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In this chapter, we aim to explore ‘transformative’ pedagogies of physical education (PE) and consider what these approaches might mean for addressing issues of gender sexuality in the field. We do not assume that there is a singular transformative approach but we do argue that some pedagogies have greater potential to be transformative than others. Specifically, we look at how transformative approaches might directly challenge narrow norms of gender sexuality in PE. It is important to note here that the word ‘transformative’ is used in a wide variety of ways in education (for example, Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). In this chapter, we draw on critical approaches to transformative pedagogy that align with the field of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011; hooks, 2010; Kincheloe, 2008) and the sociology of the body (Evans, Davies, & Wright, 2004; Gard & Wright, 2005; Shilling, 2012). In so doing, we suggest that transformative approaches to PE require attention to the social and political contexts within which they occur, and which articulate with practice in complex ways. This is crucial in considering issues of gender sexuality because, as we explain below, these are expressed in PE settings at the intersection of body, culture, and practice (Butler, 1999; Shilling, 2012).

We begin by defining transformative pedagogy and then explaining our theoretical approach to gender sexuality. We use the two terms here together (as gender sexuality, rather than as gender and sexuality) because we argue that these are intertwined. We then consider work in the field of PE, and education more generally, directly addressing issues of gender sexuality. In the second half of the chapter we offer a few examples of transformative approaches to gender sexuality from our own practice. We discuss these as ‘moments’ or possibilities rather than suggesting they are fully articulated modes of practice.

Transformative pedagogy

Typologies come with the obvious risk of glossing over specificities and differences. While acknowledging the potential for reductionism, Wink (2005) suggests that thinking about pedagogy as one of transmissive, generative, or transformative provides a useful starting point for teacher reflection. Similar three point typologies abound in the literature, such as Miller and Seller’s (1990) – transmissive, transactional, and transformational – and Cummins’ (2005) – transmissive, constructivist, and transformative. This consistency in terminology reflects a broadly
shared set of educational concerns: control and power sharing, what counts as legitimate knowledge, how meaning is constructed, and intended learning outcomes.

Transmissive pedagogy, sometimes referred to as traditional pedagogy (Rogers, 1969) or ‘banking education’ (Freire, 1970), is premised on the beliefs that the teacher’s job is to impart knowledge to students, and that teachers’ knowledge is more legitimate than students’. In the transmissive classroom, the teacher initiates and controls interactions, knowledge is most often viewed as fixed and inert, and learning equates to memorisation. Scholars have also claimed that transmissive pedagogies presuppose docile, passive students in classrooms characterised by a lot of teacher talk and a lot of student listening (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011).

The roots of generative pedagogy, sometimes called progressive, constructivist, social constructivist, or experiential pedagogy, can be traced at least as far back as to the work of Dewey and Montessori. In the generative classroom, knowledge is conceptualised as catalytic, meaning it is the catalyst or inspiration for further inquiry (Cummins & Sayers, 1995). Advocates of the generative classroom favour learning that is collective and collaborative. However, these approaches have been criticised for focusing too narrowly on the teaching and learning relationship and failing to articulate a coherent vision of the broader social implications of instruction. For example, Reyes (1992) has suggested that generative pedagogies may be just as blind as transmissive pedagogies to diverse social realities within and beyond the classroom.

Transformative pedagogy is sometimes used interchangeably with critical pedagogy (Wink, 2005). Cummins and Sayers (1995) describe it as an orientation that draws on collaborative critical inquiry to relate curricular content to students’ lives, and focuses on the analysis and transformation of social realities. Ukpokodu (2009) defines it as “an activist pedagogy combining the elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy” and notes that it aims to empower “students to examine critically their beliefs, values, and knowledge with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency” (Ukpokodu, 2009, p. 43).

Irrespective of how it is defined, it is an orientation to pedagogy firmly rooted in Freirean, critical, and feminist theories that, for its advocates, seeks to be grounded in the lives of students and is participatory, activist, culturally sensitive, academically rigorous, hopeful, and critical. Student voice in this regard is central and “describes the many ways in which youth actively participate in school decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their peers” (Mitra, 2008, p. 20). The student voice movement supports a shift in the status of students in schools from passive objects to active participants, and student voice advocates often position their work as transformative (Hodgkin, 1998).

**Transformative pedagogy in physical education**

In the last 30 years, many scholars in the field of PE have observed the limitations of transmissive and generative approaches, and advocated instead for transformational pedagogies. While they have not necessarily used these terms, work in critical pedagogy, critical inquiry, and the politics of the field are clearly concerned with transformation. Perhaps because of its explicit focus on movement, bodies, and physicality, scholars have claimed that PE is potentially a key site for transformative practice (Fitzpatrick, 2010; Gard, 2006). Although the literature gives more attention to theoretical critique (Azzarito & Solmon, 2005; Fernández-Balboa, 1995, 1997; Kirk & Tinning, 1990; Wright, Macdonald, & Burrows, 2004), numerous examples of transformative practice do exist, some of which address gender, sexuality, and, specifically, the PE experiences of girls. Feminist, critical, and activist
scholars have, for example, demonstrated how producing knowledge in collaboration with girls can support them in transforming oppressive practices within their local PE and physical activity contexts (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2010, 2012; Fisette 2011; Fisette & Walton 2014; Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012; Oliver, Hamzeh, & McLaughtry, 2009; Oliver & Kirk, 2014; Oliver & Lalik, 2001, 2004a, 2004b). Although less numerous, pedagogical studies concerned with reshaping constructions of masculinity have also been reported (Gard, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a; Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999; Tischler & McLaughtry, 2011). Others illustrate what a critical multicultural pedagogy might look like and draw attention to the impact of narrow gendered and racialised discourses on notions of the physical (Azzarito, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2010, 2013). With respect to sexuality and gender identities, other scholars have addressed the ways that PE marginalises particular gender expressions, and silences the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth (Clarke, 2000; Coll, O’Sullivan, & Enright, 2013; McLaughty, 2013; Sykes, 2011) and teachers (Clarke, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2002, 2003; Squires & Sparkes, 1996; Sykes, 2001; Woods, 1992). There is, however, a dearth of work based on transforming practices in school PE around issues of sexuality (Fitzpatrick & McLaughty, in press; Sykes, 2011).

There are many commonalities across these pedagogical studies; they all espouse a commitment to student centred, critical, culturally aware, and democratic education. While interpretations of these terms may differ, above all this work emphasises the importance of understanding the subtleties of context. Transformative pedagogy is not a pedagogical ‘model’ that can be easily transplanted from one context to another. It is “the outcome of particular struggles and is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources” (Giroux, 2011, p. 4). In relation to gender sexuality then it is important to attend to the specificities of both geographical contexts and how the body is gendered and sexualised in PE in different ways across sites. How scholars then approach gender sexuality theoretically is important. In order to transform inequitable practices, we need to understand the ontological bases for assumptions about gender sexuality and how these ultimately inform practice in the field.

**Gender sexuality, the body, and theory**

The field of PE, like other sites, is undoubtedly a site of gendered practice. Unlike other sites, however, and in its connection with sporting cultures, PE seems to produce particularly heightened expressions of gender sexuality. This is perhaps to do with the focus on physicality and the centrality of the body within the field (Dismore, 2007; Shilling, 2004), although Youdell (2005) argues that schools circumscribe gender in ways that are more delimiting than other spaces. Nevertheless, schools and PE are both framed by wider discourses of the body that form gender and sexuality in particular ways. Scholars have approached these issues from different theoretical perspectives, including naturalistic, socially constructed, in relation to social justice and disadvantage, and body capital (Shilling, 2012). In the field of PE, issues of inclusion and disadvantage have dominated (Clarke, 2006; Dagkas & Armour, 2012; Ennis, 1999; Flintoff & Scraton, 2006; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010; Penney, 2002; Wright, 1996, 1997) although in sociologically oriented scholarship, a number of theoretical approaches have been used. While Connell’s (1989, 1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity has been influential (e.g. Brown & Rich, 2002; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Parker & Curtner-Smith, 2012; Skelton, 1993), in the last 15 years, the theoretical perspectives of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu have been particularly significant.
Butler and Foucault

Butler (1999) argues that gender is constituted in relation to sexuality via, what she calls, the ‘heterosexual matrix’. She argues that sex is “produced precisely through the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms” (pp. 24–25). This requires “discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’” (p. 24). Youdell (2005) explains this as a sex–gender–sexuality constellation. Such a constellation, she argues, constitutes sex, gender, and sexuality in particular ways “that open up possibilities and set limits for ‘who’ a student can be” (p. 250). She argues that within the constellation:

> the female body is already feminized, the feminine is already heterosexual, the hetero-feminine is already female. Sex–gender–sexuality, then, are not causally related; rather, they exist in abiding constellations in which to name one category of the constellation is to silently infer further categories. (p. 256)

The power of this constellation concerns the levels of intelligibility rendered. Youdell (2005) points out that for one to step outside of the constellation – or to embody an unexpected variation – is a move towards unintelligibility. So, the masculine–woman is questionable and is assumed to be lesbian. The masculine–heterosexual–woman is bordering on unintelligible. Such levels of unintelligibility potentially disrupt the gender-sexuality norms, although they may also reinforce them. Indeed, Youdell (2005) argues that, even when young people disrupt the constellation they also reinforce it because their ‘difference’ is quickly labelled as abhorrent or dismissed as the exception to the rule. Gender and sexuality then, according to this framework, are in constant articulation and are socially constructed, rather than naturalistic. Sykes (2011) argues that Butler’s notion that heterosexuality is the original ‘normal’ from which other sexualities emanate “enables us to think about why there is continual, repetitive anxiety about learning, becoming and ‘proving’ normal heterosexuality in PE spaces” (p. 25). A number of scholars in the field have found Butler’s thinking productive for challenging gender sexuality norms (see, for example, Clarke, 2004; Hills & Croston, 2012; Larsson, 2014; Larsson, Redelius, & Fagrell, 2011; Martino & Beckett, 2004).

Shilling (2012) argues that, along with Butler, Foucault’s (1977, 1978) work has also been enormously influential in understanding gender, sexuality, and the body (and Butler, indeed, draws heavily on Foucault). The work of Foucault has proven productive in critiquing gendered representations and expressions of the body in PE (e.g. Garrett, 2004; Kirk, 2000; Larsson, 2013; McCuaig, 2007; Wright, 1997) and other physical contexts, such as sport and exercise (e.g. Markula & Pringle, 2006).

Along with Butler, Foucauldian thinking has also been critiqued for its dismissal of the material body (Larsson, 2014; Shilling, 2012) and, therefore, biological expressions of gender sexuality. As Shilling (2012) observes, “Butler’s view of the performative constitution of bodies is suggestive, but it overlooks how embodiment and materiality themselves participate in performances and are not just effects of those enactments” (p. 214). Larsson (2014) points out that there is an undeniable tension in the field of PE pertaining to issues of the material body versus the body as social construction.

Bourdieu

The notion of physical capital mediates this position somewhat by acknowledging both the socially located nature of the body and, therefore, gender sexuality, but also the embodied and
physical expressions of culture (Shilling, 2012). Scholars employing the notion of physical capital draw on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1986, 1990) and theorise culture, and specifically social class, as resident and recognisable in the body via habitus (dispositions, expressions, and world view). Habitus is in constant dynamic articulation with the field (the social context in which it is formed) and is thus a bodily expression of cultural expectations, norms, and what Bourdieu understands as social capital. Capital takes many forms but is the recognition of prestige, power, and status within the field; essentially what stands for success.

McNay (1999) argues that Bourdieu’s ideas apply particularly well to gender concerns because they highlight the materiality of the body and the expression of culture via bodily hexis. Shilling (2012) argues that bodily practices (including gendered forms of movement) are formed both by and within the contexts one engages in over time. Situated action then results from cultural context and individual strategic involvement in that context. Physical capital is both developed and employed strategically within a social field, according to the boundaries of that field and the possibilities for development. Skeggs (2004) argues “embodiment is the product of the composition and volumes of capital that can be accrued and carried by the body and the fit between the habitus (the disposition organising mechanism) and the field” (p. 22).

In PE contexts, certain gendered habitus are a fit with the field while others are not; related norms of gender sexuality are then inscribed and reinscribed within the field in ongoing ways. This has a great deal to do with how the field of PE reproduces rather than disrupts norms, and how particular forms of femininity and masculinity are rewarded and reproduced. PE scholars have employed Bourdieu’s notions of capital, field, and habitus to better understand gendered relations of power in the field (e.g. Brown, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003; Hills, 2007; Hunter, 2004).

If we are to transform the field of PE and challenge the multiple ways the field reproduces narrow gender sexuality norms, we suggest that transformative approaches (rather than the transmissive or constructivist approaches we discussed earlier) hold the greatest potential. Transformative pedagogies both acknowledge the gendered nature of the field and aim to directly address relations of power, drawing on various theoretical perspectives to produce praxis. In the final section of this chapter, we offer examples of transformative pedagogies from our own practice. We do not offer these here as any kind of universal answer or suggest others should take up these specific approaches. We are, rather, responding to the critique that there are too few examples of applied critical practice in education and in PE (Wright, MacDonald, & Burrows, 2004). These small examples are offered here with the intention of sharing transformative practice, however messy, fraught, context-specific, and imperfect.

**Doing transformative gender sexuality practice in physical education**

*Katie: teacher education and transformative practice*

If we accept that gender sexuality is both socially constructed and material, then addressing these issues in the field requires an analysis of both social context and materiality, including bodily expression and experience. hooks (2010) argues that critical approaches to issues of power in education begin with personal experiences. One approach to transformative pedagogies in PE might be personal biographies (for example, Dowling, 2012). These can help to name and expose the norms of cultural practice we live. Bourdieu understands this via the metaphor of a fish in water. He explains that the fish cannot see the water, the cultural norms, it is swimming in: “when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself ‘as a fish in water’, it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted”
(Bourdieu in interview with Wacquant, 1989, cited in Grenfell & James, 1998 p. 16). I (Katie) use this metaphor in my own undergraduate teaching to facilitate students to begin to see the water we are all swimming in and to identify how norms of gender sexuality (and other issues) are reproduced in PE.

I teach a course called ‘curriculum issues in health and PE’. The students in the course are all studying to be teachers of health and PE in secondary schools, and the course is completed in the final year of a four-year programme. As part of the course, students are required to read bell hooks’ account of her experiences in her book, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (2010). hooks begins the book with an account of growing up and attending university amid racially segregated communities in the USA in the middle of the twentieth century. She talks directly about the racism and sexism she experienced in education contexts, but she also highlights the importance of the teachers who humanised and who attended to the experiences and struggles of students. The students in my class are then required to write personal biographies of their PE experiences at the intersection of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, and social class. They can represent these in creative ways via story, narrative, and poetry. Following this task, we explore a range of issues in the fields of health and PE (these two subjects are interwoven in curriculum in New Zealand) and we draw on a range of literature in the field which questions gender sexuality, ability, racialisation, body size, health, and so forth (for example: Burrows & Wright, 2004; Gard, 2004b; Hokowhitu, 2008; Rich, Holroyd, & Evans, 2004; Sykes & McPhail, 2008). For their next assignment, the students each have to form what I call a ‘bold statement’. This statement is an argument for something they would like to change or advocate for or against. It must be related to health and PE and is a kind of ‘moot’ which they argue for and defend orally in front of the class. They must draw on research evidence to support their argument.

One of the students from my class in 2014, Will Elliot, presented his argument to the class and then submitted his bold statement as an opinion piece to the *New Zealand Physical Educator*. This publication is sent to all schools and is a mixture of practitioner-based articles and research articles. Therein, Will argued that girls and boys should not be separated for PE lessons, as is the case in some schools. He drew on the literature to argue that:

> The messages we send about the reasons why we would separate female students from males says something in itself. The arguments for single sex PE often include that females are intimidated by males which can often be construed as females are not as dominant at sport as males are. These serve to reinforce the power relationships which privilege males over females.

> What’s more, by separating classes based on their observable physical attributes we are alienating those students who may appear male or female based on the way they look, but actually identify with other genders. In doing so, we would reinforce the idea of heteronormativity.

> I argue that many of the issues which single sex PE claim to remedy are not actually remedies at all, they are just pushing the issues to one side, rather than confronting them in classes. Additionally I believe that arguments for single sex PE often cite girls’ non participation as an issue. I believe this issue is perhaps more of a reflection on a teacher’s pedagogy in that they have created a class environment which is not inclusive. (Elliot, 2014, p. 15)

What is significant about Will’s argument is that, while he was undoubtedly influenced by the readings and discussions in the class and the perspectives of other students, his bold statement, like those of other students, came from his own concerns about gender sexuality practice in
schools. He was drawing on praxis to argue for change and transformation in the field of PE in a specific way that linked directly to the practice of schools.

**Eimear: on seeing and being in a heteronormative world**

The flâneur was a bourgeois man of nineteenth century French society, able to walk through the streets of the newly renovated Paris experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of modern life, while still maintaining a distance from that which he observed. As a connoisseur of the streets, the flâneur was not only “just looking” (Bowlby, 1985), but rather seeing and being in the world in ways that intrinsically revealed meaningful, cultural critique and commentary (Ritzer, 2007). Introducing the concept of the ‘flâneur’ to my (Eimear’s) PE teacher education (PETE) students was the starting point for a visual diary task I engaged students with on a third year sociology course. We began by acknowledging the historical background of the term, and considering the gendering of the flâneur as masculine and the excluded/invisible feminine flâneuse (Wolff, 1985). We then discussed what it might mean to be a flâneur/flâneuse in the twenty-first century. We drew on Kenway and Bullen’s (2008) notion of ‘the youthful cyberflâneur’ to help us think about the focus of inquiry, the landscape travelled, and the tools that might be used in contemporary flânerie:

...today the object of the young cyberflâneur’s inquiry is the global cultural economy and he or she is not limited by territoriality or time. The young cyberflâneur uses information and communications technologies (ICTs) as tools for inquiry and digital technologies for the production of visual and written commentary and critique. (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 24)

I then introduced the visual diary task, which centred on gender. Students were asked to keep a four-week visual diary of their gendered PE, sport, and physical activity experiences. I prompted them to focus this diary on a variety of facets of their everyday lives, including watching televised sporting events, attending sport events, their own sport and leisure worlds, and sports media. I also suggested they consider exploring both the physical world and the virtual geographies that ICTs allow them to access. As cyberflâneurs the students drew on multiple genres (photographs, advertisements, social media, news stories, sports shows, sports club communications and websites, and so on) and chose to embed multi-media formats (image and text, audio and video, hyper text and hyper links) in their interactive visual diaries to reflect upon and articulate their critique. Students gathered advertisements, photographs of their own sporting clubs, pictures of toys and books, sports websites, flyers for sports attire, social media postings, blog sites, YouTube clips, and much more. They wrote short narratives about these photos in their diaries. These diaries then became the focus of classroom debate and also individual essays, where students were asked to make sense of their diary and the social construction of gender in relation to the literature we had been reading (e.g. Bernstein, 2002; Burrows & Wright, 2004; Coakley & Pike, 1998; Dewar, 1987; Gorely et al., 2003; Sykes & McPhail, 2008). Discussion of the visual diaries revolved around how gender norms are inscribed in how people move, gesture, eat, dress, talk, and act, assumptions of heterosexuality, cultural myths and stereotypes, media coverage of women in sport, and how omnipresent little symbols of gender sexuality differentiation are.

In anonymous course feedback two PETE students shared the following:

I thought it was going to be an airy-fairy [course] to begin with but first impressions were wrong. The visual diary made me start to see things I hadn’t noticed before. You
These two students evidence a transformation of sorts. They speak about ‘seeing things they hadn’t noticed before’ and ‘looking at our own lives in different ways’. Like Katie’s example of transformative practice in teacher education, these students have been involved in a process of naming and exposing the norms of cultural practice that we live. The diary task and their positioning as flâneurs/flâneuses required them to ‘step outside of [themselves]’ and led to some of them articulating a transformative intent. Worth highlighting here, however, is that for a minority of students on this course this visual diary task specifically was “a waste of time … another [course] that took away from time we could be doing practical stuff” (Anonymous male student). This student voice reminds us that while we can work to create conditions which might support transformation, we can never be sure that our efforts will be well received or will actually lead to transformation.

**Transformative work with young people**

We have both taught in transformative ways and researched transformative practice with young people in schools (see Enright & O’Sullivan, 2012, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2010, 2013; Fitzpatrick & Russell, 2015). During this work we have learnt a lot about the importance of valuing student voice, employing collaborative and reciprocal methodologies, and the centrality of relationships with youth. Critically, research with youth is only truly transformative if it engages young people with the politics by which they live. In this sense, such research should focus on the issues that are important for young people in their own communities and seek to enhance their knowledge of these issues and their ability to act for social change. Of course, researchers are working within and among relations of power with young people. Being the ‘adult researcher’ among school students is simultaneously a position of power and one of alienation. The researcher in this setting has no real purpose: s/he is not a teacher or a student but some kind of intermediary, perhaps an observer, a pedagogue, a provocateur, an activist, a listener, and so forth. These depend on the kind of research being undertaken, the questions being asked, and the context. Young people are also dealing with wider power inequities at the intersection of gender sexuality, ethnicity, culture, and social class. The notion of youth voice cannot be naïve to these issues and researchers seeking student voice must consider who is given more/less voice and why (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009). Youth research scholars are in agreement that forming trusting relationships with young people is central to successful research of this kind (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Madison, 2012; Tobin & Kincheloe, 2006), but it is also invariably messy and imperfect. We advocate for researchers in this sense to be especially sensitive to the voices of youth, for therein lies real potential for truly transformative pedagogies.
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Final thoughts

In this chapter, we have attempted to explore the potential for transformative work in PE that attends to issues of gender sexuality. It is important to note that, while there is no singular approach to transformative practice, this work comes from and attends to concerns of social justice, exclusion, and inequities in the field. These are apparent in PE in complex ways, and theories of gender sexuality, as well as current research in the field, remind us how insidious gendered relations of power are. Nevertheless, scholars and educators working in critical ways to expose and challenge narrow norms of gender sexuality in PE have shown that transformational work with young people in schools and in teacher education is both possible and productive, especially when this work is done with the meaningful reciprocal engagement of young people themselves.

Reflective questions for discussion

1. Why do the authors use the terms ‘gender sexuality’ together (rather than ‘gender and sexuality’ or ‘gender, sexuality’)?
2. Why is it important to understand various theoretical approaches to gender sexuality?
3. What might transformative approaches to PE in your context look like?
4. How might these differ from transmissive or generative approaches?
5. The authors state that transformative teaching is not a model. What are the limitations of models-based practice, and why are these not typically transformative?

Note

1 We use the term gender sexuality here (rather than ‘gender, sexuality’ or ‘gender and sexuality’) to highlight the interconnectedness with which these two concepts are both read and performed (Butler, 1999). We explain this in more detail further below.

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