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An Examination of the (In)visibility of Sexual Orientation, Heterosexism, Homophobia, and Other LGBTQ Concerns in U.S. Multicultural Teacher Education Coursework

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Heterosexism and homophobia permeate U.S. educational institutions. However, research heretofore has shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and queer (LGBTQ) concerns remain largely invisible in teacher education contexts. In an effort to better understand this phenomenon relative to multicultural education and related courses, we performed a content analysis on 41 syllabi from multicultural education courses taught in the United States with special attention to the extent to which LGBTQ concerns were included or omitted from the course designs. In addition, we examined data from a survey of 80 people who teach multicultural education courses in U.S. teacher credentialing programs to uncover both the likelihood that, and the nature by which, they incorporated LGBTQ concerns into their courses. We found that LGBTQ concerns often are invisible in multicultural teacher education coursework in the United States and that, when these concerns are covered, they generally are addressed in decontextualized ways that mask heteronormativity.

KEYWORDS *Heterosexism, homophobia, multicultural education, teacher education, textbooks*

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Heterosexism and homophobia permeate educational institutions (Ferfolja, 2007; Filax, 2006; Meyer, 2007; Prettyman, 2007; Young, 2007). Heteronormative discourses—symptoms of a hegemony which holds heterosexuality as “normal” and other ways of being, relative to a heterosexual standard, as abnormal or deviant (Cosier & Sanders, 2007; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010)—dominate school environments, upheld, as they are, by administrators, teachers, and students at all levels of education (Cramer, 2002; Evans & Broido, 2002; LaSala, Jenkins, Wheeler, & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2008; Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008). The implications of these conditions can be devastating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and queer (LGBTQ) youth or youth who are not gender conforming and thus presumed by some to be LGBTQ. These young people regularly face verbal abuse and the threat, if not the reality, of physical abuse. As a result, they often feel unsafe, invisible, or isolated at school (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2007; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006; Rudoe, 2010). They also face a constant stream of heteronorming messages, both in curricula and in school hall chatter among their peers and teachers (Ferfolja, 2007; Nixon & Givens, 2007; Prettyman, 2007). Further, youth are not the only targets. LGBTQ teachers report feeling isolated in schools (DeJean, 2004). In addition, according to Bower and Klecka (2009) and Gabb (2005), LGBTQ parents and guardians often report discomfort interacting with schools, a condition which could influence family involvement.

However, change along these lines is possible. Attempts to create positive school environments for LGBTQ youth can mitigate some of the implications of heterosexism (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008). Similarly, research has shown that many kinds of interventions, from in-service professional development to preservice teacher education, help prepare teachers to counter some of the effects of heterosexism (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003; Szalacha, 2003)—an important point, because teachers have been shown to possess the power to improve school conditions for LGBTQ youth (Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001; Wyatt, Oswald, White, & Peterson, 2008). Given this potential, many scholars have argued that teacher education programs should incorporate attention to topics ranging from sexual orientation to heteronormativity into coursework (Blackburn, 2005; Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; Cosier & Sanders, 2007; Mulhern & Martinez, 1999; Rofes, 2005; Talburt, 2004).

Nevertheless, evidence heretofore gathered suggests that teachers largely are not being prepared to recognize homophobic bias, much less to subvert heteronormativity. Schools and colleges of education have been shown, in many cases, to breed deeper heterosexism in teachers—through explicit hostility toward the issue (Nixon & Givens, 2007; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010) or its omission from teacher education programs (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; DeJean, 2010; Hermann-Wilmarth & Bills, 2010; Stiegler, 2008). Like their K–12 counterparts, many LGBTQ teacher education students

and teacher educators feel isolated (Cosier & Sanders, 2007), even within colleges of education that profess a commitment to social justice (Stiegler, 2008).

Adding an important complication to these conditions, when heterosexism is broached in education coursework it most often is tucked into a single “diversity” or “multiculturalism” course (Vavrus, 2009). However, despite a growing body of literature detailing the general lack of attention to LGBTQ concerns in teacher education, very little attention has been paid to the extent to which they are addressed in these courses.

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of attention to LGBTQ concerns (by which we mean the identities claimed, the oppressions experienced, and the resistances enacted by LGBTQ people and those committed to eradicating heterosexism) in multicultural teacher education (MTE) courses. We asked: To what extent are issues and concepts related to LGBTQ identities, oppressions, and resistances visible in MTE courses taught in U.S.-based teacher education programs? And when such issues and concepts are incorporated into MTE courses, how are they framed?

Our sources of data included a survey of people ($N = 80$) who teach MTE courses in the United States that was designed to identify the topics and theoretical frameworks these educators were most likely to incorporate into their MTE courses. It also included a sample of 41 syllabi from MTE courses taught in the United States, which were originally collected as part of a study analyzing dominant philosophical approaches to MTE (Gorski, 2009).

CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

Much has been written about heterosexism in schools (Ferfolja, 2007; Filax, 2006; Meyer, 2007; Prettyman, 2007; Young, 2007). Meanwhile, a growing body of scholarship has examined the treatment, or lack thereof, of LGBTQ concerns in teacher professional development and education coursework (Stiegler, 2008; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). A review of this literature revealed two themes that helped us situate this study: (1) the implications of heterosexism and heteronormativity in schools and why, given these implications, teachers should learn about LGBTQ concerns, and (2) scholarship about the visibility of these concerns in teacher preparation and professional development contexts, including MTE courses.

Why Teachers Should Learn About LGBTQ Issues and Concerns

As documented in GLSEN’s (2007) National School Climate Survey, about three-fourths of LGBTQ middle and high school students reported often or frequently hearing homophobic or sexist comments at school. Nearly 40% of

those surveyed indicated that they never had witnessed a teacher intervene in response to such comments. In addition, 86.2% had experienced harassment at school in the past year, nearly two-thirds (60.8%) felt unsafe at school, and one-third (32.7%) had skipped at least one day of school in the past month due to safety concerns. LGBTQ youth drop out of school at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts (Jennings, 2007). LGBTQ teachers and parents report similarly hostile experiences with schools (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Gabb, 2005; Rudoe, 2010).

Even when LGBTQ youth, parents or guardians, and teachers are not targets of overt heterosexism, they face the heterosexist hegemony of heteronormativity, which, according to Herek (1990), “operates principally by rendering homosexuality invisible and, when this fails, by trivializing, repressing, or stigmatizing it” (p. 16). Describing the phenomenon further, Kehily (2002) explains that “the pervasive presence of heterosexual relations and the simultaneous invisibility of its structure makes heterosexuality normatively powerful in the lives of teachers and pupils” (p. 57). Implicit and explicit messages of heteronormativity dominate schools (Ferfolja, 2007; Unks, 1995, 2003). Kumashiro (2002) and Bower and Klecka (2009) have demonstrated how deviations from a strict, presupposed, heterosexual norm are sanctioned by heteronormative educational practices and structures. These practices and structures help police adherence to the “norm” in myriad ways, from social exclusion to physical violence (Bass & Kaufman, 1996; GLSEN, 2007).

Another way heteronormativity is sustained in schools is through the omission of LGBTQ concerns from the curriculum, cocurriculum, policy (including nondiscrimination policy), and professional development (Hickman, 2011; Meyer, 2007; Young, 2007). This omission often renders LGBTQ people invisible or leaves them feeling isolated in schools (DeJean, 2004; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006; Rudoe, 2010). It also buttresses cycles of ignorance regarding heterosexual privilege (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Cosier & Sanders, 2007; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010), heteronormativity (Hickman, 2011), and LGBTQ concerns more generally (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008; Szalacha, 2004). These conditions are illustrated, for example, in the reduction of homophobia, if it is addressed at all in school contexts, to “bullying” (Ferfolja, 2007).

Teachers can have at least a mitigating effect on heterosexist school environments (Espelage et al., 2008; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008; Wyatt et al., 2008). But in-service teachers are rarely provided with the support and strategies necessary to do so while managing the hostility they could face in return (Ferfolja & Robinson, 2004; Jiménez, 2009). This includes professional development experiences related to “diversity,” which largely ignore LGBTQ concerns (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006). So, as Ferfolja (2007) explains, despite the urgency some educators feel for mitigating heterosexism,

teacher practices and pedagogies, limited and poorly implemented staff professional development, censorship and vetting of information, heterosexist educational curriculum, and schooling cultures where anti-lesbian/gay pejoratives flourish, all contribute to the ongoing sexuality discrimination experienced by many, while normalizing and constituting heterosexuality as the dominant and only legitimate sexuality. (p. 147)

Because teacher interventions in response to heterosexism can improve conditions for LGBTQ youth, parents or guardians, and educators (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008; Russell et al., 2001), and can even promote a more positive self-identity for LGBTQ youth (Renn, 2000), many have argued that teachers must be prepared to disrupt heterosexism in their classrooms (Blackburn, 2005; Cosier & Sanders, 2007; Rofes, 2005). Furthermore, because advocates for multicultural education proclaim a commitment to educational equity and social justice (Gorski, 2009), and because many teacher education students experience a single MTE course as their lone opportunity to learn about equity concerns (Vavrus, 2009), MTE courses ought to address LGBTQ concerns among other identities, oppressions, and resistances.

Why Teachers Are Not Learning About LGBTQ Issues and Concerns

Existing scholarship suggests, however, that teacher education programs and colleges of education generally fail to delve into, or even acknowledge, these concerns. We synthesize this scholarship into two major themes: (1) heteronorming in teacher preparation programs and (2) the invisibility of LGBTQ concerns in MTE discourses.

HETERONORMING IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

As in K–12 school environments, heteronormative discourses are prevalent at colleges and universities (Evans & Broido, 2002; Nixon & Givens, 2007; O'Connor, 1998), from heterosexism in the Greek system (Hesp & Brooks, 2009) to the marginalization of queer scholarship across disciplines (Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). As a result, higher education contexts often are experienced by LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students as threatening (LaSala et al., 2008). Colleges and schools of education are no exception (Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). According to Cosier and Sanders (2007), many LGBTQ teacher educators feel isolated in their program areas or departments, where they experience wide-ranging hostilities including “conflations of gay sexuality with communism, criminal behavior, and disease” (p. 25). Those who attempt to teach about heterosexism may experience elevated hostility from colleagues (Nixon & Givens, 2007) and students (Asher, 2007; Cosier & Sanders, 2007; O'Malley, Hoyt, & Slattery, 2009; Szalacha, 2004). And again, where hostility

is not explicit, it is reflected by silence. Although scholars have come to a variety of conclusions about heterosexism in colleges of education, they overwhelmingly agree that silence persists in teacher education programs when it comes to LGBTQ concerns (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; De-Jean, 2010; Hermann-Wilmarth & Bills, 2010; Jennings, 2007; Szalacha, 2004; Vavrus, 2009).

In their study of teacher educators in Australia, Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) found that individual teacher educators' decisions to include queer issues in their courses were based largely on their personal sympathies. Add to this the fact that teacher educators themselves are susceptible to the same heteronorming socializations as their K–12 counterparts, and it stands to reason that even those teacher educators who want to include LGBTQ concerns in their courses are hesitant to do so (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008), even if they do incorporate topics such as racism (Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). Doing so can be especially difficult for LGBTQ faculty (Cosier & Sanders, 2007), who may want to avoid “outing” themselves in hostile environments (Wickens & Sandlin, 2010).

So, again, although teacher education programs have the potential to interrupt heterosexism (Bower & Klecka, 2009) and develop in teachers deeper knowledge and more positive attitudes about LGBTQ youth (Athanasēs & Larrabee, 2003; Szalacha, 2003), the reign of heteronormativity within these programs tends to ensure limited, if any, success in doing so.

(IN)VISIBILITY OF LGBTQ ISSUES IN MTE DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

In their examination of session offerings at the annual national conference of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), the largest professional organization for multicultural-minded educators in the United States, Amosa and Gorski (2008) found that offerings about homophobia and heterosexism were rare relative to those about racism and other equity concerns. This omission of LGBTQ concerns demonstrates how heterosexism, which, according to Epstein and Johnson (1994), “posits a totally and unambiguously heterosexual world in much the same way as certain forms of racism posit the universality of whiteness” (p 198), remains prevalent even within multicultural education contexts. It also confirms concerns raised by several scholars about the ways in which LGBTQ concerns are silenced within popular diversity discourses (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; Ferfolja, 2007; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006).

Little attention has been paid to the visibility of such topics as heterosexism in MTE courses. In one study, Gorski (2010) documented the scholarship that more than 200 multicultural teacher educators identified as most influential to their MTE work. Findings reflected a comparative lack of attention to LGBTQ concerns. For example, of the 25 introductory-level books and 20

moderate-expertise-level books most identified by participants as influential to their work, ten centered race, one centered class, one centered language, and none centered sexual orientation. Similarly, none focused exclusively on (dis)ability, gender, or religion. Several edited volumes commonly identified in the study incorporated some content—often a single chapter—related to sexual orientation, but these volumes tended to pay far more attention to race and other identities than to sexual orientation. Illustrating this point, the book identified second most often as the most influential introductory-level book on multicultural education, *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (Banks & Banks, 2010) included one chapter on sexual orientation; it contained four chapters on race.

Considering that existing scholarship points to a systemic omission of LGBTQ concerns from in-service teacher professional development (Ferfolja, 2007), an MTE course may represent, for many teachers, their one shot to hone the consciousness and skills necessary for creating equitable learning environments for LGBTQ youth.

Methodology

To ascertain the extent to which LGBTQ experiences, oppressions, and resistances are visible in U.S. MTE courses, as well as the nature of their inclusion, we examined two sets of data: (1) a sample of 41 syllabi from MTE courses taught across the United States, collected as part of a previous study of philosophical frameworks for MTE (Gorski, 2009); and (2) data from a survey of people ($N = 80$) who teach MTE courses in the United States about the topics and theoretical frameworks they are most likely to incorporate into their courses (Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2012). Because the data collection, instrumentation, and participants related to these sets of data have been described in detail in the published results of the previously cited studies, we offer here an abbreviated description of each data set and how we used it in this study.

SAMPLE OF MTE SYLLABI

To complicate existing understandings of common approaches to MTE, a sample of 45 syllabi for MTE courses was collected from a regionally and institutionally diverse cross-section of education degree programs, both undergraduate and graduate, from across the United States. An analysis of these syllabi, focusing primarily on course descriptions, goals, objectives, and other indicators of explicit curriculum (that which is publicly named), supported McLaren's (1995) suggestion of three primary approaches to multiculturalism, which he named conservative, liberal, and critical multiculturalism. Expanding on this typology, Gorski (2009) elaborated on the nature of these

approaches by describing five approaches to MTE: (1) teaching the “other,” (2) teaching with cultural sensitivity, (3) teaching with multicultural competence, (4) teaching in sociopolitical context, and (5) teaching as counter-hegemonic practice. Notably, in both McLaren’s (1995) and Gorski’s (2009) typologies, “multiculturalism,” which refers largely, if not exclusively, to race and ethnicity in some contexts, encompasses a broader vision of diversity that includes race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, sex, socioeconomic status, home language, and a variety of other identities: a typical philosophical, if not practiced, construction of multiculturalism in the United States.

We wondered what we could learn about the visibility of LGBTQ concerns in MTE courses by examining another aspect of the syllabi: detailed session-by-session course schedules, which were included in 41 of them. We used these course schedules to calculate the average percentage of overall class time devoted to identity- or oppression-related topics, such as race, ethnicity, and racism; sex, gender, and sexism; and so on. We calculated, as well, the percentage of these syllabi that omitted any mention of the same identity- or oppression-related topics. These calculations allowed us to consider the prevalence of attention to LGBTQ identities, oppressions, and resistances relative to those related to race and gender as codified on MTE syllabi.

DATA FROM MTE FRAMEWORK AND TOPIC SURVEY

A diverse (by race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, faculty rank, and years of teaching experience) snowball sample ($N = 80$) of people teaching MTE courses at U.S. colleges and universities was surveyed to identify the extent to which they were likely to incorporate various concepts (e.g., racial identity, heterosexism) and theoretical frameworks (e.g., critical race theory, queer theory) into their MTE courses. A previous analysis of the data (Gorski et al., 2012), which focused upon self-efficacy among multicultural teacher educators in regard to their MTE work, revealed, among other things, that LGBTQ participants had lower levels of self-efficacy in teaching MTE courses than their heterosexual counterparts. Although lower levels of self-efficacy among African American participants were found as compared with their White counterparts, no such discrepancy existed across any other social identifier.

Given evidence that teacher educators who choose to teach about LGBTQ concerns do so because of a personal sense of sympathy toward related issues (Ferfolja, 2008), we inquired as to what the data from the survey suggested about likelihood of multicultural teacher educators including LGBTQ concerns in their MTE courses. We examined, as well, the nature of the inclusion of LGBTQ concerns relative to that of other identities, oppressions, and resistances—specifically, those related to race and gender. To do so we calculated the mean likelihoods of including LGBTQ concerns (sexual

orientation, heterosexism, homophobia, and queer theory) in one's courses. For comparison, we also calculated the mean likelihood of including concepts related to gender (gender identity, sexism, and feminist theory) and race (racial identity, racism, and critical race theory).

It is important to note here that we included transgender identity, oppression, and resistance within the LGBTQ frame, understanding that, identity-wise, it might have made more sense to include it in the gender frame, because the few syllabi that incorporated transgender identity in any way incorporated it into sexual orientation. This, of course, raises a host of other questions about multicultural teacher educators' understandings of the relationships between gender and sexual orientation.

Drawing on Gorski's (2009) expansion of McLaren's (1995) typology of approaches to multicultural teacher education, we also compared mean likelihoods across a range of concepts and theoretical frameworks—identity descriptors (sexual orientation, racial identity, gender identity), forms of oppression (heterosexism and homophobia, racism, sexism), critical theoretical frameworks (queer theory, critical race theory, feminist theory)—to determine the nature of the inclusion of LGBTQ concerns relative to race and gender concerns. This allowed us to compare likelihoods of concept and framework incorporation on a continuum between McLaren's approaches to addressing equity and social justice concerns:

- (1) a *conservative* approach to MTE, characterized by a sole focus on identity (e.g., sexual orientation or gender identity) and the omission of a consideration for oppression (e.g., heterosexism and homophobia or sexism) and the sorts of hegemonic sociopolitical contexts uncovered by critical theories (e.g., queer theory or feminist theory);
- (2) a *liberal* approach, characterized by a focus on identity and oppression and the omission of a consideration of sociopolitical contexts uncovered by critical theories; and
- (3) a *critical* approach, characterized by a focus on the relationships between identity, oppression, and counterhegemonic practice within the sociopolitical contexts uncovered by critical theories (Gorski, 2009; McLaren, 1995).

We examined, for instance, the likelihood participants would engage a critical approach to LGBTQ concerns with the likelihood they would engage a critical approach to race or gender.

Findings

Overall, our findings confirmed the bulk of scholarship on the relative (in)visibility of LGBTQ identities, oppressions, and resistances in teacher

education. Notably, though, by focusing on MTE courses, we documented this phenomenon in a context in which education students *ought to be* considering the full range of equity concerns (Gorski, 2006), if such considerations are not facilitated throughout education programs. In addition, the findings offered important contours to the question of the (in)visibility of LGBTQ concerns in MTE by providing an initial understanding of the nature by which these concerns are included in MTE courses, if they are, in fact, included.

LGBTQ CONCERNS IN THE OFFICIAL CURRICULUM OF MTE: ANALYSIS OF SYLLABI

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the findings of an analysis of 41 MTE syllabi regarding the comparative prevalence of class time devoted (in an “official curriculum” sense, according to the text of each individual syllabus) to content focused on sexual orientation, homophobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity, queer theory and studies, and related concepts and conditions.

We found that, according to the official curriculum of MTE as codified in course syllabi, little attention is paid to LGBTQ identities, oppressions, and resistances, particularly relative to those related to race. As detailed in Table 2, they are more than eight times more likely to be omitted from any section of course syllabi overall than concerns related to race and racism. They

TABLE 1 Average Percentage of Class Time Devoted to Specific Identities and Oppressions According to Class Schedules Embedded in MCE-Type Course Syllabi

Dimension of Identity or Oppression	Average Percent of Overall Class Time Devoted
Race (including racism, racial identity, White privilege, critical race theory, etc.)	21.67 ^a
Gender (including sexism, gender identity, transgender identity, feminist theory, etc.)	7.16
Sexual orientation (including heterosexism, homophobia, LGBTQ identities, queer theory, etc.)	3.76 ^b
Class/socioeconomic status (including classism, poverty, economic injustice, class identity, etc.)	3.61
Language (including linguisticism, ELL identity, etc.)	3.55
(Dis)ability (including ableism, ability identity, critical [dis]ability theory, etc.)	2.20
Religion, faith, and spirituality (including religious oppression, Islamophobia, religious or nonreligious identity, etc.)	1.91
Immigration status (including anti-immigration oppression, immigrant identity, etc.)	0.69 ^c

N = 41.

^aApproximately 9.8 hours of a 45-hour course.

^bApproximately 1.7 hours of a 45-hour course.

^cApproximately 18 minutes of a 45-hour course.

TABLE 2 Percentage of Syllabi Containing No Mention of Specific Identity- or Oppression-Related Concerns in Any Form

Dimension of Identity or Oppression	Percent of Syllabi in Which Dimension Is Omitted
Race	4.80
Gender	32.71
Sexual and affectional orientation	41.46
Class/socioeconomic status	53.66
Language	56.10
(Dis)ability	63.41
Religion	70.73
Immigration status	85.37

N = 41.

are somewhat more likely, as well, to be omitted than gender- and gender-identity-related concerns. It also is notable that none of the syllabi spoke directly to intersectionalities between gender and sexual orientation—perhaps a topic for another study. In addition, according to our analysis of those syllabi, which included detailed course schedules, course designers devoted less than one-sixth of class time to LGBTQ concerns that they devoted to racial concerns. In other words, for every minute devoted to LGBTQ concerns in these course schedules, nearly six minutes were devoted to race, according to the syllabi. Approximately twice as much time was devoted to gender as to sexual orientation.

As Table 2 indicates, we found similar inattention to a variety of other identities and oppressions, including those related to class, language, religion, (dis)ability, and immigrant status. Each of these was less prevalent in the course schedules than sexual orientation. However, as we discuss later, we did not interpret these findings as positive in regard to the status of LGBTQ concerns in MTE. Rather, we interpreted them as possible evidence for an endemic lack of attention to identity and oppression intersectionalities and an equally endemic lack of broad applications of equity, diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice in MTE courses.

Although these findings supported existing scholarship on the relative (in)visibility of LGBTQ concerns in the official curriculum of MTE, they left important questions unanswered. For example, some faculty who teach about LGBTQ identities, oppressions, and resistances, but who do not feel supported by their institutions in doing so, may omit text related to these concerns from their syllabi purposefully, perhaps to ensure that they survive review by a curriculum committee. We could not discount the implications of omitting LGBTQ concerns from more than 41% of the syllabi as, in and of itself, part of the hidden curriculum of MTE and indicative of the hostilities experienced by some faculty who may wish to teach about these concerns given greater levels of support. Interestingly, this finding reflects, almost

exactly, results of a study by Sherwin and Jennings (2006), who found that 40% of the 77 U.S. secondary teacher preparation programs they examined failed to address sexual orientation in overall coursework. However, in the case of the present study, we could not be completely sure, despite the high rate of omission from syllabi, that these concerns were not introduced to MTE students in other ways, such as through discussions about gender identity, during conversations about bullying, or in the context of intersectionalities with other identities or oppressions.

LIKELIHOOD AND NATURE OF LGBTQ CONCERNS IN MTE COURSES

Table 3 summarizes findings from our survey data analysis: *t*-tests comparing the extent to which teacher educators were likely to include material related to sexual orientation, gender, and race in MTE courses. Overall, teacher educators were most likely to include, among all concepts about which we collected data, content on racism. By contrast, they were least likely to incorporate, among all of these concepts, queer theory. While participants reported that they generally were likely to include content on heterosexism, homophobia, and sexual orientation, they were significantly more likely to include content related to race and gender concerns, on average, than those related to sexual orientation.

Drawing on the typology of approaches to multiculturalism offered by McLaren (1995), we found multicultural teacher educators who reported that they included content related to LGBTQ concerns into their courses were significantly more likely to do so at the conservative level, with a focus on identity (sexual orientation), and least likely to do so at the critical

TABLE 3 Mean Values for Respondents' Likelihood of Inclusion of Concepts Into MCE-Type Courses

Concept	Mean
Sexual orientation	4.12 ^d
Heterosexism	4.05 ^d
Homophobia	4.03 ^d
Queer theory	2.96 ^{a,b,c}
Gender identity	4.00 ^d
Sexism	4.32 ^{b,c,d}
Feminist theory	3.61 ^{a,b,c,d}
Racial identity	4.36 ^{a,b,c,d}
Racism	4.64 ^{a,b,c,d}
Critical race theory	3.93 ^d

N = 75.

1 = *Extremely unlikely*; 5 = *Extremely likely*.

^aSignificantly different from sexual orientation; ^bSignificantly different from heterosexism; ^cSignificantly different from homophobia; ^dSignificantly different from queer theory. *p* < .05 for *t*-tests.

level, with a focus on understanding counterhegemonic practice within the sociopolitical context of heteronormativity, as facilitated by queer theory (Hickman, 2011). Participants were more likely to incorporate race-related concerns at the liberal level, with a focus on identity *and* oppression, than at the conservative level.

Comparing mean responses across parallel concepts and frameworks illuminated a consistent hierarchy of topic incorporation into MTE courses. Starting with a conservative approach to multicultural teacher education, participants were significantly more likely to incorporate racial identity than to incorporate sexual orientation. At the liberal approach level, racism was most likely to be included, followed by sexism, with heterosexism significantly less likely to have been included. At the critical level, critical race theory was more likely to be included than feminist theory, which was significantly more likely to be included than queer theory.

There was no statistically significant difference between the likelihoods of participants including the conservative or liberal LGBTQ concepts (sexual orientation, heterosexism, and homophobia) and the critical theoretical framework for examining race and disrupting racism (critical race theory). Similarly, participants were significantly more likely to engage a conservative framing of LGBTQ concerns (sexual orientation) than a liberal framing of race concerns (racism) in their MTE courses.

These findings suggested overall that those teaching MTE courses were less likely to incorporate LGBTQ concerns into these courses than race or gender—a finding consistent with scholarship on how multiculturalism is framed in teacher education programs. But they suggested as well that when such content *was* incorporated, it most likely was framed in a more conservative, or less critical, way than content on race and, to a lesser extent, gender. In other words, when LGBTQ concerns were not omitted from MTE courses, they most often were framed, relative to concerns related to race, in ways which may not have accounted for systemic marginalization or situated “sexual orientation” in a sociopolitical context of heteronormativity.

DISCUSSION

We apply in this discussion a theoretical lens constructed by overlaying the notion of “episto-power” (Kincheloe, 2008) onto Gorski’s (2009) typology of approaches to MTE. Such a lens equips us with the theoretical tools to locate our analysis both in the sociopolitical context of heteronormative discourses and to situate our findings relative to existing bodies of MTE literature. Upon describing episto-power and its relationship with MTE and the general findings of this study, we (1) discuss several implications of the findings in terms of MTE and the larger education milieu, (2) reconsider, in light of our findings, scholarship on conditions which might limit the incorporation of

LGBTQ concerns into MTE courses, (3) reflect on how professional organizations with a stated commitment to multicultural education might mitigate these conditions, and (4) describe the limitations of our study.

Kincheloe (2008), in an explication of critical pedagogy as a force against exploitative social, political, and economic systems, described how epistemic power (or the power of hegemonic knowledge) is used to organize people into hierarchical categories in order to perpetuate and justify stratification and the unjust distribution of power. The categories, although salient in a sociopolitical sense (as the oppressions people experience in relation to these categories, such as racism and heterosexism, have *real* implications), are fairly arbitrary outside the context of the elite drive to maintain institutions constructed to uphold, and to manipulate us into compliance with, the hierarchy. Kincheloe (2008) explained:

The superiority of those who fall under the parasol of dominant positionality is made so obvious by educational and other social institutions that everyone knows where they fit on the status ladder. This knowing where one fits on the ladder does great harm—obviously to those who at the bottom rungs who feel inferior—but also to those at the top rungs who develop a sense of privilege and superiority. It is the charge of critical pedagogy to throw a monkey wrench into a system of knowledge . . . that perpetuates such perspectives and the human suffering that accompanies them. (p. 3)

Notably, Nieto and Bode (2011), Gay (1995), and other prominent multicultural education theorists insist that critical pedagogy is a key component of multicultural education theory and practice.

When it comes to the identities, oppressions, and resistances of LGBTQ people, this study supports a growing body of evidence that teacher education, and MTE more specifically, tends to perpetuate, both by omission and relatively conservative or liberal framing, a sort of epistemic power, which complies with the very conditions it is meant, at least theoretically (Gorski, 2006, 2008; Nieto & Bode, 2011), to redress. At the basest level, the inconsistent coverage of LGBTQ concerns in MTE courses is indicative of their invisibility in broader educational and teacher education discourses (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; DeJean, 2010; Hermann-Wilmarth & Bills, 2010; Jennings, 2007) and in professional development contexts related to diversity (Ferfolja, 2007; Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006). Meanwhile, the comparatively (relative to race and gender concerns) conservative or liberal, as opposed to critical, framing with which these concerns *are* included, such as by focusing on binary or fixed sexual orientation identities and interpersonal homophobia (“bullying”), while affording less or no attention to counterhegemonic practice within a sociopolitical context of heteronormativity, is, in and of itself, a symptom of heteronormativity, according to Hickman (2011), Renold

(2005), and Rudoe (2010). Critical to understanding the significance of these findings is recognizing that they are insights into discourses, practices, and philosophical orientations as codified and operationalized in, perhaps, the single educational contexts in which we can least afford heteronormative compliance: MTE courses.

Implications in Regards to MTE and the Larger Education Milieu

The implications of these findings are many. Most obviously, they confirm the concern that teacher education is inadequately preparing many pre- and in-service educators for countering heteronormativity or creating equitable, if not merely relatively “safe,” school climates for LGBTQ youth (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; DeJean, 2010; Hermann-Wilmarth & Bills, 2010). Moreover, the findings demonstrate that this is not just a failure of teacher education but one of MTE. The literature reviewed to contextualize this study paints a powerful, if disturbing, picture of the repercussions of these conditions, from the largely uninterrupted persistence of heterosexism in schools and its effects on the lives of LGBTQ youth (Bower & Klecka, 2009; GLSEN, 2007; Jennings, 2007; Rudoe, 2010) to the largely unabated imposition of heteronormativity onto curricula (Hickman, 2011; Meyer, 2007; Young, 2007). Scholars long have described the (in)visibility of attention to LGBTQ concerns in education and teacher education contexts and, given their documentation of heterosexism in those contexts, the ways in which heteronormative hegemony continues to thrive (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Ferfolja, 2007; Kumashiro, 2002). The findings of this study paint what might be an even bleaker picture. They suggest that although roughly 60% of students in MTE courses may have some opportunity to consider the implications of heterosexism, approximately 40% will have no such opportunity. And those who do are more likely than not to be engaged in these topics in decontextualized ways that focus on identity (conservative) or interpersonal bias (liberal) rather than those acknowledging intersectionalities and the sociopolitical context of heteronormativity (critical).

As a result, even those teachers who may *want* to learn how to facilitate equitable learning environments for LGBTQ youth by countering the most insidious forms of heterosexism are not, in many cases, being prepared to do so in MTE courses. Although they might learn something about sexual orientation generally or about LGBTQ-related bullying, they are significantly less likely to be challenged to grapple with heteronormative lenses in the same way they might be challenged to grapple with Eurocentric lenses. These conditions are all the more disturbing in light of scholarship demonstrating that teachers can, at the very least, mitigate heterosexist hostilities (Espelage et al., 2008; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008; Wyatt et al., 2008).

Also of interest is the fact that MTE, in its greater relative likelihood to include LGBTQ concerns in a conservative or liberal manner than in a critical manner (Gorski, 2009; McLaren, 1995), implicitly supports larger patterns of reframing LGBTQ-targeting biases and oppressions as interpersonal problems rather than symptoms of systemic heterosexism. For instance, Ferfolja (2007) describes how these biases and oppressions often are conflated with and minimized to “bullying.” Certainly, antibullying initiatives are important (Rudoe, 2010). However, as Renold (2005) explains, the tendency in school environments to discuss LGBTQ concerns only in relation to bullying, in its suggestion that LGBTQ youth should be “tolerated” and its omission of attention to heteronormative hegemony, is itself a reflection of that hegemony. Alldred and David (2007) refer to this approach as “pastoral” in its moral passivity and disregard for the possibility that more significant social change is in order; they urge that youth, not just teachers, should learn “to disrupt the silent defaults” (p. 44) of heteronormativity.

In a similar vein, as discussed by scholars tracking the recent resurgence of deficit discourses in educational contexts (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Gorski, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Yosso, 2005), when equity concerns are addressed only in decontextualized, identity- and culture-centric ways, we run the risk of reifying deficit ideology. Just as the deficit ideologue, even if well intended, sees class inequalities as the result of supposed deficiencies in economically disadvantaged people, she or he, by failing to locate heterosexist marginalization in a larger sociopolitical context, sees LGBTQ people, even if implicitly, as “the problem” to be fixed when it comes to interpersonal tensions related to sexual orientation. The function of this deficit ideology—of directing efforts toward “fixing” disenfranchised people rather than the conditions which disenfranchise them—is to manipulate responses to inequalities in ways that ensure they will pose no threat to existing power hierarchies (Gorski, 2011). For example, a deficit ideology response to homophobic bullying in schools might focus on carving out a limited number of “safe spaces” to help LGBTQ youth survive a heteronormative environment rather than on redressing conditions that make survival a concern for them.

Finally, Filax (2006) has demonstrated that, in addition to the relative invisibility of LGBTQ concerns in education contexts, the prevalence of hegemonic framings of LGBTQ-related discourses in occasions when these concerns are addressed largely maintain the us/them binaries imposed by heteronormative hegemony. The possibility, at which the findings of this study hint (although more focused scholarly attention is needed to uncover complexities in these conditions), that this invisibility and hegemonic framing—the conditions deconstructed by queer theory (Hickman, 2011)—are reproduced on average in MTE courses, suggests that systemic patterns of MTE practice may be contributing to the injustices multicultural education is meant, at least theoretically, to redress.

Revisiting the Conditions Limiting Incorporation of LGBTQ Concerns Into MTE Courses

However, as important as understanding these conditions in a larger sociopolitical and institutional context of heteronormativity is recognizing that they are not simple reflections of systemic inadequacies among those teaching MTE courses. The request that multicultural teacher educators squeeze learning experiences about the broadest host of equity concerns into a single course is unreasonable and, some have argued, a purposeful assurance of limited attention to these concerns and an equally purposeful disintegration of educational equity concerns from broader educational theory and practice (Keiser, 2005; Sleeter, 2008). In fact, according to a study on multicultural teacher educators' perceptions of the most common challenges faced in MTE practice (Gorski, 2012), multicultural teacher educators are hypercognizant of this time constraint and the implications of having to exclude from their courses several important explorations. In addition, many people teaching MTE courses do so in environments in which the simple act of advocating for basic queer rights is met with hostility from colleagues (Cosier & Sanders, 2007) and students (Asher, 2007), imposing additional pressure to conform with heteronormativity.

A related condition, which may limit the incorporation of LGBTQ concerns into MTE courses, is the relative invisibility of LGBTQ concerns in multicultural education literatures (Gorski, 2010), professional development contexts (Amosa & Gorski, 2008), and discourses (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Clark, 2010; Ferfolja, 2007). As Gorski's (2010) study on the literature most influencing MTE practice demonstrated, and as this study's analysis of detailed course schedules confirmed, issues related to race and racism remain central to MTE practitioners' conceptions of multicultural education, if not the ways in which they prioritize MTE curricula. Amosa and Gorski's (2008) analysis of offerings at the international NAME conference pointed to a disproportionate focus on race (we refer here to *volume* and *air time* rather than relative *importance*) in the larger multicultural education milieu. And although several multicultural education scholars have called on their colleagues to make LGBTQ concerns more central to their scholarship and teaching, some prominent voices in the field have been resistant to, if not dismissive of, these calls. As a result, the very notion that multicultural education ought to address heterosexism remains a contested issue in the field's prominent discourses in a way that class and other issues, despite *their* relative lack of coverage in MTE courses, are not contested. Considering these conditions and, because a vast majority (76 out of 80) of the teacher educators who participated in our survey were products of teacher education programs, it is little surprise if they, on average, are reproducing the invisibility or dominant framing of LGBTQ concerns they likely experienced in their exposures to multicultural education.

It is possible, too, that these conditions have been hastened indirectly by the imposition of hyperaccountability measures and the influence of these measures on teacher education programs. Obviously, No Child Left Behind's accountability mandates do not require data to be disaggregated by sexual orientation. But the heaviness of the accountabilities imposed by high-stakes testing mandates have resulted, purposely and problematically, according to Sleeter (2008), in several shifts in education discourses that reflect the episto-power manipulation of knowledge described by Kincheloe (2008).

One such shift is that from conceptualizing educational equity in broad terms of social justice and equitable opportunity to conceptualizing it solely in relation to an "achievement gap" measured singularly by standardized test score comparisons (Books, 2011). Whether or not they have been lulled into this conception, multicultural teacher educators, susceptible as anyone else to the manipulations of hegemony, may feel an increasing sense of urgency to focus on this "achievement gap" framing. Because the loudest discourses about this gap focus on the racial achievement gap (rather than, say, the socioeconomic achievement gap), such a focus could strengthen some multicultural teacher educators' convictions about the centrality of race in multicultural education. Meanwhile, the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education—the predominant U.S. teacher education program accreditation agency—may have reified the (in)visibility and framing of LGBTQ concerns as well. In 2007, when it dropped "social justice" from its standards, it also dropped sexual orientation from the text of its dispositions (Heybach, 2009); teacher education programs are not accountable for preparing educators with antiheterosexist dispositions or competencies.

Eliminating These Barriers: Roles of Multicultural Education Scholars and Organizations

One of the findings from our analysis of course schedules was that a pattern of omission of several equity concerns, in addition to those related to sexual orientation, constituted what might be called the broader "null" curriculum of MTE. Some of these concerns—class, language, (dis)ability, and religion, to name a few—may, in fact, receive even less attention in MTE courses than LGBTQ concerns do. As we stated earlier, we were careful not to locate in this finding a sign of hope about the prevalence of LGBTQ concerns relative to these other concerns. Rather, we interpreted this finding as possible evidence of both a systemic lack of attention to oppression intersectionalities and a pattern of narrow applications of diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice in MTE courses: a sort of MTE "hierarchy of oppressions," to use Lorde's (1983) words. Unfortunately, these patterns appear to be reified by some of the organizations and associations with stated commitments to multicultural education and MTE—the very organizations and associations

which ought to be redressing them. For example, earlier we mentioned NAME, the content of whose annual conference reflects this oppression's hierarchy (Amosa & Gorski, 2008). The organization's statement of "goals" (NAME, 2011) replicates it, too. One of its six goals—"To eliminate racism and discrimination in society" (para. 2)—explicitly names racism but only implicitly ("and discrimination") points to other forms of oppression. The rest of the statement is silent on these other forms, including heterosexism. However, illustrating the contested nature of the LGBTQ concerns in the largest multicultural education professional association in the United States, NAME (2004) did produce a Resolution on Heterosexism stating, among other things, its commitment to eliminating heterosexism. It is interesting to note that NAME was identified, in Gorski's (2010) survey of more than 200 multicultural teacher educators in the United States, as the professional organization most influential to their MTE work.

Just as they have the power to reify the episto-power evidenced by a hierarchy of oppression in MTE, organizations like NAME can *and must* play a leading role in dismantling it. We recommend, for instance, that NAME initiate processes to direct more attention to LGBTQ concerns, and those related to other concerns currently underaddressed (either by omission or by the nature of their inclusion) in MTE, at its annual conference, even if doing so means manipulating the proposal review process.

Similarly, we urge Rethinking Schools, whose magazine was identified in Gorski's (2010) study as the magazine or journal that most influenced the work of multicultural teacher educators, to direct more attention to LGBTQ concerns. A Google search of its online archives (conducted April 20, 2011) identified 269 documents related to "racism" but only 30 related to "homophobia" and "heterosexism" combined; 18 documents in their archives mentioned "critical race theory," but none mentioned "queer theory" or "heteronormativity."

Moreover, we urge these and other organizations not only to engage more often with LGBTQ concerns but also to engage *more deeply and complexly* with them. Doing so requires transcending the popular discourses on these concerns that reduce them to "bullying" or "tolerance" even while reifying the socially constructed identity binaries that strengthen, rather than diminish, heteronormativity. It requires, as well, the considerations for identity and oppression intersectionalities facilitated by queer theory.

Meanwhile, we invite our MTE scholar and practitioner colleagues, many of whom already have incorporated critical race theory into their scholarship and practice, to engage, if they have not done so already, queer theory, feminist theory, and other critical theoretical frameworks. Queer theory, in particular, offers a powerful set of tools not only for understanding heteronormativity or placing heterosexism in sociopolitical context but also for facilitating the critical examination of the wide range of false binaries and identity simplifications beyond sexual orientation that may impede attempts

to strengthen the equity consciousness of teachers and teacher educators (Hickman, 2011).

Limitations

Several limitations should be noted. As mentioned earlier, although our analysis of syllabi allowed us to consider the *official* curriculum of MTE, syllabi do not necessarily paint an accurate picture of the *explicit* curriculum (that which is explicitly taught) or *implicit* curriculum (that which is learned implicitly) of coursework. Similarly, not all instructors have full autonomy over their syllabi. It could be the case that some MTE faculty incorporated LGBTQ concerns into their courses despite their omission from course syllabi. On the other hand, it could be the case that some faculty chose not to address these concerns despite their presence on syllabi. Our inability to know the extent of either scenario made the results of our analysis inexact.

Similarly, the nature of textual analysis requires interpretation on the part of researchers. Our inability to know how, precisely, those who constructed the syllabi conceptualized the content listed on them and our inability to know how those who taught the courses operationalized this content limited the preciseness with which we could calculate the prevalence of LGBTQ concerns and other equity-related concerns. Future research might complicate this analysis by examining readings, major assignments, and other aspects of MTE courses in order to better understand the visibility and nature of attention to LGBTQ concerns within them. Similarly, teacher action research and ethnographic approaches likely would provide important nuances to understandings of these conditions by connecting what happens in MTE courses to on-the-ground classroom contexts.

Finally, although we drew survey participants from a fairly small population, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of our quantitative findings.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent and nature of the visibility of LGBTQ identities, oppressions, and resistances in MTE courses. We found that such concerns, particularly relative to those related to race, are underaddressed, both by the volume of attention and the nature of attention afforded them. We explored a variety of implications for this in light of Vavrus's (2009) concern that an MTE course represents, for many pre- and in-service teachers, the lone formal learning context in which LGBTQ concerns may be broached. We called on organizations identified by multicultural teacher educators in the United States as most influential to their MTE work

(Gorski, 2010) as well as MTE scholars and practitioners to facilitate the reversal of these conditions by focusing more, and more complex, attention on LGBTQ concerns. We recommended engagement with queer theory as one point of departure.

Future points along this study's line of inquiry should examine how the exclusion, or nature of inclusion, of LGBTQ concerns in MTE courses or education degree programs more generally predicts teachers' dispositions toward, and willingness to advocate for the educational and other rights of, LGBTQ students, parents or guardians, and colleagues. Future research should consider, as well, how these conditions inform the ways in which teachers understand heterosexism (and its intersectionalities with other oppressions) and recognize heteronormativity, and how they reify or counter them in their practice. Ethnographic studies might help illuminate these conditions with greater specificity.

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