

## **Queering “the” Child Where it Hurts the Most. Or: What’s Fundamentally Wrong about Eating Cookies?**

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**ABSTRACT.** A reflection on queer intervention necessitates a reflection on the bulwarks, ultrastructures and dynamics of the queerable and the *un*queerable. My paper will be addressing the issue that contemporary reflection on queer-radical and queer-deconstructionist curricula has only marginally included a radical deconstruction of *the principle of curricula* itself. I explore this “absent paradigm” by referencing the idea of *curricular subjectivity*. My question is: may what is queerable in pedagogy be the pedagogical imperative, logic and schedule itself? For instance, is sex being “adultified” so that it excludes and marginalizes the pre-adult? My point will be that “queer curricula” should try to deconstruct the normative (Foucault) and infrastructural (Deleuze) paradigms of curricula themselves. This opens up queer projects for a “post-curricular” and radically dialogical approach to “childhood” “sexualities” as deconstructables.

“So ah, you’re really into this space stuff huh?”  
“Yeah...Ever since I was a little girl...my Dad used to take me out to this plain...sometimes at night...I used to reach out, and try to touch the stars”<sup>1</sup>

## ***Birth “vs” Arrival***

“An audience which awaits a discussion on sex- and this includes even those who profess a certain sophistication in such matters- usually reminds me of a youngster who knows there are some cookies in the pantry, and who is contemplating a raid. He [*sic*] knows there is something in the pantry which is of interest- he feels a sense of anticipation regarding the adventure, mixed with some apprehensiveness- there is something naughty about the situation, which inspires guilt- but he reassures himself that there are only cookies, and that cookies actually were made to be eaten; and after all, what’s fundamentally wrong about eating cookies?” (Piker, 1947, p. 392).<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I like to make a tentative case for deconstructing normative becomings, and what I consider a fraudulent bifurcation between two disciplinary plots: that of the ontogenetic queer, and that of the propaedeutic queer. The first plot references the psychoanalytic queer, the retro-imagination and *Deutung* of her/his queer ontogenesis; the second delivers the tale of the freshman queer’s “first” participation, celebration, and political inauguration. As is well documented, the first issue has been central in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century lesbian/gay politics, while the second one, only flourishing in the radical 1970s came under considerable strain during the 1980s and 90s. What I want to say is, the idea of a solid difference between *coming-into-being* and *coming-(out)-to-play* is a political one, it is an essentialist one, and it serves to split up and canonize two axes of queer performance: the narration of queer coming-into-the-world (and thus, queer being-in-the-world) and on the other hand the

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<sup>1</sup> Biosphere, “Startoucher” (*Patashnik*, R&S Records 1994). [samples from *Roxanne, the movie*, conversation between Steve Martin and Daryl Hannah, resp.]

<sup>2</sup> Piker, Ph. (1947). The psychiatrist looks at sex offences. *Journal of Social Hygiene*, 33,8, 392-397.

narration of queer being-in-time, queer playtime. What is being stipulated here are two fictions that are simultaneously two forms of closure: *queer birth* (an ending to a queer formation) and *queer arrival* (an ending to a queer journey). Another issue emerges from all this. We observe an activist schism between **queering hetero-patriarchy** and **queering hetero-gerontocracy** (the rule of the aged) and **hetero-parentocracy** (the rule of the progenitor), a schism I reckon being fraud with an unfortunate compromise of tolerating developmentalist psychology while—and even *to the benefit of*—deconstructing gender (qua) psychology.

Now, a key matter in question, the late issue of «Heteronormativity of Childhoods» refers to a (seemingly laudable) act of inclusion (of “child” in “queer”), but it also delimits the “child” problem in sexuality studies to its appropriation in the anti-normativity departments of an adult sexological space, as a problem of gender, of “the sexual”, and indeed one of normativity. Having come a long way in the deconstruction of all of the above, we could well ask, what remains to be queered, and to what extent might we queer?

In contemporary sociological ethnographies addressing the intersection of schooling and gender, we have seen an encroaching of gender analysis, feminist gaze and queer theory onto the lower strata of the scholastic institute, without much intent to scrutinize, deconstruct, or subvert “necessary” stratifications or “necessary” institutes, which are commonly “*assumed*”, notably as research arenas and platforms for gender politics. It seems to me that the child, the school, the curriculum are commonly referenced as inert spatial opportunities, as “sites” to colonize and “topoi” for queer activism. We might speak of a *political spatialization of the school*, where it is metaphorically reduced to “host” the pedagogies that do or do not herald “societal” reform. Also consider the now fashionable pluralization and rebound de-globalization of “childhood”: for it assumes the culturalist notion of a child delimited and

conceptualized by its Anglo-Saxon suffix *-hood* (rendering it rational as a state, a shared condition, or a common destiny, and indeed, a “site to go to”), a plea for commonality subsequently problematized by the advocacy of its plural: *-hoods*.

I have never heard a child say “childhood(s)”.

Faithful to Michel Foucault’s main ethical concern with knowledge being tied to the realization that “everything is dangerous” and that “the ethico-political choice we have to make everyday is to determine which is the main danger” (Foucault, 1983, p. 232)<sup>3</sup>, my question will be an ethnographic one: where does queering “the” child hurt hegemonic society the most? That is to say: what, indeed, *is* fundamentally wrong about eating Piker’s cookies? By asking this question we should of course be interested in contextualizing, not hierarchizing, a range of dangers that seem to coalesce on the late modern stage of sex-pedagogy.

## ***The Gonadalization of Childhood***

Now, to launch us into a mode of engaging with this conundrum, please let us consider the (again) Foucaultian thesis that “the child has a flow [Kritzman: an assortment] of pleasure for which the ‘sex’ grid is a veritable prison.” (Foucault, 1988, p. 117/1996, p. 219)<sup>4</sup> (“[que] l’enfant a un régime de plaisir pour lequel la grille «sexo» constitue une veritable prison”) In a previous talk (Janssen, 2005a)<sup>5</sup> I interpreted this remark as referencing a discursive “*gonadalization*” of childhood, by which I mean to hint at the bio-developmental straightjackets by which children

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault, M. (1983). On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of a Work in Progress. In Dreyfus, B., & Rabinow, P. (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 229-252). 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, M. (1988). Power and Sex. In L. D. Kritzman (Ed.), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. London: Routledge. Foucault, M. (1996). The End of the Monarchy of Sex. In S. Lotringer (Ed.), *Foucault live (interviews, 1961-1984)*. New York: Semiotext(e).

<sup>5</sup> Janssen, D. F. (2005). *On Sex Play* (2). Paper delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Summer School, “Playtime: The Cultures of Play, Gaming and Sport”, Institute for Contemporary Arts, London, July 26-30, 2005.

are configured as proto-mature (specifically: *pre-pubescent*) objects of sexological rationale and pedagogical routine. Other than a political *spatialization*, we here encounter an instance of political *temporization*. Sex is “adultified”, which entails that “childhood sexuality” is constructed as prototypical of a final, mature erotics. We might note in passing that even forefront postmodernizers of sex/gender never established a radical perspective on age stratification (Janssen, 2004).<sup>6</sup>

The problem obviously is that of sex being a monopolistic narrative of the adult aesthetic and its imperialism into what it allows as childhood territory, an aesthetic of “knowing” anticipation, progressive repetition, intelligent delay, consummated climax, and post-climactic contemplation. Here we see a convention of tying pleasures to a gradual, hierarchy-informed and plot-driven consolidation of identity and identifications. Our curriculum reads: the imperative of the no-touch day-dreaming pre-propaedeutic proto-erotic child; the curiously loaded regulatory notion of “first sex”; the propaganda for a constitutive yet bifid routine of rehearsal and repetition; the disciplinary focus on timing and *Bildung* through a pseudo-ritual cult of delay; a singularistic, unifying and metaphysical celebratory moment; and “finally” a necessary, reflective and intellectualizing coda or postscript that frames inauguration. My question here reads: might we need to upset *any* sexuality’s bio-dramatic Bildungsroman, according to which

“first, there is a cultural goal, which is the complete unfolding of all natural qualities; then, there is a clear path toward that goal [...] a reasonably direct line from error to truth, from confusion to clarity, from uncertainty to certainty, from, as the Germans

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<sup>6</sup> Janssen, D. F. (2004). *Postdevelopmental Sexualities: Don't Bring the Kids*. Paper delivered at the XVth Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozialwissenschaftliche Sexualforschung (DGSS) Conference on Social Scientific Sexuality Research “Sexualities and Social Change”, June 25-27, 2004, Lüneburg, Germany.

have it, nature to spirit” (Hans Heinrich Borchardt, 1958, as cited by Trites, 2000, p. 11, my underlining).<sup>7</sup>

What if children could not care less about these adult agenda, this linear plot and closure, this biosocial formula? If they don’t *fit the Curriculum*? What, for instance, if someone like Jacqui Gabb (2001a,b, 2004a,b)<sup>8</sup> questions the “traditional sexual-sexless boundaries” that have conventionally delimited child bodies and parental ones?

Please note that the biomedical model on which this late 19<sup>th</sup> century clinical move is based (“adolescence”) is, if anything, a convention often invoked to cut short a socio-cultural discussion on pre-fertile sexualities (see further Janssen, 2001).<sup>9</sup> However, problems arise where Foucault (referencing Schérer and Hocquenghem’s 1976 subversive work *Co-Ire*)<sup>10</sup> talks about “the child”, and also where the *late* Foucault refers to “veritable prisons”. These problems appear to be: (1) the referencing of life phases as “monolithic cultural categories” (Burman, 1995)<sup>11</sup>, and (2) Foucault’s quintessential notion of disciplinary power which he developed in the mid-1970s.

These problems obviously are immediate ones to the queer pragmatist—after all, isn’t any theory-backed agological “praxis” a delimitation of imagined possibilities for antagonism, subversion, sabotage, or parody?

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<sup>7</sup> Trites, R. S. (2000) *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. Also consider Valens, K. (2004) Obvious and Ordinary: Desire between Girls in Jamaica Kincaid’s *Annie John*, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 25, 2, 123-149.

<sup>8</sup> Gabb J. (2001a). Desirous Subjects and Parental Identities: Toward a Radical Theory on (Lesbian) Family Sexuality. *Sexualities*, 4,3, 333-352; Gabb, J. (2001b). Querying the discourses of love: An analysis of contemporary patterns of love and the stratification of intimacy within lesbian families. *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 8,3, 313-328; Gabb, J. (2004a). ‘I could eat my baby to bits’: passion and desire in lesbian mother children love. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 11,3, 399-415; Gabb, J. (2004b). *Behind closed doors: Intimacy and sexuality in ‘non-abusive’ families*. Paper presented at British Sociological Association Annual Conference, York University.

<sup>9</sup> Janssen, D. F. (2001). *Paradoxia Sexualis. Bio-Othering and Psychopathia Sexualis of the Child (1877-1931)*. Unpublished manuscript. Dept. of Medical History, Philosophy and Ethics, Nijmegen University, The Netherlands.

<sup>10</sup> Schérer, R. & Hocquenghem, G. (1976). *Co-ire. Album Systématique de l’Enfance*. Paris: Recherches (No. 22).

<sup>11</sup> Burman, E. (1995). “What is it?” Masculinity and femininity in cultural representations of childhood. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 49-67). London: Sage.

To children, then, is sex (the adult fixture and market, the site which the adult claims by pronouncing it “adult”) a prison or denied fruit of late capitalist sexology? Does including “the” child mean entrapment of “any” child? When in a prize-winning article Steven Angelides (2004)<sup>12</sup> recently called for a “queer theory of age stratification”, he seemed to privilege an inclusion of children into the notion of “serious” (i.e. seriously queer) sexuality, and to reject the fashionable application to childhood sexuality of a “play” label for this being a “regulatory construction”. This strikes me as important since serious sex doesn’t sound particularly utopian to me, and also because “play” is in important ways basic to the very notion of the queer. Also, ethnographies demonstrate that children themselves opportunistically claim a “playhood” status for their sexual excursions.

Here, regulatory constructions *include rather than exclude* the child in an age-politics over sex; at least *the* child proves to be partial to the cultural “truth” of age, however dichotomous. It is as if *the* child joins “us” where in the musing of Kathryn Bond Stockton (addressing “plots of sideways growth” and time, “that modernist obsession”),

“Our figure of *the* child reveals our most earnest attempts to grasp time and tame its effects”<sup>13</sup> (italics mine).

The double question raised is, (1) is part of the problem of the Normal, the problem of its un/becoming, its perpetual and perpetually nagging liminality; and, if so, (2) where is “the child” complicit in solving (that is: masking) this problem?

Of course, “the” child is altogether constitutive of the current discursive entity that it is supposed to be merely referencing by playing/experimenting it: sex. Current

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<sup>12</sup> Angelides, S. (2004). Feminism, child sexual abuse, and the erasure of child sexuality. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies*, 10,2, 141-177.

<sup>13</sup> Stockton, K. B. (2004). Growing Sideways, or Versions of the Queer Child: The Ghost, the Homosexual, the Freudian, the Innocent, and the Interval of Animal. In Steven Bruhm & Natasha Hurley (Eds.), *Curiouser* (pp. 277-315). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

research demonstrates that pre-adults contribute massively to this entity, for instance by “acting” as consumer categories —nagging “tweens” allegedly plagued and “sexualized” by “encroaching” teenage consumption imperatives and styles. Secondly, “the teen” embodies the splendid icon of sexual society, its exemplary hetero-consumerist ethos, its naïve modernist fictions and identity quests uneasily digested through postmodernist appetites. Lastly, “the child” (we might venture, as a Baudrillardian “extra”) continues to anchor multi-million dollar morality wars. Nay, Euro-American Zeitgeist has not destabilized age-delimited passions from the canons of either gonadal “sex” or its “age” limits—if anything, this “sex” seems to be coterminous with a bizarrely over-funded psychologizing of its boundaries and chronometric parameters. While the West’s cult of egalitarianism has reinvented and to some extent trivialized gender (perhaps to the point of *necessitating* queer discourse), clearly it has allowed a queering of the contents of pedagogy but hardly of the bulwarks, the operational parameters and the discursive necessities of “playful development” as a *chrono—logic*. The rhetoric of *play* (as, for instance, the horrendous notion of “cuteness”), of course articulates a disciplinary form of curricular entitlement, which is constitutive of a subjectivity that is thus rendered “curricular”, i.e., reduceable to its formal and formative trajectory. In its poetic rendering within the academe, for instance, “the child” is literally a body that has *not yet begun to embark on the pursuit of the adult* (pre-adol-escent). Might we “queer” such a rendering without “adulterating” its referent?

### ***Queering the Curricular Subject***

As Angelides rightly points out, the child is known and in fact expected to play around relative centres like the *allos* (another of the same kind), the *heteros* (another



of a different kind), the *hōraios* (the seasoned, ripe, mature), the *xenos* (the alien and unfamiliar), the *phallus* (the patriarchal, the masculine), and so on. This “ludus” Motif situates the queerable child in a Butlerian “matrix” that is not just a heterosexual one, but one comprised of a variety of dimensions, all of which are assumed to be entitled to curricular delimitation, and agogical intervention. In my view, sex-in/as-curriculum (the very idea, the routine) emerges (in fact: *remains*) as the unchallenged metanarrative (Lyotard), matrix (Butler), infrastructure (Deleuze), grid, axis, or overarching politico-economic principle (Marx/Freud/Reich/Guyon/Elias/Marcuse/Kinsey/Money/Herdt) of pleasure (Janssen, 2005b).<sup>14</sup>

I personally consider it worthwhile to study age-delimitation as an ultrastructure of Foucault’s momentous notion of the *pedagogization* of sex. To recall, Foucault found that the latitude of pedagogical necessity is historically rooted in the invention, definition, delimitation, consolidation, and proliferation of its objects. To this I would add that *relative timing* has become a key “measure” of this evermore measurable object, “the child”.

In any case, thinking about normative and ideal-typical trajectories needs to be done inclusively, departing from the specific scholastic definition of *curriculum*. Instead we need a reading that embraces the *total cultural apparatus* that prescribes bodies’ social chronologies, their “private” trajectories, and their medicolegal “decursus”. For instance, early 20th century developmental psychologists specifically de-pathologized adolescent “pseudo-homosexuality” via the rationale of its representing a transitional phenomenon (Spurlock, 2002).<sup>15</sup> This spurious normalization was thoroughly

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<sup>14</sup> Janssen, D. F. (2005b). *Current Western Problems of “Taught” and Propaedeutic Sexualities*. Paper read at the “Cultural Aspects of Sex/Sexuality Education” One-day Conference at the Institute of Education (IoE), University of London, London, UK, 25 May 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Spurlock, J. C. (2002). From reassurance to irrelevance: Adolescent psychology and homosexuality in America. *History of Psychology*, 5,1, 38-51.

contingent on developmentalist rationales, for adult homosexuality continued to be regarded pathological. What we encounter here is not the tyranny of the Category but the tyranny of the Curriculum (here: a temporariness deal).

One could argue that this problem of curricula invites an influx into queer praxis of what elsewhere is called anti-developmental or critical pedagogy, in which not just the themes are queered but also their curricularized dosage. The heteronormative Curriculum, after all, not only articulates a circumscribed and compartmentalized thematic coverage (the stuff of anti-heteronormative content analyses), but also implies a mode of injection, an ethic of titration, and a schedule of exposure and immersion. In short, all curricula are based on the principle “*Curriculum*”, a programmatic *parcours* projected forward in time, a scheme that propels bodies into adventure, situates them *en route*, and delivers them *in due course*. Particularly evident since the first compulsory education laws, the body has become a prodigy, a candidate, an interim, a drop-out, or the end-product of a formalized and rationalized (hetero-)developmental plan. In the 1990s U.S. we have witnessed a veritable cult of the age-appropriate, a *Quest for the Normal* necessitated by the discursive consolidation of sexual abuse diagnostics. Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we might speak of a resulting sexual *blueprintism*. This was already prefaced by the “homonormative” milestone models proposed during the late 1970s and 80s that were to guide sensible forms of mentorship (Cass, Lee, Plummer, Coleman, Troiden, and later Savin-Williams). Here the queer is made less queer by demonstrating its answering to a familiar developmentalist packaging, by anchoring it in normal (if alternative) time, in ped/agogical time.

One might argue that the child as a queer agenda, as a *queerable*, risks to be reduced to a gender paradigm, just as much as one might argue that a focus on curriculum may distract due attention away from gender/sex norms. Allow me to suggest that the

gender/sex complexity passes as “natural” specifically where it passes as a pre-adult “development”, at least where this “pre-adult” passes as a pre-intellectual emotionalist, a political simpleton, a neuro-endocrinological closed circuit, or as a passive culture victim. These categorical natures of childhood should be undone; conversely, lived childhood (only partially reviewed by perceptive autoethnographies, cinema, and art) destabilizes existing “natural”, gonadal, adultist, and otherwise centric orderings of, for example, reproductive sex, “orientated” sex, preference-delimited sex, gendered sex, orgasmic sex, a-traumatic sex, and in other words sex that works, delivers, satisfies, fulfils or “lives up to” some key, pristine “outcome” or finale, some “product”. Here we may irritate what clearly does not irritate celebrated San Francisco anthropologist Gilbert Herdt where he lays claims to “sexuality that is genuine, well rounded and healthy”.<sup>16</sup> I think child/hood pleasure is none of the above, and produces none of the above, and where it is or does, it’s probably not going to be particularly pleasurable. “If you notice, it is the puppies that seem to go against Nature, but grown dogs, never”, notes Havelock Ellis.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Queering Sexual Trajectories***

None of three recent journals<sup>18</sup> that specifically address intergenerational issues in GLBTQ and Queer studies (notable assets, to be sure), have to date offered *explicit* inclusion of age as a deconstructible axis of oppression, disciplinary routine or infrastructural confinement. Curiously, this is so while during the past quarter of a century, the Western medicolegal apparatus has been shifting its interests from gender to age. This status quo in my opinion invites a *philosophy of retaliation*

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<sup>16</sup> Gilbert Herdt, *What is sexual literacy? And why is it so needed now?* National Sexuality Resource Center website, San Francisco State University, 2004?, as accessed July 9, 2005

<sup>17</sup> From a letter written by “an experienced master in one of the most famous English public schools” to Havelock Ellis, quoted in *Auto-Erotism*. See Ellis (1927).

<sup>18</sup> The *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* (2003-...), the *Canadian Online Journal of Queer Studies in Education* (2004-...), and the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* (2004-...).

against what might be called *teleionormativity* (τέλειος, Gr., adult). I haste to say that this requires a critical ethnographic perspective on the autobiographical self (cf. Miller, 1998)<sup>19</sup>, perhaps even a paradigm shift in queer-educational scholarship and activism.<sup>20</sup> We may, as Eric Rofes (2005; cf. 1998)<sup>21</sup> does (in the words of reviewer William Ayers) “[upend] the dogmatic dominant narrative of childhood innocence and its contemporary twin, childhood trauma, exploring the possibility of childhood as much more complex, dynamic, propulsive, conflicted, contradictory, and contested”.

A promising entry to this agenda is offered by Susan Talburt (2004a,b,c)<sup>22</sup> who asks, “What subject positions and narrative endings are privileged in adult talk of LGBT youth?” She argues that we might denaturalize “narrative segments that produce ethnography’s and subjects’ desires for trajectories with a beginning and a destination” (and might we add: desires for *necessary* beginnings and *ultimate* endings). Here Talburt, in effect, deconstructs *the discourse of the interim*, by questioning the starting and end-coordinates of sexual trajectories. The crux being: an ascribed trajectory of becoming may turn out as delimiting as an ascribed fixed status. A critical sexology of youth indeed needs to consider the possibility and relevance of scrutinizing the kinds and forms of “development” as they circulate

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<sup>19</sup> Miller, J. L. (1998). Autobiography as a queer curriculum practice. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Queer theory in education* (pp. 365-374). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>20</sup> Last year’s reader (Bruhm & Hurley, Eds., 2004) clearly furthers this case, as does a number of forthcoming efforts (Driver & Herrup, Eds., *in press*; Dennis, *in press*). Bruhm, Steven & Hurley, Natasha (Eds.) (2004). *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; Driver, S., & Herrup, M. (Eds.) (*in press*). *Queer Youth Cultures*. (Due out 2006); Dennis, J. P. (*in press*). *Queering Teen Culture: All-American Boys and Same-Sex Desire in Film and Television*. Haworth Press. (Due out Spring 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Rofes, E. (2005). *A Radical Rethinking of Sexuality & Schooling: Status Quo or Status Queer*. Eric Rowman & Littlefield; Rofes, E. (1998). Innocence, perversion, and Heather’s two mommies. *Journal of Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Identity*, 3,1, 3-26.

<sup>22</sup> Talburt, S. (2004a). *Becoming Meaningful: Ethnography and Sexual Subjects*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, “Doing the Public Good: Positioning Education Research”, Melbourne Australia, Nov. 28 – Dec. 2 2004; Talburt, S. (2004b). Intelligibility and Narrating Queer Youth. In M. Rasmussen, E. Rofes & S. Talburt (Eds.), *Youth and Sexualities: Pleasure, Subversion, and Insubordination In and Out of Schools*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Talburt, S. (2004c). Constructions of LGBT Youth: Opening Up Subject Positions. *Theory Into Practice*, 43,2, 116-121.

through the welfare apparatus, action fronts, education libraries, developmental models, “awareness” programmes, and postmodern media.

I would also argue that this increasingly requires thus-ramified children to do the critical looking themselves. How are they buying the too-early/too-late binaries of sociological surveys (Cotton et al., 2004)<sup>23</sup>? How is adolescence revisited and Othered by adult auto/biographical reconstructions of the political present (a key illustration was offered by Gordon, 1999)<sup>24</sup>, and how are contemporary adolescents negotiating this *politics of the past*? How problematic are *queer virginities*, for instance: might elementary transitions within the sexual sphere take place from not-doings not to other doings, but to other, more elaborate not-doings (as in the prize-winning read of Mullaney, 2001)<sup>25</sup>? If so, how can you pedagogically address (queerly) complex forms of not-doing without further complicating them? Can you?

A critical analysis of body curricula indeed entails reflection on children as potential self-developmentalists (cf. Kelle, 2001)<sup>26</sup> who might queer their own developments. For instance, there is an obvious performative (other than: colonial) entry to the notion of curricular sex (Janssen, 2005c; cf. Gubrium & Buckholdt, 1977)<sup>27</sup>, which is where the child “acts her/his age” sexually, *as* and *as much as* s/he acts out a (hetero)(normative)sexuality. Research needs to clarify where and how these

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<sup>23</sup> Cotton, S., Mills, L., Succop, P. A. et al. (2004). Adolescent girls’ perceptions of the timing of their sexual initiation: “Too young” or “just right”? *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 34,5, 453-458.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon, A. (1999). Turning Back: Adolescence, Narrative, and Queer Theory, *GLQ* 5:1–24.

<sup>25</sup> Mullaney, J. (2001). Like a Virgin: Temptation, Resistance, and the Construction of Identities Based on “Not Doings”. *Qualitative Sociology*, 24,1, 3-24.

<sup>26</sup> Kelle, H. (2001). The discourse of ‘development’: how 9- to 12-year-old children construct ‘childish’ and ‘further developed’ identities within their peer culture. *Childhood*, 8,1, 95-114.

<sup>27</sup> Janssen, D. F. (2005c). *Sex and Curriculum in Life Narratives: A Poststructural Meditation*. Mini-Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Cultural Anthropology, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands; Gubrium, J., & Buckholdt, D. R. (1977). *Toward Maturity*. London: Jossey-Bass.

performative dimensions —maturity, sex, gender, subversion, competence—intertwine.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Some Suggestions***

To invite a discussion more directed toward pragmatism, please join me in the following musings.

♦ Anthropology, philosophy, sexology, what came to be called culture studies, these were all missing from my own primary and secondary school experience, they were not among the canons of “primary” needs. Their late (tertiary) introduction can be explored in anticipation, questioned, and in fact undone through a facultative course model at primary school level.

♦ Even in secondary school, sex was never discussed in my history, “society”, “religion”, art, or Greek/Latin classes. The common “inclusive” status of sexuality within “biology”, “health”, and “hygiene” classes is of course a discursive subjugation and delimitation of its plot, its hetero-dramatis personae, its de-politicization, and its scholarization / disciplinarization / spatialization. This is something that has to be addressed head-on, toyed with, and ridiculed. The transition from primary to secondary school class subjects might prove a useful entry to a critique of class routinization, mono-disciplinary coverage, and inclusiveness.

♦ The notion of sexuality being a *schoolable* subject further invites a paradigm question: is sexuality a structure, a disciplinary tactic (a norm), a performance, or an

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<sup>28</sup> Notable efforts were offered by Vehkalahti, K. (2003). *Defiance and Vulnerability. Negotiating Age and Maturity in the Early Twentieth-Century Reform School Context*. "Youth – Voice and Noice", Nordic Youth Research Symposium 2003, NYRIS8, Roskilde University, June 11-14 2003; Eckert, P. ([1994]). *Entering The Heterosexual Marketplace: Identities Of Subordination as a Developmental Imperative*. Working Papers on Learning and Identity 2. Undated draft retrieved from author; Korobov, N., & Bamberg, M. (2004). Positioning a 'mature' self in interactive practices: How adolescent males negotiate 'physical attraction' in group talk. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 22, 471-492; Aapola, S. (1997). Mature Girls and Adolescent Boys? - Deconstructing Discourses of Adolescence and Gender. *Young - Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 5,4, 50-68; Gonick, M., Harris, A., & Aapola, S. (2000). 'Doing it Differently:' Sexual Maturity and Cultural Resistance in Australia, Finland, and Canada. *Journal of Youth Studies* 3,4, 373-388.

infrastructure? *What is it?* Exercises in ontology might identify these options as positional choices, asking, do children choose to be taught sex as a Marxian “underclass”, or as a Foucaultian “category” of psychosocial self-censoring self-categorizing imminent neurotics, or as Deleuzean “dividuals”, critical users and navigators of information violence? Do they actually choose? Do they have to choose?

♦ The question of hetero- and Other-normativities flows from here. For instance, is heteronormativity to be addressed in terms of a war, a complex, or a coordinate? Here we encounter a difficult and perennial dialectic between a politics of psychogenesis and a politics of participation (cf. Schmidt, 2004, and in a more complex reading, Lesnik-Oberstein & Thomson, 2002).<sup>29</sup>

♦ The issue of positionality, of course should allow the idea of positioning oneself in a hetero/sexual timeframe, this “long way to go” with its normal pace and natural order of events and interventions. This, to conclude, I reckon is the most guarded dimension of contemporary sexological status quo, the most painful, and therefore requires careful negotiation. In my view a juxtaposition of ethnohistorical case studies (cf. Janssen, 2003, I)<sup>30</sup> may prove quite damaging to a Western hetero-order when hurting where it hurts the most, at its chronometric parameters. ♣

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<sup>29</sup> Schmidt, G. (2004). Kindersexualität. *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung*, 17,4, 312-322; Lesnik-Oberstein, K. & Thomson, S. (2002) What is Queer Theory Doing With the Child? *Parallax* 8,1, 35-46

<sup>30</sup> Janssen, D. F. (2003). *Growing Up Sexually*. Volume II. *The Sexual Curriculum*. 0.1 ed., Victoria Park, W.A.: Books Reborn. 0.2 edition online as linked from: [http://www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/GUS/GUS\\_MAIN\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/GUS/GUS_MAIN_INDEX.HTM)