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PERFORMED ETHNOGRAPHY FOR ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA TEACHER
EDUCATION: LINKING RESEARCH TO TEACHING

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This article describes a research program of *performed ethnography* that I have used as a pedagogical tool for anti-homophobia teacher education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Performed ethnography involves turning ethnographic data and texts into scripts and dramas that are either read aloud by a group of participants or performed before audiences. This fairly new approach to writing and disseminating ethnographic and other forms of qualitative research has been taken up by a number of writers and researchers in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology and in the fields of performance studies, theatre studies and arts-based inquiry in education (Denzin, 1997). My own work brings performed ethnography into the field of critical teacher education. I began working with performed ethnography in December 1999 and have found that it has allowed me to share research findings on equity, diversity and schooling in a way that matters to my students who will be certified as teachers upon graduation from OISE/UT's teacher education program. To date, I have written three ethnographic play scripts on the topics of linguistic, cultural, racial, religious and sexual diversity. The first is entitled *Hong Kong, Canada* (Goldstein, 2001). It tells the story of immigrant students' experiences of racism and

linguistic discrimination in a multilingual, multicultural and multiracial high school. *Satellite Kids*, the second play (Goldstein, 2003a), is about the linguistic and cultural politics of educating transnational students from postcolonial contexts. The third play, *Snakes and Ladders* (Goldstein, 2004) is about the challenges of undertaking anti-homophobia education in a secular public high school, which serves a religiously diverse community. All together, the three plays have received thirty-three classroom or conference readings and two amateur productions at the University of Toronto.

In this article, I will focus on my pedagogical work with the third play *Snakes and Ladders*, which disseminates research findings on homophobia and schooling (for a discussion of my pedagogical work with *Hong Kong, Canada* see Goldstein, 2000). I begin with a brief commentary on why I have embarked on a research program of performed ethnography for critical teacher education. Next, I provide some background on the critical ethnographic research study that informed the writing of *Snakes and Ladders*. This is followed by a plot synopsis, several excerpts from the play, and an analysis of my students' discussion of these excerpts of the play. I conclude the article with a brief summary of what my students' discussions reveal about the pedagogical possibilities of *Snakes and Ladders* for anti-homophobia teacher education.

Performed Ethnography for Critical Teacher Education: Linking Research to Teaching

There are two principle reasons why I have begun a research program on the possibilities of performed ethnography for critical teacher education in addition to my more traditional program of research and scholarship on diversity, equity and schooling.

The first has to do with the nature of representation of ethnographic data in educational and other social science research. The second has to do with my teaching goals in OISE/UT's undergraduate teacher education program. In an early article about my performed ethnography research, I wrote:

As a critical educational ethnographer who is also a teacher educator, I want my ethnographic writing to engage my teacher education students in critical analysis and practice. My experiments with ethnographic playwriting and performed ethnography endeavor to represent the research subjects in a way that not only facilitates their truths but also matters to people who were going to be asked to listen to and act upon, these truths (Goldstein 2000, p. 311)

My interest in the nature of representation of ethnographic data in educational research (Goldstein, 2000, 2002) has been important to graduate students at OISE/UT who are interested in arts-based research, critical ethnography and postmodern qualitative research. However, in this article, I focus particularly on my work in OISE/UT's undergraduate teacher education program. The teacher education students are less interested in conducting educational research and more interested in pedagogy and institutional change.

The play *Snakes and Ladders* investigates what happens when high school teachers and students attempt to implement anti-homophobia educational initiatives in their school. The play is based on a one-year study that was undertaken at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) from the spring of 2002 to the spring of 2003^[1]. TDSB operates almost 600 public elementary and secondary schools in the Greater Toronto

Area and has an equity policy that requires all its teachers to work towards a homophobia-free teaching and learning environment (Toronto District School Board, 2000). The research study, entitled *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism in Elementary and High Schools*, investigated the ways in which one TDSB elementary school, one alternative middle school and two secondary schools had begun to implement the anti-homophobia equity policy that TDSB had instituted in the 2000-2001 school year. The research team and I interviewed six teachers and administrators in the four TDSB schools about their anti-homophobia education initiatives. We also visited three of these four schools to observe anti-homophobia education in action. In addition to the TDSB staff, we also interviewed two OISE/UT pre-service teachers who were practice teaching in TDSB schools. The purpose of these pre-service teacher interviews was to investigate how new teachers working in TDSB schools felt about implementing TDSB 's anti-homophobia equity policy.

The data used to write *Snakes and Ladders* comes from two sources. The first source is the observation field notes that were taken during our three school visits. The second source is the interview material obtained from the TDSB administrators and teachers and OISE/UT pre-service teachers. The data revealed that teachers, students and administrators face a number of challenges and dilemmas in their efforts to implement TDSB's anti-homophobia equity policy. These are dramatized in *Snakes and Ladders*. While limitations of space do not allow me to include the entire play in this article (I will publish the entire script in a book entitled *Anti-Homophobia Education in Public Schools* (Goldstein, 2004), I am able to provide a plot synopsis and several excerpts from the play.

The data used to analyse the pedagogical possibilities of *Snakes and Ladders* for anti-homophobia teacher education also come from two sources. The first source is the observation field notes that were taken during the discussion of the play reading in six different teacher education classes at OISE/UT. The second source is the interview material obtained from a small group of teacher education students who were interviewed about their experience of working with the play. In total, eight students from three different teacher education classes were interviewed. Data from two of these interviews are analysed here.

Snakes and Ladders: Pedagogical Possibilities for Anti-Homophobia Teacher Education

The play *Snakes and Ladders* opens with a conversation between English and Drama teacher, Rachel Davis, and the new principal of Pierre Elliot Trudeau Secondary School, Karen Diamond. Rachel is the faculty supervisor of the school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) group.^[2] The group wants to put on a Gay Pride Day at the school, and Rachel wants to get Karen's support. In the first scene, Rachel finds out that Karen didn't know the school had a GSA group and that she is uncomfortable with the idea of having a gay support group at the school. Rachel and Karen never discuss the topic of Gay Pride Day in this scene.

Rachel talks to her colleague Anne James about her meeting with Karen Diamond. Rachel is outraged that Karen might shut down the GSA. Anne is also concerned that the GSA might fold because she thinks that students need to have a space to hear positive things about being gay. She comes up with an idea that has students from the GSA and the Students and Teachers Against Racism (STAR) group working together

to put on a set of Pride Days to commemorate March 21, the International Day to Eliminate Racism. Before agreeing to the project, Karen decides to talk to her mentor Bob Byers who has been a principal for many years. To Karen's surprise, Bob is very supportive of the project. He tells Karen that his daughter came out to the family during her first year of university, but that she had known that she was a lesbian "quite a while before that." When Karen asks Bob if his daughter had had a hard time at school, he answers that he didn't really know as she was in the closet all through high school. Bob then shares the fears he has for Shannon's safety and how important he thinks the implementation of an anti-homophobic equity policy is to the well being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer students in school.

After her talk with Bob, Karen gives Anti-racism and Pride Week her support. However, when Rachel and Anne pitch the idea to their four student teachers and to the students in the GSA and STAR, they get a variety of reactions and commitments from them. The following excerpts from scenes 9, 10 and 11 illustrate these varying reactions and levels of commitment.

Excerpt from Scene 9

Anne (Teacher): What we propose is a set of Pride Days. Racial Pride, Ethnic Pride and Gay Pride.

Chris (Student in the GSA): Why are we calling it Gay Pride? Shouldn't we call it LGBTQ Pride?

Ray (Student in STAR): What do all those letters mean?

Chris (Student in the GSA): Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer.

Gail (Student in the GSA): I thought the "Q" stood for "questioning."

Diane (Student in STAR): What's transgendered?

Chris (Student in the GSA): It's used to describe people who live in the gender that is not the one they were raised in. Like a person who born male and is living as a female or vice versa.

Diane (Student in STAR): Oh.

Ray (Student in STAR): Why do we have to have Gay Pride Day during Anti-racism Week?

Diane (Student in STAR): Yeah. Why don't they celebrate it sometime in June when other gay people celebrate it? March 21 is supposed to be about racism.

Roberto (Student Teacher): Some people experience racism (emphasizing) and homophobia. We need to fight both together.

Diane (Student in STAR): (Matter of fact) Black people aren't faggots.

Helen (Student in the GSA): What?

Rachel (Teacher): (Calmly) Okay. Hold it there. (Addressing DIANE) The last word you used. What was it?

Diane (Student in STAR): (Embarrassed) What? Faggots?

Rachel (Teacher): Right. How is faggot used in the hallway? Is it a compliment?

Helen (Student in the GSA): No.

Diane (Student in STAR): It's not a put down.

Rachel (Teacher): Although some people might use it as a joke, I think the consensus is that it's usually used as a put down. So we won't use it. Okay?

Diane (Student in STAR): Okay.

Excerpt from Scene 10

Anne (Teacher): So what's the problem?

Sherry (Student in STAR): I don't want to introduce the people from T.E.A.C.H.^[3]

Anne (Teacher): Why not?

Sherry (Student in STAR): People will think (emphasizing) I'm gay.

Anne (Teacher): In your introduction, you can tell people that you are a member of STAR who is there as a straight ally to fight homophobia. If you want, I can get you a button that says "Straight, but not narrow." That way everyone will know you aren't gay.

Sherry (Student in STAR): But what if I don't want to be a straight ally?

Anne (Teacher): What's the problem with being an ally?

Sherry (Student in STAR): It means that I agree that it's okay.

Anne (Teacher): That what's okay?

Sherry (Student in STAR): That (looking down at the floor) it's okay to be a fag- to be gay.

Anne (Teacher): I think what we're saying as straight allies is that we should all respect other people's differences.

Sherry (Student in STAR): But if I don't agree that it's okay to be gay, then shouldn't my opinion be respected?

Anne (Teacher): (Pauses.) I want you to think about something. People are. We have to respect the right of all of us to just be. Be who we are. And that's not easy. And it doesn't happen without some kind of conflict. Because we don't live in the world all by ourselves.

(Lights dim on the hallway and come up on the English classroom.)

Rachel (Teacher): So what's the problem?

Chris (Student in the GSA): It's just not fair.

Rachel (Teacher): What's not fair?

Chris (Student in the GSA): That Ms. Diamond gets to say what can and can't happen at Pride Days.

Rachel (Teacher): She's the principal.

Chris (Student in the GSA): I know. But can't we, like, protest or something? Can't you talk to her about the Drag Contest?

Rachel (Teacher): What do you want me to say?

Chris (Student in the GSA): Tell her that if the school can host a Gospel choir and draw from Black culture to educate about racism, then it's only fair that we host a Drag contest and draw from Gay culture to educate about homophobia.

Rachel (Teacher): I don't want to say that.

Chris (Student in the GSA): Why not?

Rachel (Teacher): Because that would be pitting anti-homophobia work against anti-racism work. We're trying to work as allies.

(Lights dim on the English classroom and come up on the English office.)

John (Student Teacher): Rahima, what do you have to do?

Rahima (Student Teacher): I'm doing a workshop on stereotyping Muslims with a student from STAR. I'm also supposed to organize the visit from T.E.A.CH. and welcome the speakers.

John (Student Teacher): The workshop will take some work, but organizing the visit isn't too hard.

Rahima (Student Teacher): It's not hard, but it's a problem.

Amy (Student Teacher): Why?

Rahima (Student Teacher): If I welcome the speakers to the school, to Gay Pride Day, it will look like I think it's okay to be gay.

Amy (Student Teacher): And you don't.

Rahima (Student Teacher): No. I mean, I don't believe that gay people should be discriminated against. I bust kids for saying, "fag" in the hallway. And I have gay friends in the cohort. Like Roberto. But I don't think it's okay to be gay. You can't be gay and Muslim.

Excerpt from Scene 11

Roberto (Student Teacher): It's not true, you know. You can be gay and Muslim.

Rahima (Student Teacher): What?

Roberto (Student Teacher): I have a friend who is Muslim and he was gay. He found this organization on the net. An organization of Muslim gay men. It's called "Al-Fathiha"

(Rahima nods.)

Roberto (Student Teacher): Yeah. It's a group that is working out how to be gay and still follow the faith. (Pauses, waiting to see if Rahima will say anything.)

(Rahima is silent.)

Roberto (Student Teacher): But if you don't want to introduce the T.E.A.C.H. speakers, I'll do it for you.

Rahima (Student Teacher): Thank you.

Roberto (Student Teacher): You're welcome. But in return, I want you to co-facilitate the workshop on name-calling with me.

Rahima (Student Teacher): Sure.

Roberto (Student Teacher): I'm planning to look at both racist and homophobic name-calling.

Rahima (Student Teacher): Okay.

Roberto (Student Teacher): Okay.

Rahima (Student Teacher): Thanks for understanding.

Roberto (Student Teacher): Yeah. I know what it's like. My family is very religious.

Space limits a reporting of all the rich discussions that have emerged from my students' discussions of scenes 9, 10, and 11. Here, I will report on three of the most frequent discussions that arise in readings of the play. The first discussion has to do with the variety of understandings and knowledge of homophobia and the lives of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people that high school students and teachers bring to initiatives such as Anti-Racism and Pride Week. Some high school students, like the character Chris, are leading openly gay lives and have a wealth of knowledge about homophobia and anti-homophobia education. Other high school students, like the characters Ray and Diane, are discussing homophobia for the first time. In this first discussion, my teacher education students and I talk about the importance of beginning with definitions of terms and language commonly used in anti-homophobia education work. As explained by Collins (2004), this is a pedagogical strategy used by the peer educators from T.E.A.C.H. when they conduct anti-homophobia workshops in elementary and high schools classrooms. We also talk about the importance of challenging the use of any derogatory words to talk about LGBTQ people in anti-homophobia workshops, whether they are used intentionally or not. My students often

find it difficult to find the words they need to challenge homophobic name-calling and they appreciate the model provided by the character Rachel in scene 9.^[4]

A second discussion that arises from our reading of scenes 9, 10 and 11 concerns the difficulty of addressing racism and homophobia simultaneously. When the teacher characters, Anne and Rachel, decide to form an alliance to challenge both forms of discrimination the International Day to Eliminate Racism, they encounter resistance from some of the STAR students. One aspect of the resistance has to do with the students' religious beliefs. This is a topic that always provokes a lot of discussion in my teacher education classes and a report of our discussions on religious resistance to anti-homophobia education appears below. Before analyzing that discussion, however, I want to discuss another aspect of the STAR students' resistance. It is resistance that has to do with the fear that work on homophobia will take away the focus from work on anti-racism. When first presented with the idea of an Anti-Racism and Pride Week, the high school student character Diane asks, "Why don't they celebrate it sometime in June when other gay people celebrate it? March 21st is supposed to be about racism." Competition for time and resources is one of the barriers that can hinder or undermine the success of an alliance between anti-racism and anti-homophobia educators. To challenge the divisiveness of the "we and them" discourse that characterizes Diane's remark, the student teacher character Roberto responds by saying, "Some people experience racism and homophobia. We need to fight both together." Roberto's response which refers to the way that LGBTQ people of colour experience multiple forms of oppression, provides my teacher education students and me with a productive theoretical and political framework for pursuing our discussion of the possibilities and challenges of coalition

building in anti-oppression education work. When engaging in this discussion with my students, I have found Kevin Kumashiro's (2002) work on multiplicity and situatedness of oppression particularly helpful. Whenever possible, I have my students work with Kumashiro's ideas in follow-up activities to our play reading and discussion.

As mentioned above, a third discussion that arises from our reading of scenes 9, 10 and 11 has to do with the religious resistance to undertaking anti-homophobic equity work in schools. In the play, religious resistance comes from both students and teachers. In scene 10, the high school student character Diane tells the teacher character Anne that she doesn't want to be a "straight ally" because she doesn't believe "it's okay to be gay". In scenes 10 and 11, the student teacher character Rahima tells her student teacher colleagues, "You can't be gay and Muslim." There are several ways in which Anne and Roberto respond to Diane and Rahima. Anne tells Diane that she wants her to think about people's "right to be".^[5] Roberto tells Rahima there are groups of people who are working out how to be gay and still follow the Islamic faith. When Rahima doesn't engage in a dialogue about opening up religious texts to interpretation, Roberto realizes that she is not ready to consider such a possibility and tells her that he will introduce the guest speakers from T.E.A.C.H., if she will assist him in facilitating a workshop on name-calling. I will begin with an analysis of our discussion of Anne and Roberto's pedagogical work with Roberto's offer to do the anti-homophobia work Rahima is not yet willing to do.

While some of my teacher education students are favourably impressed with the way Roberto negotiated a space for Rahima to take up one aspect of anti-homophobia work – challenging name-calling - others were not. The following excerpts are from two

interviews I undertook with teacher education students who had participated in a *Snakes and Ladders* reading. The interview excerpts illustrate two different ways students have responded to scenes 10 and 11 (partially reproduced above) and point to the kinds of class discussion the scenes have provoked. The first excerpt begins with my teacher education student, Judy, telling me about which characters in the play engaged her most. In the second excerpt, Barb, who read the part of the teacher named Rachel, tells me which character irritated her most. Both Judy and Barb are pseudonyms.

Interview Excerpt 1

Judy: ... Rahima and Roberto, I was very interested in those two characters and the kinds of discussion they were engaged in...

Tara: ...Tell me a little bit more about Rahima and Roberto. What particular issues did you find to be really important? What kinds of interaction, or what, what spots in, in the play when they were working together did you think were important?

Judy: ...The discussions they were having around religion and queerness and how those fit together and -- It was interesting to me to see their relationship develop and the kinds of ways that Roberto was questioning Rahima. And I, I have respect for his negotiations with her and, and also I think for her, the way she was interacting with him in terms of stating where she was at, what she was uncomfortable with and yet also maintaining her relationship with him and -- I think they, of all the characters, come to an interesting sort of, I'm, I'm not sure whether it's a compromise or just an interesting space of negotiating together and working together...[Interview, February 4, 2004].

Interview Excerpt 2

Tara: ... tell me a little bit about your impressions of Rachel the associate teacher and what it was like to, to play her.

Barb: I don't, I didn't have any. Like with her, there wasn't any strong emotions. But some of the other teachers that were [in the play]... I felt really strongly [about what they were saying], like, they were really irritating me, or their ignorance was really annoying.

Tara: Interesting... Do you remember whom in particular? Was it the principal that you got annoyed with or was it some of the students that you got annoyed with?

Barb: No, it was one of the other, well, the one teacher who, or student teacher, I found really annoying...I think she was, she was supposed to be, I don't remember her name but, just so, not willing to, to listen and-

Tara: Right, [Rahima] the one, the one who had problems doing the workshop. And she had issues-

Barb: She didn't feel comfortable talking about it or introducing it because what if somebody thinks she is [accepting of homosexuality] and it's like, "get over it," you know. [Interview, January 22, 2004].

While teachers are in a powerful position to positively intervene and counteract much of the discrimination that occurs in schools, their individual commitment and preparedness to deal with different kinds of diversity and equity issues vary. Some teachers do not hold equity philosophies, while others may hold strong social justice philosophies. However, like Rahima, teachers may shift their positions in relation to particular equity issues, such as homophobia (Robinson, 2002; Robinson and Ferfolja, 2002; Robinson and Ferfolja, 2001). Given the different and shifting equity positions

that characterize teacher education classrooms, post-play discussions that include both Judy and Barb's impressions of Rahima and Roberto's interaction in scene 11 are important. Such discussions provide students with access to ideas or discourses that may be different from those within which they currently position themselves. Barb's remarks suggest that Roberto is assisting Rahima in reproducing religious homophobia. Judy's remarks suggest that Roberto is accommodating a colleague's religious beliefs in order to maintain an important professional relationship. A third discourse that has arisen in classroom discussions is about Roberto showing respect for the religious pluralism evident in his secular school. Positioning oneself in each of these discourses carries different possibilities and constraints for anti-homophobia education in public schooling.

The three discourses just mentioned also found their way into post-play discussions that took place at the *2nd Annual International Conference on Teacher Education and Social Justice* in San Francisco in July 2004. The names of my colleagues involved in the discussion are also pseudonyms.

Sam: Roberto should have pushed Rahima more. Tell she is being homophobic
(Roberto is assisting Rahima in reproducing religious homophobia).

Kris: Roberto handled it well. He told Rahima you can be Muslim and gay. He told her about a group that was working it out. He made her think. He pushed her in a way that was appropriate, that acknowledged her strong beliefs (Roberto is showing respect for religious pluralism in his school).

Nan: But if she's not pushed even more, she'll think it's enough to stop the slurs and have gay friends. Just because you have Black friends, it doesn't mean you're an anti-racist (Roberto is assisting Rahima in reproducing religious homophobia).

Jim: I want to talk about the importance of having allies at school. Not all allies are perfect allies. Rahima is not a perfect ally for Roberto. But she's a good enough ally. In a school of Johns [teachers who are not interested in doing any anti-homophobic equity work], Rahima is an important ally. Even if you would prefer that should introduce T.E.A.C.H. rather than refuse (Roberto is accommodating a colleague's religious beliefs in order to maintain an important professional relationship).

Jess: Roberto gives Rahima a safe space [to talk about anti-homophobia education] and an entry point for engagement. It's a small act of subversion. When it comes divine values, people incline themselves towards the particular position of their community. Not all communities are ready to work with religious texts and open them up to interpretation (Roberto is showing respect for religious pluralism in his school). [Field notes, July 25, 2004].

Each of the three discourses that emerged from the discussions of Roberto's pedagogical work with Rahima evaluates the potential of Roberto's efforts differently. When my teacher education students ask me which discourse provides the most effective way forward, I respond by saying that I find it helpful to ask what each particular discourse will cost and benefit anti-homophobia educators in a particular interaction at a particular school at a particular moment of time. For example, we can ask if Roberto's offer to introduce T.E.A.C. H., if Rahima agrees to co-facilitate a name-calling workshop, will

benefit Anti-racism Week and Pride Week. I would argue it does. We can also ask if it contributes to Rahima's continuing journey as an anti-homophobia educator. I would argue that it does. We can ask if Rahima's refusal to introduce T.E.A.C.H. because she does not believe it is okay to be gay reproduces religious homophobia at the school. I would argue that it does. We can ask if this is something Roberto has to "live beside" (Lewis, 1999) at this moment of time. I would argue that it is. We can ask if the cost of reproducing religious homophobia at the school is overridden by the gains of a name-calling workshop co-facilitated by Rahima and Roberto. I would argue that it is. Other anti-homophobia educators will disagree.

Before returning to plot summary of *Snakes and Ladders*, I want to briefly discuss the teacher character Anne's pedagogical work with the high school student character Diane. As mentioned above, Anne responds to Diane's religious resistance to becoming an anti-homophobia ally by asking her to consider the following:

People are. We have to respect the right of all of us to just be. Be who we are. And that's not easy. And it doesn't happen without some kind of conflict. Because we don't live in the world all by ourselves.

In our discussions about Anne's work with Diane, I have argued that Anne is reproducing religious homophobia by talking about respecting LGBTQ people's "right to be" rather than respecting LGBTQ people. I argue that respecting people's right to be represents a discourse of tolerance rather than a discourse of respect and affirmation of LGBTQ lives. However, once again, I also believe that it is important to ask what Anne's response of tolerance buys her at that moment. If Diane becomes involved in one of the anti-homophobia workshops because she believes in respecting people's "right to be," then

the coalition building work between the GSA and STAR moves forward. However, while a discourse of tolerance may support efforts to challenge homophobic name-calling in the halls and classrooms of public schools and may promote coalition building between different equity-seeking groups of students, it is not a discourse that can achieve an inclusive school that respects and affirms LGBTQ lives and families.

Before ending this pedagogical analysis of our discussions of scenes 9, 10 and 11, it is important to outline the TDSB's institutional position on religious accommodation and anti-homophobia education. Following their equity policy, the TDSB sees anti-homophobia education as human rights education and safe schools education. Students from families who would prefer their children not discuss homosexuality at school are not allowed to opt out of human rights and safe school education activities at their school. This school board discourse of anti-homophobia education as Human Rights and safe school education is another discourse that is discussed in my teacher education classes. It is an institutional discourse within which teachers and students who teach and learn at the TDSB are expected to position themselves.

Returning to the plot of *Snakes and Ladders*, plans for Antiracism and Pride Week go ahead despite people's reservations and the tensions involved in pursuing both anti-racist and anti-homophobia initiatives. However, when a parent calls the superintendent with her concerns about the anti-homophobia events, he asks Karen to facilitate a discussion about these events at the next School Council meeting. Antiracism and Pride Week is then in jeopardy. In the last scene, several characters discuss the importance of Anti-racism and Pride Week as a means of implementing the Board's equity policy. In accordance with the TDSB's institutional discourse of equity,

Antiracism and Pride Week is allowed to take place. However, in response to the objections raised by three parents, it will undergo an assessment by the principal.

I would like to conclude this article with a brief summary of what my teacher education students' discussions and interviews reveal about the pedagogical possibilities of *Snakes and Ladders* for anti-homophobia education. First, working with the play modeled productive pedagogical approaches to anti-homophobia education in public schools. As discussed earlier, the teacher character Rachel has provided many of my teacher education students with a way to respond to the use of the term *faggot* in their own classrooms.

Second, working with *Snakes and Ladders* provided me with a way to respond to the different and shifting equity positions evident in all teacher education classrooms, including my own. Reading the play allowed a variety of oppressive and anti-oppressive ideas or discourses, as well as fears about engaging in anti-oppression education, that were raised by a set of characters from the script, rather than from the teacher education students themselves. Students could explore contradictory desires, such as the desire to protect high school students from homophobia and the desire to hold on to orthodox or traditional religious beliefs about homosexuality. By representing different and shifting equity positions in the play, I was able to provoke debate and dialogue about a variety of discursive approaches to anti-homophobia education in public schools. As Kumashiro (2002, p. 9) writes, "Every educational discourse, approach or practice makes possible some anti-oppressive changes while closing off others." Our discussions around religious resistance to anti-homophobia education allowed us to consider what different discursive responses benefit and cost anti-homophobia educators.

In my continued work with the play, I want my teacher education students to continue to analyse the kinds of understandings and educational changes that are made possible by particular discourses and practices and the kinds that are closed off. Such an analysis is important for cultivating the kind of leadership we need to strengthen anti-homophobia education initiatives and practices in schools.

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^[2] *Snakes and Ladders* is an ethnographic play script with an obvious anti-homophobia agenda. That being said, there are many ways to pursue an anti-homophobia agenda and some readers of the play script will find themselves disagreeing with the viewpoints held by the anti-homophobia educators. Such disagreements underscore the fact that any text is subject to multiple readings, a fact that is explored further in the pedagogical analysis. The views that appear in the text are the views of the individuals that constructed it on the basis of ethnographic data. These individuals include me as the writer of the play script and those people who participated in the validating of the script. The readers' interpretations of the script may or may not map onto the expectations of its creators.

^[3] T.E.A.C.H. is an acronym for Teens Educating Against and Confronting Homophobia a peer education group housed and trained by Planned Parenthood of Toronto. The group visits schools in the Toronto area to do anti-homophobia

education work. For an excellent description and reflection on the work that T.E.A.C.H. does in schools see Collins (2004).

^[4] Rachel's response to the use of *faggot* in the Anti-Racism and Pride Week discussion was modeled after a teacher response filmed in Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohen's (1996) documentary *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School*. The documentary is another excellent pedagogical tool for anti-homophobia teacher education. For a review of *It's Elementary* see Giugni and Semann (2004).

^[5] Anne's response to Diane is also modeled after a teacher response filmed in *It's Elementary*.