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Taking homophobia's measure

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To make the claim that there is not a universalized form of homophobia might strike some as strange. In fact, it might strike others as even stranger that what constitutes homophobia in one geopolitical space does not translate seamlessly to another geopolitical space. And if homophobia is in question, the what and the how of the idea of homosexuality are also in question.

- Walcott, 2010: 315

My focus in this article is on the topic of homophobia and its place in the sexuality education classroom in Australia and the United States (US). This paper draws on research in anthropology[1] law [2] and, on studies of gender and sexuality [3] in an attempt to complicate predominantly psychological understandings of homophobia that may underscore the popular use of scales to measure homophobic attitudes in pre-service and in-service teachers. These interdisciplinary approaches to homophobia provide the basis for

[1] Murray, 2009.
[2] Monk, 2011.
[3] Butler, 1999; Hooghe, Dejaeghere, Claes and Quintelier, 2010; Hooghe, Claes, Harell, Quintelier and Dejaeghere, 2010; Puar, 2007, 2012; Walcott, 2010.

a critical reading of some contemporary pedagogical approaches to anti-homophobia education in diverse education contexts.

Clearly, Australia and the US provide different contexts in which to understand the place of homophobia in education. The concern of how to address problems related to homophobia and heterosexism in education has been more fraught in the US context than in the Australian context, where states have generally endorsed some form of comprehensive sexuality education.[4] This is not to say that homophobia is not seen as an issue in the Australian context, though attempts to address homophobia in teacher education and university education have not been confronted with as much organized resistance as in the US context.[5] It is also true to say that in both the US and the Australia the question of how to deal with homophobia, and resistance to inclusion of issues related to diverse genders and sexualities has not been uniform.[6]

In sexuality education it is often taken as read that homophobia is problematic and the focus becomes ways in which to intervene against the reproduction of homophobic attitudes.[7] As a consequence, strategies are devised and implemented to help students and teachers become less homophobic.[8] Teachers and students who refuse this help maybe seen as ineffective or a 'problem' in the battle against homophobia.[9] Those who stand up and confront homophobia are lauded.[10] Some of the resources I discuss below are illustrative of how Australian's working to

[4] Weaver, Smith and Kippax, 2005.
[5] Gibson, 2007; Rasmussen, 2006.
[6] Rasmussen, 2005, 2006.
[7] Morrow and Gill, 2003; Ollis, 2010; Serdahely and Ziemaba, 1984.
[8] Elia, 1993; Franck, 2002.
[9] Morrow and Gill, 2003.
[10] Blackburn, Clark, Kenney and Smith, 2009; Ollis, 2010; Witthaus 2011; Zack, Mannheim and Alfano, 2010.

combat homophobia in diverse education contexts have sought to craft US scales so they are fit for purpose in the Australian context.[11] However, if what we understand to be homophobia is in question, as Walcott suggests, what does this mean for some of the tools used in anti-homophobia education? In this article I aim to consider how scales that measure homophobia [12] (a common tool deployed in anti-homophobia education in Australia and the U.S.) might be read against the proposition that what we understand homophobia to be is still in question.

In the first section of this paper I look at research from psychology, education, and sexuality studies in the US and Australia that attempts to situate homophobia on different scales. My focus is on the conditions of possibility that have brought three particular scales into being: Daniel Witthaus' adaptation of Betty Burzon's classification of homophobic types for use in workshops (in and outside of schools in rural and regional Australia); Ollis' pedagogical use of Riddle's Scale of Attitudes in a national Sexuality Education Resource produced in Victoria, Australia; Zack, Mannheim and Alfano's classification of archetypal responses to homophobic rhetoric, for use in teacher education in the United States. My critique of these scales should not be read as a disavowal of the problem of homophobic bullying. I appreciate that for some young people experiences of homophobia are profound, frequent and devastating. Rather, my focus is on how particular truisms have developed about homophobia, and its treatment, manifest in scales organized to measure levels of homophobia in particular groups. It is these understandings that I want to complicate in this article.

[11] Ollis, 2010; Witthaus, 2011.
[12] Clark, 2010; Rogers, McRee and Arntz, 2009.

Following on from an analysis of scales that have been developed to measure homophobia, I move to a consideration of the logics that underpin these scales. How is homophobia being interpreted in these scales? What is the relationship between anti-homophobia education and post-homophobic imaginings? How does homophobia intersect with cultural and religious difference in these scales and what does this mean for the continued use of scales that purport to measure homophobia? Finally, I turn to some other ways of theorizing homophobia that might prompt educators and researchers to think differently about the question of homophobia, and their use of scales that measure homophobia.

Scaling Homophobia

Homophobia is commonly associated with psychological understandings of sexuality. There are hundreds of studies that use scales to measure homophobia; the following studies are just a few examples.[13] The scales generally originate in psychology, and their history in the measurement of homophobia goes back to at least 1980.[14] It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed analysis of the formation of these scales, for a history of the logic underpinning the development and validation of homophobia scales in the discipline of psychopathology see Wright, Adams and Bernat's *Development and validation of the homophobia scale*.[15] In this article my focus is on the pedagogical use of these scales to educate people in such a way that it may assist them to become less homophobic. I situate such a rationale for the use of scales in educational contexts alongside

[13] Clark, 2010; Elia, 1993; Franck, 2002; Morrow and Gill, 2003; Pain and Disney, 1996; Rogers et al., 2009; Witthaus, 2011.
[14] Hudson and Ricketts, 1980.
[15] Wright, Adams and Bernat, 1999.

contemporary research that is critical of how homophobia is conceptualized and sometimes utilized as part of "progressive" educational agendas.

As indicated by Debbie Ollis, an education researcher working in the Australian context, sexuality educators may employ scales of homophobia as tools to support them in developing educational spaces that they perceive to be more affirming of sexual diversity. Ollis argues that:

> The successful pre-service and in-service teacher education programs which do exist have demonstrated a number of elements that have been seen to have promoted their success. These include a group-teaching model, seen as effective in developing the key skills of working together and communication (Thomas & Jones 2005; Walker et al. 2003); and questionnaires and rating scales (including Riddle's scale of attitudes) on participants' own reactions, designed to provoke self-reflection amongst participants (Levenson-Gingiss & Hamilton 1989; Thomas & Jones 2005; Ollis 2010).[16]

For Ollis, the scales are a means to provoke students to reflect on their own thinking about diverse sexualities. The scales are also held to be particularly pedagogically persuasive because they enable pre-service and in-service teachers to measure their own attitudes and to see how these measures might change in comparison to other points on the scale.

In their work with teachers Ollis, Harrison and Maharaj advocate the use of Riddle's scale.[17] Dorothy Riddle, the developer of Riddle's scale, was a psychologist and a part of an American Psychological Association Task Force that effectively lobbied for the removal of homosexuality as a psychiatric

[16] Ollis, Harrison and Maharaj, 2013, p. 4.
[17] Riddle, 1994.

disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. The Riddle scale of attitudes was developed in the early 1970s when Riddle was based at the City University of New York.[18] The first published version of the scale did not appear until 1994. It is worth noting the context in which the Riddle Scale was developed; it is now nearly 40 years old but researchers and educators in Australia and the US still see the scale as having applicability within and outside the US.[19] Let me be clear in stating that Ollis' decision to use the scale in her pedagogy is in many ways unremarkable. For instance, *Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria*, the peak body for lobbying on issues related to enhancing the health and well-being of *Victoria's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex* communities also employs Riddle's scale in its professional development programs.[20]

However, researchers in counselling psychology have questioned the value of such scales, arguing:

> The long-standing theoretical assumption that heterosexual attitudes can be understood only along the unidimensional, bipolar continuum ranging from condemnation to tolerance (Herek, 1994) has been challenged by these findings. We speculate that these results are not only a function of the evolution of heterosexual attitudes since Herek's seminal work in the area but also reflect an increasing need and interest in the precision of measurement in this area. [21]

While Worthington and colleagues seek to develop a more precise measurement building on the research of Herek, in this article I

[18] See http://newsarchive.woodstockschool.in/Alumni/DistAlum/riddle.htm accessed 20 April 2013.
[19] Hirschfield, 2001; Ollis, 2010; Ollis et al., 2013.
[20] See http://www.glhv.org.au/files/Training_session_plan.pdf accessed 29 April, 2013.
[21] Worthington, Dillon and Becker-Schutte, 2005, p. 116.

seek to question the drive to measure such attitudes – at least through the employment of scales which employ continuums.

Ollis has identified, and I would concur, that some teachers are reluctant to "recognise and affirm sexual diversity" in public schools and she has developed a series of workshops to help teachers think about what might cause this reluctance.[22] The workshops, which were part of a national Talking Sexual Health program, also feature in a more recent resource, Sexuality Education Matters[23] (an online resource for Australian teacher educators[24]) which aims

> …to present teachers with an examination of a range of discourses that have operated to position sexual diversity in a constraining and negative way…These include discourses of fear, illness, difference, and abnormality. The workshop also aimed to present teachers with others [discourses], which Johnson (1996) calls 'a way forward' that can enable teachers *to deconstruct heterosexuality, affirm diversity and position sexual diversity as the part of the normal spectrum of sexuality; in other words the positive subject positions.*[25] (Emphasis mine)

In Ollis' workshop, as discussed in her 2010 article, participants position themselves and their school in response to heterosexuality and homosexuality using 'Riddle's Scale of Attitudes'.[26] The following attitudes in relation to both heterosexuality and homosexuality appear on Riddle's scale:

[22] Ollis, 2010, p. 218.
[23] Ollis et al., 2013.
[24] See http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/education/teach-research/health-pe/projects.php accessed 20 April 2013.
[25] Ollis, 2010, p. 220.
[26] Ollis, 2010, p. 221.

Celebration
These people celebrate gay and lesbian people and assume that they are indispensable in our society. They are willing to be gay advocates.[27]

Appreciation
These people appreciate and value the diversity of people and see gays as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to work to combat homophobic attitudes in others.

Admiration
This acknowledges that being gay/lesbian in our society takes strength.
Such people are willing to truly look at themselves and work on their own homophobic attitudes.

Support
These people support work to safeguard the rights of gays and lesbians.
Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the implications of the negative climate homophobia creates and the irrational unfairness.

Acceptance
Still implies there is something to accept, characterised by such statements as 'You're not a gay to me, you're a person'. 'What you do in bed is your own business.' 'That's fine as long as you don't flaunt it.' This attitude denies social and legal realities. It still sets up the person saying 'I accept you' in a position of power to be the one to 'accept' others. It ignores the pain, invisibility and stress of closet behaviour. 'Flaunt' usually means say or do anything that makes people aware. This is where most of us find ourselves, even when we'd like to think that we are doing really well.

Tolerance
Homosexuality is seen as just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people 'grow out of'. Thus, gays are less mature than straights and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one will use with a child. Gays and lesbians should not be given positions of authority (because they

[27] Riddle, 1994 in Ollis et al., 2013, p. 92-93.

> are still working through adolescent behaviours), as they are seen as 'security risks'.
>
> *Pity*
> Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is seen as more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming straight should be reinforced and those who seem to be born 'that way' should be pitied, as in 'the poor dears'.
>
> *Repulsion*
> Homosexuality is seen as a 'crime against nature'. People who identify as homosexual are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked etc., and anything is justified to change them (e.g. prison, hospitals). You might well hear this expressed as 'Yuk! When I think about what they do in bed!'

The hierarchy at play in the scale is readily apparent; people who are repulsed by homosexuality appear at the bottom. In this structure it appears that the most desirable position a teacher might assume is that they come to celebrate homosexuality. The desirability of achieving celebration on Riddle's scale is discussed below:

> …teachers also talked about the importance of Riddle's scale in challenging their notion of what the attitudes 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' really meant in relation to being inclusive. Kim was one of the three teachers prior to the professional development to feel that her program did not need changes to be inclusive. Yet even for her, the 'Scale of Attitudes' activity challenged her understanding and attitudes and made her reflect on the possibility that she too had some movement towards inclusiveness to make. She could remember thinking: "I was so liberated in my thinking but I'm probably not yet at celebration, you know, that's still one step on for me. So I guess that struck home because I thought, well, everybody's got somewhere to go as far as their thinking on homosexuality". (Kim, Phase 3) [28]

[28] Ollis, 2010, p. 224.

Kim' statement that "everybody's got somewhere to go as far as their thinking on homosexuality" demonstrates that she has absorbed the lesson of the scale, namely that many people's thinking about homophobia is in need of advancement. Ollis is, I think, pleased with this outcome because it points to the productivity of these scales in helping people diagnose their own shortcomings in regards to affirming sexual diversity.

What interests me, both in Ollis' and Kim's (the pre-service teacher participant) use of the scale, is their investment in the logic employed by Riddle in developing the scale, namely, that celebration should be every teacher's ultimate destination. Later in this paper, I critically consider this impulse to move us to celebration. But first, I want to illustrate some other scales that are currently being used in anti-homophobia education in Australia and the US.

Daniel Witthaus is a prominent Australian anti-homophobia activist who has been doing advocacy related to gay and lesbian issues since the early 1990s. He spends a lot of time talking to school and community groups in rural and remote Australia. Currently he is endeavouring to develop support for NICHE – (National Institute for Challenging Homophobia Education). On his *Beyond That's So Gay* website in a resource entitled *The Faces of Homophobia: Everyday resistance quantified…* he states that he has adapted Betty Burzon's (sic) model homophobic types for the Australian context as part of his Beyond that's so gay, Australia wide training program. In her text *Setting them Straight*[29], Berzon, an author and psychotherapist, developed a series of types in order to help readers who encountered homophobic messages in everyday conversations. Other

[29] Berzon, 1996.

researchers have also drawn on Berzon's types in their anti-homophobia work.[30]

In creating types that draw strongly on Australian stereotypes Witthaus' is no doubt using a form of language that he thinks will engage his audiences in regional and remote Australia. Witthaus has developed the following descriptors of different personality types which he relates in the following order.

> *The Romper Stomper*[31]
> Feel vulnerable and constantly under attack; Mobilised to counterattack those things and people that threaten their well-being; Typically male, their definition of reality is described as 'narrow' and their outlook 'hateful'.
>
> *The Frustrated Bogan*[32]
> Trouble coping with reality, and shows inflexibility in adapting within their environment; Frustration is primarily handled using aggression; Emotion is an important weapon, often shown by lashing out.
>
> *The Politician*
> Conservative individuals who jump onto the nearest 'bandwagon' (e.g. polls); Desperate to fit in with the 'in-group' and be seen to distance themselves from the 'out-group'; Avoid taking responsibility for their attitudes and actions.
>
> *The Sheep*
> Thinkers who are dependent upon the opinion of others (i.e. the flock); Don't spend much time considering the consequences of discrimination; Their lack of a self-determined belief system paired with their apathy makes them dangerous in the hands of the wrong shepherd.

[30] Rostosky, Riggle, Horne and Miller, 2009; Wormer and McKinney, 2003.
[31] The name Romper Stomper evokes the 1992 Australian film of the same name directed by Geoffrey Wright. The focus of the movie is racism enacted by a neo-Nazi skinhead group in a Melbourne working class suburb.
[32] Bogan is an Australian pejorative used to denote somebody who is lacking in culture or manners.

> *The Stirrer*
> Attempts to exploit the fears and frustrations of the other homophobic types; Exploits people's ignorance and fear of difference; Adept at stirring up anger in others and experts in uniting and building cohesion against a 'common enemy'.
>
> *The Almost Ally*
> Invariably well-educated and older people, often females, who pledge their LGBT allegiance; Often unaware of their own homophobia; Unwilling to put themselves in situations where they, or others, could assess them as prejudiced.[33]

These portraits portray people who are homophobic as paranoid, hateful, conservative, and unable to think for themselves. The 'type' classified as The Sheep, which appears to evoke religious metaphors (the shepherd) and their followers (sheep), are constituted as unthinking and non-agentic.

Akin to Ollis' use of Riddle's scale, for Witthaus' advancement of people along the scale is a clear goal of its use. This is apparent in the citation below:

> Experienced LGBT advocate and friend to religious communities, Anthony Venn-Brown, is clear that in any everyday conversation he has with homophobic opponents he only has one goal: to identify where they are on this very scale and to shift them one step forward.[34]

Ollis and Witthaus are both committed to anti-homophobia education, and they share a belief that anti-homophobia education can help people become less homophobic. These scales

[33] Witthaus, D. (2011) The Faces of Homophobia, Everyday resistance quantified in *Beyond That's So Gay*. See http://thatssogay.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/For_the_hand_BTSG.pdf accessed 10 October, 2012.
[34] See http://thatssogay.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/For_the_hand_BTSG.pdf accessed 10 October, 2012.

are assembled within a liberatory framework which sees the value in progressing all people along a scale. In the logic of the scale, becoming less homophobic, constitutes a more enlightened or liberatory position. Together with Harwood, I have previously argued that the expression of competing truths about homosexuality [including the expression of homophobia] is an important part of pedagogy and that to curtail speech that is homophobic privileges particular understandings of inclusion.[35] Consequently, I read these scales as imposing particular truths on people who are asked to participate in lessons based on their use vis-à-vis where they should situate themselves in relation to homophobia.

US education researchers j. Zack, Alexandra Mannheim and Michael Alfano have also designed a scales to measure "the varying levels of ability and willingness of the participants [111 student teachers] to address homophobia in their classroom. Ideally, we hoped that our participants would move from the lower levels of avoiders and hesitators to the higher levels of confronters and, ultimately, integrators".[36] Below are brief descriptors of each of the archetypal responses to homophobic rhetoric classified by Zack et al.:

> *Confronters*
> Many student teachers took it upon themselves to take time from the scheduled lesson plan to address homophobic slurs that were leveled against students. It was the consensus among these student teachers that homophobic rhetoric was widespread, considered socially acceptable, and posed a challenge to them as educators that was nearly impossible to conquer singlehandedly – but they were willing to give it a try. (103)

[35] Harwood and Rasmussen, 2012.
[36] Zack et al., 2010, p. 102.

> *Integrators*
> A few student teachers sought to combat the issue of homophobia within the school by integrating homophobia reduction into the curriculum. These student teachers understood that queer culture is an important part of the multicultural repertoire and should not be excluded. (104)
>
> *Hesitators*
> By far the largest archetype, "hesitators" describes the largest group, those who felt a call to action to address the homophobia they witnessed, but lacked the set of skills necessary to create an atmosphere free of homophobic rhetoric or move students toward more accepting ideologies. The reasons for this lack of confidence varied among the student teachers, but were most commonly the result of 1) being accused of being gay by students, 2) encountering religious opposition in the students, and 3) feeling pressured to focus on content. (103)
>
> *Avoiders*
> While there was heated discussion regarding homophobic rhetoric, made evident by the numerous student teachers who volunteered the topic and confirmed how rampant the problem was, some student teachers chose to remain silent during the discussions. It is impossible to state with any certainty the reasons for these participants' withdrawal from the conversation. The silence may imply that they were on some level complicit with the level of homophobia being exhibited by students and unwilling to address these behaviors…Some of the avoiders may have been struggling with their own sexual identity. Or, we hypothesized, perhaps some were uncomfortable talking about anything dealing with sex in a public forum. While no student teacher freely admitted to doing nothing when encountering homophobic speech at their schools, their silence was telling. (102)

The archetypal responses developed by Zack et al. produce a hierarchy that measures people's capacity to address homophobia in a way that the researchers' perceive as appropriate. The notion of progress is also apparent. The researchers, in talking about Confronters, observe "we were pleased that many felt confident enough to address homophobic

speech when it presented itself and had the knowledge and skills to move students in a positive direction".[37] So participants who were characterized as having most able and willing to address homophobia were the one's who conceptualized themselves as having the capacity to move students on from homophobic attitudes.

Avoiders, the archetype situated at the bottom of Zack et al.'s scale, are seen as potentially taking up this position for a multitude of reasons. Below they provide an account of the type of teacher education student who might take up the avoider position:

> Knowing that the discourse within our program favors pluralism and a regard for diversity, it is likely that some participants in the discussion remained silent because their personal views were in opposition to homosexual lifestyles. Perhaps they believed that the religiously, morally, and politically charged issue of homosexuality was outside the purview of public schooling. Or, maybe they were just too shy. Whatever the case, it seemed unlikely that these beginning teachers would be addressing the issues of homophobic hate-speech in any meaningful ways in the near future.[38]

As opposed to the classifications describing the lowest points in Riddle's scale and Witthaus' types, this discussion allows that participants might have religious objections which would account for their being labelled as avoiders. There is also recognition that the space of the university classroom featured in the research, which is described as one that "favors pluralism and a regard for diversity", meant that "some participants in the discussion remained silent".[39]

[37] Zack et al., 2010, p. 104.
[38] Zack et al., 2010, p. 103.
[39] Zack et al., 2010, p. 103.

This is a particularly salient observation because it indicates the ways in which religious objections to homosexuality have become unspeakable in some university classrooms. Avoiders read the classroom climate and know that homophobic utterances are unacceptable in this particular space and thus they know to keep silent. This shared understanding, on the part of professors and their teacher education students, that homophobia is unutterable, sets up a space which sets specific limits on pluralism and diversity, no doubt with the best of intentions.

Below Zack at el. provide Confronters with tips on how to deal with religious beliefs of students that are perceived as discriminatory:

> Student teachers should also be equipped with information that challenges the religious beliefs of students (when these beliefs are mired in discrimination) …Some organizations that can aid those entering the teaching profession in solidifying their responses to religious and legal arguments against homosexuality include freedomtomarry.org, which provides advice on how to talk about marriage equality, and informedconscience.com, a group that explores homosexuality and the Catholic Church and provides alternative interpretations of scripture.[40]

I am concerned at what such directions might mean for teachers when they are working in schools and they encounter remarks that they perceive as homophobic from peers, parents or students. Such an approach could set up teachers to the conclusion that certain students' beliefs are in need of correction, or, at least, movement in a "positive direction". This prompts me to ask: When does saying no to homophobia become a means by which to discipline specific types of religious beliefs in the classroom?

[40] Zack et al., 2010, p. 109.

The binaries at work in the production of scales utilized in anti-homophobic research and pedagogies are well summed up in a recent doctoral thesis entitled *With us or against us: Using religiosity and sociodemographic variables to predict homophobic beliefs.*[41] In this study Erin Schwartz, a graduate of the Indiana State University doctoral program in Counseling Psychology, utilizes a psychological scale to measure the homophobic attitudes of people in the US who were, and were not, religiously affiliated. By employing a particular scale Schwartz found that people who identified as fundamentalists in Christian traditions were more likely to be homophobic. While the body of thesis does not appear to make mention of its title, one interpretation might be that scales of homophobic beliefs are useful because they are helpful in determining who is "with us or against us". What is not clear, is who is "us"?

Schwartz was surprised to note that level of education among people who were fundamentalist did not alter their level of homophobia – though age did.

> *The finding of no differences in homophobia based on level of education was surprising.* It had been expected that having more education and thus, more exposure to various points of view from sources other than family-of-origin and one's religious congregation, would play an important role in differences in homophobic beliefs. This unexpected finding indicates that education alone may not have an important impact on changing prejudicial beliefs.[42] (Emphasis mine)

Such a finding is surprising to Schwartz, I would argue, because there is a firm belief that more education and exposure to gays and lesbians will have the effect of moderating people's

[41] Zack et al., 2010, p. 109.
[42] Schwartz, 2011, p. 47.

homophobic tendencies. The strength of this belief, that people will become less homophobic when exposed to anti-homophobia education, is apparent in all the scales that I have discussed above. In the context of this discussion of homophobia and sexuality education, this belief is key because it reflects a repeated tendency to attribute homophobic beliefs to a lack of education, rather than to religiosity.

In their research on homophobia among adolescents in Canada and Belgium, Hooghe, Claes, Harell, Quintelier and Dejaeghere[43] also trouble the belief that there is a link between homophobia and educational attainment. They note that

> Despite arguments that hostility toward LGBT rights among Muslims can simply be attributed to their lower average education level or to a Mediterranean cultural factor, our study does not find support for these arguments. Our models included controls for educational background from two separate country samples with diverging immigration patterns. This allows us to isolate the religious factor quite unequivocally as an important element for the occurrence of negative feelings toward equal rights for LGBT groups.[44]

It is clear in this study that level of education does not correlate with level of homophobia. Hooghe et al. state that their finding that religion and homophobic belief are correlated in some people of Christian and Muslim faiths is unremarkable. They go on to note that several research studies suggest "adherence to strict and fundamentalist forms of religion is positively associated to homophobia and anti-gay attitudes".[45] The correlations Hooghe et al. see between homophobia and religious fundamentalism

[43] Hooghe et al., 2010.
[44] Hooghe et al., 2010, p. 396.
[45] Hooghe et al., 2010, p. 385.

leads them to question the assumptions that underpin scales that measure homophobia.

In an article by Hooghe, Dejaeghere, Claes, and Quintelier's subtitled: *The Structure of Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Rights among Islamic Youth in Belgium* the researchers draws attention to the specific ways in which race, ethnicity and religion are often highlighted as markers of increased homophobia in studies using homophobia scales. Hooghe et al. seek to problematize this type of research arguing that:

> …the scales …all originate in a liberal, rights-oriented approach toward homosexuality, which is often at odds with a more religiously based understanding of homosexuality and homosexual behavior. Basically, this would imply that the measurement scales for homophobia that are conventionally used are not sufficiently cross-culturally valid to allow for unbiased understanding of the feelings toward homosexuality among various religious groups. These scales indeed originate from a secularized Western research setting and very little effort has been devoted to the question [of] whether these scales can be used meaningfully in a more religious context.[46]

For the purpose of this discussion of scales and homophobia in the context of sexuality education, Hooghe et al.'s comments are particularly salient. While continuing to employ scales in their research, there is also recognition by these researchers of the limitations of scales that measure homophobia.

Hooghe et al. illustrate the complexities of defining just what homophobia is in quantitative and qualitative research. Their own research using these scales has prompted them to question how scales that measure homophobia are rooted in systems of belief that almost ensure particular groups of people will be

[46] Hooghe et al., 2010, p. 50.

classified as homophobic. As I have asked elsewhere "how might I understand religious reasoning on sex education, using a frame that eschews the authority of secular reason?"[47] In the context of this discussion, I am constructing scales that measure or classify particular types of homophobia as embedded in the authority of a secular reasoning in which an anti-homophobic response is often conflated as a combination of ignorance, irrationality, religiosity and miseducation.

What are the consequences then of employing these scales in anti-homophobia research and pedagogy to, once again, and, often not surprisingly, identify particular members of specific populations as homophobic? To my mind, the repeated use of homophobia scales is problematic because in, a Butlerian[48] sense, the findings they produce are performative. Through the continued utilisation and production of the scales we come to know particular subjects first and foremost as homophobic; in this respect the employment of scales can be seen as a liberal mechanism of exclusion.

Thinking differently about homophobia in teaching and research

As David Murray notes "Homophobia has gone global"[49] and it is "increasingly attached to moral, political, and economic agendas around the globe." Homophobia has, indeed, gone global, but as the epigraph to this article suggests, this is not to say that homophobia cannot be easily translated across geopolitical sites. In countries like Australia and the U.S. that both have large communities of new immigrants this is an

[47] Rasmussen, 2010, p. 701.
[48] Butler, 1999.
[49] Murray, 2009, p. viii.

important consideration because if homophobia is not a universal phenomenon, then anti-homophobia education needs to be attuned to this. Though, as I discuss below, significant differences in how people understand the question of homophobia are by no means confined to immigrant communities. For instance, people within Protestant religious communities across the U.S., hold markedly different understanding of homophobia and heteronormativity.

Daniel Monk in an article entitled, *Challenging homophobic bullying in schools: The politics of progress*, see discourses related to homophobic bullying as first and foremost political, and therefore necessarily subject to critique. He writes,

> …while issues such as gay marriage and gays in the military are campaigns that have been exposed to lively critique within the LGBT community and academic literature, there has been very little similar debate about homophobic bullying, located as it is within the 'benign' emancipatory liberal discourses of education and future-focused discourses of innocent and universal childhood.[50]

The critique of scales that are used to measure homophobia has been limited, partially because it is commonly understood that such scales are fundamentally benign. Monk goes on to make the point that anti-homophobic discourse is founded in "imaginations and representations of a post-homophobic time".[51] I construe scales that measure homophobia as part of broader constellation of discourses that seek to challenge homophobia, and as I have tried to illustrate above, I do not perceive such scales as benign or emancipatory. By challenging

[50] Monk, 2011, p. 191.
[51] Monk, 2011, p. 191.

the use of these scales I want to join with Monk in scrutinizing the politics that underpin anti-homophobia education.

The progressive narratives implicit within scales that measure homophobia can be conceived as a technology explicitly designed to help students and teachers develop imaginings of post-homophobic time. Scales of homophobia very specifically construct responses to homophobia as something which might be improved, over time, by moving people along the scale from a position of repulsion to celebration[52] or from romper stomper to almost ally (Witthaus). The scales simultaneously produce, and are embedded in, imaginings of post-homophobic time. Homophobia, (so the logic of these scales suggests), we can all agree, is a problem. Consequently, it is also held to be true that individuals, who are identified as holding homophobic beliefs via technologies such as scales, can only benefit from exposure to anti-homophobia education. Part of my task here then is to elaborate why I think it is problematic to develop educational practices that are embedded in the reproduction of post-homophobic imaginings.

Imaginings of a post-homophobic time are problematic in part because such imaginings assume that some consensus has been derived on the subject homophobia, yet recent anthropological studies of homophobia point to inconsistencies in the way that this concept is understood.[53] For instance, Constance Sullivan-Blum in her study of contemporary American Christian homophobia notes that the evangelical Protestants she interviewed consistently denied that they were homophobic. Sullivan-Blum accounts for this reticence in part by drawing attention to the way in which her participants conceptualized

[52] Ollis, 2010.
[53] Murray, 2009.

people who are homophobic. They believed that "homophobes harbor an irrational fear of homosexuals" and they did not perceive their attitude towards homosexuals as therefore homophobic. Rather, Sullivan-Blum notes, "most evangelical Protestants I spoke to are not afraid of homosexuals; rather they believe that homosexuality is sinful and must be rejected as morally wrong". [54] Such distinctions in the way that people understand the concept of homophobia, and the ways in which they imagine themselves and others as homophobic (or not), points to the challenges of anti-homophobia education and imaginings of post-homophobic time.

Scales of homophobia might suggest that particular groups of people, such as evangelical Protestants, are more likely to be homophobic. However, if these people do not apprehend homophobia as something that is applicable to them, what does this mean for the application of the scale? Monk suggests that:

> One might reasonably ask whether in highlighting the existence of homophobia in schools and developing strategies that enable it to be acknowledged by policy-makers it is necessary to engage with conflicting imaginations about an idealised post-homophobic world. The argument here is that it is, for if homophobic bullying is made speakable through discourses of heteronormativity, then those outcomes become the form through which its success is evaluated.[55]

Monk rightly points out that the success of anti-homophobia education is predicated on particular imaginings of homophobia that rarely admit conflicting perspectives. The scales can only be ruled a success, if there is a concomitant agreement about the discourses of heteronormativity. As Sullivan-Blum notes,

[54] Sullivan-Blum, 2009, p. 51.
[55] Monk, 2011, p. 194-195.

evangelical Protestants perceive same-sex marriage as problematic for many reasons, one of which is that it disrupts the authority of scripture.[56] I do not perceive scripture in the same way as evangelical Protestants, nor do I support same-sex marriage - but for very different reasons to evangelical Protestants. My point here is that sometimes when homophobia is construed as irrational or uneducated or illiberal – it is worth interrogating further whether or not such claims can be sustained. Surely, sometimes homophobia may result from the above. But it also worth considering that sometimes the tendency to construct particular events, people, places and or religions as homophobic may be a maneuver that has the effect of constructing all objections to post-homophobic imaginings as necessarily pathological, ignorant and regressive. As a result, people who don't agree that heteronormativity is a problem may come to be seen as in need of re-education.

Of course the necessity of conforming to post-homophobic imagining does not fall equally upon all people of different faiths. Discourses of homophobic bullying, that are reproduced through the use of scales that measure homophobia, may also operate to reify binaries between Islamic fundamentalism and secular freedoms.[57] So the problem of not conforming to particular readings of homophobia and post-homophobia is not limited to the sphere of religion, it may also become associated with homonationalism and terrorist assemblages.[58] Particular groups of people who are marked as homophobic according to these scales can also be construed as a danger to the secular state, and to the safety of the imagined nation.

[56] Sullivan-Blum, 2009, p. 56.
[57] Monk, 2011, p. 200.
[58] Puar, 2007.

Conclusion

I do recognize that discrimination related to gender and sexual identifications does exist. At the same time in this article I have been attempting to complicate the pedagogical power that is associated with taking up the position of challenging, and measuring, homophobia. Scales of homophobia may be difficult to speak back to precisely because their righteousness is affirmed through images of the vulnerability of gay youth.[59] Though as Monk illustrates, the cost of such righteousness is "the extent to which it effectively silences other voices and reduces the experience of lesbian and gay young people to one of passive victimhood.[60]

In this article I have situated scales that measure homophobia as part of a broader political project that is embedded in emancipatory imaginings of a post-homophobic world. In order to do this I have tried to consider some of the logics that underpin the use of such scales. By way of a conclusion, I have sought to make a list of provocations that illustrate what I perceive to be troubling logics that support the use of scales that measure homophobia of teachers and students. My hope is such a list might provoke ongoing debate about the ways that homophobia is taken up in education about gender and sexuality.

Provocations

- That we can agree on what homophobia is

- That we can therefore measure homophobia

[59] Rasmussen, 2004; Puar, 2012.
[60] Monk, 2011, p. 188; Rasmussen, 2004.

- That there is a "right way" to respond to homophobia
- That progressive teachers and students will challenge homophobia
- That affirming homophobia is inadmissible in the bounds of liberal, secular, education
- That people who are homophobic can benefit from anti-homophobic education

My hope is that taken together these provocations might be used to open up conversations in which homophobia becomes less familiar. It is only by making homophobia strange in the context of anti-homophobic education that it may become possible to think differently about motivations and assumptions that underpin such pedagogical projects. Such provocations about homophobia are, as indicated in the epigraph to this article, also designed to provoke questions about the what and the how of homosexuality. If an aim of anti-homophobia education is to create spaces in which young people who are lesbian or gay identified may be safer – can we assume that taking homophobia's measure will necessarily have this outcome?

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