



Are We Not Fatigued?: Queer Battle Fatigue at the Intersection of Heteronormative Culture

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Abstract

Grounded in three narratives, a lesbian high school student, a transgender college student and a high school teacher/researcher, this paper discusses student resistance in heteronormative spaces and places it relates to themes of agency, affect, and reflexivity. The purpose of this paper is twofold. It seeks to, on one hand, further nuance William A. Smith's framework of Racial Battle Fatigue as it applies to questions of school, culture and fe/male bodies. On the other, this piece discusses the multiple possibilities in resistance and with resilience when young wo/men enact a sense of agency to create spaces of equity and access in school. By foregrounding the multiple intersections of self and sexual orientation in public schools today the paper discusses the direct impact of what the authors call *Queer Battle Fatigue*; an examination of the nexus of the ontological and epistemological as they relate the questions of equity and access in schooling.

Keywords: Racial Battle Fatigue, Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville.... At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may

require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I seldom answer a word (DuBois, 1903, p. 1)

What makes a person or group a “social problem”? Who decides when one’s way of being becomes a problem to broader sociocultural norms and values? When one is labeled as a “problem”, and treated as such, what are the material consequences for being affected in this way? Every day in schools, children are marginalized based on race, sexual orientation, ability, gender and religion (Apple, 2006; Cooper, 1892; Hendry, 2011; Truth, 1851; Quinn & Meiners, 2009; Valente, 2011; Woodson, 1933). Through un/intentionally marginalizing school structures, children that are either identified in or identify with these groups become seen as sociocultural problems (den Heyer, 2003; Jackson, 1968; Winfield, 2007; Woodson, 1933). By creating *friction* (Tsing, 2005) with sociocultural norms and values, children from the aforementioned groups are often essentialized as problems to the predetermined structures in schools and broader ecologies.

In schools, traditionally marginalized groups face both implicit and explicit marginalization through curricular and social structures (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2002; Page, 1991; Quinn & Meiners, 2009; Tatum, 2003; Varenne & McDermott, 1998). While the authors acknowledge that all groups face varying degrees of exclusion, this paper focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ¹) populations and their allies. To be

¹ While the acronym “LGBTQ” is designed to be inclusive of the multiple orientations of the community, we would like to note that there is a significant difference between sexual

clear, raising questions as to why and how *any* child is seen as a “problem” in schools is important. Without scholars and educators asking these questions, little progress could be made toward questions of equity and access in schools.

In light of these important dialogues in the field, the emphasis on the LGBTQ population in the paper is twofold. On one hand it is intended to disrupt the assumption of values that legitimize and privilege heteronormative values that are pervasive in schools (Quinn & Meiners, 2009). On the other, it seeks to further questions of battle fatigue (e.g.: Smith, Yosso & Solóranzo, 2006) by asking how, why, and to what extent LGBTQ students and their allies experience exhaustion by simply being themselves in schools and universities, regardless of whether they are out or closeted for their own protection.

Grounded in three narratives, a lesbian high school student, a transgender college student and a high school teacher/researcher, this paper discusses student resistance in heteronormative spaces and places it relates to themes of agency, affect, and reflexivity. The imbrication of these narratives is significant for at least the following reasons. First, through our stories we seek to expand William A. Smith’s framework of Racial Battle Fatigue as it applies to questions of school, culture and fe/male bodies. Second, these narratives discuss the multiple possibilities in resilient (Helfenbein, 2010) resistance when young wo/men enact a sense of agency to create spaces of equity and

orientation and gender expression/identity that is implied in its grouping but is nonetheless often overlooked.

access in school. By foregrounding the multiple intersections of self and sexual orientation in public schools today the article discusses the direct impact of what the authors call *Queer Battle Fatigue*, an examination of the nexus of the ontological and epistemological as they relate the questions of equity and access in schooling.

The authors use collaborative discensus (Gershon, 2009) as a method for collecting and analyzing the narratives. Qualitative research is always inherently collaborative (Behar, 1996; Gershon, 2009; Lassiter, 2005; Rosaldo, 1993). Attending to the reciprocal nature of qualitative work complicates traditional “hierarchical constructs that place the scholar at some apex of knowledge and understanding” (Lawless, 1992, p. 310), inscribing the role of the local actor as less knowledgeable or Other. While collaboration is often held with the ideal of consensus, the role of consensus is often to help build a context where participants concede ideas or ideals to engender compromise (Gershon, 2009). Collaborative discensus allows collaborators to maintain particular positions that are unique (Gershon, 2009). This opens the possibility for the authors to “transparently negotiate difficult contexts or content, and provide complex, layered interpretations of meaning” (Gershon, 2009, p. xxiv). Further, it allows room for a kind of friction (Tsing, 2005) in and between narratives that is important for a movement toward change.

The product of this collaborative discensus is a kind of polyphonic text (Bahktin, 1982) where the narrators can provide different ways of

knowing and being in a space that does not value one identity over another. The purpose of an intertextual framework (Gershon, Lather & Smithies, 2009; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Wozolek, 2013) is to call to attention the juxtaposition of narratives while transparently exploring the nuanced intersections of the authors' distinct experiences. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the position of the texts is significant. The students' narratives are placed to take up the majority of space on each page as they are separately presented. The lead author's narrative runs beside that of the students, moving parallel to and aside rather than on equal space to those of the students. Rather than coming second to the story of the teacher/researcher, they are physically given more room than that of the lead author. Like most qualitative work, without the students' bold willingness to participate, this paper would not exist. While all narratives render those involved vulnerable in some way (Behar, 1996), it shows a particular kind of courage to share these narratives. Therefore, their placement in the polyphonic text is meant to visually invert inherent teacher-student power structures that tend to be present in schools daily.

This paper begins by reviewing queer studies literature as it relates to questions of friction, affect and ontology. It continues by discussing the important impact of Racial Battle Fatigue as it seeks to further complicate the theory at its intersection to queer theory. The narratives that can be read separate or together follow the literature. Finally, a discussion that focuses on

the importance of Queer Battle Fatigue will be presented prior to any concluding thoughts.

It is important to note that what is presented in this paper is a framework to discuss fatigue from the perspective of LGBTQ individuals and their allies. The framework of Queer Battle Fatigue is intentionally fluid and is not presented with a set of tenets or ideals to anchor the theory. This is because we wish to center the discussion on lived experiences rather than tenets that in some fashion validate what it might mean to be queer and fatigued through battling every day commonplace aggressions.

Trans-Identities: Place, Identity and Being

Much like Ahmed's (2010) discussion of feminism, to be recognized as queer² in a heteronormative context is to be "assigned a difficult category and a category of difficulty" (p. 1). Such recognition, either through one's outward identity or through another's identification as queer, are often moments of friction between self and other, identity and culture (Ahmed, 2013; Cvetkovich, 2013; Foucault, 1978; Pinar, 1998; Tierney, 1997). This friction between queerness and heteronormativity is significant as it highlights the "sticky materiality of practical encounters" (Tsing, 2005, p. 1). While friction can be productive, such encounters can also provoke negative outcomes (Tsing, 2005). For example, while a Gay-Straight Alliance often provides a safe

² As Pinar (1998) argues, the term "queer" is simultaneously held as a term of contention and coalition. Following this argument, this paper will use the term as a point of coalition in the LGBTQ community rather than as a negotiation of identity politics in, with and between groups.

space for its members to discuss issues in their local and less local communities, they can also inadvertently out LGBTQ students and their allies. The complication of being out/ed in this and other contexts often becomes a question of which set of positive or negative outcomes, of movement, that the assignment of a “difficult category and a category of difficulty” will engender.

One can always affect and be affected within sites of friction. However, it is important to remember that affect and being affected are not dualistic. Though even within structural recalcitrance, dualisms still not only exist but are also often the cause of such stagnation (Sedgwick, 2003). Rather, the process of both affecting others and being affected are more akin to Nespor’s (1997) image of a tangled knot. Affective interactions are therefore layered connections and intersections that are articulated as a network of relations and understandings rather than linear connective binaries and boundaries. One’s experience with/in these connections and intersections is both implicit and explicit (Sedgwick, 2003; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Stewart, 2007). For example, a drag show often elicits implicit and explicit encounters with affect/being affected for both participants and observers.

Within these affective intersections, friction becomes the “force or forces of encounter [that]...transpire within and across...shuttling intensities” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 2). These intersections of affect are important to all marginalized groups. They are also particularly significant for the LGBT community. This is because affective tensions are often as responsible for

disrupting identification as they are for the construction of identity (Sedgwick, 2003). Further, it is the connections within this tangled knot of affect/affected can become driving forces for sociopolitical change. Similar to Sedgwick's (2003) discussion on shame, affect through the lens of these connections can become a site of transformational resistance (Ahmed, 2013; Cohen, 2013; Muñoz, 2013; Sedgwick, 1993).

How is one's ways of being and knowing shaped within these affective tensions? How do individuals identify with/in a cultural cartography that has historically and politically formed sociocultural disensus for their ways of being? McDermott and Varenne (1995) argue that culture is "not so much a product of sharing, as a product of people hammering each other into shape with the well-structured tools already available" (p. 326). The practice of pounding one's way of being into structured, socioculturally defined molds is similar to Mills' (1998) discussion on social ontology. Mills uses social ontology as a way to explicate a way of being that is socially constructed through exclusivist contracts that shape ideas and ideals about individuals and groups. The "contracts" Mills describes are imposed upon socially designated "subpersons," a term that parallels Spivak's (1988) description of the "subaltern," to talk about traditionally marginalized people. These contracts are internalized to the point where they become habitus (Bourdieu, 1993) and are questioned and unquestionable. In the case of the LGBTQ community, the "epistemology of the closet" (Sedgwick, 1993) is a "powerful place of

unknowing and knowing [within] an occupied and consequential...space” (Sedwick, 1993, p. 52). From this perspective, being closeted and the existence of an epistemological closet can be understood as a social ontology.

While Mills’ (1998) work on social ontologies is certainly helpful to think about questions of Othering and ontological ceilings, Mills applies this theory solely to questions of race, ignoring questions of gender and sexual orientation. To be clear, it is extremely important to attend to questions of race. On one hand, race is visible. It is this visibility that maintains sociocultural ideas and ideals that a “child’s black face is a curse” (Woodson, 1933, p. 3). Socioculturally constructed visibilities of blackness create and maintain a “feeling of alienness, strangeness, of not being entirely at home” (Mills, 1998, p. 3). On the other hand, sexual orientation is not visible. This is not to say that sexual orientation cannot be worn (Clark, 1993), learned (Halberstam, 2011; Quinn & Meiners, 2009; Rich, 1993) or identified by others (Hall & Jagose, 2013; Sedwick, 1993; Tierney, 1997). Rather, it is this kind of (in)visibility that is central to affective encounters within the epistemological closet. Therefore, there is significance in using LGBTQ issues to further nuance social ontology. Not only does it further the possibilities of social ontology as it relates to marginalized individuals and groups. In spite of longstanding conversations about identity, construction of self and positionalities, and questions of community in LGBTQ studies (e.g.: Ablove, Barale & Halperin, 1993; Hall & Jagose, 2013), discussions about the

ways in which these multiple facets combine to form a social ontology are often overlooked.

Queer Battle Fatigue: Fighting the Everyday in Heteronormative Spaces

The construction of one's ways of knowing and being through sociocultural ceilings, norms and values create the structure through which individuals experience daily microaggressions that engender exhaustion for marginalized groups and individuals. So how does one negotiate the everyday of hatred and discrimination? When one's way of being is devalued through normalized historical-political structures, how does that affect one's way of knowing and being? The counter-narratives of individuals who experience Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) provide strong answers to these questions.

Accounts of those who endure RBF illuminate an image of the exhaustion a person of color endures from being constantly positioned to interpret and negotiate daily microaggressions with peers, authority or community members (Smith, Yosso & Solóranzo, 2006). Racial Battle Fatigue scholarship is significant because puts into friction (Tsing, 2005) the image of a post-racial America with the reality of the everyday microaggressions people of color encounter in multiple contexts.

What is explored here is the possibility of further complicating Racial Battle Fatigue as it relates to the LGBTQ community. This is not to take away from the powerful narratives of RBF but rather to add the complication of questions of gender and sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

and questioning individuals are constantly and consistently marginalized through schooling and broader social contexts (Abelove, Barale & Halperin, 1993; Hall & Jagose, 2012; Quinn & Meiners, 2009). This marginalization is both implicit and explicit, existing in social and political, verbal and physical forms. Howard Efland, Harvey Milk, Charlie Howard, Rebecca Wright, Roxanne Ellis, Michelle Abdill, Matthew Shepard, Fred Martinez and Chrissie Bates are but a few examples of LGBTQ individuals who have been victims of hatred and explicit violence in the name of heteronormative culture.

The following is a list of young people who took their lives due to LGBT related bullying in a twelve month period of time in one country in Ohio: Matthew Homyk, Michael Mayell, Jarod Piatak, Ashley Reid and Devon Baab. What makes this difficult is the link between the microaggressions that they faced and their lives as socially identified queer youth. Specifically, without a note, it is difficult to prove the link between an individual's identity, social perceptions of that individual, peer interaction and the confluence of factors that led to their death. Further, it is important to note that the bullying is not necessarily a reflection on these individual's identities. However, among those who knew them, all evidence seems to indicate that the microaggressions that they encountered and the social factors that made them feel helpless, leading to their deaths, is in no small part due to the microaggressions that they faced every day.

Nationally, one in five LGBTQ students have been victims of physical assault at school. Additionally, eight of ten LGBTQ students admit to being verbally harassed at school while six of ten LGBTQ students admitted to feeling unsafe at school, leading to twice as many LGBTQ students attempting suicide over their straight peers (Kosciw et al, 2010). The notion of Queer Battle Fatigue recognizes these implicit and explicit aggressions LGBTQ people and their allies encounter daily that contribute to a cartography of queer exhaustion. The narratives below are but three examples of such exhaustion from Queer Battle Fatigue. They represent not only counter but also corrective and collective narratives about the everyday of living and being with Queer Battle Fatigue.

Counternarratives of Injustice

Ross: Peeing Comfortably: A Cisgender Privilege

It has been months since I have held my pee for fear of using a public toilet. In the grand scheme of things, that is not a long time. I pass as a guy now. A thirteen, maybe fourteen year old with translucent, fuzzy stubble and visible acne. I certainly do not look my 20 years. But I pass, and that’s the key. When I have to go now, I still walk in with my head bowed, hoping nobody sees me. Fortunately, guys do not look each other in the eye

Boni: Fatigued Be-ing with Depressed Teens

The call came through around nine o’clock at night. A recording of my principal’s voice played on the other line. “I’m calling with the sad news that one of our students committed suicide this

in the bathroom, nor do they expect greetings or comment on each other's makeup or fashion choices. But there is still the risk that their eyes might cross my chest or hips. They are the two places on my body that can still give me away. The places I keep under wraps.

Reasonably, I know nobody thinks twice. Usually walking into a men's room is confirmation enough that I am indeed seen as male. But for a long time I was used to stares that lingered a little too long, narrowed eyes, and comments behind my back.

"She uses the men's room, do you see? She thinks no one notices," they would say. That's not true, of course. I am particularly aware when they see me enter what they believe to be the wrong restroom. Every moment of every day, I am aware.

But I have gotten tired of holding my pee and I have come to the realization that I shouldn't have to. That voiding one's bladder is a right, not a cisgender person's privilege. Do I care that they talk about me? Of course I do. It is very difficult to

evening. Please check your district e-mail for further details. There will be a brief staff meeting before school begins tomorrow morning." I was driving home from my adjunct position at a local university and couldn't check my mail at the moment. *Which child's depression had I missed?* Then the mental anguish and pleading began. *Please don't let it be one of the students from the Gay-Straight Alliance. Kathy 'seemed "off"... She's already had two suicide attempts this year. Not her. Not any child. Not another*

reach that level of apathy, and what they say is rarely kind. I doubt I will ever be completely comfortable in male-only spaces, not because of who I am but because of how I am seen. Now, I often feel like an imposter, a mole that is trying not to be caught. Even years from now, when I pass completely and have had surgery to correct the parts of me that hormones cannot, there may still be moments when I will expect someone to call a manager.

Static Gender: A Passport to Avoid Harassment

I handed my passport to the man behind the desk. “Reservation under Varndell?” he asked. I nodded. He looked me up in his computer, then frowned. “Please wait a moment.” He looked at me critically and went to the back.

I was standing in the lobby of the Geneva Youth Hostel in Switzerland on the last day of a three-week trip. I’d already paid online for my bed, and asked for a female dorm because of the gender

*child. How did I miss this?
How do we always miss
this?*

I am a biracial teacher in a predominantly Anglo, heteronormative suburban school district.

When I began at the district in 2010, there was no Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) for students in the district.

In my previous district I had advised an established GSA for two years and I felt surprised to learn that no such group existed. After one academic year, and some internet searches, students had found my

marker that was still on my passport. I silently hoped the showers here had stalls, not like the communal ones in the Budapest hostel. Unlike Budapest, however, if they denied me my bed here, I had no place else to go. There were no other hostels in Geneva, and I didn't have the money for a hotel. Besides, I was exhausted, hungry, and late for my hormone shot. I waited.

A woman came from the back and looked me up and down as well. The man explained to her in French the situation, thinking maybe I didn't understand. She told me to wait while she called a couple of other people to make sure I was allowed to stay. It took more than a half hour to clear me. Even then, I had to explain my life story to my bunkmates when I met them. I found myself keeping my head as low in the female restroom as I did in men's rooms everywhere else. I came to realize that no gendered space is comfortable in this stage of transition.

In the future, this may change. When my gender marker and I are less at odds, official things

profile from the previous district and began asking if we could establish such a group at the high school. The district was conservative but I naively thought to myself, "*Why not? After all, it's 2010*" and proceeded to start the paperwork for a new club.

After the group's establishment, the co-advisor and myself began receiving e-mails from colleagues. Some were supportive. Some accused us of promoting pedophilia because "all gays are pedophiles". Others accused us of

will not be as uncomfortable. Next year at school I get a male roommate. On one hand, I see that going more smoothly than checking into a hostel on the other side of the world. On the other, I do not know what to expect. There is a lot people don't know, and while I am committed to promoting education about transgender people, it is generally difficult to get people to understand that something as sacred as divided gender spaces can be turned upside down by someone who does not conform.

Taylor: Bruised and Beaten by Zero Tolerance

I've always known what being gay or lesbian was and what it meant but I never really knew that I was one to fit the profile. In about 6th grade I began questioning my sexuality for the first time. Now here I am, four years later, fifteen years old, and proud be an out lesbian. Proud, that is, until I cannot be myself in school without experiencing verbal and physical abuse by my peers.

My story of abuse begins in 8th grade. That

sponsoring radical political agendas. A few colleagues expressed their feelings in person. One such occasion where a colleague decided to voice his opinion about GSA activities was on the Day of Silence. The Day of Silence is an annual peaceful observance of the voices that are silenced daily by homophobia when students vow to cease all forms of communication for one day. As I taught and went about my day silently in support of the students' work, this

year was already hard enough. The harassment for being gay began that year before had personally come to terms with my feelings or orientation. It's like everyone else identified me before I determined my own identity. Aside from the constant bullying, I was also dealing with the loss of one of my best friends to suicide early in the year. Prior to his death, he had told me in confidence that he was bi curious and wasn't quite sure how to handle social perceptions of his sexuality. However, I attribute his death to the extreme bullying he received every day. After watching his struggle and dealing with my own personal experiences, the idea of coming out really frightened me. Whether I wanted to do it or not it was something that was eating away at me. However, I knew that if I couldn't accept myself for who I am at heart and couldn't learn to let others think what they want of me that I would no longer be living on this earth. I certainly wouldn't be writing this.

Right after winter break word had gotten

individual approached me to tell me that he thought he might be gay but that he wasn't worried because we have a "club for fags" in which he can participate. He smiled and laughed at the fact that I refused to respond and break my vow of silence. Similarly, other colleagues express inappropriate curiosity about the group by asking questions like, "Which ones are gay?", expecting me to out the students that my position as advisor is designed to protect.

Along similar lines,

out that I was dating a girl from our school. The whispers behind our backs, curious and cruel stares made the news seem so big. I feel it was in part because we were at a school full of wealthy Christians and because I personally felt greatly affected by the gossip. For whatever reason, no one really gave the other girl shit. Unlike me, she didn't seem to care how people viewed her or what they thought. A quality I really admired and struggled with myself.

The worst bullies were a group of boys that had been picking on me since kindergarten. In middle school they joined the wrestling team together. Their new strength was intimidating as they began to use their size as an aide in the harassment during this difficult time. One day I heard them talking bad about one of their teammates. Having been verbally harassed by this group in the past, I felt bad and decided to tell the boy about the gossip. It's a decision I still question today.

Five minutes after they heard what I had done,

while the administration has been supportive in allowing the club to exist and participate in activities like the Day of Silence, to date the head principal has yet to attend a single meeting and of the other four building administrators, one has attended only one event. This includes days where we have nationally known guest speakers, like the national president of PFLAG, or community members, such as the county auditor or local police, in attendance. As athletic events and student council activities

the boys started running after me. They were pissed. They cornered me and began to beat the crap out of me in an area of the school where there were no cameras and no escape. When they were done beating me senseless they told me to go make one of my other friends kill themselves and asked me to kill myself because no one wants to talk to a faggot. I laid there for a minute, crying in pain before getting up to stagger to the principal's office. After I told him what happened, he told me that there was nothing he could do because there were no cameras and no witnesses. How could he say that? Did he just ignore the fact that I was covered in red marks and scrapes? Later that week my mom went to the school, told my story and asked how these boys could represent the school as wrestlers. She was told the same thing; there was nothing that he could do.

My fears around my ability to survive the daily harassment and bullying that are a part of my high school experience are not just confined to questions of physical violence. For example, my

are generally attended by at least one administrator, students in the club have been forward about asking why they cannot receive similar support. As I feel the need to remain professional, I am always left without a substantial answer.

Yet, the disdain for the group as voiced by my colleagues and the significant lack of administrative support only provide an oppressive backdrop for the most challenging work that my job as an ally can bring. Each year I am privy to about

middle school had a strong culture of bullying that included bullies pantsing other students. I have a very masculine, butch appearance for which I have received verbal and physical violence from other students who do not approve of my look.

Therefore, every day I live in fear that, as a sick joke, students will use this practice as a means to question and expose my gender. As a result, I wear 2-3 layers of clothes under my pants. If the pants have a pull string, I tie them. If not, I wear a belt. I do this hoping that more layers will equal less opportunity for my classmates to expose my body. The outcome from this anxiety compounding my fear of physical and verbal abuse is that I have elected to enroll in a tech school where I report to one room of the school building and take all but one of my classes online. This allows me to avoid being in the general population of the school for the majority of the school day.

In the last two years I have known six students that have committed suicide. Of those six, four were very close friends. The first was my

half a dozen cases of children who are suffering from extreme depression. I have visited children in the hospital after suicide attempts. I have watched children bury their friends. As I provide a number my students can reach me at until 8pm each night, I have had students that I've never met call and explain that they or a friend are suicidal and have subsequently spent hours on the phone to the police, parents and children's services.

There are times that I feel as the intensity of

aforementioned friend, a wonderful bi-curious person. The second person to pass away was a high school senior without ties to the LGBT community. The third person to pass away was a good friend and a strong ally of the LGBT community. Less than a week later, another friend left us. Some people rumored that she was bisexual but, perhaps more importantly, she functioned as an ally to the community. Only a month later, but during the same weekend, teens from a neighboring city took their lives. One was an ally, the other was bisexual. If they are not succeeding at suicide, they are making attempts. Trying to escape the depression. Every year I see several friends in the LGBT community struggle with the everyday of bullying and depression in school. I know because I'm one of them. Making a daily decision to keep breathing. To keep going.

I am constantly told by other individuals at school to go kill myself. The statements are often accompanied by specific suggestions, like being told to drink bleach. Because of moments like

the school year increases that my job is on one hand to work hard to prevent these tragedies while simultaneously waiting for the next unforeseen moments of heartbreak.

While I work to remain professional and stay as calm as possible when my heart breaks for those children we've lost, I know my position is far less tiring than the children who are living in the everyday of discrimination. As an ally I cannot pretend to understand the constant and consistent experiences of hatred

these, I have thought about suicide and acted on it, landing me once in the hospital for two weeks. I no longer wanted to live on this earth and play its games.

These schools claim to have a zero tolerance policy for bullying but I've lost count of the times I've walked into the office and told them something had happened, only to be brushed off by the administration. So when you're at school or in public, and you feel like you have no support from anyone, you begin to live your life in fear. Fear of bullies, fear of being alone, it's the most tiring and terrifying feeling.

I'm 15 years old and have attended public school my whole life. It's supposed to be a place where students should feel safe, not a place that makes kids want to harm themselves. Yet in my 9 years of schooling I've been bullied, called a "fag," been kicked down and felt like there was no other escape besides self-harm or suicide. I wish there was more of a support system for people, but especially for the people who are different because

the LGBT students relay about schooling. What I do know is that I will not stop being an ally who works to defend their right to "just be" in school. And yet, there are moments that I feel so lost in my inability to prevent their grief that I too feel bone weary exhaustion, the fatigue of battling for the mental and physical health of LGBT students and their allies in a place where all students should have the right to feel safe- at school.

they're looked down on more. All I'm asking is that we do something to help so kids like me can feel safe at school. When did that start being too much to ask?

Discussion: Queering Positions

The purpose of this final section is to attend to certain portions of the stories in order to highlight the intersections of the narratives, literature and Queer Battle Fatigue. The purpose of not providing a more theoretically based conclusion is to allow the narratives to speak for themselves while speaking to and against the previously positioned theoretical framework. The stories presented above function as a set of examples that bridge the theory of Queer Battle Fatigue and the everyday experiences of LGBTQ people and their allies. Presented above are but three examples of how counternarratives can function to describe how microaggressions can affect people as well as have an effect to on the broader LGBTQ community and its allies. The specific examples drawn from the narratives below are just a few points pulled from the intersection of daily experiences in (micro)aggressions and LGBTQ community. As with any counternarrative, there are always nested and concentric layers that are significant to the telling and understandings of an event (Geertz, 1973).

Point 1: (Micro)aggressions

Ross: *But for a long time I was used to stares that lingered a little too long, narrowed eyes, and comments behind my back. “She uses the men’s room, do you see? She thinks no one notices.”*

Taylor: *The whispers behind our backs, curious and cruel stares made the news [of our lesbian relationship] seem so big...I’ve been bullied, called “fag” and...told to go kill myself.*

Boni: *Colleagues express inappropriate curiosity about the group by asking questions like, “Which ones are gay?”...Some accused us of promoting pedophilia because “all gays are pedophiles”.*

Both Queer and Racial Battle Fatigue result from aggressions that leave the victim negotiating the meaning of the encounter. Through these affective intersections in, around and between people, victims are often left wondering if what was said or felt was meant to be implicitly or explicitly discriminatory (Smith, Yosso & Solóranzo, 2006). However, as demonstrated in the examples above, it is difficult to define these aggressions as *micro*, particularly when they are both implicit and explicit in nature while being specifically directed toward an individual or group. We therefore argue that aggressions are seldom *micro*. While they may be less explicit in the broader context of daily experiences, they are still aggressive victimizations of LGBTQ people and their allies. While we do not wish to minimize or leave out the process of interpreting (micro)aggressive encounters, our purpose here is to draw attention to the

underlying hostility while not forgetting the effects of homophobic antagonisms.

Point 2: Ontological Fatigue

Ross: *Even then, I had to explain my life story to my bunkmates when I met them. I found myself keeping my head as low in the female restroom as I did in men's rooms everywhere else.*

Taylor: *Because of moments like these, I have thought about suicide and acted on it, landing me once in the hospital for two weeks. I no longer wanted to live on this earth and play its games.*

Boni: *There are times that I feel as the intensity of the school year increases that my job is on one hand to work hard to prevent these tragedies while simultaneously waiting for the next unforeseen moments of heartbreak.*

Queer Battle Fatigue affects not only one's way of knowing but also one's way of being. First, social ontology (Mills, 1998) presents a socially and politically predetermined cultural understanding of a person or group. It contributes to the way LGBTQ people and their allies are socioculturally perceived as well as what is considered "acceptable" behavior toward these individuals. Second, moving beyond habitus and into the everyday, as these aggressions play out, they often become a part of how one functions and reacts to these sociocultural norms and values. All three narratives demonstrate an ontological shift from fatigue, a reason at affective tensions to "no longer want to...play [these] games".

Point 3: Resistance and Resilience to Hostilities

Ross: *In the future, this may change [and]...I am committed to promoting education about transgender people.*

Taylor: *Now here I am, four years later, fifteen years old, and proud be an out lesbian.*

Boni: *What I do know is that I will not stop being an ally who works to defend their right to “just be” in school.*

Within moments of extreme exhaustion, people still have agency and the ability to resist untenable spaces and places. While the friction (Tsing, 2005) LGBTQ individuals and their allies certainly engenders negative confrontations that often result in homophobic aggressions, they can also provoke a sense of agency and resistance. As illustrated above, despite fatigue each narrator explicitly states some form or feeling of resistance to hostilities. Further, the narrators are clear that the social complications do not take away their sense of agency in and against hegemonic structures that tolerate such aggressions.

Final Thoughts

I think everyone who does gay and lesbian studies is haunted by the suicides of adolescents. To us, the hard statistics come easily...The knowledge is indelible, but not astonishing, to anyone with a reason to be attuned to the profligate way this culture has of denying and despoiling queer energies and lives (Sedgwick, 2013, p. 3)

This paper began by quoting DuBois, by asking what it means to be considered a social “problem.” It uses that image of problematic black youth, the idea that any person’s “black face is a curse” (Woodson, 1933, p. 3) to parallel the lived experiences that make the epistemological closet (Sedgwick, 1993) a social problem to heteronormative spaces. Indeed, culture has denied and despoiled queer energies, marking its dominance with verbal and physical violence.

We use the term “Queer Battle Fatigue” not as a replacement or in opposition to other such theories of exhaustion felt through social hostilities but rather as a way to further nuance counterstories with questions of gender and sexual orientation. Further, it is used to attend to the ways in which queer theory often argues for LGBTQ people making space in heteronormative culture by arguing for the interruption of social ontologies in order to create broader social space. Finally, Queer Battle Fatigue is used as an acknowledgement to the particular kind of hostilities LGBTQ people and their allies face within ontological ceilings. We call for scholars to use such counternarratives to move away from knowledge of depression, self-harm and suicide that “is indelible but not astonishing” (Sedgwick, 2013, p. 3). In fact, we argue for the opposite (re)action. We should always feel shocked by these numbers and somewhat saddened by these stories. If we do not, how can we every really understand or begin to empathize with the exhaustion of the everyday of Queer Battle Fatigue?

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Taylor Speer is currently a high school student enrolled in the district's technology school. She has played lacrosse for six years and participated in the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) for the past two years. During that time she has served on the executive committee of the Gay-Straight Alliance, working as the community events coordinator. Taylor is interested in questions of social justice for the LGBT community and hopes to continue serving marginalized populations through outreach programs like the high school GSA. Her future plans include going to college to earn a degree in psychology in order to help those who have suffered injustices similar to her own in ways that she herself did not receive in her youth.