

# Queering Science for All

## Probing Queer Theory in Science Education

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### Looking for an Opening

*I am looking for an opening. I am sitting on the edge of my chair, my mouth dry. It is late afternoon and the conversation has been going on for over an hour. I am one of twenty-six graduate students and post-docs sitting tightly in a room, the same room we have been in all day, talking to each other about science curriculum materials. This conversation, the one we are having now, is on the agenda as “Tea Time Chat: Rethinking Diversity.” Someone passes around a platter of tea cookies. At the front of the room, four of the principal investigators on the project are visible on a television screen, participating via Internet Polycom technology from several remote locations. We have been exploring how curriculum materials can address issues of diversity. So far, the conversation has been mostly about reaching inner-city African American students and sometimes about urban schools that have students from multiple ethnic backgrounds. The two people leading the conversation, both post-docs, are African American. They are the only people of color in the room or on the TV. Everyone defers to them as the experts on diversity. I am looking for an opening to suggest that in addition to race, class, and gender, maybe there are other ways to think about diversity. I am looking for an opening to try to get people to really “rethink” diversity.*

*My pulse begins to race to about 110 beats per minute. I feel the sweat begin to bead on my forehead, and I feel short of breath. I don’t hear what anyone else is saying right now; I am only trying to figure out how I am going to say it. I want everyone to realize that there are other people who get left out of science education, who are invisible in the discourse, and who are marginalized in schools. Can anyone tell how anxious I am? I silently curse that it always works this way, that whenever I want to bring up this topic, it always feels like I am coming out again (and again) for the first time, even though most of the people in this room and on the TV know I am a lesbian (I think they do, anyway). But every time it feels this same way. The anxiety is there about how the topic will be received and whether or not people will see it as relevant. I am going to take the risk, once again, because it is relevant, it is important, and it has bearing on all students’ learning and all teachers’ teaching.*