Even if you say it three ways, it still doesn't mean it's true: The pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early childhood education

Alexandra C Gunn
University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Abstract

Heteronormativity, the concept that heterosexual sexuality is an institutionalized norm and a superior and privileged standard, is held firm when discourses of gender, sexualities and family form converge. In a study of heteronormative discourses in the context of early childhood education, teachers shared accounts of practices where genders, sexualities and family form were troubled and troubling. An analysis of these showed the repetitive distribution of the statement, heterosexuality is/as normal, and therefore illuminated the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in work with young children and families. This article makes visible the ways heteronormativity is achieved in early childhood education along these trajectories and asks, in whose interests is the (hetero)norm being preserved?

Keywords

discourse, early childhood education, gender, heteronormativity, same-gender families, sexuality

Introduction

In this article I draw attention to the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early education settings. I question practices that seek – knowingly-or-not – to preserve the (hetero)normative status quo. My reasoning for this is to draw attention to practices in teaching and learning that legitimize some subjects and call others to question. By paying attention to the ways we construct norms and then include and exclude *others* on the basis of these we are able to consider how heteronormativity might impact on those who live either side of the *(hetero)norm*.

Heteronormativity is the concept that heterosexual sexuality is an institutionalized norm and superior and privileged standard. Warner (1991) described it as a pervasive and often invisible aspect of modern societies. Through heteronormativity heterosexual sexuality as constructed as

Corresponding author:
Alexandra Gunn, School of Educational Studies and Human Development, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand
Email: alex.gunn@canterbury.ac.nz

natural, as unquestionable, and as taken-for-granted. Achieved via the conflation of discourses that distribute the statement[1] *heterosexuality is (or as) normal*, heteronormativity has consequences for the regulation of children, parents and teachers in early childhood education.

Foucault's (1978) studies into sexuality showed how the construction of *normal heterosexuality* in the West occurred via a convergence of, religious, legal, scientific and medical discourses beginning in the 17th century. Following the construction of non-heterosexual acts as illegal and of homosexuality as immoral, the science and medicine of sexuality marked non-heterosexual sexuality as pathologic and abnormal, achieving in this process a 'new specification of individuals' (pp. 42–43) whose sexuality diverged from the *norm*. The homosexual was born and he, with his afflicted sexuality became other to the heterosexual. Thus notions of normalcy associated with heterosexual sexuality position heterosexuals with their 'normal' form of sexuality as ascendant. This contributes to what Epstein and Johnson (1994) call the 'heterosexual presumption' (p. 198) – the taken-for-granted assumption that everybody will or should be heterosexual. Examining heteronormativity therefore provides insights into the multitude of ways heterosexual sexuality is imposed on us and how we knowingly-or-not impose it on others. In this article I draw on data from a New Zealand study of heteronormativity and early childhood education to make visible such practices (Gunn, 2008), and then I ask, in whose interests do we preserve the (hetero)norm?

Three trajectories of heteronormativity in early childhood education

Heteronormativity draws attention to practices that derive from and contribute to understandings and assumptions about one's gender, sexuality and close interpersonal relationships. Preserving and distributing the statement, heterosexuality is/as normal, heteronormativity in early childhood education most clearly resides in constructions of genders, of sexualities and of the family form (Gunn, 2008). Central to everyday understandings and practices these three phenomena provide the locus for heteronormativity in this domain. Understanding their own and others' genders occupies children's attention greatly in the early years (Blaise, 2005; Davies, 1989a; MacNaughton, 2000), as well as this, teachers and parents invest a great deal in the production of children who are expected to become recognizably male or female (Boldt, 1997; Davies, 1989b). Sexualities, children's growing awareness of their bodies, of processes of reproduction, of intimacy, and concern about children's safety with respect to these aspects of life informs and shapes practices in early childhood education (Essa and Murray, 1999; Honig, 2000; Jones, 2003, 2004; Tait, 2001). And finally notions of family have significance for early childhood educators' work. In Aotearoa New Zealand, policy and practice frameworks for early childhood education have long been informed by models of human development that respect and rely upon family expertise (Ministry of Education, 1990, 1996a, 1996b, 2008). Teachers have striven over many years to work in ways that promote partnership and trust between families, homes and education settings (Dalli, 1999, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Gunn et al., 2006; Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2006). But, the norms and taken-for-granted assumptions associated with notions of family, sexuality and gender are closely entwined with the statement heterosexuality is/as normal. By observing how the statement of heteronormative discourse becomes dispersed along and between these three trajectories we can begin to comprehend just how pervasive a discourse heteronormativity is.

How is heterosexuality entwined with dominant notions of genders, sexualities and family?

Practices in early childhood education that produce children as gendered also work to produce them as heterosexual. I found this in my own formal teaching history when I entered into the study

of early childhood teacher education during the late 1980s. Once a student I learned two competing accounts of gender development: that one's (male or female) gender was either innate or learned (Skolnick, 1986; Smith, 1986). Whilst my frameworks for comprehending gender are now elaborated, when as a teacher educator I ask students of today, 'what is gender? And, how it is come by?' the same ideas I learned are parroted back to me. Dominant biological and social learning theories of gender prevail to both challenge and confirm each other. A main point of agreement, related to the statement heterosexuality is/as normal, is that gender is something an individual *has*: an enduring and stable aspect of one's identity, essentially male or female, that emulates the natural world order, balances with its opposite, and which is necessary for the survival of humankind. Here gender conflates with notions of sexuality and reproduction (Cameron and Kulick, 2003) and the heterosexual matrix, that 'grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalised' (Butler, 1990: 151) is in play. The idea of heterosexuality is/as normal is quietly asserted as gender and sexuality are fixed to each other and viewed as continuous and collapsible categories (Sedgwick, 1994).

I learned about sexuality development from multiple domains. Medicine provided evidence of all the ways (hetero)sexuality could become afflicted (de Cecco, 1987; Foucault, 1978), and prescribed remedies and interventions designed to heal it; psychiatry brought to life the homosexual who was thought pathologic and potentially paedophile (Foucault, 1978; King, 2004); and Freud (1925) provided a barely contested trajectory of normal sexuality development which always and inevitably resulted in the heterosexual adult. Freud's ideas helped assert the orthodoxy of the sexual child (Tait, 2001) and worked to define, within developmental psychology what the norms of development concerning that child were to be (see for example, Honig, 2000; Skolnick, 1986). Between these domains, the statement heterosexuality is/as normal, was continually and quietly asserted.

Finally, dominant family constructions in the West have privileged the nuclear family form over all others and this too is implicated with heteronormativity. Foucault (1978) described how this kind of family became valued for both its reproductive functions and for its capacity to engage in middle-class productivity. He argued that the nuclear family was an absolute necessity in the development of modern capitalist societies. The traditional patriarchal and later contemporary nuclear family (which may have shifted the power relations between men and women but which still relied on the assumption that there would be men and women parents of children) came with an assumption that all children would inevitably have two opposite gender parents, biologically or legally connected to them. Thus, dominant conceptualizations of the family (and within this, parents) work effectively to disperse the statement, heterosexuality is/as normal.

Yet it gets more complex because when we consider the ways ideas in each of these domains merge and cross – the nuclear family and its gender assumptions; the notion of normal (heterosexual) sexuality development leading to men and women who will desire members of the opposite gender and produce children together; gender conflating with sexuality; stereotypes about gender and sexuality – as Figure 1 shows, the picture is far more revealing for the ways the statement heterosexuality is/as normal is quietly and steadfastly preserved.

Figure 1 represents the multiple and complex ways the norm of heterosexual sexuality is produced and maintained along and between the trajectories of gender, sexualities and family formation. Foucault (1978) argues that norms lay claim to power and that they are evident in the ways power is exercised on and in people's bodies. People do things to us and we do things to ourselves so that we can be recognized and recognizable to each other as subjects of a kind. Our methods of dress, the words we use, how we move our bodies, the changes we make to how we present ourselves, these are all representations of the way power helps us to be. Therefore the norm
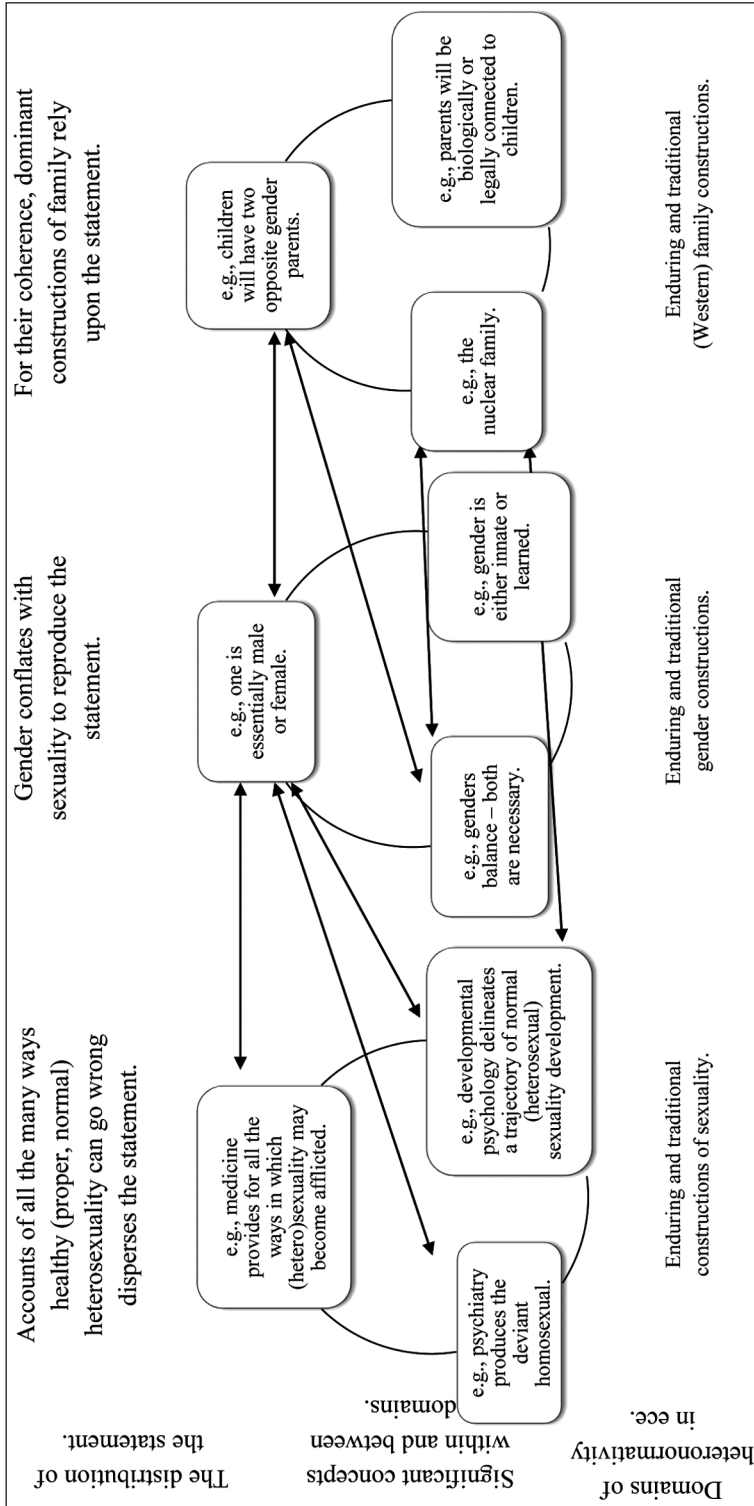
Figure 1. The distribution of the statement along and between three dominant trajectories in early childhood education

Text within the figure:

For their coherence, dominant constructions of family rely upon the statement.

Gender conflates with sexuality to reproduce the statement.

Accounts of all the many ways healthy (proper, normal) heterosexuality can go wrong disperses the statement.

e.g., parents will be biologically or legally connected to children.

e.g., children will have two opposite gender parents.

e.g., the nuclear family.

e.g., one is essentially male or female.

e.g., gender is either innate or learned.

e.g., genders balance – both are necessary.

e.g., medicine provides for all the ways in which (hetero)sexuality may become afflicted.

e.g., developmental psychology delineates a trajectory of normal (heterosexual) sexuality development.

e.g., psychiatry produces the deviant homosexual.

Enduring and traditional (Western) family constructions.

Enduring and traditional gender constructions.

Enduring and traditional constructions of sexuality.

The distribution of the statement.

Significant concepts within and between domains.

Domains of heteronormativity in ece.

brings with it principles of both qualification and correction. What counts as normal is always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation. So, does and if so how does this play out in everyday practice between teachers, children and others in early childhood education?

The study

The study that this articles reports on sought to explore the discursive production of heteronormativity in New Zealand early childhood education (Gunn, 2008). In keeping with Foucault (1969, 1978) the study was concerned with both historical and present-day questions. How did heteronormative discourses shape understandings of and in early childhood education during New Zealand's 20th century? How are heteronormative discourses confirmed and resisted in the present day? A methodological framework combining genealogy and ethnography guided the investigation. The approach was formative: genealogy informed ethnography and an initial focus group interview and analysis guided subsequent interviews and analyses. Data sources were texts: historical and present day policies, legislation and writings considered influential to the development of early childhood education in New Zealand were combined with present-day focus group interview transcripts and reflective journals for discourse analysis.

Participants

I set out to recruit up to five teachers to each of three participant groups: queer allies (teachers who worked with children and families and who did not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual), queer teachers (lesbian, gay and/or bisexual teachers who worked in centres with children and families) and teacher educators (whose sexuality, for the purposes of recruitment, was unremarked[2]). I formed the groups in this way for manageability purposes and to allow heteronormativity to be spoken about from divergent subject positions. This structure also provided a mechanism for members of participant groups to build confidence with like participants, and to speak about heteronormativity, heterosexism and homophobia in ways that made sense to them before joining with other participants to engage with the topic. The safety of all participants was paramount to the research design, and for the non-heterosexual teachers in particular, I wanted to provide a way for them to begin their participation in the study in the assumed relative safety of 'like' peers.

Snowball sampling secured the participation of 14 teachers (four in the queer allies group, five in each of the queer teachers and teacher educators groups). Based on information I had supplied about the participant groups, participants self-selected into these. When the study began I knew or was known to all but three of the participants. Our relationships had formed in a range of contexts, through my capacity as early childhood teacher colleague, teacher educator, lesbian parent and/or education researcher.

Procedures and approach to analysis

The participant groups met independently of each other twice, and then in a final combined focus group interview and workshop. This meant that participants took part in three rounds of focus group interviews where issues of heteronormativity, homophobia and heterosexism were explored with increasing depth. Transcripts of the interviews were produced and subjected to discourse analysis. A close reading of them sought to identify instances where heteronormativity was *in play*. Heteronormativity was considered in play whenever heterosexual sexuality was constituted in some way as normal, as healthy, as proper, or as a standard to attain. Such constructions asserted

the statement: heterosexuality is/as normal. Through this analysis an account of the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early childhood education was perceived.

Ethics

The study received approval from the University of Waikato and adhered to all the usual ethical requirements including the requirements for informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality. Provisions for anonymity were made; real names and other identifying information have not been used in the reporting of the study.

Limitations

To illustrate the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early childhood education, this article draws selectively from the range of data reported in a study of how heteronormativity shapes practices in the field (Gunn, 2008). The data therefore are not the only examples gathered of how heteronormative discourse works to authorize and marginalize particular subjects in early childhood education. They do however most readily show how the minutiae of everyday practice can access and mobilize dominant and normative discourses along the trajectories of sexualities, genders and family form, even if unintended.

Findings and discussion

In this section of the article and to demonstrate the manner in which the statement of heteronormative discourse is distributed I discuss evidence of the constructs represented in Figure 1 as they were produced in the context of my study. Three participant discussions from the empirical phase of the study have been selected to illustrate how practices in early childhood education regularly access and mobilize heteronormative discourses.

'All they hear is sexual, sexual, sexual'

These data reflect how heteronormativity is perpetuated via dominant constructions of sexuality development in early childhood education. The comment, 'all they hear is sexual, sexual, sexual' came from a teacher who was talking in her focus group interview about what happens in her centre when teachers try to talk with parents about children's bodily play. Pat said:

> When you talk to parents about sexual play or sexual curiosity I try to find other words because as soon as you say sexual they just,

> Rona: it freaks them out,
> Pat: they freak out. They're feeling like something's going wrong . . ., we have the resources that have the little thing that talks about norms and what children may do at certain ages . . . and you provide them with that, and when you first discuss it . . . they're not hearing you, all they're hearing is sexual, sexual, sexual, and then they take these two pieces of paper away and come back and go, 'oh wow, it was quite reassuring to know that this and this and this occurs' . . .

I find Pat's comment about 'finding other words' provocative, it calls to mind many other discourses associated with notions of childhood, sexuality, innocence and maturity but for the purposes of this analysis it is the comment about 'norms' and 'ages' that illustrates an imposition

of heterosexuality on children.[3] As discussed earlier, norms about psychosexual development were established by Freud whose work in this domain became one of several prominent regulatory discourses about children's sexuality in the West. Freud argued that if the *Oedipus complex* is successfully resolved in both early childhood and adolescent periods of development then this will contribute to the development of conscience and adult heterosexual sexual identity. The developmental discourse inherent in Pat and Rona's 'pieces of paper' impose an expectation of heterosexual sexuality on the children in their care. It successfully assists parents to do the same. No contestation of the developmental discourse is evident in how Pat describes the parents' responses to the resources, quite the contrary, they are seemingly reassured that the normal developmental trajectory is being adhered to by their curious child.

'Boys and men wear kilts in Scotland'

In this second data extract we see teachers actively re-framing a child's expression of boy inconsistent with expected and normative performances of masculinity. The re-framing of the gender performance achieves the boy as normal because through it he is able to be read as performing an arguably valorized form of masculinity from another cultural context – it is called, 'boys and men wear kilts in Scotland'.

In the context of their first focus group discussion Rose, a teacher educator, spoke of an account whereby student teachers had talked in her class about the supposed acceptance of a boy child's non-traditional gender performance in the early childhood centre. Rose relayed her student's comments:

> There [is] one boy child, four years old, always dresses in pink dresses and comes in his pink dresses from home with his handbags and his high shoes . . . we think the parents are brave to allow this . . . [Of her students' Rose said], they all love it when the boy has a kilt on because then all of the teachers can safely say, 'What a wonderful kilt, boys and men wear kilts in Scotland.'

Later in the interview, another teacher educator Dan, reflecting on Rose's account said, 'I've heard this, there's a child coming to the centre in women's clothing and they dress, yeah, so I've heard the same thing, they dress him in a kilt, yeah . . .'

While there is possibly a key difference between these teacher educators' accounts of practice (in one centre the teachers welcomed the child's parents practice of dressing their son in a kilt, in the other, it may be the teachers themselves who are reported to have dressed the boy differently) it does seem that in both instances there is something troubling about the boys' gender performances as described. We are first alerted to this in Rose's account because of the way the student teachers are reported to have talked about their child's parents as *brave*. Framing the parents actions in this way immediately alerts us to the fact that there must be some transgression of a standard, expectation or norm occurring – why else the need for their bravery to be recognized? There is something wrong with this boy's preferred expression of gender; could it perhaps be an early indication of arrested sexuality development? However, a way to accommodate both the boy's desires and to have him meet expectations of how boy's should dress is found – if he comes to the centre wearing a 'dress' of another sort: a kilt. Of course, a kilt is not a dress, but it seems close enough to placate the teachers and to achieve the boy's gender performance as normal. If the boy wears a kilt to the centre his teachers have a way of safely acknowledging his dress preferences but also a way of preserving notions of proper masculinity and therefore assumed heterosexual sexuality. This is where the heteronormativity resides. By dressing a boy in a kilt, the teachers (or

parents) normalize his gender performance and the boy's 'kilt/dress/skirt' wearing can safely be understood as an expression of a proper sort of masculinity and even more than this perhaps, as an expression of ethnic identity or cultural heritage and awareness too.

'My mummy said it doesn't matter'

The third trajectory along which heteronormativity moves in early childhood education concerns the family. The data I draw on to illustrate this aspect of Figure 1 shows children as able to both perpetuate and resist heteronormativity in their everyday play. In it a teacher from a queer teachers' focus group interview reports on some play in which one child challenged a same-gender marriage script that was being enacted by two girls. Andy recalled:

> Two girls were playing and there was a boy as well, and they were wanting to do dress ups and have a wedding. The boy thought that he was getting married but it was going to be just the two girls and he got quite upset and threw a bit of a hissy-fit about the fact that the two girls were going to be getting married together, and told them that they couldn't . . . One of the girls … went on to say, 'my mummy said it doesn't matter whether it's two boys or two girls, just as long as you love each other …'

Here we have a construct of the family, that according to the boy, is outside of the (hetero)norm. Not only can he not imagine a place for himself in this play – he is the boy, he expects to be the groom – he can't actually accept his peers' construct of a same-gender marriage and inherent to this a same-gender headed family, he refuses them. Fortunately one of his peers understands, on good authority, that it's not only possible to love each other as a couple if you're of the same gender, but that you're actually able to 'get married' and if you want to, to form family together. The heteronormativity is successfully resisted. The boy's construct however precludes his ongoing participation in the play beyond the wedding reception. Andy went on to describe how he ended up a part of the script but that he didn't stay long wandering off, as his peers continued with their game. What these data show is twofold: it illustrates how heteronormativity is perpetuated by children in curriculum, and also how it plays out in relation to dominant constructions of family in fleeting but not so subtle ways.

Maintaining the (hetero)norm

The kinds of practices highlighted in these data reflect the everyday methods by which heteronormative discourse disperses the statement 'heterosexuality is/as normal' in early childhood education. In each of the practices described, heterosexuality is constructed as a normative standard with heterosexual sexuality repeatedly constructed as a norm while variations to this are constructed as 'other'. Comprehending the maintenance of such norms is important if we are to fathom just how pervasive a discourse heteronormativity is.

As discussed earlier, where norms are asserted there is a shifting of power through the body. What counts as normal is always, in Foucault's (1978) terms, associated with principles of intervention and transformation. We shape ourselves and are shaped in relation to ascendant norms so that we can recognize and be recognizable to each other as subjects of a kind, woman, lesbian, mother, etc. We saw this in the reported data when for instance the skirt/dress/kilt wearing boy/s were subjected to intervention. Adults worked to normalize troubling gender performances by dressing the children in a particular way, transforming the meaning of the dress choices, and rewarding the children for this: 'the teachers love it because they can safely say . . .', reported Rose. In contrast, the boy in Andy's account was unable to recognize a place for himself in the family

play that didn't have him occupying the position of groom and potential husband. Unable to claim the subject position available to him in his discourse of the family, he left the play and opportunities to expand his discursive frameworks for what might constitute family (beyond exposure to his peers' play) were lost.

Norms not only define how one may have a hold over others' bodies, but they govern how one may work to perfect his or her own – hence they connect with notions of power, correction, surveillance and discipline. Recall the norms and ages/stages handouts that teachers in Pat's account referred to? These spelt out what normal sexuality development looked like and therefore supported adults to watch for, encourage, reward and expect that trajectory of normal (heterosexual) sexuality development. Unable to access alternative discourses of sexuality development, the (hetero)norm prevailed. A significant emphasis within Western early childhood education has been historically to promote normal and healthy child development: in the case of sexuality development we have constructed this to mean heterosexual sexuality.

It remains to therefore to ask, in whose interests are such practices working? As this article has shown, heteronormativity is a pervasive discourse within the context of early childhood education. The data attest to ways in which we see and experience the repetitive constitution of heterosexuality as a taken-for-granted, imposed upon others, assumed and expected norm. It is difficult to disentangle ourselves or anyone from the effects of heteronormativity because notions of gender, of sexuality and of family, with which heteronormativity conflates, are prominent in our early childhood field. Heteronormative discourse implicates and impacts on us all because as Atkinson (2007) reminds us, and everybody knows, heterosexuality just is. For the times we are constructed as normal through this discourse, it works just fine, but what happens to your sense of self, your view of the world and your interpretations of reality if or when your identities shift? Or, what if you are a child of same-gender parents, or if you're a parent of a child not biologically or legally related to you, or if you're a teacher whose significant relationships are with people of the same gender as you? Are the interests of these children, families, teachers being preserved through heteronormative discourse? I think not. Therefore it is in all our interests to raise awareness of how we are authorized or marginalized by heteronormative discourses because it is only by seeing how we are complicit with or othered by them that we begin to desire and work for something else.

Conclusion

This article attests to the complex and overlapping ways in which heteronormativity permeates our work with children and families in early childhood education. As demonstrated, heteronormativity in early childhood education readily resides in dominant constructions of genders, sexualities and the family form. The data reported show the dispersal of the statement heteronormativity is/as normal in complex ways: observed in interventions by teachers and parents that re-frame gender performances which contravene traditional understandings of masculinity; seen in the imposition of heterosexuality on children by expecting of them so called 'normal' trajectories of development; and holding to conceptualizations of the family that privilege nuclear family norms – these data provide an insight into the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early childhood education.

Notes

1. Foucault's (1969) description of discourse involves the *statement*: a component of discourse that establishes relational fields amongst discourses (Danaher et al., 2000). Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) comment that the statement 'is neither an utterance nor a proposition, neither a psychological nor a logical entity, neither an event nor an ideal form' (p. 45), rather it is a function that involves units (sentences or propositions) of grammar or logic and relates them to a field of objects which opens for them a number of

possible subject positions (Foucault, 1969). Distinguishing statements is a way of understanding verbal performances, 'of dissociating their complexity, or isolating the terms that are entangled in its web, and of locating the various regularities that they obey' (Foucault, 1969: 121). Thus discursive formations can be analysed in four directions: for the way the produce objects; for the way they produce subjects; for the formation of concepts, key terms and ideas within a discipline; and for the formation of strategic choices. The statement of heteronormative discourse is 'heterosexuality is/as normal'.

2. As the participant groups were established in the first instance for the purpose of having heteronormativity spoken about from the subject positions of queer teacher, queer ally, teacher educator it was unnecessary to recruit participants to the teacher educator group with sexuality needing to be stipulated. As it eventuated, this participant group contained both heterosexual and non-heterosexual men and women teacher educators.

3. The document to which Pat and Rona refer was not collected however it was however clarified with the teachers that it was a typical account of 'normal' sexuality development such as that found in published child protection resources for New Zealand early childhood services. An example is the 1990 *Feeling Safe* (The Child Alert Trust) resource that includes photocopy masters of handouts for teacher and parents one of which is titled 'What's normal?'. The handout describes indicators of 'normal sexual behaviour' and 'sex play' for children aged two to six years and includes descriptions of 'customary [behaviours] in normal, unmolested, well adjusted and well brought-up children'. Reflecting a developmental trajectory for sexuality development, the document and others like it that take up a developmental discourse, reassert the heterosexual presumption and therefore heteronormativity, because the discourse presumes that normal sexuality development will always and inevitably lead to adults who are heterosexual.

References

Atkinson E (2007) Speaking with small voices: Voice, resistance and difference. In: Reiss M, DePalma R and Atkinson E (eds) *Marginality and Difference in Education and Beyond*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 15–29.

Blaise M (2005) A feminist poststructuralist study of children 'doing' gender in an urban kindergarten classroom. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 20(1): 85–108.

Boldt G (1997) Sexist and heterosexist responses to gender bending. In: Tobin J (ed.) *Making a Place for Pleasure in Early Childhood Education*. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers Inc., 188–213.

Butler J (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Cameron D and Kulick D (2003) *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalli C (1999) Starting childcare before three: Narratives of experience from a tri-partite focus. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington NZ.

Dalli C (2001) Starting childcare. What it means for children, mothers and teachers. In: *Early Childhood Folio 5: A Collection of Recent Research*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 5–18.

Danaher G, Shirato T and Webb J (2000) *Understanding Foucault*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Davies B (1989a) *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales. Preschool Children and Gender*. Brisbane: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.

Davies B (1989b) The discursive production of the male/female dualism in school settings. *Oxford Review of Education* 15(3): 229–241.

de Cecco J (1987) Homosexuality's brief recovery: From sickness to health and back again. *Journal of Sex Research* 23(1): 106–129.

Dreyfus R and Rabinow P (1982) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Epstein D and Johnson R (1994) On the straight and narrow: The heterosexual presumption, homophobias and schools. In: Epstein D (ed.) *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education*. Buckingham, UK and Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 197–230.

Epstein J (1995) School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(9): 701–712.

Essa E and Murray C (1999) Sexual play: When should you be concerned? *Childhood Education* 75(4): 231–234.

Foucault M (1969) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Sheridan Smith AM. London and New York: Routledge.

Foucault M (1978) *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Hurley R. New York: Random House Inc.

Freud S (1925) *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, trans. Brill AA. New York and Washington, DC: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co.

Gunn AC (2008) Heteronormativity and early childhood education: Social justice and some puzzling queries. Doctoral thesis, University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ.

Gunn AC, Child C, Madden B, Purdue K, Surtees N, Thurlow B and Todd N (2006) Building inclusive communities in early childhood education: Diverse perspectives from Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 5(3): 293–308.

Honig A (2000) Psychosexual development in infants and young children. *Young Children* 55(5): 70–77.

Jones A (2003) The monster in the room: Safety, pleasure and early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 4(3): 235–250.

Jones A (2004) Social anxiety, sex, surveillance, and the 'safe' teacher. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25(1): 53–66.

King J (2004) The (im)possibility of gay teachers for young children. *Theory into Practice* 43(2): 122–127.

MacNaughton G (2000) *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Ministry of Education (1990) Statement of desirable objectives and practices (DOPs) for chartered early childhood services in New Zealand. *Education Gazette* 69(23), Special Insert.

Ministry of Education (1996a) Revised statement of desirable objectives and practices (DOPs) for chartered early childhood services in New Zealand. *New Zealand Gazette* 139(4): 3349–3350.

Ministry of Education (1996b) *Te whäriki. He whäriki mätauranga mö ngä mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education (2008) *Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008 and Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework.* Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education.

Mitchell L (2003) Children, staff, and parents: Building respectful relationships in Australian and New Zealand early childhood education contexts. Keynote address to the 8th Early Childhood Convention, Making change for children now: shaping early childhood today, 22–25 September, Palmerston North, New Zealand, available at: http://www.nzcer.org/nz/pdfs/13299.pdf.

Mitchell L, Haggerty M, Hampton V and Pairman A (2006) *Teachers, Parents, and Whänau Working Together in Early Childhood Education*. Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research – Te Rünanga o Aotearoa mö te Rangahau i te Mätauranga.

Skolnick AS (1986) *The Psychology of Human Development*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Smith AB (1986) *Understanding Children's Development: A New Zealand Perspective*, 2nd edn. Wellington, NZ: Allen & Unwin NZ Ltd.

Tait G (2001) No touch policies and the government of risk. In: Jones A (ed.) *Touchy Subject: Teachers Touching Children*. Dunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press, 39–49.

The Child Alert Trust (1990) *Feeling Safe*. Wellington, NZ: The Child Alert Trust.

Warner M (1991) Introduction: Fear of a queer planet. *Social Text* 29: 3–17.

Author biography