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Abstract

***Researching gender and sexual diversity in educational communities:
Methodological challenges and possibilities***

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This paper interrogates methodological challenges and possibilities related to CRC-funded research, aiming to foster gender and sexually inclusive school communities through literacies and technology. Informed by queer and trans-infused approaches (Britzman, 1995; Elliot, 2009; Rooke, 2010; Stryker, 2006), we aim to address the difficulty of conducting research and gaining access to participants in a gender phobic and homophobic context, involving delegitimation of minority rights. Queer and trans-infused theories provide important resources for gaining analytical insights about our methodology as we navigate field entry in an attempt to address the de-subjugated knowledges of queer, transgendered and transsexual people (Stryker, 2006).

Our research must be understood from a broader perspective involving the Australian educational landscape. Commonwealth policy proposes an inclusive society, which meets all young learners' intellectual, social and personal needs (ACARA, 2013; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs, 2008). But research reveals that homophobia and transphobia in educational institutions compromise the health and well-being of many gender and sexually diverse students (De Palma & Atkinson, 2009; Ferfolja, 2013; Hillier et al., 2010). A paucity of state policy also does little to counter heteronormativity and trans-informed understandings of gender identity and embodiment (Lake, 2009; Namaste, 2000; Prosser, 1998). Under this contentious landscape, the methodology of studying gender and sexual inclusivity in educational communities imposes certain demands and requires a degree of critical reflexivity in navigating field entry; the terrain and ride emerge as rugged and bumpy (Weis and Fine, 2000), and necessitate managing censorship of 'uncomfortable' knowledge.

Biographies

Dr Wendy Cumming-Potvin is a Senior Lecturer at Murdoch University, Western Australia. Her research focuses on questions pertaining to social justice, literacies, technology and qualitative inquiry. As chief investigator for a CRC project, Wendy is

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Wayne Martino is Professor of Gender, Equity and Social Justice in the Faculty of Education and an affiliated faculty member of the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. His research and teaching focus on gender, queer and trans studies in education, anti-oppressive education, masculinities and schooling and qualitative inquiry.

Veronica Gardiner is a postgraduate student, at Murdoch University Western Australia. She has an interest in critical perspectives on professional learning and literacy, in response to her experiences of being a public school primary teacher in Western Australian schools.

Key words: literacies, gender, diversity, sexuality, methodology

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