Disturbing the Power Equilibrium: How Notions of Private and Public Construct the Lesbian Educator in the American School System

Lillian Petrovich Brandt
Loyola University Chicago

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DISTURBING THE POWER EQUILIBRIUM:
HOW NOTIONS OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CONSTRUCT THE LESBIAN
EDUCATOR IN THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
LILLIAN PETROVICH BRANDT
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
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Thank you to my parents, who came to this country for freedom from oppression and a better life. You instilled in us the importance of education, and your next generation turned out to become a family of educators.

Thank you, Dr. Noah Sobe, who for six years pushed me to dig deeper, think harder, and dare to imagine myself as a scholar. Your knowledge is vast, and you share freely. I could not have asked for a better mentor and dissertation chair. Hvala mnogo.

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No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so.

—Paulo Friere
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ABSTRACT

Educational institutions are places permeated with the dominant social ideology and are sites for social reproduction; that is, the American school socially reproduces the white, male heteronormativity of the American public life. These dominant institutions perpetuate privilege for some, but not for others who are not represented in the dominant discourse. At times rendered invisible and private inside the school, a lesbian educator, may, in fact, be visible and public outside the school. There is a paucity of research on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) educators, yet queer educators exist in the school setting in which a “don’t ask don’t tell” mentality prevails. By framing non-normative personal lives as something that should not be shared in the school setting with children, a public/private binary is formed for oppression to continue. This study will focus on this private versus public dichotomy and research the following: How do lesbian educators reinforce and/or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and their public lives? How does the school institution influence lesbian educators’ lives in this negotiation? A mixed method approach was utilized, with an online survey providing descriptive statistics and an online focus group and individual interviews providing insight into the lives of six lesbian educators.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you ... when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing. It takes some strength of soul—and not just individual strength, but collective understanding—to resist this void, this non-being, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard (Rich, 1986).

Years ago, part of this quote by Adrienne Rich was given to me when I attended a seminar on equity issues in schools. Since then, this sentence has been tacked on my bulletin board at work: “…When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.” The meaning of that one sentence has challenged me to learn more about marginalized identities, particularly the marginalized identities of gay, lesbian, and transgendered students and staff in high schools. As an educator who has worked in secondary and junior high schools for over 20 years, I became interested during this past decade in the diversity of experiences that schools have, particularly in the non-normative discourses emanating from lesbian and gay students and staff.

The Personal is Political

The personal certainly is political, and I could relate to being thrust into what Rich refers to as this void, this non-being. I am one of those women who “came out of the closet” later in life after being married to a man and living a privileged heterosexual
lifestyle. Nowhere was this binary of being and non-being more evident to me than my workplace, for I work in one of the most heteronormative and homophobic social spaces of today—the American public high school. I went from living the life of the heterosexually privileged teacher to a life in the margins; in a public sphere which at its best wanted to hold me up as a token of tolerance and at its worst found me unfit to teach.

Certainly, I have witnessed great strides during the last 15 years since I first claimed my identity of “nonbeing.” More teachers are coming out of the void, but there is still a social stigma attached to being a gay or lesbian educator in K-12 education. Gayle Rubin’s words still ring true: “The more influence one has over the next generation, the less latitude one is permitted in behavior and opinion. The coercive power of the law ensures the transmission of conservative sexual values with these kinds of controls over parenting and teaching” (Rubin, 1984, p. 290). Gay teachers are still too often silenced in K-12 education by having to deny who they really are. A significant part of us may be left behind as we walk through the front doors of our school buildings.

In the mid-2000s, a group of anti-gay activists permeated the school in which I work. When I, who never hid my lesbian sexual identity in school, became involved in organizing a panel of LGBT students to speak to freshman during a diversity unit (students of color and disabled students also shared their stories on the panel), the activists took out a full-page newspaper advertisement in our local community newspaper in protest. In their advertisement, they stated:

We believe these students are being used to further the causes of gay activists in the high school...What teachers are preparing these students to speak? What
personal information are they discussing with these students? Is it appropriate to have teachers discussing personal sexual behavior and choices with students?

The anonymous teacher referred to in the ad was me, as I was one of two sponsors working with our LGBT students in our Gay-Straight Alliance. The other sponsor was heterosexual. The anti-gay activists concluded their advertisement with the slogan:

“[XXX High School]—Rein in your staff who are using the school to promote their personal views.” Before we knew what hit us, we administrators were besieged with emails and voicemails from “outraged” citizens. Below are some of the emails I received:

Stop screwing around with the minds of your young people and try to do your job. God help you idiots who think you can continue to damage our future and trash the rights of parents to protect their kids. Not everyone is as blind and stupid as you who think being queer is okay.

When your own children are sexualized and approached in a molesting fashion because of your tolerance maybe then you will wake up.

What in the world are you people trying to do? If you’re a homosexual keep it to yourself we as Americans do [not] want to know about your sexual ideas or your sexual fantasies…you will teach how to be a fag but you will not take time to teach them to be Christian…you make me vomit!!!

May you all, the supporters and promoters of the gay agenda, pay dearly, for the immorality you support, from the gay teachers in the locker rooms preying on the innocent to you the administrators that promote the sick behaviors…BURN BABY BURN!

For me, the last straw was when we received threats from a Neo-Nazi group in Ohio. Our school was forced to go on heightened security alert and our local police department beefed up patrols around our school building. For weeks, I wondered if someone was going to play shoot the dyke as I walked across the parking lot toward the school building in the morning. Dorothy Allison was right on when she wrote that we are most vulnerable to them as individual human beings. “…individual lesbian mothers
fighting for their children, individual lesbian teachers demanding their right to do the
work they love, and individual lesbian citizens who want to live as freely and happily as
their neighbors, whether they wear leather or all-cotton clothes, keep compost heaps or
drive motorcycles, live with one woman for thirty years or treat sex as a sport and are
always in pursuit of their personal best” (Allison, 1994, p. 119). The closet never looked
so warm, cozy and safe, and I longed to run back into it.

Truth be told, I did climb back into it. For quite some time, I went to work in my
usual smart business attire. Every morning, I slipped into that administrative suit and
buttoned it up so tightly that none of me showed through. As a member of the principal’s
group, I become The Man. I went through various stages with these experiences, and I
realized that I was no longer able to say I was just an educator who happened to be a
lesbian who happened to get married in Canada. Rather, my experiences at my school
pathologized me as an educator, woman, lesbian, and human being. I became deviant and
immoral.

Yet I had power. As someone who is white. As a school administrator. As The
Man at my high school. I have the power to name, the authority. I briefly exited the void
and tried to socially construct one small portion of the world by claiming my identity and
all that it means. I ran back in to the margins, but what I have since learned is that the
void is actually multi-faceted and quite powerful, for it is exactly part of my nonbeing
that is the glue that holds up the symbolic norm. In the social space of the public high
school, the symbolic is that of white heteronormativity and it is prevalent in everything
from school dances to the curricula. But without us nonbeings lurking in the void, the
identity of normative could not exist. That is exactly why my being, whether I am a
lesbian or any other marginalized identity, frightens people.

I turned to academia and began to question and wonder about these various
identities vested within the public institution of the American high school, and the binary
relationships between private/public, heterosexual/homosexual, and being/non-being.
Why is the study of these identities residing in the void important in a K-12 educational
institution? Simply put, because our primary purpose is to educate all students fully. And
all means all. We are there to provide a safe environment for teaching and learning to
occur before these adolescents become young adults, moving on to a world beyond
proms, football games and homework. We in K-12 education are teaching young adults
who will go into a world that is filled with differences. The 21st century is now a global
world, with instant communication and world-wide communities replacing our small
homogeneous living spaces.

I have come to realize that the public recognition of a gay identity need not
deteriorate into an identity-based politics that causes divisiveness within our world (and
schools). One does not need to give up their identity in order to achieve mutual
understanding. For example, most of the authors in This Bridge Called My Back (1983)
offered up a piece of themselves by sharing their own journeys to their personal
identities, identities forged through a mixture of the political and social oppression
brought down upon their sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity. Each of these authors
speaks to the oppression she experienced in the void, and many offer up coalition
building as the key to emerging out of the void. Since many of these radical feminists
adhered to the mantra of “the personal is the political,” they shared the common goal of owning and distributing one’s own narrative. Within the context of queer theory and feminism, I have been forced to ask myself some new questions. What discourse is publicly allowed to take place in the public institution of the American school? What counter-hegemonic narrative can “the other” offer? How can we exit the void and enter into the real? The real is mediated through social, political and economic discourses, so, as a traditional institution, can the public high school really be host to transformational discourse?

Rather than take sides in the theory versus praxis debate, I am being challenged to live my theory. Ultimately, the social of my institution is producing me. A feminist? An anti-racist leader? A radical lesbian? All of the above? I’m not certain. I am continuing to reinvent myself and my identity is shape-shifting. One thing I know, however, is that I now look forward to what is next. The response for a critical educator has to be personal, local and immediate. Resisting the void, or making the invisible visible, means I have to be willing to be uncomfortable.

**Overview of Theoretical Framework**

People generally belong to many different categories and can assume multiple identities. In the past, the identity of “homosexual” has conflicted with the identity of “educator,” as is evidenced by the purposeful silencing of topics of homosexuality in education. Dennis Carlson, professor at Miami University writes, “Sexual orientation matters, just as race matters, gender and class matter, and other differences among individuals matter; they should be taken into account in our relations with others, and in
our hiring, recruitment and admission policies. To refuse to see or recognize the identity of those who have been oppressed or discriminated against because of that identity is to deny that oppression and discrimination exist” (Carlson in Pinar, 1998, p. 111). Identities are socially constructed, depending on the legal, political and sociological factors of the day. In order to combat the negative stereotypes of the past, educators can serve as moral exemplars of their collective identity as both teacher and gay (Capper, 1999, p. 6).

Replacing negative scripts with positive ones requires that first, crucial step—the public recognition of our authentic selves.

Queer theory, the theoretical framework utilized for this study, brings to light these non-normative lives. We can help alter our cultural norms by recognizing, validating, and engaging with identities other than the normative social traits of white, male, and heterosexual. My study examined the participants’ own articulation and interpretations of their experiences as lesbian educators, and placed their experiences within the larger social institution of the American school. Hence, the social construction of “educator” and “lesbian” was analyzed while the American school was deconstructed vis-à-vis societal norms. The social construction of the lesbian educator was studied in terms of the negotiation of her public versus private identity. Research was conducted on how these educators’ private lives affect the way they work and navigate within the school institution.

Rather than focusing only on the lesbian educator as “the other,” normativity also became an object of analysis. In other words, their lived experiences were not solely the object of analysis. Rather, their stories helped shine a light on oppressive structures and
discourses in the school system, and their counter-hegemonic narratives offered a way to disturb the equilibrium of the status quo.

Evans (2002) also points out that what appears to form a binary, such as public/private, natural/unnatural, personal/professional, political/neutral, are mediated, not clearly delineated, and are often controlled in specific situations by those who have the most power (p. 176). Connections will be made between both levels—how these individual educators’ lives reinforce or challenge the dominant systems of the institution, and how the system influences their lives.

**What is Queer Theory?**

According to Annamarie Jagose, Professor at the University of Auckland, queer theory moves beyond gay and lesbian studies and is an analytical model pointing out the incoherencies in the supposed stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Patrick Dilley, professor at Southern Illinois University, reminds us that queer theory is not just about studying those people whose sex lives are non-heterosexual. Rather “it is about questioning the presumptions, values and viewpoints from those positions (marginal and central), especially those that normally go unquestioned. Queer theory is in part about opening and reclaiming spaces, both public and private” (1999, p. 462). Concepts of identity are key tenets of queer theory, but it avoids a fixed, essentialist identity and adheres to the post-structural concepts of identity into multiple and unstable positions (Jagose, 1996, p. 3).

Queer theory’s power lies in its ability to disturb existing notions of identity. At first glance, it may appear that using queer theory to deconstruct identity issues is
problematic. After all, doesn’t queer theory call into question the very existence of identity? Doesn’t queer theory posit that identity is so fluid that it cannot be pinned down? But it is actually this fluidity of identities, this non-essentializing of identities, which queer theory can deconstruct. One should not theorize that queer theory itself is outside the field of identity; rather, it continually interrogates and deconstructs identity categories (Jagose, 1996, p. 132).

Foucault contributed greatly to identity concepts in his writings about the evolution of homosexuality. More than an act, it began to appear as a form of sexuality in the 19th century when it was transformed from the act of sodomy into a way of being in the world. Thus, the homosexual identity came to be. “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (1978, p. 43).

According to Foucault, discourse helps shape identities. In The History of Sexuality (1978) he writes, “There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak for them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourse” (p. 27). Digging deeper, Foucault continues to counter that sexual discourse in institutions such as schools is interlocking, hierarchized, and articulated around power relations (p. 30).

Foucault concentrated on the relationships of power as they are revealed through discourse. Sternod (2011) states that in Foucault’s later writings, he deals less with the
rules that govern discourse and more with concepts of power as revealed through
discourse. Power is seen in everyday life rather than an outside force just benefitting the
ruling classes. Rather, discourse plays an active role in formulating our own realities and
what we consider to be the “truth.” Truth is constructed through our discursive practices
and often, it is reproduced so readily that it is taken for granted or seen as “common
sense” (p. 272). Hence normativity is constructed as the normal, and anything outside of
it as abnormal.

One must not read Foucault as advocating for a type of identity politics, for the
power does not reside in the identity itself. Rather, power comes from the resistance
found in acting against the normative. Resistance does not exist outside of these power
relationships. Rather, they are a part of this power relationship. *Disturbing the
Equilibrium*, the name of this dissertation, will focus on these acts of resistance.

Adam Green, Professor at the University of Toronto, states that queer theory has
been criticized by some sociologists for its “anti-identitarian” position and “refusal to
name a subject” (Green quoting Seidman, 2007, p 27). Green also finds it a paradox that
queer theory seems to renounce Foucault’s notion of the modern sexual subject by
emptying the meanings of social categories (2007, p. 29). However, Green ultimately
concludes that queer theory’s promise comes not as an extension of sociology, but a
theory that can operate “in tension” with sociological approaches to the subject (2007, p.
27). Green argues that sociological analysis can be applied to study the social
construction of the subject (through discourse or interactions), while queer theory can be
utilized to deconstruct the social order within the broader field of normativity (2007, p.
43). In queer theory, rather than focusing only on “the other,” we also focus on heteronormativity as the object of analysis. Green sees this intersection of constructionism and deconstructionism as filled with potential.

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, two key queer theorists, are careful in defining heteronormativity as more than heterosexual privilege. Rather, heteronormativity is “produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture” (Berlant & Warner, 2000, p. 318). Heteronormativity in and of itself is not the issue here, however. Nor is heteronormativity bad in and of itself. Rather, the problem with heteronormativity is in the way it can reproduce institutionalized racism, patriarchy and classism to the elimination of any other type of life narrative or social discourse.

Before proceeding, we must take some more time to acknowledge that queer theory defies institutionalization and assimilation into dominant spheres. Berlant and Warner (1995) assert that queer theory is not the theory of anything in particular and that there are no clear-cut solutions to solving problems by using queer theory to solve for “x.” So how can we take something like queer theory and apply it to an institution like the public school, a traditional institution that mirrors traditional society? Far from being pessimistic, it is precisely this ambiguity that allows queer theory to be utilized in a variety of contexts and thus offers educational researchers a wide open forum for new discourse to emerge. Queer theory’s potential is that it provides perspective and archives to challenge the comforts of privilege and status quo (Berlant & Warner, 1995). It
provides the counter-hegemonic narratives that act as the resistance to power. Thus, the equilibrium of the status quo becomes disturbed with these discourses. Most importantly, perhaps, is the transformative nature of creating new publics and in the case of the school system, creating a new knowledge base beyond the traditional canon. Berlant & Warner (1995) state that similar to feminist, African-American, Latino(a), and other minority projects, queer theory is “knowledge central to living.” It is both traditional in the sense that pedagogy involves the formation of identities and subjectivities, but radical in the aspiration to live another type of life narrative (p. 348).

Warner suggests that those embracing their own queerness, those who come to a queer self-understanding, know of the need to challenge heteronormativity in every aspect of their existence. In other words, a politics that does not mean integration into dominant institutions and societal norms, but seeks to actually transform values, norms, and laws that make relationships and institutions oppressive (Cohen, p. 29, 2005). This is a far cry from the tactics that many schools take, such as implementing “tolerance” policies and “multicultural curricula” as a solution to dealing with differences. Rather, queer theory offers a way of thinking that actively promotes alternative ways of being in this world. Furthermore, queer theory’s power lies in its ability to disturb existing notions of identity. It is actually this fluidity of identities, this non-essentializing of identities, which queer theory can deconstruct. One should not theorize that queer theory itself is outside the field of identity; rather, it continually interrogates and deconstructs identity categories (Jagose, 1996, p. 132).
Intersectionality and Queer Theory

Queer theory has been criticized because of its failure to incorporate the particularity of racialized sexualities into its core. Also, it has been pointed out that many of the leading queer theorists are white, thus operating from a white viewpoint (Green, 2007, p. 39). However, again it is the fluidity of queer theory that allows the framework for educational researchers to deconstruct the intersectionality of power and oppression, not in our shared history of identities but in our shared history of our marginalization to the dominant power structures of white heteronormativity (Cohen, 2005). Oppression plays out in a variety of ways for different people in different cultural contexts in different times. This situated nature of oppression along with multiple and intersecting identities of individuals makes it difficult to utilize any anti-oppressive form of education that concentrates only on one form of oppression or one identity (Kumashiro, p. 38). It perpetuates holding up one identity in opposition to another, causing a binary.

Thus, drawing upon critical theories such as queer theory, feminist theory, and/or critical race theory together can be key in analyzing and transforming institutions—Cherrie Moraga states that our danger comes in both ranking our oppressions and failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression (1981, p. 34). For example, just as critical race theory disturbs the notion of colorblindness, queer theory disturbs the notion of heteronormativity and sexual sameness. It disturbs the notion that identity is fixed and seeks to understand the construction and relational aspects of an identity (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004; Talburt & Steinberg, 2000). Most importantly, both theories move beyond mere representation/visibility and emphasize action.
Queer theory allows us to think of the concept of both the private and public community in a different way, and within these communities stand networks and identities that are multi-faceted and intersecting. One does not need to give up one’s identity in order to achieve mutual understanding. People generally belong to many different categories and can assume multiple identities. This concept can be viewed as the paradox of utilizing queer theory, a theory that espouses the fluidity of identities but in deconstructing the meanings of identity also allows for a fuller understanding of intersecting identities. Queer theory rejects the singular view of identity, but offers us the ability to look at the multi-faceted identities.

Another public/private tension lies in our resistance to add anything to our knowledge base other than the Westernized canon, thus silencing and making invisible those who do not conform. Yet queer, racialized bodies are often publicly marked and subjected to violence. Judith Halberstam writes (2005) that the real work in collecting these stories “must be to create an archive capable of providing a record of the complex interactions of race, class, gender, and sexuality that result in murder, but whose origins lie in state-authorized formations of racism, homophobia, and poverty” (p. 46). The public school, one such state-authorized institution, is one such social space that thus must be deconstructed.

It is important not to confuse queer theory with multicultural education. Multiculturalism in education has been around for decades, but has not had any impact on school improvement. As long as multiculturalism still functions without any radical change to the status quo, it will continue to benefit whites (Jay, 2003, p. 5, quoting
Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Instead, the ultimate goal of truly critical multicultural education is to move us toward knowledge that is transformative, creating new concepts and paradigms. However, Michelle Jay, assistant professor of social foundations at the University of South Carolina, reminds us “transformative knowledge is dangerous. It threatens those dominant groups in our society who have a vested interest in the perpetuation of the mainstream academic knowledge that supports the maintenance of dominant structures, long-present inequities, and the current power arrangements in the United States that often serve to subordinate racial minorities” (Jay, 2003, p. 5). It is precisely because of this threat to heteronormativity that much of the multicultural curricula ones finds today is along the lines of February’s Black History month or October’s Gay History month. Many have called this the “foods and festivals” type of multiculturalism. While such activities certainly have a place within school settings, it cannot function as a transformative agent because of its lack of questioning dominant power structures and forms of oppression.

Jay reminds educational researchers of multiculturalism to turn their attention to the hegemonic ways that the “hidden curriculum” enables educational institutions to tout multiculturalism as their newest initiatives on one hand, but still suppress the transformative powers of multiculturalism by continuing to keep power and leadership in traditional forms of dominant ideology. The term “hidden curriculum,” as used by Jay, refers to those things that students learn through the every day experience of attending schools (2003). The hidden curriculum is part of the knowledge base that makes up schools and is passed along to students together with the academic content of a particular
course. This moves us beyond syllabi, lesson plans, data and official policies on paper. It consists of the implicit messages transferred to students through the socially constructed realm of schooling. The hidden curriculum was first coined by sociologist Phillip Jackson in 1968. Other prominent scholars have also looked at the hidden curriculum, such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Jonathan Kozol, and bell hooks.

**Dissertation Organization**

Chapter One brings to light the statement of the problem and delves into the theoretical framework used for the dissertation. Queer theory is reviewed along with intersections with other critical theories, such as critical race theory. Chapter Two explores previous research on the historical and social construction of the teacher, including the public versus private binary. The research methodology and design of the study is explained in Chapter Three, with a review of the literature on discourse historical analysis. Chapter Four explores the findings of the study, incorporating both the online survey results with the online focus group discussions and individual interviews. The themes of double-consciousness, educator as role model, and intersectionality with gender and race are presented. Chapter Five offers an analysis of power relations inherent in lesbian educators’ negotiation of their private and public lives. Implications for further research and policy/practice changes are discussed.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Identities

Schools, particularly K-12 schools, are still often seen as the foundation of traditional knowledge, values, and norms in the United States. Schools are mirrors to the broader societal norms and values. Educational institutions continue to have tremendous ideological power because of their role in teaching to future generations what our society values (Meyer, 2009). Today, the foundation of a democratic society is based on the ability of its citizenry to work and live successfully in an increasingly diverse, global world. Gays and lesbians are making progress with regards to civil rights, but many gay teachers still express anxiety over revealing that portion of their identity in public schools. Issues of homosexuality in the educational setting have only recently become part of academic scholarship.

One might first ask, “What is a collective identity?” Numerous definitions abound, and the available literature on the topic spans through many academic disciplines. Francesca Polletta and James Jasper describe it as an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community. It is distinct from a personal identity, although it may form part of a personal identity (Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 285). David Snow’s concept also resides in a shared sense of “one-ness” or “we-ness”
between shared attributes or experiences (Snow, 2001, p. 2). Most importantly, there is a sense of belonging to a group and having a shared sense of collective agency.

While same-sex relations have been around for centuries, the distinct category of a gay and lesbian “people” is recent. “Over the last thirty or so years, instead of thinking about the private activity of gay sex, many Americans started thinking about the public category of gay people (Appiah, 2006, p. 77). The beginnings of the modern, public collective activist identity of “gay and lesbian” in the United States is rooted in its first modern collective resistance—the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969. During the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, New York police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. In those days, raids on gay bars and arrests of homosexual people were frequent. This time, however, patrons of the bar fought back and members of the New York gay community quickly rose up to protest these discriminatory measures. Two nights of rioting ensued before order was restored, but that evening was pivotal in that it united the New York gay community to fight discrimination. The following year, a march was organized in commemoration of the Stonewall Riots. To this day, many gay pride celebrations are held during the month of June in honor of Stonewall.

Another important change that affected the public collective identity of gays occurred in the 1970s, when the medical community removed homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Professionals in the medical, psychological, and mental health professions thus began to view homosexuality as a variation of human sexuality rather than a mental illness. However, despite these two
areas of public recognition, negative stereotypes and discrimination continue to exist decades later against gay and lesbians.

While the Stonewall Rebellion helped bring about a sense of public gay pride (rather than condemnation) and health professionals helped shift it out of a pathological category, the institution of the school has been slow to provide recognition for this minority group. There are two areas of recognition—the public sphere and the private sphere. While lesbians and gays have made progress in the private sphere by becoming less closeted and more open to friends, neighbors and family, lesbians and gays have yet to experience valid public recognition. While some strides have been made in the Civil Rights issues of same-sex marriage laws and the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell in our military, a lack of active public recognition still exists in educational settings.

Historically, American schools have been hostile places for both queer students and queer teachers. Renn cites Willard Waller’s 1932 book called *The Sociology of Teaching* as a foundational text guiding educators’ approach to homosexuality pre-1970s. According to Waller, schools should fire teachers who displayed “homosexual traits” since homosexuality was a “deviant, contagious, and dangerous disease” (Renn citing Tierney and Dilley, 2010, p. 133). In the 1930s and 1940s, having a minority sexual identity became associated with communism and a moral panic ensued, as public schools were required to remove any teacher suspected of being homosexual. In Florida in the late 1950s and 1960s, administrators and organizations such as the NEA (National Education Association) actively purged any teachers suspected of being homosexual (Graves, 2009; Blount, 2005; Lugg, 2010). Lesbian educators were not immune from
these purges. In 1954, Frank Caprio wrote *Female Homosexuality: A Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism* and argues that lesbian teachers regularly preyed on female students (Blount, 2005, p. 94). During the Florida purges, a special investigator told the Johns Committee (the name given to the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee in charge of investigating the infiltration of homosexuals into various state agencies such as the schools) that he noted a gender distinction among those questioned about their sexual identity. The investigator found women the hardest “to break...they go right to the bitter end before they finally give up; and they were the roughest that we had” (Graves, 2009, p. 4).

During the 1970s, Anita Bryant and John Briggs were two public figures who warned that “militant homosexual teachers” intended to recruit schoolchildren into the “homosexual lifestyle” (Blount, 2005, p. 2). Even in the 21st Century, the perceived threat against schoolchildren continues to be used. In 2008, a constitutional amendment called Proposition 8 in California was used to ban same-sex marriage. During the ensuing public discourse, that still continues to this day, supporters of the amendment claimed that if Proposition 8 did not pass, gay marriage would be taught in schools. Supporters pointed to the 2004 legal decision in favor of gay marriage in Massachusetts as an example of what could happen. After a second grade teacher read a book about two princes marrying, the parents of one of the children sued the district and claimed the teacher had read the book “for the express purpose of indoctrinating them into the concept that homosexuality and marriage between same-sex partners is moral.” This, they said, intruded on their “right to direct the moral upbringing of their own children” (Garrison, 2008).
Kevin Jennings, director of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN), edited a collection of essays in *One Teacher in Ten* (1994). Jennings writes “only through telling our stories can we shatter the myths and expose the lies that allow bigots to portray us as a threatening ‘other.’” (p. 13). Written by 35 lesbian and gay teachers, these stories touch upon early childhood experiences, their own days as students in school, or their experiences as closeted or out educators. In 1996, Rita M. Kissen wrote *The Last Closet: The Real Lives of Lesbian and Gay Teachers*. Kissen shares stories from educators and their daily struggles working in homophobic environments. Far from being only about their homosexual identities, Kissen interweaves other aspects of identity—race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status to name a few.

The study of identities is important because, simply put, learning does not occur in a vacuum. Research shows that learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others. A gay identity affects how one sees the world, their experiences, and ultimately their metacognition. In schools, academic content should not be seen in isolation of the learner. By understanding the complexity of the learner and learning, we can move individual students deeper into content that is appropriate for who they are and where they are. Teachers play a major interactive role with both the learner and the learning environment. Cultural or group influences (such as a gay identity) on students can impact many educationally relevant variables, such as motivation, attitudes toward learning, and ways of thinking. Positive learning environments can help foster higher levels of cognitive, social and emotional
growth. The teacher in a classroom is instrumental for making the learning environment safe and nurturing.

Taking a feminist perspective, Katherine Allen states that the life of a teacher is just as important in communicating knowledge as is the content area or the pedagogy (1995, p. 138). A teacher’s personality, style, and examples used in class are all part of that person’s pedagogy. Heterosexual teachers, with the freedom they enjoy to be themselves in the classroom, have a distinct advantage over homosexual teachers. In the end, it is not only the homosexual teacher who suffers due to the inability to be their authentic self in the classroom, but the students as well who are not exposed to another aspect of life. Any type of oppression in a school setting, be it heterosexism, classism, racism, affects everyone. Philosopher Charles Taylor believes that our identity is partially shaped by recognition or lack of recognition. If there is mis-recognition, people can “suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a conflicting or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25).

Identity can change in meaning based on the historical or cultural contexts. For example, Kevin Kumashiro, Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, cites his use of the term “queer” as causing some of his students to respond with anger and indignation at a term they deemed to be derogatory. Kumashiro’s students entered a “crisis” as they negotiated the use of the word, as he explained to them that the term has changed in meaning to some and is now claimed as a purposeful distancing from normativity and a way to self-empowerment. Kumashiro uses this example a way to
demonstrate the social construction of identities (2002, p. 5). Deborah Britzman, Professor of Education and Psychoanalyst at York University, writes that the “queer” and the “theory” in Queer Theory signify actions rather than actors. (1995, p. 153). Queer, as opposed to gay or lesbian, disturbs the notion that identities are fixed and employs a more critical, activist stance.

Kate Evans, Professor of Education at San Jose State University, became acutely aware of an identity conflict and crisis as she was “suddenly and anxiously aware that whatever I said positioned me somehow in relationship to others—and not just any relation, but one of ‘abnormal lesbian’ to ‘normal heterosexuals’” (2002, p.2) It became clear that her identities could affect the teaching and learning environment. As she began teaching in teacher education programs, she noticed that many queer pre-service teachers were facing similar tensions between their identities of “queer” and “teacher.” Evans explored these themes in a research study following four pre-service teachers, concentrating on the use of discourse in the construction of their identities and relations (2002). She uses tenets of queer theory to explain their process of negotiating different identities, such as that of “teacher” and “queer.” By negotiating, Evans means the constant “emotional labor” involved in positioning oneself in relation to each other and also to historically developed social roles (p. 3). Identity, then, is both relational and interactive. It is not stable and is constantly being made and remade in relation to others and in relation to social categories (p. 29). This positioning of one’s self to another in a relational way is constantly moving and fluid.
Evans’s emphasis on the relational aspect of identities is significant in that much of teaching involves relationships; both current relationships and those historically constructed social roles, such as “teacher” or “homosexual.” The constant negotiating, performing, and intersecting of these relationships and identities get played out in both public and private domains, and local and global domains. Evans uses the terms of “local” and “global” to disturb the normative concepts of individual-to-society or micro-to-macro dichotomy (p. 4).

**Public and Private**

Public and private identities of teachers were not always kept distinct. The feminization of teaching, or the shifting of school teaching from a male-dominated field to a female-dominated field, was a phenomenon that began in mid-nineteenth century education in America and continues as a trend today. Historians generally agree that there was not one single factor that led to the feminization of teaching, but rather a combination of many factors. In particular, economic conditions combined with gender ideologies contributed to this shift. The gender ideology of the day contributed to the feminization of teaching (as well as adding to the narrative of teachers as role models). Generally speaking, it was thought that the characteristics that made a woman a good mother—patience, understanding of children, and nurturing—made her a good teacher. Hence, the purpose of education began to be expanded from instruction in academic skills to the inculcation of social and cultural norms. In particular, white, Protestant women embodied the type of identity that educators hoped would “civilize” African-American, immigrant, and ethnic children. Cultural uniformity was thus added to the responsibilities
of teaching (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 9). As Stober and Tyack report, educational advocates in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, such as Catharine Beecher, Horace Mann, and Henry Barnard, worked to publicly promote women for their “divinely designated profession” (p. 496). Part of their dominant discourse involved the notion that teaching was not meant to be a long-term career for women. Rather, it was to be a step taken before entering marriage and child-rearing. Therefore, it was still considered an acceptable “women’s sphere” to be a teacher.

By 1900, 70 percent of the teaching force was made up of women (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 8). Almost all of these women were unmarried, following the legal and cultural constraints of the day. As single female teachers began to make up for greater proportions of the teaching force, earning humble wages and living on their own (or in communities of other women), critics worried that these women were becoming too independent. These women began to assume a position of power in the public sphere of the school system, so school officials appeased the fear by bringing in male administrators to oversee the female teaching force. As these women began to overstep their domestic sphere ideology, the male administrators ensured that the public accepted the appropriate social roles of the day (Blount, 2005). Stober and Tyack report that it was not surprising to see a school superintendent be male, middle aged, tall, white, and a member of the dominant church. Thus, these males added to the credibility and public social status of the school organization (p. 500).

Nonetheless, these women pushed beyond the private domestic sphere ideology of the day and into the public sphere. Through their service, women began to blur the lines
between the domestic, private sphere and the more public men’s sphere of work. However, as soon as women began to exercise their power, the critics began to emerge and stigmatized their roles. As women became more educated and began to organize in suffrage movements, the critics attacked single female teachers as “spinsters” and accused them of being poor role models for female students. Blount writes that women’s sexual partnerships with other women went unnoticed until they attained some degree of power in the public sphere. At that point, public fears of these women became expressed in the scientific literature with the publication of British sex researcher Havelock Ellis’s work *Sexual Inversion of Women*. Ellis documented cases of same-sex lesbian attraction among females and warned that it was harmful and deviant (Blount, 2005, p. 34).

Educational promotional literature from the 1920s promoted the ideal teacher as “a patriot, a creative volunteer, a producer of order, and an emotionally stable and satisfied middle-class white woman.” In a New York city newspaper in 1920, one elementary teacher was held up as an archetype: “Miss Branham teaches, saves lives, writes a thesis, then [goes] off to campaign for [the] labor party and against [the] Russian blockade” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 35). Even Herbert Hoover argued that the teacher was a public figure with public responsibilities, and could not separate their teaching life from their personal life (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 38).

However, this ideal teacher was just that—an idealized version of white, middle class normativity. Even when entrance requirements and credentials became stricter, the educators became alarmed when reality did not match their ideals, as many teachers enrolled in teacher education programs across the country had foreign-born parents. Since
school was viewed as one of the main institutions to assimilate immigrants, this was looked upon with trepidation (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 36). Hence, the administrative progressives continued one of the earlier social purposes of public schooling—the “Americanization” of immigrants and their children (Tyack, 1974). Particularly prevalent during the two World Wars, teachers were expected to instill these American values and beliefs into their students. Diversity was not seen as a desirable social value, and powerful interest groups determined this pattern of socialization to American norms. Teaching became the conduit to instill democratic values to the students, and teachers were looked upon as the role models to do so. The process of becoming a teacher was therefore also about defining the values and subsequent behaviors of a profession (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 28).

The ideal professional teacher took on the normative assumptions of white, middle class values and behaviors. The newly formed teacher education process was actually one that called for conformity to this model of professional identity, but it was filled with gender and cultural biases. The educational requirements attained through teacher training schools and the overt and hidden employment policies and procedures continued to act as a sorting mechanism, narrowing the pool of potential applicants. The ideology of professionalism was needed to separate teachers from the community and place them under the control of these administrative progressives. Professionalism became a tool for totally reshaping the lines of authority in a school system and for weeding out those of less desirable ethnic and social origins (Murphy, 1990, p. 23). The requirement for teaching and professionalism began to include employing those who
earned a college education, but it also served as a barrier to exclude marginalized
groups from entering the profession.

By 1950, females made up over 75 percent of the teaching population. This
feminization trend continued well into the twentieth century until the 1980s, when we
begin to see a decline in the ratio of women to men, probably attributable in part to other
career opportunities opening up for women. Economics continued to play a role as
unionization began to push salaries up in the teaching profession, thus attracting more
men.

The concept of a teacher as role model still holds true today, but as Evans asks,
“What might it mean for someone deemed dangerous to be a role model?” (Evans, 2002,
p. 44). This question was attempted to be answered in the early 1990s, as two children’s
books published that highlighted “differences” in family structure were incorporated into
a school curriculum. *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman is the story of a
little girl named Heather and her two lesbian mothers. In pre-school, Heather learns that
there are many ways to define a family, including her own. Newman wrote the children's
book to reflect a non-normative family. A school district in New York City listed the
books in a bibliography that was designed to teach respect for all types of families (it was
not mandatory reading). The books were immediately attacked by the religious right and
debates were held on Nightline and Larry King Live, and in *The New York Times, U.S.
News and World Report*, and other publications around the country. In 1994, U.S.
Senators Robert Smith (R-N.H.) and Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) cosponsored a measure
denying federal funds to any school that “encouraged or supported homosexuality ‘as a
positive lifestyle alternative’ or that distributed materials that did so or that referred a student ‘to an organization that affirms a homosexual life style’” (Seelye, 1994). Helms was quoted as describing the books as “disgusting, obscene materials that’s laid out before school children in this country every day” (Seelye, 1994). The books were eventually taken out of the curricula. Hence, the role model discourse continues espousing white, heterosexual, middle class value.

Empowerment

It is important to note that women teachers were not just passive subjects, but activists as well. Women teachers took advantage of the feminization of teaching to unite and realign the traditional narrative from woman as positive moral influence to woman as a more activist model of a progressive change agent (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 18). With the passage of the 19th amendment in 1919, women teachers were in a better position to bring political pressure upon elected officials in a demand for equal pay. Early twentieth century female teachers began to take on leadership roles in helping to organize local and national associations to demand equal pay and end any lingering prohibitions against married women continuing in the profession.

Margaret Haley, an organizer for the Chicago Teachers’ Federation (CTF), was one such activist who for a time successfully mobilized teachers in the early part of the 1900s. She cited that all across the nation teachers were underpaid, insecure in their tenure, overworked, and underrepresented in policy because of “the increased tendency toward ‘factoryization education,’ making the teacher an automaton, a mere factory hand, whose duty it is to carry out mechanically and unquestioningly the ideas and orders of
those clothed with the authority of position, and who may or may not know the needs of the children or how to minister to them” (Tyack, 1974, p. 257). Haley’s leadership helped the CTF fight for higher salaries, pensions, and tenure. Haley was vocal about her opposition to centralization and helped form teacher councils as a way for teachers to have a voice. In addition, she reached out beyond her role in schooling and helped mobilize teachers in support of women’s suffrage, local and state elections, and child labor legislation. She was also successful in bringing legal action against corporations who were not contributing their fair share of school taxes (Tyack, 1974). By the 1940s, however, female teachers who sided with unions were criticized as being “unladylike and selfish, even as male administrators reaped economic rewards and social prestige for their work outside the classroom” (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 19). The public discourse, however, continued to perpetuate the stereotype of the female teacher as self-sacrificing and nurturing national pride in our children.

In addition to this gender imbalance, there remained a racial imbalance within this gender subgroup as well. Teaching was and remains a very white profession with only a slight increase in the number of black teachers (including females) from 1900. Both formal and informal discrimination were factors that worked against African-American teachers entering the teaching profession (Rury in Warren, 1989, p. 35). Blacks were still not proportionally represented even after Brown versus Board of Education and the Civil Rights movement.

However, black female teachers also had their share of prestige despite the fact that black schools were separate and extremely unequal. As those in charge began to use
biased tests to supposedly measure intelligence and tout schooling as a type of sorting mechanism into the social order, a number of black American educators attacked such sentiments. There were those educators who felt that their duty was to bring to light these social injustices. One educator wrote: “As long as Negroes are the victims of lynching, police brutality, disfranchisement, residential covenants, higher rents, segregation, unsanitary living conditions, meager recreational opportunities, and other forms of discrimination, the social-civic aim of education is defeated” (Tyack, 1974, p. 218). The normative discourse of “democratic education” seemed in stark contrast to the reality black children knew.

One African-American teacher, Mary Pauline Fitzgerald Dame (1870-1955), taught for sixty-one years in black schools. Dame left behind a myriad of poems, correspondence and documents that allowed Valinda Littlefield, professor of history at the University of South Carolina, to piece together a social history. Littlefield writes that African-American teachers were expected to be active community members and nurture relationships with their students’ families. This interaction and availability provided the students with powerful and positive role models. One of Dame’s poems, titled The School Mistress, provides a glimpse of the power of the teacher: “I teach morality and truth, to the maiden and the youth” (Littlefield, 1999, p. 152). Boundaries between classroom and home life were blurred, and these teachers considered it their duty to educate and provide a racial uplifting to their people. Social activism was a part of their life as a teacher.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation researched the following: How do lesbian educators reinforce and/or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and their public lives? How does the school institution influence lesbian educators’ lives in this negotiation? My study examined the participants’ own articulation and interpretations of their experiences as lesbian educators and placed that within the larger social institution of the American school. Hence, the social construction of “educator” and “lesbian” was analyzed while the American school was also deconstructed vis-à-vis societal norms. The social construction of the lesbian educator was studied in terms of the negotiation of her public versus private identity. Research was conducted on how these educators’ private lives affect the way they work and navigate within the school institution. In addition, the broader field of social normativity in educational institutions was examined. Rather than focusing only on the lesbian educator as “the other,” normativity was also an object of analysis.

In order to answer these questions, educational researchers need to challenge assumptions, identities, and current educational practices. Hence, beginning to expand our educational research repertoire and utilizing critical theories such as queer theory is vital to beginning the transformation of educational institutions. Furthermore, technology
in the 21st century has invited new ways of conceptualizing and designing research studies beyond the norms established by traditional social science research.

**Methods Literature Review**

This study concentrated on lesbians working within the institution of the American school, which is dynamic and in turn situated within the larger framework of culture, history, and politics (Hatch, 2002, p. 44). In keeping with the feminist tradition of the “personal is political,” queer theory’s publics/counterpublics, and critical race theory’s tenets of storytelling/counterstorytelling, I utilized narrative inquiry as my main research methodology. More than just telling stories about an “other,” these counter- hegemonic narratives provide a way for resistance to dominant power structures. All of these critical theories help critique power and challenge the status quo.

While narrative inquiry was my main methodological tool, I also utilized quantitative data from an online survey using Opinio survey software. Opinio survey software is configured by Loyola University’s Office of Research Services and Information Technology to meet the requirements for online surveys involving human participants (Loyola University, December 2009).

The definition of narrative inquiry is vast and as Susan E. Chase states, it is a dynamic field adopting rich and varied methodologies. It thus provides many opportunities for exploring new methods (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 58). To some researchers, life history is a type of narrative inquiry that is used to describe an expansive autobiographical narrative. For others, life history can mean a narrative about a specific point in time, a specific experience that significantly impacted a person’s life.
Historians can use the term oral history to describe interviews in which the meanings derived from specific events are told.

Narrative inquiry was utilized critically by second wave feminists, culminating in material such as the 1983 anthology edited by Cherri Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua called *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Essays, short stories, letters, and poems by women of color provide commentary on issues of race, gender, class and sexual identity. The third edition of this book also contained visual images as part of its narrative. The narrative inquiry in this book is a precursor to the more modern version of *testimonio* form of narrative inquiry. A *testimonio* is a type of oral history that is political and resists oppression, and has been used particularly in the narratives of Latin American activists.

A performance narrative takes an oral or written narrative and transforms it to an alternative reading, either publicly performed on stage or another alternative textual form such as poetry and fiction (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 59). Kevin Kumashiro, author of *Troubling Education: Queer Activism and Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy* (2002), uses this approach in revealing his participants’ stories. Instead of utilizing the traditional quotations taken from transcript interviews, Kumashiro uses a form of poetry to narrate the participants’ stories. This strategy goes against the grain of tradition and presents as a non-normative manner of reading. Kumashiro is transforming traditional research methodology. The process of reading the text becomes fluid and just as important as the meanings of the text (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 23). Kumashiro utilizes theories of intersectionality quite often, as he speaks to the “racialized heterosexism” and the
“queered racism” throughout his study. Many of the participants in his study exhibited these intersecting oppressions. Two of his subjects reported the following:

If you start talking about homophobia inside ethnic communities then we start getting concerned because they’re not looking at the race issues.
If we start talking about race issues in the LGBT communities Then we’re concerned because they’re not focusing on The fact that we’re gay.
You know, there’s that going back and forth.
I can be Asian and gay.
I can be both, and I can be cool with everybody, you know?
I wish I could live in a world where I could just be all of it at once.

In particular, Kumashiro concentrates on education that changes students and society. He used a feminist research framework to work against detachment, attempting to alleviate any power relations inherent between researcher and subject. He also uses collaborative research to mutually explore the issues.

Carola Conle reminds us that human beings use narrative as both a communication tool and as a way of organizing knowledge. It is a way to express worldviews and help develop models of identity (Conle, 2000, p. 50). Identity is both relational and interactive. It is not stable and is constantly being made and remade in relation to others and in relation to social categories (p. 29). This positioning of one’s self to another in a relational way is constantly moving and fluid.

Evans’s (2002) emphasis on the relational aspect of identities is significant in that much of teaching involves relationships, both current relationships and those historically constructed social roles, such as “teacher” or “homosexual.” The constant negotiating, performing, and intersecting of these relationships and identities get played out in both
public and private domains, and local and global domains. Evans uses the terms of “local” and “global” to disturb the normative concepts of individual-to-society or micro-to-macro dichotomy (p. 4).

Rather than utilize the traditional method of narrative inquiry of tape-recorded, face-to-face interviews, I entered into the newly emerging virtual research arena. According to Annette N. Markham, Internet-based technologies are changing the research scene and “new communication technologies highlight the dialogic features of social reality, compelling scholars to reexamine traditional assumptions and previously taken-for-granted rubrics of social research.” These new technologies shift the way the researcher collects, analyzes and represents data (Markam in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 248).

Richard Kitto’s and John Barnett’s 2007 article, *Analysis of Thin Online Interview Data: Toward a Sequential Hierarchical Language-Based Approach*, outline some advantages and disadvantages in utilizing virtual research methodologies. Some of the advantages include efficiency in data collection, more accurate transcriptions, fewer time constraints in data collection, and more reflective answers since participants have more time to rethink and edit their positions. They conclude that the data is richer. However, they also speak to some of the disadvantages. The researcher is not able to immerse himself/herself in the participants’ environments or is not able to read non-verbal cues such as body language. In addition, producing fraudulent responses is a possibility (p. 357).
Bojana Lobe and Vasja Vehovar (2009), in *Towards a Flexible Online Mixed Method Design with a Feedback Loop*, state that the use of online technologies opens up a wide range of possibilities for mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative research in the same study). Web surveys, online interviews (also known as e-interviews), online focus groups and virtual ethnographies are the most common online methods currently being used (p. 587). The authors posit that using the Internet as a methodological tool helps foster a quicker and more flexible integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, thus increasing the depth and scope of a study. Data interpretation is enhanced with the “better explanation power of the data, i.e. ‘getting more out of the data’” (p. 588). However, according to these authors the mixed method approach is slow to be utilized in computer based research studies. The authors needed to empirically test their design, so in April 2005 ten research assistants were recruited to help carry out a small study on an open source portal called Slo-Tech, which is a national information technology portal. The study was designed to gather users’ attitudes toward web advertising on this portal. The qualitative phase included synchronous online interviews using instant messaging or internet-relay-chat. The quantitative phase involved web surveys. Research assistants were assigned to one of two groups; one group conducted their study using a sequential exploratory design, while the second group conducted their study using the flexible online mixed method. At the end of the study, each research assistant within both groups was interviewed and given a survey. Those in the flexible online mixed method group reported more elaborate and detailed findings through their data, while those in the sequential group referred to their first cycle of research as an
“introductory” one (p. 592). It is important to note that even though the “back and forth” dynamics in a mixed method study were recognized more than a decade ago, they seemed to have been utilized mainly in studies with substantial financial and time resources (p. 595). Hence, an online environment can open up these benefits in small-scale studies as well.

Certainly, there are advantages and disadvantages to this type of methodology. One immediate advantage is that this type of research methodology is in its infancy stages, and the more researchers utilize this methodology the more questions/tensions will arise. Another advantage is that research in the area of lesbian teachers is scarce, more than likely due to the reluctance of lesbian educators willing to openly participate in such studies. The very subject matter of lesbians-as-educators limits participation despite a researcher’s promise of anonymity. Entering a virtual world (a world in which both gays and lesbians have been pioneers) appears to allow for a bigger sample size.

**Online Research Design and Methodology**

Understanding a subject through personal lived experiences within their educational context, and then situating that subject and institution in the broader societal context is an example of expanding our normative educational research methodologies. It is in this spirit that new educational contexts can be created which allows for a deeper understanding of “otherness.” This context must allow room for safe challenges to the dominant ideology, an ideology that simply is not working in our school systems if you are different than the mainstream. Hence truly transformative education seeks to change values rather than just promote assimilation into the dominant institutions. This research
is important because it counters the tactics that many schools adopt, such as implementing “tolerance” policies and “multicultural curricula” as a solution to dealing with differences. Rather, utilizing critical theories such as queer theory as a framework for this research offers a way of thinking that actively promotes alternative ways of being in this world. In other words, it does not advocate for assimilation into our dominant institutions and societal norms, but seeks to actually transform values and norms that make relationships and institutions oppressive.

Participants should be collaborative partners in the research process. Together, the goal is to raise consciousness, be transformative, and raise political action. For education to be empowering, teachers and learners should strive toward understanding differences and use these new understandings to create new ways of being in the world. This moves us beyond the public recognition of the “other” identity and into the engagement with alternative life narratives as a viable way of living in our society.

**Recruitment of Participants**

I began the process by creating my own webpage hosted on Loyola University’s website (Appendix A). While the url clearly showed that this was a personal homepage (http://homepages.luc.edu/~lbrand1/Home.html), the fact that it was hosted on a university’s website with an .edu domain lent more credibility to my project. A brief description of myself and an abstract of my dissertation could be found on the website. In addition, the Consent to Participate in Research form was on my website, and participants had to click to a different page in order to get more information on participating in either the Online Survey and/or the Facebook online focus group.
My website clearly stated that all information gathered would remain confidential and no real names or identifying school information would be published. Each participant’s name as it appears in this dissertation is a pseudonym and their school names and even states will remain concealed. Facebook was chosen because of its ability to reach a nationwide sampling pool. Specifically, an online focus group was created through a Facebook group, which is different from a personal Facebook profile. A Facebook group is organized around a topic and has privacy controls. As administrator, I set the online focus group to a “secret” privacy setting and monitored it closely. Table 1 shows the various privacy controls that were available.

Table 1. Privacy Settings for Online Focus Group.

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<tr>
<th>Privacy Setting</th>
<th>Explanation of Privacy Setting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Anyone can join and information can be viewed by anyone and may be indexed by search engines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Administrators must approve requests for members to join and only members can see the Wall and discussion board, but anyone can see the group description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret</td>
<td>The group will not appear in search results of the profiles of its members. Membership is by invitation only and only members can see the content of the page or any information about the group description.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My next step involved recruiting participants for the study. Contact with potential participants was made through both personal and professional networks. A snowball sampling effect was used. Study participants (lesbian educators) were initially recruited by a variety of methods, including advertising in print and digital formats.
The following message was used:

Participants sought for a study on the public versus private identities of lesbian educators in K-12 American schools. If you identify as a lesbian or queer woman who is an educator in the school system, please click on http://homepages.luc.edu/~lbrand1/Consent.html for more information and to participate in the survey(s). Study approved by Loyola University, Chicago, IRB #74323.

Contacts included, but were not limited to the following: American Education Research Association; GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network); Illinois Safe Schools Alliance; Gay and Lesbian Review Magazine; Facebook posts on organizations such as National Education Association (NEA) GLBT Caucus, Gay Teachers Network, Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals and Western Regional GLBT Caucus; Listservs such as Queer Studies Listserv, AERA Queer Studies SIG discussion forum, NYCorte Listserv, Gender and Sexuality Studies Listserv; and my own personal and professional contacts.

A total of 114 lesbian educators took the online survey (Appendix B). Seven lesbian educators agreed to participate in the online focus group (Appendix C). However, I dropped two of the participants from the online focus group due to a lack of participation. I did so in order to continue an atmosphere of openness, yet maintain comfortable confidentiality. I did not want to have “voyeurs” in the group who were not willing to participate. The five participants also participated in individual e-interviews with me. In addition, one woman wanted to join the online group, but she contacted me after the session had closed. However, she did agree to participate in two e-interviews with me. These participants are introduced in detail in the next chapter.
The following is a brief introduction to the online focus group participants. Jane is a white woman in her 50s who works in student support services. She has worked in education for over two decades. She is employed in an urban, public school in the Midwest. Jane identifies as either queer or a lesbian. Anna is a white woman in her 30s who works as a classroom teacher. She has worked in education for a decade. She is employed in an urban, public school in the Midwest. Anna identifies as a queer, femme lesbian. Bailey is a white woman in her 20s who works as a classroom teacher. She has worked in education for less than a decade. She is employed in an urban, public school in the Northeast. She identifies as either queer or lesbian. Tina is a white woman in her 40s who works as a classroom teacher. She has worked in education for over two decades. She is employed in an urban, public school in the South. Tina identifies as a lesbian. Kyla is a white woman in her 30s who works as an administrator. She has worked in education for over a decade. She is employed in a suburban, public school in the Northwest. Kyla identifies as a lesbian. Jessie was the woman who was a little late to participate in the online focus group, but still agreed to be e-interviewed for my study. Jessie is a white woman in her 60s who worked as a classroom teacher. She is currently retired after working in a public, urban school in the Midwest, but still works in an education-related field. She was employed as both a classroom teacher and director. She worked in education for three decades.

**Discourse Historical Analysis**

Before venturing more into discourse historical analysis (DHA), which is the specific type of critical discourse analysis (CDA) used for this dissertation, it is important
that we understand CDA in its general terms. According to Wodak & Meyer (2009) CDA does not adhere to one specific theory or school of thought. Rather, it is interdisciplinary, multi-faceted and can be applied to a number of different theoretical underpinnings. CDA emphasizes understanding how language transmits knowledge in organizing social institutions (p. 7). It investigates and critiques social inequalities as expressed and legitimized by language use, or discourse (p. 10). Finally, critical discourse analysis is placed in the hermeneutic, or interpretive, methodology rather than the analytical-deductive paradigm. CDA relies on linguistic categories such as actors, time, argumentation. Both qualitative and quantitative aspects can be taken into account (p. 28).

Despite the flexibility inherent in this methodology, there are a few characteristics of CDA that are common throughout. CDA is problem-oriented and specific linguistic items are not necessarily the focus. In addition, the “theory as well as methodology is eclectic, both of which are integrated to be able to understand the social problem under investigation” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 31). Finally, there are four key tenets to CDA: discourse, critique, ideology, and power.

Discourse: Discourse can be defined in many ways. CDA views discourse as the language of social practice, and “is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned.” It maintains and reproduces the social norms, but it also helps to transform social norms. Hence, it is tied in closely with issues of power (Wodak & Meyer quoting Fairclough & Wodak, 2009, p. 6). For the discourse historical analysis researcher, language is not
powerful on its own—it is a means to an end in which the dominant maintain power by controlling the social messages (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 88).

**Critique:** CDA shares the notion of critique as a form of understanding and changing society as opposed to merely understanding and explaining society. Emancipation from forms of oppression is a key component of critical theories, including CDA. Utilizing this method allows the researcher to reveal hidden power relations and then move forward to transforming these power dynamics. Discourse historical analysis (DHA) defines critique in a socio-philosophical way, and integrates three dimensions: (1) text or discourse immanent critique uncovers inconsistencies, paradoxes and self-contradictions (2) socio-diagnostic critique helps uncover the “manipulative” character of discursive practices and here we look to contextual knowledge and wider social theories to interpret the discursive events and (3) future related prospective critique aims to improve communication in the future (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 88).

**Ideology:** Ideology is a set of beliefs and values that serve as a basis for the socio-political organizations of a society. The concept of hegemony becomes part of an ideology when most organizations and members of a society adhere to the status quo without regard to alternative ways of being. According to Wodak and Meyer, the discourse historical analysis researcher views ideologies as a means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse, such as establishing hegemonic identity narratives or by controlling access to public spheres. The discourse historical analysis researcher looks for ways in which discourse reproduces ideologies in a variety of social institutions.
**Power:** Power is a key component of CDA. Power can also be defined in many ways. CDA researchers are usually interested in the way discourse reproduces social norms and how oppressed groups may discursively resist such norms. According to Wodak & Meyer, the defining features of CDA are its concerns with power as a central component of social life and the struggles for power and control through competing discourses in various public spheres (2009, p. 10). For the discourse historical analysis researcher, power is legitimized or de-legitimized in discourses. Discourse is usually the site of social struggles of differing ideologies. Power is discursively exerted by the regulation of access to certain public spheres (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 89).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

According to Wodak and Meyer, in critical discourse analysis there is not only one way of gathering data. It is similar to Glaser and Strauss’ Grounded Theory (1967), in which data collection is not one specific phase that is completed before analysis can begin. Rather, it is a matter of finding the concepts and then expanding these concepts into categories, all the while collecting further data (sampling). In this manner, CDA does not explicitly recommend following specific procedures for sampling. Data collection is ongoing as new questions arise and earlier data is re-visited (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 27).

My online survey remained open for about eight months, from the end of June 2010 until the beginning of March 2011. During this time period, I continually recruited participants while the online focus group was being formed simultaneously. Forty questions comprised the online survey. My online focus group remained open for
approximately six months, from July through December 2010. Recruitment for the online focus group was also ongoing, but data analysis was begun almost immediately through the use of the discussion groups. I began by asking every participant to first participate in an e-interview (electronic interview) through email. The first set of interview questions was identical for each participant. Based on the first interview, I then conducted a second e-interview that delved deeper into their answers. The interview questions themselves also jump-started some of our discussion topics. Based on our online conversations, eleven topics were discussed. Table 2 lists each discussion topic and the date each topic was created. Discussions were ongoing in each category throughout the time period:

Table 2. Discussion Topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Discussion Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>Introduction to Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction of Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2010</td>
<td>Double Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2010</td>
<td>Manner of Dress/Body Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Knowledge and Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gay Teen Suicides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generational Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November/December 2010</td>
<td>Themes That Emerged For Each Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Reisigl & Wodak (in Wodak in Meyer, 2009), a thorough, ideal discourse historical analysis follows these eight steps:

1. A consultation of the relevant literature to review preceding knowledge.
2. Systematic collection of data and context information.
3. Selection and preparation of data for analysis.

4. Specification of the research question and formulation of assumptions.

5. Qualitative pilot analysis.

6. Detailed case studies, which can be both qualitative and quantitative.

7. Formulation of critique, taking into account relevant context knowledge and referring to the three dimensions of critique.

8. Application of the detailed analytical results.

The eight steps of Historical Discourse Research Design and Analysis is an ideal listing for a big project with enough time, personnel and funding. For the purposes of this dissertation, restrictions of time, breadth, and data collection were limitations.

The quantitative data was collected via an online survey using Opinio survey software. Questions were asked about identification as a lesbian, whether participants are “out” or “closeted” at work, and how they navigate their work place as lesbian educators. Opinio allows for the analysis and manipulation of data. I also imported the data from Opinio into SPSS, which allowed me to further drill down into the data and create charts and graphs.

The qualitative data was collected via the creation of a virtual learning community modeled after a traditional focus group. Facebook, a social networking site, was used to create the online focus group. Rather than set up the inherent power structure of interviewer-to-interviewees, I functioned in a role of moderator-as-researcher of this virtual community. Time, place, and the very nature of public and private are altered in this virtual world. Each phase was flexible enough to create an interactive learning
environment. However, restrictions were applied and the online focus group was not an open forum to the general online public; rather, every participant was given full disclosure of the study.

The data is organized and presented by using description, analysis and interpretation. The mixed method allows for triangulation of the data, and the virtual learning community allowed for collaborative analysis of the written word. HyperResearch 3.0 is a qualitative data analysis software tool I used to help analyze the data. This software allowed me to examine, organize, and code the data. Interpretation was emphasized from a socio-historical perspective.

**Coding**

Table 2 outlined the initial stages of breaking our discussions into topics, which occurred while the participants and I held our online discussions. In the spirit of collaborative research, my last discussion asked the participants to help name and analyze the themes that emerged for them as they went through the focus group. The participants named the following themes: the recursive coming out process and the everyday contradictions that occur with this process (what I dubbed double consciousness), race, generational differences, and teen suicides as some poignant themes that emerged for them. I kept those themes in mind as I began my own coding process.

My next process was to import the online discussion group transcripts, the e-interviews, and the free text answers from the online survey into Hypersearch. The transcripts included 26 pages from the online survey free-text answers, and 62 pages from the online focus group and e-interviews. Upon importing the transcriptions, I followed
the initial topics and/or questions and logged each one as a “case” in the software.

Table 3 shows the thirty-two cases.

Table 3. Cases Imported in HyperResearch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Day Double Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Teen Suicides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner of Dress/Body Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Fear of Losing Job Due to Sexual Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Feeling Safe at School Identifying as Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Feeling of Harassment at Any Point in School Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Feeling of Harassment Within Last Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Harassment Reported to Supervisor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Homophobic Remarks From Students, Teachers or Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Intervene Upon Hearing Homophobic Remarks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Involved in LGBT Club at School?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Involved in LGBT Organization Outside of Work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Negative Experiences From Being Out At Work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Feeling Part of Professional Community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Pictures of Same Sex Partner on Desk or Office?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Positive Experiences From Being Out at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Pre-service Training on LGBT Issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Professional Development on LGBT Issues At Work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey — Same Sex Partner Brought to School Functions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes that Emerged for Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After each case was created and all source material imported into the software, I began the process of coding through each case. The first stage of data analysis involved reading and re-reading the original source material numerous times. Eventually, I began
coding all the source material, HyperResearch allows for easy highlighting of any portion of the original text and subsequent application of codes. All the codes are kept in a master “Code Book,” which allows for the creation and organization of each code. Clicking on a code allowed me to easily revert back to the original source file and see the text associated with that particular code.

I used codes that were either single words or short phrases. Originally I used numerous codes and continued to run the coding and frequency reports throughout the numerous readings. Eventually, codes that only appeared sporadically were either deleted or re-coded. Themes began to emerge, and Table 4 shows the final frequency report of codes.
Table 4. Code Frequency Report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Bar Graph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double Consciousness</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.306</td>
<td>2.266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out at school</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing representing femininity</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>1.079</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiding</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role model</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.361</td>
<td>0.798</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradictions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.278</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.278</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophobia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational differences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies used when questions/comments referred to</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher identity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.681</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early memories of lesbian teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay identity - being representative of gay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.424</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out in the classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaydar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection in contracts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal protections</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heteronormativity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality or Multicultural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegemony</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay history</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of false accusations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluidity of identity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out with parent community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of social justice activism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 33

285
Role of the Researcher

Researchers employing a discourse historical analysis methodology should make their own position clear and justify why certain interpretations seem more valid than others. Furthermore, the analytical construct of a discourse always depends on the perspective of the researcher. So a discourse is not a “closed unit,” but rather a dynamic and fluid entity that is always open to re-interpretation (Reisigl & Wodak in Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 89).

Both Evans and Kumashiro disturb the notion of being void of subjectivity in their research. As Evans states, “To hide the researcher within the research project may be to suggest that knowledge can be constructed in a vacuum” (2002, p. 9). Both Evans and Kumashiro reveal aspects of themselves throughout their studies. Their stories and identities are open to those people they are researching.

Within the context of queer theory and feminism, I have been forced to ask myself some questions throughout my 20-plus years as an American lesbian educator. What discourse is publicly allowed to take place in this public institution? What counter-public does the mere presence of “the other” offer? How can we exit the void of silence and enter into the real? The real is mediated through social, political and historical discourses, so as a traditional institution can the public high school really become transformative? If the personal is political, then how has my own identity changed?

Rather than take sides in the theory versus praxis debate, I am being challenged to live my theory. So it is important to note that my own world is constructed through the experience of a lesbian, first-generation American, white, brought up working class but
now middle-class, school administrator at a high-achieving North-shore high school. In addition, I merged my private life with my public life when I came out at work a few years ago—my marriage to my partner in Toronto was announced at our first faculty meeting of the year, along with all the other new heterosexual marriages, births, and significant life events. Because of that announcement, my life at work has drastically changed. Because I (naively?) wanted to *stand up, demanding to be seen and heard* and claim my identity as a lesbian, my other identity as an educator has sometimes been questioned by some of my colleagues and community. Once, my entire identity was whittled down to the “homosexual assistant principal” and my school district seen by some as having an administration that “is peppered with gays and lesbians, so that the school very intensely promotes homosexual lifestyles” (Americans for Truth website, 2007).

Michael Warner suggests that those embracing their own queerness, those who come to a queer self-understanding, know of the need to challenge heteronormativity in every aspect of their existence. In other words, a politics that does not mean integration into dominant institutions and societal norms, but seeks to actually *transform* values, norms, and laws that make relationships and institutions oppressive (Cohen, p. 29, 2005). Some would argue that my getting married and announcing it alongside all the other staffs’ significant life events was assimilationist. I would counter that the very act itself of two lesbians marrying is transformative and an act of becoming real subjects. Private and public do not need to be markedly delineated. The very public act of same-sex marriage changes the institution of marriage itself. So I believe that truly critical
education, one that will benefit all children, is transformative in nature. Like the institution of marriage, schools are not static. Hence we should be linking the social structure of the school with the human agency found within. To not account for the human piece is to ignore how students and teachers live their daily lives in school. Power is not one-dimensional, and thus can be found in acts of resistance such as a lesbian teacher announcing her marriage to her partner, or an interracial young adolescent couple hooking up at the dance.

**Validity and Reliability**

Critical discourse analysis, like other qualitative research methodologies, is often criticized for its lack of objectivity. According to Wodak & Meyer (2009), some critics continue to “state that CFA constantly sits on the fence between social research and political argumentation” (p. 32). Furthermore, the classical concepts of validity, reliability and objectivity normally associated with quantitative research are not applied to critical discourse analysis in the same manner. Discourse historical analysis uses triangulation as a method to ensure validity, although the triangulation approach is mainly theoretical and based on context in four levels: (1) the immediate language used (2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between discourses (3) the social level, referred to as the “context of situation” or the institutional framework/social variables (4) broader sociopolitical and historical contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Alternating between these contexts and evaluating the findings from these different levels should minimize the risk of bias. In addition, discourse historical analysis uses multi-methodical research designs to triangulate the data. My quantitative data design helps in my analysis
of the qualitative data. However, the classical use of “objectivity” is not the goal for discourse analysis (p. 31).

Intertextuality means that texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present. These connections are established in many ways, one such way being the transfer of given elements to next contexts, known as *recontextualization*. If an element is taken out of a specific context, this is known as *decontextualization*. If this element is placed in a new context, this is *recontextualization* and it takes on a new meaning since meanings are formed in use.

Interdiscursivity is the linkages between different discourses, as discourses are rarely belonging to one genre only. Discourses are open and hybrid, with new sub-topics being formed all the time.

**Limitations**

The “iceberg concept” is a commonly used metaphor in educational studies, with its small visible tip emerging on the surface, but containing a huge mass hidden below. This dissertation dives below the surface and highlights some of the broader issues involved in the social construction of the lesbian educator and the deconstruction of heteronormativity within the school institution. Much still remains below the surface, however.

Some of the tensions described during the examination of the social construction of the lesbian educator illuminates the fact that instead of looking to educators to teach content to our children, education must be involved with bringing social injustices to light, and to provide authentic experiences for children to interact with other humans
regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, or any other difference.

This theme should be further researched as a path to academic achievement rather than concentrating on “accountability” issues.

Utilizing online research methodology is limiting, for this is an emerging field. Given the rapid proliferation of new technologies, it is paramount that further research into this emerging methodological field occur. Finally, while this technology opens up a sample size to include all locales within the United States, it will be limiting in that the participants will be those who are comfortable utilizing technology.

This study concentrates on lesbian educators, but there are many more marginalized identities that should be intersected throughout this study. Furthermore, steps for taking concrete social action to combat these injustices should be explored.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This study asked how lesbian educators reinforce and/or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and public lives. Additionally, the school institution remained an object of study, and was deconstructed vis-à-vis societal norms. The social construction of the lesbian educator was researched in terms of her negotiation of public versus private identity. My research concentrated on the effect these educators’ private lives had on the way they work and navigate within the school institution. Rather than focusing only on the lesbian educator as “the other,” normativity also became the object of analysis.

Like other categories and identities, the role of “teacher” has been socially constructed. Evans noted that three main discourses have been prevalent regarding the social construction of the role of teacher: Teacher as feminized, teacher as professional, and teacher as role model (2002, p. 42). All three of these themes emerged in some manner during the focus group sessions. In addition, other themes emerged and intersected as the lesbian educators narrated the negotiation of their public and private lives, through a variety of techniques and through multiple dimensions of identity including race and gender. As these lesbian educators negotiated their private and public lives against the dominant ideology of the American school system, the themes of double consciousness, educator as role model, and intersections with other identities emerged.
For example, even though the focus group participants were all white, many recognized that they were operating through a dimension of privileged whiteness intersecting with their minority sexual identity.

The focus group members had many degrees of being “out” and/or “closeted” in the school setting. Simply put, being “out” refers to being one’s authentic self and claiming a homosexual identity in all aspects of one’s life. Being “closeted” refers to hiding one’s authentic self, or passing as part of the heterosexual majority. However, it is important to stress that out-versus-closeted not be thought of as yet another binary formation, for identity is fluid. In this study, degrees of being out ranged from the youngest participant being completely out in all aspects of her life to the oldest participant being closeted in most aspects of her life.

This study intersperses descriptive statistics and free-text answers from the online survey into the discourses from the online focus group. In order to clearly differentiate the free-text dialogue of the online survey participants from the dialogue of the focus group participants, the free-text statements from the survey will be presented in table formats.

**Introduction to the Online Focus Group Participants**

Bailey is a white woman in her 20s who works as a classroom teacher. She has worked in education for less than a decade at the same school. She is employed in an urban, public high school in the Northeast. She identifies as either queer or lesbian. Bailey describes herself as being completely out since she was 18. She says that being out was neither a journey nor a choice for her: “When I came to terms with myself as a queer
person (in high school) it was hard for me to really conceal that from anyone else. Given that I am most comfortable presenting myself in androgynous style of dress and mannerisms, I think that it would be very hard for me to be in the closet even if I tried.” Her definition of being out is that, “I openly refer to my partner with my colleagues and my students (if relevant). I dress in the way I am most comfortable (androgynous) and have short hair. I am open about my daily life with my partner and she has accompanied me to school events in the past.” At work, Bailey has never felt herself to be a target of negative responses because of her sexual identity. She considers herself to be out, even though she does not necessarily verbalize it: “…I think that my appearance defines me in many respects without my having to say anything at all.” Bailey is not committed to teaching as a career yet, but decided to “try teaching.”

Anna is a white woman in her 30s who works as a classroom teacher. She has worked in education for approximately one decade, with the majority of that time at the same school. She is employed in an urban, public high school in the Midwest and also teaches pre-service teachers at her local university. Anna identifies as a queer, femme lesbian and has been out since her sophomore year in college. Her immediate family of origin is accepting of her, but some members of her extended family do not approve. However, she feels that her friends are her “chosen family” and they are all very accepting, “as they are all pretty queer (some LGBT and some straight queers).” To her, being out “means being openly queer/gay; it means being honest about who I am, having a lesbian partner, and about my queer family.” At work, she considers herself out “for the most part, though I find it difficult to keep coming out, year after year. It’s not something
I feel I have to announce, but because I DON’T announce it, I feel sort of like I’m hiding something, even though I know I’m not. It’s a strange feeling.” Anna considers her school to be a safe space for lesbian teachers, although there is a small group of teachers who are “adamantly against LGBT people and I am probably one of their worst enemies on staff.” Anna credits her mother for guiding her toward education as a career since she was not very goal-oriented when she graduated from high school.

Kyla is a white woman in her 30s who was the only administrator in the focus group. She has worked in education for well over a decade with the last three years at her current school. She is employed in a suburban, public K-12 school in the Northwest. Kyla identifies as a lesbian, but recognizes that being out has been a continuum for her. For her being out “means being comfortable with who you are—sexual identity as well as overall self—and sharing your life with other people without shame. Living life without apology.” Kyla came out in her early 20s, but it was not an easy journey for her. “I came out right when I first started teaching and I was grappling with my sexual orientation while I was teaching teenagers who were grappling with theirs. Though intellectually mature, I sometimes felt like an adolescent figuring out what these feelings were and how to handle them. It didn’t make for the best circumstances because I was totally in the closet and it was incredibly hard to be open and let my students get to know me while I was hiding who I was.” Kyla was quick to point out that being a lesbian is only one part of her identity and that “it’s not that defining of me or for me. I would say that my other identities (teacher, principal, student, partner, etc.) are much more important than my
sexual identity. The lesbian part is really incidental.” Kyla comes from a family of educators and following in their footsteps seemed to be a natural career choice.

Tina is a white woman in her 40s who works as a classroom teacher. She has worked in education for over two decades, with the last six at her current school. She is employed in an urban, public middle school in the South. Tina identifies as a lesbian and describes herself as being out. To her, being out means “living all aspects of my life without regard to whether or not people know about my sexual orientation. Living in an honest manner regardless of the gender of my chosen partner. Not, necessarily, making announcements to everyone I meet but, rather, just being myself without being afraid of what people think of me.” Tina is out in her personal life, but finds that being out in her professional life keeps changing as she has changed schools. When asked to elaborate, she continues, “…’lesbian’ is a personal label and just part of who I am. It is not something I have tattooed across my forehead or emblazoned on my office wall. However, if asked, I do identify as a ‘teacher who is also a lesbian.’” Tina is heavily involved in her union, particularly around LGBT issues. She decided on education as a career because of her enjoyment in working with and mentoring children. Her teacher identity has become deeply ingrained. “Over time, I’ve come to realize that being a teacher is just a part of the way I naturally express myself and is who I *am* rather then what I *do* [sic].”

Jane is a white woman in her 50s who works in student support services. She has worked in education for over two decades, with the last seven at her current school. She is employed in an urban, public middle school in the Midwest. Jane identifies as either
queer or a lesbian. To Jane, being out means “letting others know that I have a
minority sexual identity, that I’m a lesbian and married to a woman—and not being
ashamed about that. It means being able to talk about my wife in social settings, take her
to events and being able to introduce her as my wife without feeling uncomfortable or
nervous. It means having her picture on my desk and not hesitating when people ask me
who she is, and reaching to hold her hand in public without hesitating first to see who’s
around.” Jane was fired from her previous school district due to issues surrounding her
sexual identity. She filed a lawsuit and won the case, but she is now guarded at work due
to her past experiences. When asked if she would describe herself as out, she said,
“Sometimes, with some people, in some places. But never always, with everyone, in
every place, event or setting.” Coming out to her family was initially stressful for her
“because as my dad said, ‘I grew up in Oklahoma where gay bashing was a sport.’”
Currently, she does not consider her school to be safe environment for lesbian educators.
Her principal knows that she is lesbian and tells her that her personal life is not his
concern. Education became a career choice for her because she loved learning and
wanted to be able to share the joys of discovery with her students.

Jessie is a white woman in her mid-60s who worked as a classroom teacher. She
identifies as a lesbian. She is currently retired from education after working in a public,
urban high school in the Midwest, but still works in an education-related field. She was
employed as both a classroom teacher and a curriculum director for three decades, in
three different schools throughout her career. To Jessie, being out means that her sexual
identity would be “known and common knowledge to those around me.” She does not
consider herself out to her family and was only out to one other educator at work. “We knew right from the start that we were both gay. It was wonderful for both of us to actually relax and be in each other’s company, knowing we were on the same ground. However, being with the rest of the staff, and especially adolescents who felt that being different in any way was a death sentence, was a very different story. The dichotomy was exhausting.” Throughout her career, Jessie never felt like her school was a safe place for a lesbian educator. “Being in a position of teaching not only students, but other teachers as well, knowledge of my sexual orientation would have put up a wall that would have been extremely effective at stopping all the positive work I had done and would continue to do.” Now that she is no longer in the classroom, she moved away and lives in another state in the Midwest. She is currently out to a few of her co-workers in her new place of employment. However, she still fears telling her employers, who are older and conservative. “I would be fired on the spot and sent packing straight to the place in hell reserved for ‘homos and perverts.’ Oddly enough, that doesn’t seem to concern me in the least; not anymore.” Jessie entered the field of teaching because she has always been good at teaching people and it was “natural” to enter a career in which she knew she could excel. Even now, the identity of a teacher stays with her. “Even though I am no longer in the classroom, I still teach. It’s who I am.”

**Descriptive Statistics of the Online Survey Participants**

A total of 114 lesbian educators took the online survey. Their ages ranged from 21 to 72, with a mean age of 36 and a median age of 32. The mean work experience in education was 10 years and the median work experience was 7 years. The mean work
experience in their current school was 5 and the median was 3. Forty-eight percent were tenured teachers and 51% were non-tenured teachers, with 1% declining to answer the question. Approximately 1% identified as Asian/white, 4% as Asian, 2% as black, 1% as black/Latina/white, 3% as Latina, 4% as Latina/white, 1% as Pacific Islander/white, and 85% as white. The participants worked in all levels of K-12 education. Most participants worked in public education, with 79% in a public school, 11% in a charter school, and 9% in a private school. Also, the majority of respondents worked directly in the classroom, with 74% identifying as a classroom teacher, 16% identifying as a support service educator (counselor or librarian, for example) and 11% working as administrators. Most participants came from an urban school setting (65%), followed by suburban schools (25%) and lastly, rural schools (10%). In addition, participants came from all over the United States: 40% from the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic, 25% from the Midwest, 13% from the Southwest, 11% from the South, and 9% from the Northwest. Three percent of the participants did not answer this question. The majority of the participants held advanced degrees—71% had a Master’s degree and 5% had a Ph.D. or Ed.D. The remaining 24% held Bachelor’s degrees.

**Discursive Themes**

**Double Consciousness: Living in Two Worlds**

At times rendered invisible and private inside the school, a lesbian educator, may, in fact, be visible and public outside the school. As Worthman states, there is a growing awareness of the multiplicity of perspectives in the world, with our private selves and our public selves forming a bond. Private and public constantly interact in this dynamic
relationship (2004, p. 366). Put another way, the metaphor of windows and mirrors create the fluid perspective of looking back and forth between the private self and the public self. A mirror reflects back to us and includes our feelings, perceptions and how we see ourselves. The window, on the other hand, frames our view to the outside world and allows the outside world to look at us. There is no binary, clearly delineated mark between private and public. Rather, we observe the world, participate in the world, and reflect back upon both these experiences. It is relational and recursive and our identity is constructed through our interactions with ourselves and others. Those in marginalized groups, be they racial, ethnic or sexual minorities, attempt to negotiate their identities from a position of what W.E.B. Du Bois called “a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, 1897). Du Bois wanted to claim this double identity that he experienced, but was not allowed to publicly do so.

This section explores the double consciousness that being in versus out of the closet in a school setting brings, and the variety of ways the lesbian educators in this study negotiated that sensation. Regardless of the degree of being out, all the participants stressed that all teachers live in two worlds—private and public. Schools consist of both public and private locales, and many lesbian educators make conscious decisions about which space they occupy at which moment. As they move between the private and public worlds, many utilize different identity management techniques. Some feel they are completely out while others make a conscious decision to come out to only a few
colleagues. Others choose not to be out to anyone in the public school setting, as school spaces are not neutral and are fraught with power relations that may prove hostile for lesbian educators (Rudoe, 2010, quoting Clarke, 2003).

The online survey showed that the degree of being out was definitely dependent on the setting and the stakeholders. Ninety-one percent of the participants were out with their friends and 81% were out to their family. Inside the school building, 62% were out to their colleagues. A dramatic decrease was then seen in their degree of being out with students and parents. Only 24% of participants were out to their students and only 10% were out to the parent community. However, those who are out in the school setting reported positive interactions and experiences because they chose to be out. Table 5 highlights a few quotes from the online survey participants, which shows the benefits they experienced from being out at school.

Table 5. Online Survey: The Benefits of Being Out at School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I didn't waste energy on hiding my identity I was able to establish real relationships with open give-and-take as human beings. Hiding myself usually meant that others could discern a wall I kept up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain students have confided in me for advice. I think I have also been able to help students develop more tolerant and open-minded perspectives on diversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I've had remarkably positive experiences. I was promoted because of my knowledge of GLBTQ concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One woman told me that prior to knowing me she would have just signed the petition at her church when approached, but she got a funny feeling, read the petition, saw it was anti-gay, thought of me and my family and declined to sign. I was so touched and proud! So many stories like that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being out has been one of the best things for me. Students, teachers, and administrators alike come to me as a resource. In addition, it provided me with the opportunity to be an advisor for the GSA, a group which has done great things to improve our school climate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am able to connect with many students (both queer and non-queer) by talking about my own struggles. I think it is great for my students to be able to see/know a queer responsible caring adult.</td>
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</tbody>
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In the focus group, only Bailey was completely out in all aspects of her life, including all the public spaces in the school such as her classroom. The others were out in varying degrees, and it often depended on the setting. Regardless of her openness, Bailey was still careful about revealing too much about her personal life because of her role as teacher, not because of her sexual identity:

As an open, out lesbian at school, I don't really have much of a cost/price that I pay at work. The only thing that I really censor is just mentioning my personal life much at all with my students, but not because of the queer issue — mostly just because the kids are nosy and I don't want to encourage their inappropriate questions...I am just pretty open about it [sexual identity]. I don't necessarily 'come out', but if I had a fun time seeing a movie with my girlfriend, I'm going to say so.

Tina was adamant about avoiding separating her identity, feeling that she has reached a place in her private life and public career where she no longer compartmentalizes.

“Everything about who I am just combines into this one being who *is* [sic] me. When I speak out on issues, I will often refer to myself as a ‘teacher who is lesbian’ but the two aspects are part of a much greater whole and all the things that make me who I am just don't separate out like oil and water.”

Anna agreed that all teachers live in two worlds to an extent, and she even has two Facebook accounts she uses—one serves as her public account in which she serves a role as school advisor for the Gay-Straight Alliance and Amnesty International, and the other is her private account. “Every time I log into this Facebook account, [the name she uses for her private account] and then sign out, and then re-login as someone else [the name she uses for her public name], I am reminded of my strange, double-life.” Anna also recognized the fact that she does not talk about her private life in the same manner as
her heterosexual colleagues do, such as in their ability to mention their spouse or children:

I hear straight folks talk about their partners freely—without consciousness, really—to their students/colleagues/friends/etc. But, even though I would tell a student I were gay if they asked, I also feel like I shouldn’t freely announce my gayness, either. I feel like I’m walking a fine, strange line of being in and out of the closet: not too out but also not too in. Only recently (about 2 or 3 years ago) did I decide to come out—at the time, I felt like students were trying to pound the “door” down, so I thought I’d feel more comfortable if I just opened it. I couldn’t hold on to the handle anymore, so I just let go. And that was a freeing moment…but I still revert back to the closeted behaviors I developed in my first 7 years of teaching. Additionally, I don’t put pictures of my partner and I up on my desk, though I have other pictures, including my dogs, my grandparents, parents, and niece. From my desk, I appear to still be part of the family I grew up with (minus my dogs), rather than the family I have now—my partner, my 3 dogs, and a huge extended family of queer friends.

Jane, on the other hand, finds herself living in two worlds every day, “struggling to balance public and private, insofar as I have to decide the price of visibility versus the emotional/psychic cost of covering.” However, Jane’s story was the most egregious in terms of overt discrimination due to her sexual identity. Years ago, being a lesbian was just part of her identity and she never consciously talked about it at work. However, she and her partner lived in the community and so she was brought into the same social situations as her students and parents. Before long, according to Jane, the students came to realize they were a couple and a community member had confirmed Jane’s sexual identity. Jane, wanting to be proactive, decided to tell her principal. “He told me that as long as I didn't plan to sew rainbows to the backs of all my clothes, he didn't have a problem with it.” Although Jane describes her principal as being “wonderful,” note how his discourse conveyed a message that she should not overtly express her minority sexual identity. In other words, Jane was implicitly being told to keep it private, which
perpetuates the stereotype that sexual identity is a set of behaviors, and not a full identity worthy of being open and out in public life. Nonetheless, Jane reports having no issues at work for years about her identity and received “stellar” evaluations. However, eventually a change in administration brought a new principal to her school. Jane still received a positive evaluation and was even asked to head one of the school’s leadership committees. Shortly afterward, Jane told the principal that she would begin a unit on Civil Rights in her Government class. She warned the principal that there might be some controversial topics covered, such as affirmative action, women’s rights and other forms of discrimination. Jane showed a PowerPoint presentation in class about the National Day of Silence. In keeping with the tenets of the Day of Silence, Jane remained silent while presenting the PowerPoint to the class. Soon thereafter, the new principal told Jane that there had been a change for next year and her contract would not be renewed. Jane said several excuses were given to her, but “over time it became clear that it had something to do with being gay.” While Jane did find another job at her current school, she filed a lawsuit in Federal Court as a sexual discrimination lawsuit violating the 1st and 14th amendments. “During the deposition of witnesses, an email came out that the superintendent had written stressing I was to be let go because there were questions about my sexual orientation. That piece of evidence and their myriad excuses about the reason they fired me became the basis for the judge's decision to allow the lawsuit to move forward.” At that point, her old school district settled the case with her outside of court and Jane won the policy changes for which she had advocated. However, Jane’s

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1 Originally begun in 1996 at a college, the Day of Silence is now sponsored by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network). Many students in K-12 education participate by remaining silent for all or part of the day to symbolically represent the silencing faced by LGBT people.
experience changed her. “My sense of safety, of being open and out regardless...is greatly diminished. I am cautious, careful, and particular about where and with whom I am out at least in school settings. Even though I work for a school district that just recently negotiated partner benefits, sexual orientation & gender identity non-discrimination policies, etc., I am still very guarded.”

Jane’s current principal knows she is a lesbian, but states that he is not concerned about her private life, yet he sometimes crosses over his own self-imposed boundary to request that Jane relay some information to her partner who is also an administrator in the district. When this was pointed out to Jane during the course of the focus group, she grew angry:

It’s interesting because I had not even considered his incongruent behavior until you basically shined the light. Then I got irritated thinking about how self-serving it was—he could keep at bay any discomfort he experiences by acknowledging/confronting the totality of my identity, but was also willing to verbally acknowledge the reality of my same-sex identity when it suited him or served his interests. Since reading your question, I have been particularly attentive to his behavior as relates to situations, which bring my hidden identity to light, and noticed he engages in that hypocritical behavior regularly!!

Jessie, the oldest member of the focus group, was steadfast about her need to maintain two separate lives. She drew an impenetrable border between her private and public life as a lesbian educator. She viewed her sexual identity as her own business and did not even think about it in the classroom:

The fact that I was a lesbian was separate and private. I was an educator. It was my job, my life’s work, to teach students to write powerfully and precisely. Not once do I recall considering what and how to teach something differently because I was a lesbian...I have always thought teachers must be careful, regardless of what rights they think they have. Lesbian teachers, if they are to keep from going crazy, must maintain these two separate lives to the extreme. Taking a three-day weekend in another state (or even country) is a real mental health necessity
sometimes. When I was partnered, we luxuriated in those stolen days because we could rejuvenate and “be real.” It took one whole day to unload the burden of silence. Then we’d cry and laugh simultaneously for an hour or two and then be okay. Even when we left our room, we were careful not to appear too much into each other, touch only briefly, and talk softly. It is a small world, after all. After our three days of “normalcy,” we would go back to our separate closeted lives, smiling occasionally to ourselves at the wonder of it.

During the period that the focus group was still regularly meeting in late 2010, the mainstream media began to cover what appeared to be a rash of gay teen suicides. In September 2010, columnist Dan Savage and his partner, Terry Miller, began the It Gets Better campaign on YouTube as a way to change the prevailing discourse. Originated to combat the higher-than-average number of teenagers who commit suicide due to harassment faced at schools, the video went viral. Before long, scores of celebrities, politicians, and ordinary people videotaped their messages to tell teens that “it gets better” if they can just “get through their teen years.” While one can argue that this also perpetuates a victimization role, it nonetheless remains a powerful counter-hegemonic narrative. Furthermore, the stories emanate from both heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Anna felt greatly affected by the media attention and began an anti-bullying campaign at her school. Despite her earlier misgivings, Anna began to actively and publicly resist the dominant ideology and merge her public and private life by posting a picture of herself and her partner standing underneath a huge pride rainbow flag on her public, school Facebook account. She said that it was “obvious” that the two were in a relationship and she felt more out than ever before.

Kyla was also affected by the media coverage of the teen suicides, but seemed to distance herself and generalize that the adolescent years can be stressful for all teens.
However, she did refer to the *It Gets Better* campaign and stated that she hopes young people are “taking that to heart. But it can really be such torture to be a teenager regardless of one's sexuality. I wish there was a way to stop the pain...I do think that the more we all come out, the better things will be.”

DuBois’ looked in the mirror and saw numerous aspects of his identity, yet the window to the world saw him very differently. “…a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.”

While the participants made it clear that all educators negotiate private and public lives when dealing with their students, it became evident that the lesbian educators in this study were more conscious of the negotiation and had much more to lose. Jane’s example was the most serious, but it highlighted that the consequences of being out of the closet can cost lesbian educators their employment, while heterosexual teachers do not face these types of consequences due to their sexual identity. As a result of hiding their sexual identity, a lesbian educator operates in two different spheres, reminiscent of the 19th century separate sphere ideology of public versus private lives and what was deemed acceptable. However, like some of the early lesbian educator pioneers detailed in Chapter Two, the participants in this study showed that they were not merely passive victims, but retained a sense of power and agency. Some of the women knew they were empowering themselves by doing so, while others empowered themselves in other ways by resisting the dominant ideology. The next section focuses on the power these lesbian educators retained.
**Empowering a Double Life.** Power is regulated by state agencies such as the school. In Chapter Two I referenced power as a key aspect of Queer Theory, and returned to this topic in Chapter Three as part of its role in discourse historical analysis. While power can be defined in numerous ways, this study examined the way certain discourses continue to reproduce heteronormativity, and the way power can also be found in the manner by which oppressed groups discursively resist heteronormativity. Thus, resisting the dominant ideology goes beyond just publicly claiming a name of “queer” or “lesbian.” Rather, the power lies in taking a marginal position and empowering it, no matter the degree of outness. Kumashiro (2002) states that the norm, or status quo, continues to manifest in the traditional operation of schools and it is this status quo that is oppressive. Without disturbing the equilibrium of the status quo, the institutional structures would continue to reproduce oppressive practices. Britzman (1995) also calls for practices that go beyond the mere representation of gay and lesbian subjects in academic content and concentrates on a pedagogy that begins to critically engage difference “as the grounds of politicality and community” (p. 152). Despite being publicly positioned as a subordinate “other” and despite their varying degrees of being out, the women in this study empowered themselves by offering alternative ways of thinking, speaking, and acting in their day-to-day educational work. They provided counter-hegemonic narratives and actions, and through these actions empowered their subordinate social positions. The women focused on discursive structures that need to be disturbed and in doing so, actively worked to bring about change.
The results showed that despite variations in being out, and despite both resisting and at times reinforcing the dominant ideology, the focus group participants retained a sense of agency and power as they balanced their private and public selves in the workplace. To explore how subjects found aspects of this double life empowering, this section describes some areas of their curricular work within the classroom, as part of staff development opportunities, and in everyday interactions such as combating hate language.

Bailey believes it important educational work to share some LGBT history with her students, and shows the movie *The Laramie Project*\(^2\) to them. Anna insists on devoting at least one meeting every year in her Gay-Straight Alliance club to cover key historical events in LGBT lives. Even Jessie, who was deeply closeted throughout her career, resisted the dominant ideology and addressed issues of homophobia in her professional work with other teachers without revealing her own sexual identity:

Sometimes when I was working with small groups of teachers, we would examine their curriculum maps for multicultural, non-sexist elements. We tried to stretch teachers’ creativity in these areas. I would get comments about it being bureaucratic b.s. and that we didn’t have, or need, any gays, so why did we need to be so concerned about it. There it was. I would explain politely to them that not everyone was like they were, and we needed to teach students to be more tolerant and understanding. All the while, I wanted to grab the proverbial 2x4 and dent their foreheads with it. When these sessions were over, I would drag my curriculum materials back to my office and sit in the silence for a while.

Despite some of these negative experiences and the mental exhaustion she experienced, Jessie felt a sense of accomplishment through the curricular work she did with other teachers:

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\(^2\) *The Laramie Project*, a film/play by Moises Kaufman, tells the story of the murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. Shepard was the victim of a brutal hate crime that drew worldwide attention to homophobia.
In no way do I feel that being closeted negatively impacted the quality of my work. In fact, I feel it may have made the quality of my work better because I attended more closely to it. Because I was closeted, I could assure that the curriculum included elements that addressed tolerance issues without being accused of having a specific agenda. And, because people would work with me without reservations (as much as it is possible), we could make progress toward our goals. Teachers’ complaints had to do with having to work too hard or meeting deadlines or having long work sessions. They did not complain about having to work with a lesbian who was a “man-hater” or a “dyke” or “muff-diver.” To them I was a teacher who became a curriculum director who wanted to help make what they taught more effective. We made that happen.

Even though Jane remains more guarded about her sexual identity due to her past experiences, she still attempts to disturb assumed heterosexuality by educating other teachers to resist the status quo:

The PE/Health teacher, for example, told me about a lesson she was doing with the 8th grade girls and how she had them imagine a boy they’d like as a boyfriend. Her approach was very heteronormative and established her lines of comfort. When I mentioned casually alternative approaches, it became evident the lines also defined her boundaries in terms of disgust. She defines herself as “old school” which means that the classroom is her space. In fact, she sees herself as having a moral obligation to teach students right conduct - heterosexuality.

Publicly and actively combating hate language with students was another arena in which the participants empowered themselves. The online survey participants overwhelmingly reported that students at school make homophobic remarks, with 81% hearing it sometimes, frequently, or always. These educators reported that they sometimes, frequently or always intervene 95%. The remarks seemed to come mainly from students. The participants reported that other teachers rarely make homophobic remarks. Only 28% reported hearing homophobic remarks sometimes, frequently, or always, while 72% report hearing it seldom or never. These figures drop even more when
they reported homophobic remarks made by administrators—91% reported never or seldom hearing such remarks.

Bailey believes that hate language is the biggest homophobic issue in her school, and attempts to eliminate it in the everyday interactions she encounters. She finds that it is common to call people “gay” in place of “stupid.” Once called a word meant to dehumanize, the individual (student or adult) is socially and politically marginalized.

Bailey, the only participant completely out in the classroom setting, utilizes identity strategies within this public space to address the topic. Note how she purposely combines both private and public, and in doing so nonchalantly offers an alternative to heteronormative Bailey is utilizing counter-hegemonic narratives to disturb the equilibrium of the status quo heterofamilial discourse of husband, wife and children:

In the classroom, I often have to police occurrences of students calling each other gay, or using derogatory terms for gays in conversation. My usual responses are either “I think the gay person in the room should decide who and what is or is not ‘gay,’” or “You talk about gay things more than I do....” which both elicit laughs and a general compliance from the kids. I also have some photos of my partner and I on my computer, etc. and students see these. Occasionally I will offer an anecdote, like “when my partner and I went to the museum this weekend...” or something like that. She has also come to my school for performances by my students and I introduce her as my partner.

Tina also uses opportunities in this public space to teach against discriminatory language. Although she is not out in the classroom and unlike Bailey does not use herself as an example, she still actively resisted the dominant ideology and retained her sense of power by dealing directly with the issue:

Once, when comments and insults were really getting out of hand, I did have an entire class sit down and asked students who among them had a friend or family member who then knew to be gay/lesbian. About one-quarter of the kids raised their hands. I asked them how they felt when they hear other kids saying negative
things and all of them said they didn't like it. I talked to the class about never knowing who they might be hurting with they say these things because sexual orientation isn't something you can see.

In these examples, the lesbian educators actively worked to disturb hegemonic power and dominant ideology by naming discrimination and making it visible. They employed consciousness raising techniques as well as critical pedagogy, which can lead to transformations of institutions as change-resistant as the American school. Anna, Tina, Jessie, Jane and Bailey recognized and named the injustices, and empowered themselves and students to act upon oppressive structures. These discourses were disturbed and the status quo challenged. Dominant ideology is not merely a system of beliefs, but also a set of active practices. Teachers do represent the state in the public school system, and thus are seen as disseminators of societal ideology. These lesbian teachers went against the grain and helped conceptualize new ways of knowing, understanding, and being in public. They resisted and refused to perpetuate heteronormativity and assimilation, and in the process showed how their minority identity does not have to continue a discourse of victimization, but can become offer discourses that empower both the individual lesbian educator and the collective identity of lesbians.

**Educator as Role Model and Professional**

**Role Modeling.** As reviewed in detail in Chapter Two, the feminization of teaching was the shifting of school teaching from a male-dominated field to a female-dominated field in the mid-nineteenth century. In short, economic conditions combined with the gender ideologies of the day to contribute to this shift. The issue of professionalism in education also began to be discussed more during this time, and the
purpose of education was expanded from academic skill instruction to role modeling social and cultural norms (Rousmaniere, 2005). Hence, the new professional teaching credentials and qualifications that were put in place had as much to do with the social characteristics of a teacher as much as the mastery of pedagogy. So even in education programs, teachers were made responsible for teaching proper American values. John Daniels, a sociologist studying biculturalism in the 1920s, noted, “If you ask ten immigrants who have been in America long enough to rear families what American institution is most effective in making the immigrant part and parcel of American life, nine will reply ‘the public school’” (Tyack, 1974, p. 241). Hence, administrators looked for teachers who shared the normative social characteristics of middle class, white values to help students assimilate.

The role model and professionalism discourse continues to this day. After all, K-12 schools still operate under a legal obligation of in loco parentis. Furthermore, the role model discourse today espouses role modeling for gender, race, or ethnic origins. For example, many K-12 schools are interested in hiring a teaching force that mirrors their increasingly diverse student populations. Another example can be found through the popular media’s focus on a shortage of male classroom teachers in the classroom setting, particularly at the elementary classroom level. Scholars such as Wayne Martino (2008), Brandon Sternod (2011) and Douglas Gosse (2011) have critically written about this discourse in Canadian and American schools, but they concentrate on the unjust systems of patriarchy, racism, classism and sexual identity that this discourse perpetuates. Martino states that the discourse highlights the “political significance of denying knowledge about
the role that homophobia, compulsory heterosexuality, and hegemonic masculinity play in ‘doing women’s work’” (2011, p. 189). Sternod states that it is easy for the public to concentrate on the popular media’s narratives of role modeling because it affirms their assumptions of the essentialized nature of gender and also serves as a backlash against the social and political gains made by women (p. 269).

Themes of role modeling and professionalism emerged during the focus group discussions and in the online survey. This next section concentrates on these themes, and exemplifies how many still believe in the concept that educators are hired to do more than teach the content of their academic subjects. Furthermore, the lesbian educators in this study disturbed the notion of compulsory heterosexuality as noted above. The lesbian educators taking the online survey also mentioned role modeling as part of their jobs. Table 6 references some of these quotes, which disrupt the historically developed social role of white, middle-class, and heterosexual teacher as role model.

Table 6. Online Survey: Lesbian as Role Model.

Students see (and I have one on one conversations with several students to share with them that) it is okay to be a gay Latina. That you WILL/CAN be... 1. Successful 2. Fall in love 3. Not go to hell 4. Get a job working with children 5. Will be loved by your family 6. Get married 7. Be happy.

Kids, and educators, need the open role model. They need to see that being a lesbian is just a fact of life-it is not a freak show.

I have had several students come to me with their own struggles surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity, or have shared stories of friends and loved ones who have struggled with it. I have been told that I am a good role model for LGBT youth.

I feel certain female students relate to me even if they only subconsciously are aware of the reasons why. It is usually because they are questionably homosexual themselves, or someone in their home life is.

I like being there for the gay students or those who are questioning. For me, it feels easier to do that as an out queer woman that perhaps it would as a straight ‘ally.’
Tina, like earlier educators, saw her mission as educating the whole child, not just teaching academic content. “It is important to me because I want to be part of developing whole, kind, empathic, socially aware young people. These are the kids who will be my doctors, lawyers, politicians, police officers, fire persons, neighbors, etc. and I believe this is all part of changing our society into the kind of place I’d love to grow old in.” However, Tina realizes that being an educator who identifies as a lesbian in the “buckle of the Bible Belt” is challenging, but being open about her identity is rewarding because she feels she can speak for people who cannot speak for themselves due to fear of losing their jobs. Jane, too, found it inspiring to be a role model for lesbian teens. She hopes that lesbian educators show young women that “all of their dreams ARE POSSIBLE despite what the world has told them (or not told them) they can do as lesbian women!” Jane sees the dichotomy apparent in her lesbian educator as role model position, but views it as empowering. Sometimes her students call her “mom” and she does not believe students find her threatening, which might force people to re-examine their normed assumptions about lesbian educators.

Out of all the focus group participants, Jessie struggled the most with the concept of lesbian educator as role model and seemed to contradict herself. She said she does not believe that lesbian educators who are out are thought of as role models “unless you count their roles as models to those young lesbian students who are starving for positive role models.” She remained adamant that her sexual identity was her own private business and did not encroach on her professional life. However, her comments seemed to conflict: “…and, as far as an openly lesbian woman influencing children, I believe she
would, but not because she would do things differently because she is out. Rather she would be an influence on children because of the attitudes others have about her.” It is not surprising that Jessie did not view this as being a role model, since she kept careful boundaries between her public professional life and her private personal life. However, Jessie is also acknowledging the fact that the window through which the world views the lesbian educator might be perceived in a positive light, as opposed to a moral menace.

**Tensions Within The Role Model Discourse.** While many of the lesbian educators in this study are resisting dominant discourses by proudly embracing their role model status, this particular role model discourse can cause conflict for such a marginalized groups because of the stereotype of queer as child molester. Much of the dominant heteronormative role model discourse involves protecting children. Written about in more detail in Chapter Two, the perceived danger from gay and lesbian teachers resulted in “moral panics” around sexual identity and education (Rudoe, 2010, p. 26). Even today, anti-gay activists continue to perpetuate a binary discourse that frames homosexuality around deviant sexual behavior, and heterosexuality around love and “family values” (Jackson, 2008).

Many of the participants shared stories about this fear-mongering discourse. Kyla came from a family of educators and can recall a conversation when she was younger in which her mother spoke about a rumored lesbian teacher. “My mother was on staff with her and I remember hearing her use words like this woman was trying to ‘recruit’ students to be ‘politically active’ which I guess meant become lesbians.” Anna recalled rumors in her youth about the Physical Education teachers. “All the girls were afraid to
be too close to them; and we all would bring our towels into the pool area and wrap them close to ourselves when we were near her! Ridiculous, I know.”

Jessie, who as the oldest participant in the study had the most educational experience, reflected on this dominant ideology of protecting children from lesbian teachers:

One of the things I have struggled with for all of “us” as I moved through my career was that awful idea that having a lesbian teacher automatically meant parents had to [be] vigilant that their children would not become corrupted or endangered while in her presence. It was if being gay meant being dangerous…As my career passed into the late 90’s and early 2000’s, the laws became pretty specific about equality of opportunities for all, regardless of sexual orientation. I know that lesbian students were somewhat safer because of the laws, but I am not sure that lesbian teachers were or are.

Tina agrees that teachers are role models, but that lesbian educators have to work in disturbing the notion that they are there to “recruit” children. She shared an incident in which she resisted this narrative, but in doing so also inadvertently reinforced normativity by making heteronormativity explicit in her example:

In the last couple of days I had an incident with a female student making a comment about me looking at her “booty” after I talked to her about the appropriateness of her clothing for a PE class. I wasn't satisfied with my initial response of simply saying that I was trying to teach her better so the silly boys in the class didn't think it ok to look at her “booty.” The next day I called her over and told her that if she ever again made a comment suggesting that I would look at a child (and I emphasized the word child) inappropriately then I would have to call her mother and we'd have to have a conference. She got the message, apologized, and went on with her business.

Jane felt that Tina’s incident exemplified the fears many lesbian educators have. Tina agreed and relayed another incident a couple of years ago “in which I allowed a similar insinuation to go without a direct response (although my body language clearly sent the message that additional comments would not be tolerated). Kicked myself for
days after that because what I really wanted to say was ‘if you make any such
insinuations to my face or behind my back again you will be talking to my lawyer.’ I
refuse to teach in fear of what a child or parent may or may not do.”

In the past, the identity of “homosexual” has conflicted with the identity of
“educator,” as historically the American school system has proven to be a hostile place to
be a lesbian educator (Jennings, 1994; Blount, 2005; Lugg & Toom, 2010; Endo, et al.
2010). Interactions such as those described above are events that lesbian educators face
quite often. Tina recalled two of these incidents—one which she chose to ignore and one
which she chose to disturb. This required a conscious act of reflection and then reflex to
disturb the status quo. As difficult as it may be and as dire as some outcomes can be
(such as in Jane’s case), other participants also chose to disturb the status quo regardless
of fears and stereotypes.

**Professionalism.** During discussions of their negotiation of private versus public
in their educational lives, professionalism was another recurring theme for the
participants. Often, it was discussed with the role model theme. A professional identity
awards power to the individual, something early female educators continually fought for
in their work. Lesbians can occupy multiple subordinate positions based on their gender,
race or class, so it is important to note, however, that the emphasis of a professional
teacher identity can be construed in a different manner for lesbian educators. Many
scholars have noted that the lesbian educator’s negotiation of private and public involves
an emphasis on professionalism and the “good teacher identity.” (Rudoe, 2010, quoting
Blount, 2005; Rasmussen, 2006). There appears to be an importance placed on
professionalism and could be seen as a defense strategy against homophobic responses to lesbian educator’s sexual identity status. According to Rudoe, retaining power and avoiding loss of control is important to any teacher in the school setting, but may be more necessary for the lesbian educator (p. 30). Martino (2008) also sees the effect of heteronormativity in his analysis of male educator role models, and how systems of “hegemonic masculinity” determines both the status of the education profession and the legitimacy of the teacher identity (p. 204).

Tina invoked the professionalism discourse most often during the course of the focus group discussions, and frequently used the term to describe various relationships and situations with colleagues:

When I took a job in a different district, all of the old fears came with me... again, until I felt that I'd established myself as being invaluable in my job and had built professional relationships with other teachers... Now that I've been in my current school for the last six years, I don't even think about it any more because I have strong relationships in the building and have established myself as a professional.

Tina stated that being out in her work life on a continual basis is difficult because circumstances change. She is also adamant about how she is treated and despite what others think about sexual orientation, she says she refuses to be treated in a manner other than the professional she considers herself to be.

Kyla also spoke about being a professional when discussing her private versus public lives. She identifies freely as a lesbian with her staff, but does not speak about her personal life with students or parents:

Partly because I am very cognizant of professional boundaries and probably wouldn’t share my personal life even if I was straight. I like to keep my work life and personal life as separate as possible. I’m sure part of it has somewhat to do with being a little apprehensive about what parents and students would say but if
they asked me I’d tell the truth. It just doesn’t come up because it’s more about business when I’m at work.

Kyla’s answers seemed to be most guarded out of all the participants, and this could be attributed to the fact that school administrators such as Kyla typically have higher-profiles in their work than do classroom teachers. Consequently, their behavior is continually scrutinized and unlike other professionals, public school administrators do not come home after work and shed their identities (Lugg, 2010 quoting Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Lugg, 2003; Walcott, 1973).

Both Jane and Anna also referred to professionalism quite often. Jane used the term when describing the positive impact of those occasions when she has come out to her students, and she felt the impact was greater when they viewed lesbians in a professional career setting. Anna also used the term when reflecting upon divisions in her public and private life, stating that things that are private for her are private for most professionals.

The construction of the educator as professional identity and/or educator as role model identity continues to perpetuate the heteronormative discourse in which female educator bodies and identities are scrutinized and policed by the normalizing eyes of educational authorities and institutions. The discourse over lack of appropriate male role models in education, for example, shows another moral panic over the supposed threat of female educators and their perceived emasculation of boys. Martino (2008) argues that invoking the male role model discourse as the answer to the lack of males in education illustrates the heteronormativity inherent in the school institution. This discourse often invokes the white, heterosexual male figure as the actor, and thus when read critically,
the absence of discourses about whiteness and heterosexually is highlighted (p. 200).

Britzman states that invoking this discourse fails to address issues of whiteness or patriarchy, and how this “deadly combination works to define differently the imperatives of masculinity and femininity” (Martino quoting Britzman, 2008, p. 204). This group of lesbian educators disturbed the normalization of such discourses in not only their sexual identity, but also with their gender and race. The next section highlights this intersectionality.

**Intersectionality with Gender and Race**

Along with the professionalism/role modeling discourse in the 19th century education profession came a gender hierarchy in the form of predominantly male administrators and predominantly female teachers (Strober and Tyack, 1980; Blount, 2005; Khayatt, 1992; Rury, 1989). Almost all of these women educators were unmarried, following the legal and cultural constraints of the day. The perception that teachers were “mothering” or only working in the field until they married added to a public discourse of teaching’s lack of professionalism. The lower social status of women allowed the mostly male administrative staff to underpay and undervalue the profession. As school systems became increasingly hierarchical, male educators increasingly took on the top paying, more prestigious administrative positions, while women continued to dominate in the lower-paying positions of classroom teacher. Schools were now becoming hierarchies, with superintendents, principals, and assistant principals (usually male) all monitoring a teacher’s (usually female) classroom.
Female educators had prescribed rules of conduct they were forced to adhere to outside of their usual teaching hours and classrooms. Contracts typically forbade female educators from socializing with men, and required they be chaperoned by a relative whenever they went out for socialization (Sedlak, 1989, p. 269). Tina, who has always worked in the south, remembers that even in the mid-1980s she was much more careful about revealing her sexual identity and even feared losing her job due to a clause in her contract concerning “moral conduct.” She said those types of clauses were common in the rural, southern district where she began her career.

The early discourse espousing teacher as role model helped carry out some of the earlier bans against married teachers, with women educators forced to give up teaching after they married. By controlling who has access to the school institution (which is an agent of the state), the male to female binary was continually constructed with men dominant and females subordinate, which served as part of the gender role models of the day. That is, once a woman married, her role in life was to tend to the home and children. Furthermore, these bans were not only due to the gender ideology of the day, but also due to race and class-based anxieties that were exacerbated by the reactions to numerous immigrants entering the country. Hence, the broad bias against the married woman teacher also included the fears associated with the future of the white race if women worked instead of procreated. In 1931, *School Executive Magazine* published the following:

My chief objection to married women teaching is the fact that it leads almost necessarily to childless homes or to the restriction of children in homes that really should produce more children. Every time you elect a married teacher, you tacitly
endorse and encourage such practices which are the most reprehensible sins of the upper and middle classes (Clifford citing McGinnis in Warren, 1989, p. 305).

Despite the educational history and the civil rights strides made for both women and minorities, today teaching still continues to be staffed by predominantly females and whites. According to a study published in 2011 by the National Center for Education Information, the American teaching force is still 84% female and 84% white, with Hispanics representing the fastest non-white group entering teaching (Feistritzer, 2011, p. 11).

This section continues with the themes of gender and race that also emerged within the focus group. In particular, Bailey and Anna, the two younger participants, often referred to their manner of dress as an act of resistance to the dominant ideology of feminization of teaching, with an emphasis on the “feminine” portion. As Lugg & Tooms (2010) observed, norms can be created under the guise of “professional dress,” which serve as both political and hegemonic in addition to the meaning of professional garb. The “presentation of self” looms large and constructs a panopticon in which various identities can be read (p. 77–78). Bailey and Anna both emphasized gender performativity by referring to their presentations of self, and how they tried to challenge gender normativity.

Bailey is most comfortable presenting herself in an “androgynous style of dress and mannerisms” and feels that her appearance defines her as a lesbian without her needing to come out of the closet. “…one of my favorite students from last year would
call me ‘Ms. Ellen’ sometimes, so I’d say that they get it whether I tell them or not.”

Anna thought that the body can be used as part of everyday activism in combating dominant ideology. She struggles because she desires to be out, but she can be read as heterosexual because of her femininity:

There is definitely a queer fashion movement and many queers who consciously and politically fashion themselves in ways that queer their bodies and/or gender presentation. I am highly aware of the way I fashion myself and the way I present my body to the world. This is part of everyday activism for me...as a femme, I feel invisible—so I mark my body in queer ways. I want to be out—I want to be seen—I want to be visible. My (butch) partner would never be confused for a straight woman...I want to be THAT OUT.

Kyla, however, stated that she does not even think about the messages clothing sends and continues to invoke the professional discourse when pondering gender or clothing. “Honestly, I don't even think about my clothing, hair, and style as being straight, gay or otherwise. I tend to dress on the classic professional side—dresses, skirts, suits, slacks and oxford shirts—at work.” Furthermore, Kyla reported that most people do not read her as a lesbian until she tells them. She equates it to the racial concept of “passing” as a member of the dominant white race. “So I have this ‘privilege’ that comes along with a modicum of guilt that I can choose to reveal or not depending on my comfort level and whether it serves me well. This is how I've negotiated the world of work in general (I do not say this with any sort of pride).” However, in her current role as school administrator, she actually feels like she has come out much more and benefits. “I would have to say it's the best time of my career because instead of editing out and carefully selecting what I share, I can just be me. That takes the edge off my aloofness

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3 Ms. Ellen refers to Ellen DeGeneres, an American comedian who publicly came out as a lesbian on her television show in the late 1990s.
and lets me focus on the people around me instead of monitoring what's going to come out of my mouth.” Kyla’s reference to herself as aloof can be attributed to the challenges that come from the constant negotiation of the private and public binary for lesbian educators. Janna Jackson, professor in the College of Education and Human Development, referred to this dichotomy as “masks” that many gay and lesbian teachers have to wear at work because they were trapped between wanting to be open about their identities, but fearful of losing their jobs. Jackson’s study also found that despite attempts to separate their lives, a LGBT educator’s ability to teach to their fullest potential is compromised. Kyla exemplifies this dilemma, and the empowerment that can occur when one takes off their mask.

Jane shared a story during which changing the dress code came up as an issue at work. Jane questioned whether it was discriminatory to allow girls to wear earrings, but not boys. “Our principal, despite saying he wanted to be inclusive, said he just could not bring himself to let boys wear earrings—it was just wrong and made him uncomfortable. In his opinion, he is to keep the moral standard raised and that means perpetuating normalized conduct and values.” Jane also identifies as a feminine lesbian, and realizes that her very being can be seen a threat:

What I do think is that who I am causes others to look at who they are in a new light and that causes discomfort. Those who claim heterosexuality but have a very masculine persona for example, are suddenly looking at a very feminine lesbian; the juxtaposition of those two paradoxical images causes discomfort that most cannot simply ignore.

In other words, Jane conforms to gender normativity, but it can also be seen as an act of
resistance in that it challenges others’ stereotypes of what a lesbian is supposed to look like.

Just as in the past, issues of race continue to intersect with dominant school ideology. Although all the women in the focus group were white, many did identify and refer to race as an additional dimension of identity to their public education worlds. The same holds true for racial identities in the public school system. As Loutzenheiser and MacIntosh (2004) state, the “rights and freedoms” given to those adhering to heteronormative citizenry are not given to those “others” such as queers or racial minorities. Neither race nor sexuality can be separated from one another, as the social construction of one relies on the social construction of the other, with both running counter to heteronormativity (p. 154). Anna shared a blog with the rest of the focus group she wrote in June 2009, where she pondered issues of queerness within minority settings:

From my own experience, I've found that many identity-groups will use that specific identity-category as the excuse for hating queers. When I started working at [school name], a school that is 99% African-American, I was told that issues of homosexuality were deeply frowned upon in the Black community and that I should not address them. When talking to one of my best friends from high school, he told me he'd kick his nephews’ asses if any of them even thought about being gay. When I asked him why, he responded, “We're Hispanic. Clearly, you don't understand what it means to be Hispanic!” And Margaret Cho's parody of her mother speaks to the same issue…so why is it, when white folks are homophobic, it's not often tied to a racial identity? I think, and I could very well be mistaken, that this is because whiteness is invisible (I'm specifically talking about mainstream whites — not crazy supremacists). It is because whiteness is invisible that racism functions so well. We don't ever have to think about our privilege; it just is. Therefore, when whites are homophobic, they *may* [sic] cling to other identities such as religious, political, or class identities (i.e. “It's against the bible!”)…I've found that it is simply a myth, fueled by homophobia, that XYZ groups are *particularly* [sic] homophobic. One's race, religion, sex, or class does not make one homophobic. One's homophobia makes one homophobic.

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4 Margaret Cho is an Asian-American comedian who identifies as bisexual. She is known for her stand-up routines in which she critiques race and sexual identity.
Jane was impacted when she read Anna’s blog, and shared her own thoughts about intersections of race and sexual identity. She wondered whether there is a subversive strategy of minority populations with strong homophobic traditions using the dominant majority “to keep their own queer members in the closet by suggesting as they did to you that you would be insensitive to broach the ‘gay’ topic with their members.” Jane seemed particularly interested in this discussion as she grew up involved in racial Civil Rights advocacy work with her parents, and was conscious of her privileged white identity intersecting with a minority sexual identity:

Though I saw the affects [sic] of prejudice and discrimination, I was not afraid to be outspoken or stand up for injustice. I did it regularly. What I didn't realize until much later was perhaps it was easy then because as a white, middle class, woman who identified as straight, I was operating from a very privileged position. In fact, I continued operating that way even after I started identifying as lesbian, at 40 years old.

Jane was cognizant that she was positioned as a minority due to her sexual identity, but nonetheless can still operate from a privileged position in our racialized and stratified society. Despite her self-knowledge of her various social positions, Jane cites her white racial identity as a factor in feeling unsafe around her predominately black parent community. She says that many are openly religious and have a strong tradition of being averse to LBGT people:

I stay very closeted around them. I might feel safer if I was African American because then I would be one of them. But, since I’m white and gay, I feel like it’s easier for them to blame my being gay on being white—it’s easier to reject me because I appear to have nothing in common with them.

Bailey also made generalizations of collective racial identities:

Many of my black students that are from the Caribbean (Jamaica, Grenada,
Trinidad/Tobago, St. Lucia, Haiti, etc.) come from communities where being gay is just not okay. Even if the students themselves are more accepting, the cultural rhetoric around gayness in their communities is unwelcoming at best.

Both Jane and Bailey reinforced the dominant racial ideology by making these types of sweeping generalizations based on their non-white communities. It is of little wonder that these white women, despite having a minority social status, contributed to dominant white norms in some of their statements because after all, the structures that created and pathologized racial ideologies also created and pathologized homosexuality in American society.

This chapter has concentrated on the themes that emerged during the online focus group and through the data collected from the quantitative survey. Stories and counter-stories were shared exemplifying the negotiation of lesbian educators’ private and public lives. The next chapter will summarize these findings in terms of how lesbian educators are redistributing power relations with their intersecting identities. Social justice work in education goes beyond the mere representation of “other.” Rather, transformational educational work calls into question the prevailing dominant discourses that oppress those of minority status in institutions such as the American school. Furthermore, it calls into question the archetype of a minority who needs protection or is a victim—which operates under a deficit model rather than an asset model. Finally, the next chapter will highlight implications for further research as well as implication for future policy/practice changes.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The goal of this dissertation has been to unpack the negotiation between the public and private lives in the social construction of the lesbian educator identity, and to determine how this negotiation resists and/or reproduces the dominant ideology of the American school. Using queer theory as the critical framework and discourse historical analysis as the methodology, this study has disturbed the more widely held notions of appropriate social norms in the school, by examining the social construction of “normal” and “deviant” behaviors (Bower and Klecka, 2009, quoting Kumashiro, 2003; Pinar, 1998). That is, heteronormativity is constructed as normal and natural, while homosexuality is positioned as abnormal and unnatural. Furthermore, heteronormativity is grounded in the assumption that heterosexuality is the assumed sexual identity, so it becomes invisible.

Our various identities are socially constructed through relationships between ourselves, others, and historically constructed roles. People generally belong to many different categories and assume multiple identities. Various themes emerged during the discourse historical analysis, and this research study concentrated on discourses of double consciousness, educator as role model and professional, and intersectionality with other identities such as gender and race.

Broad socio-political discourses continue to construct lesbian educator identities
as subordinate to heterosexual educator identities (Ferfolja, 2008). Heterosexuality continues to be regulated by state institutions, such as the American school. However, some of the lesbian educators in this research showed that the lines constructing private lesbian and public educator are beginning to blur. These lesbian educators were much more conscious of negotiating this divide and merging the two identities. The study also showed that lesbian educators, like most school employees, live in both public and private worlds. But the focus group members were more conscious of that separation and experienced Du Bois’s world of double consciousness. Jane and Jessie exemplified this double conscious sensation more than the other participants.

This study showed that the issue appears not to lie in the degree of “outness” that a lesbian teacher is at in a given moment of time and space as they negotiate between private and public lives, but rather in the power relations inherent in the prevailing discourse through which they construct their identities. Furthermore, the results also showed that despite variations in being out, the lesbian educators in this study both resisted and reinforced the dominant ideology. While one may have assumed that their minority sexual identity would automatically mean a resistance to heteronormative ideology, that was not reflected in this study. On the contrary, at times the participants reinforced dominant ideology.

Furthermore, this research showed that the lesbian educators in this study all retained a sense of agency and power as they balanced their private and public selves in the workplace. The participants actively worked to disturb hegemonic power and dominant ideology by naming discrimination and thus making it visible. They employed
both consciousness raising techniques and critical pedagogy. Bailey, the youngest, was
the most outspoken and vigorous in her activism work in all areas of her school life. But
even Jessie, the oldest and probably most emotionally drained from the public versus
private dichotomy, was able to experience her positive impact on colleagues through her
multicultural curricular work.

We have all been socialized by the same structures that reproduce
heteronormativity (along with racial and patriarchal subjugation), so it is not surprising
that even the lesbian educators in this study at times reproduced these same norms. For
example, in 2010 the focus group participants experienced a significant historical
moment together—the increased media coverage of teen suicides. This coverage created
an online social movement in terms of the *It Gets Better* campaign. In particular, this
experience propelled Anna to come out even more to claim and bridge her private and
public identities. This is a form of resistance, to be sure. Yet, as the participants discussed
the incident they simultaneously reproduced and perpetuated a victimized, subordinate
role of these teens. That is, when issues of homosexual identity do surface in the school
setting, it still retains a victimization stance in which lesbian and gay sexual identities are
referenced only in terms of bullying. While homophobic bullying is an important topic,
one in which young lives can literally be at stake, the discourse continues to perpetuate an
identity that must be protected from victimization. Instead of employing this passive
approach, students and teachers alike should be taught to name and disturb
heterosexuality in this discourse, just as they should learn to name and disturb whiteness
in racial discourses or sexism in gender discourses (Rudoe, 2010; Sumara, 2007). Ritch
Savin-Williams (2005) in *The New Gay Teenager*, invoked some controversy when he questioned the validity of some of the previously cited research studies that showed that anywhere from 10 to 30% of teens attempted suicide. However, he provided an alternative viewpoint and stated that few researchers today focus on the fact that the majority of gay and lesbian teens are not attempting suicide. Savin-Williams rejected the standard victim model and focused on the assets that the majority of gay teens possess. “Given the documented levels of intimidation and harassment young people receive, the fact that the vast majority of them do not attempt suicide is noteworthy; it suggests that these teenagers have exceptional, but unacknowledged, coping skills and resiliency” (p. 184). Savin-Williams is correct in that scholarship focusing on healthier representations should be equally reported, which is just as instrumental in disturbing the dominant discourse.

This study showed that moral panics continue to perpetuate the myth that lesbian and gay teachers are not fit to teach our young children, and will recruit children into the homosexual lifestyle. Tina’s example of a child accusing her of looking at her “booty” was just one example of the type of micro aggressions lesbian educators face. Jane lost her employment due to her sexual identity. Jessie never felt safe being out in school over the span of her long career. As recently as February, 2012, House Bill 630 (State Fair Employment Practices Act) was taken to the Georgia House of Representatives. This bill would have added protections for public employees from discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender identity. During a House sub-committee hearing on the bill, a Georgia K-12 teacher and state director of Concerned Women for America was the only
witness who spoke against the bill. In her public testimony she incited the protectionist discourse:

… if this bill became law, then what we would be protecting for public employees is not only heterosexuality, bisexuality, pedophilia, transsexuality, transvestitism, I'm not going to read them all. Voyeurism, exhibitionism, feetism, zoophilia, necrophilia, klismaphilia and the list goes on. I teach in the public school system and I know that this would impact the public school system. And we have parents who bring their kids to school every day and expect the school to protect them. And what's going to protect our children if someone that is a pedopilic comes in and gets a teaching job, is a bus driver, is a custodian, and they can be people that just want to prey on children and they’ll be protected with this law (Hibbard, 2012).

Despite widespread testimony in support of the bill, it died in the subcommittee.

Themes of role modeling and professionalism also emerged during the focus group discussions and in the online survey. Early educators constantly fought for rights and the acknowledgement that their career was a professional career, and the same seemed to hold true with this focus group. It was surprising that even in this day, professionalism continues to be such an important topic when discussing education. Role modeling was another theme that continues from early historical accounts, but this group of educators disturbed the compulsory heterosexuality notion and most embraced their sexual minority role model position. The female body, once regulated by prescribed marriage laws, slowly began to empower a public sphere and in some cases these early educators even became pubic activists. The female lesbian body, once purged from school systems, is now slowly gaining some civil rights. Based on the group of lesbian educators for this study, some are even beginning to claim and empower this social public space in the school setting.

Identities are always intersecting and multi-faceted. Although this dissertation
concentrated on a single lens analysis of lesbian sexual identity, other identities constantly wove in the discussions and linkages were made to gender and race. According to Rudoe, homophobia is linked to gendered norms in schools and unless these norms are disturbed, the formal and informal culture of the school will continue to perpetuate prejudices and policing of normative ideas around gender differences. For example, Jane’s principal didn’t want the boys to wear earrings because that did not fit in with normed masculinity. As the principal, he was in a position of authority to continue to perpetuate those norms. While it was not surprising that gender became an important discourse with this female focus group, the women actually delved deeper and deconstructed issues of femininity. Since all of the women in the study were white, it was unexpected that race emerged as a theme. Anna, especially, was cognizant of the role race can play in various systems of oppression. When asked to articulate which themes were salient for them at the end of the focus group study, Anna replied, “Honestly, I feel like some unexamined racist sentiments came up during these discussions and I feel like that is still and will always be a place where we, white lesbians, need to do the most labor. I fear that racism somehow becomes an excuse for LGBTQA educators to not address homophobia, heterosexism, and sexism.” As white women socialized under the same systems and institutions that render whiteness invisible, it was surprising that a couple of these lesbian educators were able to name the dominant white racial ideology as another system of oppression.
Disturbing the Power Equilibrium

According to Renn, queer theorists attempt to critically analyze the meaning of identities and resist oppressive social constructions of categories. They seek to disturb the dominant normative discourses, “such as those that have been used historically to police teachers, students and administrators at all levels of education” (Renn quoting Blount, 2005, Dilley, 2002, Quinn & Meiners, 2009, 2010). This study was not about seeking queer activists within educational institutions. Rather, this study concentrated on how an educational researcher employing a critical theory was able to read, interpret, and present the every day lives of lesbian educators to illustrate how they disturbed the status quo through their negotiation of private and public. It is with that framework in mind that I described how these lesbian educators could be considered activists for their role in disturbing heteronormative discourses. Some, like Anna, knowingly embraced their activist role. Others, like Jessie, would never have considered herself an activist. However, as an educational researcher utilizing this critical framework and methodology, I was able to exemplify how they all queered their little corner of the world.

It is also important for the reminder that heteronormativity is not bad in and of itself. Rather, it is the negative value judgments and biases placed on these non-normative identities that prove detrimental to the ideals of a democratic society. Disturbing the Power Equilibrium, therefore, was a study focused on bringing about alternative ways of being into the norm. It is about norming alternative narratives without dehumanizing, pathologizing, and oppressing those different from the majority.
Likewise, it is important to note that early female educators were not just passive subjects in a male-dominated scenario despite the historical forced control over women’s bodies and the moral panics around queers teaching children. There are educational scholars today who are challenging the notion that teaching was a short-term move in a woman’s life before marriage, particularly in the large, bureaucratized, urban areas. Rather than view teaching as temporary, women teacher-activists were more in control of their own lives than previously believed. Women teachers took advantage of the feminization of teaching to unite and transformed traditional discourse from woman as role model for heteronormative society to woman as role model for progressive change (Rousmaniere, 2005). For example, some early female educators lived their entire lives with other such women and chose not to get married. Instead, they chose to live with other women or center their lives around communities of women, which resisted the strong pull of the dominant ideology of the day. These women developed types of intimacy that bore no resemblance to the normalized relations around the domestic sphere of the time or the normalized kinship patterns.

The fact that these lesbian educators blurred the lines between what has been historically expected of a female’s private and public self exemplifies the fluid construction of identities. Binary constructions of homosexual and heterosexual, private and public, public school teacher and private citizen, are dynamic and positioned in space and time. Today, lesbian teachers like Anna recognize both the heteronormative ideology of the American school system and her own part in disturbing the equilibrium of status quo:
Normal educators enforce traditional, middle-class values and gender roles. They instill the notion that education is strictly about job training/employment, rather than about changing society. They enforce and model conservative, sexist dress codes. They are heterosexual, married, may have kids, may own a home, may have advanced degrees, act like adults. I am not married, I don’t have kids nor do I ever want them; I believe that the purpose of education is to change society—to provide tools for social and political change—that educated people are the ones who rise up, rebel, and start revolutions. I do not dress conservatively; and while I am mature and I enforce rules that ensure students’ safety and freedom(s) and students demonstrate respect for me, many students have said I don’t seem like a “normal” teacher to them—some have said I look like a student and am easier to approach. Am I an adult? Yes. Do I present myself according the societal roles of adulthood—I guess not!

Despite prevailing thought that lesbian teachers who choose to remain closeted are suffering from heterosexual oppression, remaining closeted still can retain power and pose a challenge to heterosexuality. The very act of staying closeted shows that even heterosexuality is a social construction. It shows that heterosexuality is not an essentialized identity position, for if one is not out of the closet, then one cannot claim the title of homosexual or heterosexual. One is merely “passing,” or performing the act of heterosexuality, despite the fact that he/she does not claim heterosexuality as his/her identity. One is “acting” as a heterosexual, which shows that heterosexuality is a social construct. Being in the closet means that the private identity remains as homosexual, but the public identity is seen as heterosexual. Jessie was the lesbian in the study who never regretted remaining closeted, and firmly believes that being out would have hindered her work:

If I had decided to be out, I truly believe that [Mira] would not have become a surgeon, [Jeff] would not be a newspaper editor, and [Vida] would not be an up and coming writer of books for adolescents. [Tom] would not be an aircraft mechanic for Delta, and [Liz] would not be in charge of an entire shift of nurses in a large metropolitan hospital. I know who I am and make decisions based on what I believe to be the best opportunity to do what I do well.
Jane, on the other hand, felt that silence prevented her from being her authentic self at work. But being vocal or silent about one’s sexual identity is not the only factor. Jane summarized the consequences of being closeted as broader than the inability to publicly claim an identity. Rather, she is not fully engaged in the dominant discourse and thus multiple stakeholders suffer:

There are discussions I don’t have with students and/or their families by not being out. I cannot offer them the reassurance borne of experience, the connection established through the bond of common culture/identity by being in the closet. In my discussion, I feel constrained to hint at the fact that I know we share this similarity. As a result, they can never know with any certainty that someone really does understand their perspective, share their experiences within the world, or empathize with how they feel. We are each denied the satisfaction that comes from the intimate connection shared between people of similar cultures, religions, families, and the like where a look of the eye, a tilt of the head, a hinted smile is immediately understood and builds bridges across myriad of differences. Conversely, remaining closeted with parents reinforces social stigma, prevents opportunities for educating, advocating, and affecting desperately needed change.

The danger in coming out or being outed at school still remains real. As Morris states, the paradox about outing oneself is that it can lift repression, but at the same time it can create dangerous situations and create other narratives—such as those of Matthew Shepard or Harvey Milk (2005, p. 12). Lesbian educators must walk this fine line.

As history has shown, it is difficult for minorities alone to change inherent power structures that perpetuate their status as “other.” For example, whites had to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement and men had to become involved in women’s rights movement. An important contribution from critical feminists has been to show how patriarchy has shaped a hierarchy that not only disadvantages women, but men as well. For example, the social structures that suppress women also construct the normative ways
men are taught to act. These same patriarchal structures contribute to homophobia. Likewise, for heteronormativity to be disturbed, heterosexuals must become involved (Sumara, 2007).

The work ahead is for all educators, not just those occupying a minority status, to challenge curricula, educational theory, and pedagogy in a way that does not simply reproduce heteronormativity. Disturbing this equilibrium—challenging our own perspectives and questioning those structures like the public schools that have helped shape our identities, is key to transformational education and realization of our democratic ideals. Insights can be made when educational researchers queer the stories such as those reported in this study.

While multicultural education has become the latest buzzword in much educational leadership literature, lesbian educators are often left out of this discourse. But lesbian educators continue to negotiate their identities within broader social positions which include race, gender, and class among others. One way to combat this injustice is to consciously illustrate the intersections with other minority areas such as gender or race, and then concentrate on the imbalance of power relations in whichever minority group is the topic of conversation. While this research did hone in on only lesbian educators, expanding the discussion as generally as possible does not water down the content; rather, it can highlight the underlying cause of the injustice—the power inequality embedded in patriarchal white systems. Many of the participants recognized the intersectionality and named it. Some went further and disturbed it.
Implications for Further Research

Given the small sample size, it is difficult to generalize to all lesbian teachers. Furthermore, this discourse analysis study was studied by a researcher who is herself an openly out, lesbian school administrator. It would add to the scholarly research if more researchers, particularly those claiming a heterosexual identity, chose this topic as an area of analysis. Furthermore, the quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics only, and would benefit from a more comprehensive quantitative data analysis. It also could prove beneficial to expand the sample pool to include those educators who identify exclusively as heterosexuals for a comparison.

While this study did narrow in on one dimension of identity—sexual identity, it would be beneficial to widen the scope to multiple facets of identity and their intersections. Of particular importance could be a study exploring gender through the lens of femininity. The participants touched upon this theme when they discussed clothing and presenting oneself as a woman. Finally, employing a more critical feminist framework would help dissect the role patriarchy plays in stigmatizing lesbian educators as more than a perceived “deviant” sexual identity. Historically, lesbian educators were not perceived as endangering until they threatened the domination of males and their control over female bodies. Also continuing to explore the intersections between race and sexual identity is important. Anna summarized that she felt some “unexamined racist sentiments” came up during the focus group. Further work in this area is paramount.

In addition, disaggregating the data in terms of age could be beneficial in exemplifying the fluidity of social construction of identities. Bailey was the youngest and
the most comfortable in negotiating the public and private worlds. Jessie was the oldest and still remains fiercely protective of what she deems her private life.

Further deconstruction needs to be done around the broader issue of “protecting children.” This study has briefly touched upon the moral panics that ensued when gay and lesbian teachers were perceived as threatening in their position as educators. However, these moral panics also continue in other areas tangential to schools. For example, both proponents and opponents of same-sex marriage and LGBT adoption claim that they take into account the best interests of children. This attention turns schools into socio-political agents of the state, particularly as these institutions continue to be used as political propaganda such as No On Prop 8 or the various Protect Marriage groups (Bower & Klecka, 2009, p. 358). Like it or not, schools are caught in the middle of these debates. Society would benefit if more educators would stand up and take a stand rather than espousing “neutrality.”

**Implications for Policy and Practice Change**

As noted, the small sample size can be a limitation. Nonetheless, there is broader applicability from this study to similar types of work on anti-oppressive education. So, much as whiteness is now interrogated in anti-racist education work, heteronormativity must also be interrogated in teacher preparation programs. Teacher education programs should focus on making the invisible visible, so future practitioners do not continue to reproduce to the heteronormative system already in place. Significant progress has been made in teacher education programs to introduce the tenets of diversity, but until we begin to make salient heterosexuality as a normative process (much like making
whiteness salient in our discussions on race) we cannot begin to transform educational institutions. Teacher preparation programs need to shift their focus from emphasizing methodology and content knowledge to the broader subject of relationships. As Sumara states, “More recently, teacher education has replaced some of this learning with an obsession on methods. And so, while we may be educating teachers that know more about the technicalities of teaching school subjects, we are not doing enough to expand their understanding of the human subjects they will be teaching” (2007, p. 53).

Teachers are serving the public good, and as such have a responsibility to learn more about the structures that create and continually shape identities and inequalities.

Recruitment practices in schools can also change. While there remains a significant push to diversity the education field (in terms of both gender and race), there still lacks a unified and public push to have queer educators represented. Although often hidden in affirmative action policies, there needs to be a greater push to recruit through national organizations such as GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network). To not make a concerted effort on this minority recruiting means that a “don’t ask don’t tell” message is perpetuated, with sexual orientation being tolerated but still hidden from that of their teacher identity. One positive result of having more teachers come out is that it may force educational institutions to face the fact that overt discrimination still exists in terms of sexual identity.

Policy and procedural changes at both the local and federal level can assist. For example, extending domestic partner benefits, including anti-homophobic language in local anti-discrimination board of education policies, and shifting day-to-day school
practices to combat homophobia for all groups who enter the school building can begin to assist. These policies should be transparent and communicated well to all employee groups. Day-to-day changes in content and pedagogy can also be used to transform American schools. For example, health education departments can begin to include same-sex relationships as part of their curriculum and social studies departments can include gay rights as part of their Civil Rights units.

**Closing Remarks**

Collective identities can actually be used to transform institutions and dominant power structures. Rather than use these differences to categorize, negatively stereotype, and make assumptions about a group of people, schools can be instrumental in teaching children to *assume* diverse sexualities, races, religions, etc. as the norm. This shift in paradigm changes the thinking from “you’re different than I am” (still a centralized viewpoint) to “we’re all different” (a decentralized viewpoint). Teachers are not teaching about “the other” as some type of marginalized group. Rather, teachers are teaching about the collective, and within this collective stand multiple intersecting identities. In the latter, identities can more easily overlap with each other. This is a new approach to teaching and learning about multiculturalism. It calls for the formulation of diverse relationships between humans who are distinctly different from one another in a variety of ways. With this shift in paradigm can come changes in cultural norms and dominant discourses that perpetuate power inequities.

Furthermore, recognizing, validating, and engaging with other identities can help change cultural norms. Kwame Appiah, cultural theorist and Professor of Philosophy at
Princeton University, calls for something that transcends our usual view of multiculturalism. Diversity of the human race is looked at in an altogether different manner. Appiah concludes that in this day and age of globalization, it is already a given that the world is made up of many different identities. The issues are no longer only a matter of recognizing or honoring differences; rather, the issues should evolve into learning how to live with that fact and \textit{actively engaging} in these differences. It goes beyond recognition of “the other” and it develops further into making sense of that person. Appiah calls for all of us to have conversations with one another, and he uses the word conversation “as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others” (2006, p 85). This stresses the importance of using education in our schools to teach more than the core academic subject areas. We as professional educators should be concerning ourselves with helping students become critical thinkers and lifelong learners who contribute responsibly to the world. Furthermore, education should be involved with bringing social injustices to light, and to teach children to respect other humans regardless of race, gender, sexual identity, economic status, or any other difference.

The public recognition of a gay identity does not have to deteriorate into identity-based politics that causes divisiveness within our world (and schools). Rather, recognition of collective identities can be utilized to change cultural norms—to continue moving along with changes in our global community. As Appiah concludes, it is already a given that there are differences in our society. Let us move beyond that fact and begin having conversations. Most importantly, as Appiah points out, is that our conversations should not strive toward point-counterpoint, or even strive toward building consensus.
After all, how often have we engaged in the debate over the “morality” of homosexuality without getting anywhere? Rather, let us utilize conversation to help people just get used to one another (Appiah, 2006, p 84).

One way of getting used to one another is to come out as a gay educator, to make that public declaration that it is an appropriate public identity. Rather than being seen as a divisive act, it can be seen as bringing one’s whole self into another identity—that of teacher. While gay teachers will always be in a minority (quantitatively), the more public exposure of that identity in the school system, the more one’s difference will not overwhelm other aspects of an identity. For example, historically African-Americans were only allowed employment within black schools. Today, because of changes in law and societal views, an African-American teacher can be seen in all areas of school systems. When constructed in this way, it actually serves as a way to diminish differences in that the identity of teacher is seen as one that can have many various overlapping identities—Jewish teacher, Hispanic and disabled teacher, math teacher, female teacher, male and Middle Eastern teacher, lesbian teacher, etc. By explicitly or implicitly disclosing aspects of one’s identity, teachers can help model ways for students to cognitively understand their own experiences. As Allen wrote, “For education to be empowering, teachers and learners must strive toward understanding differences and use them to create new ways of being in the world.” (1995, p 136). This moves us beyond the public recognition of an identity and into metacognition.

People generally belong to many different categories and can assume multiple identities. In the past, the identity of “gay” has conflicted with the identity of “teacher,”
as is evidenced by the purposeful silencing of gay teachers. Collective identities are no doubt socially constructed, depending on the legal, political and sociological factors of the day. In order to combat the negative stereotypes of the past, gay educators can serve as moral exemplars of their collective identity as both teacher and gay (Capper, 1999, p. 6). Replacing negative scripts with positive ones requires that first, crucial step—the public recognition of our authentic selves.
APPENDIX A

WEBPAGE CREATED AND USED FOR
RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS
Disturbing the Power Equilibrium:
How Notions of Private and Public
Construct the Lesbian Educator in the
American School System

Welcome to the website for my dissertation. I will endeavor to research the following: How do lesbian educators reinforce or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and their public lives? How does the school institution influence lesbian educators in this negotiation? My study will examine the participants’ own articulation/interpretations of their experiences as lesbian educators and place that within the larger social institution of the American school. The social construction of “educator” and “lesbian” will be analyzed while the American public school will be deconstructed vis-à-vis societal norms. The social construction of the lesbian educator will be studied in terms of the interplay of her public versus private identity. Research will be conducted on how these educators’ private lives affect the way they work and navigate within the public school institution.
ABOUT ME

Name: Lillian Petrovich Brandt
Age: 45
Occupation: Assistant Principal at a high school in Chicago area.
Education: Ph.D. candidate at Loyola University, Chicago
Favorite quote: "...when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing. It takes some strength of soul - and not just individual strength, but collective understanding - to resist this void, this non-being, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard." - Adrienne Rich

New York, NY: Norton
Abstract

Educational institutions are places permeated with the dominant social ideology and are sites for social reproduction; that is, the form of the public high school socially reproduces the white, male heteronormativity forms of the American public life. However, what is rendered invisible, private and marginalized inside the school (such as being a lesbian educator) in reality is visible, public, and inundated with meaning outside the school. There is a paucity of research on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) educators, yet queer educators exist in the public school setting in which a “don’t ask, don’t tell” mentality prevails. By framing our personal lives as something that should not be shared in the public school setting with children, a public/private binary is formed in which oppression continues to operate even if overt discrimination is not present (Quinn & Meyers, p. 5). This dissertation will focus on this dichotomy and research the following: How do lesbian educators reinforce or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and their public lives? How does the school institution influence lesbian educators’ lives in this negotiation?

My study will examine the participants’ own articulation/interpretations of their experiences as lesbian educators and place that within the larger social institution of the American school. Hence, the social construction of “educator” and “lesbian” will be analyzed while the American public school will be deconstructed vis-a-vis societal norms. The social construction of the lesbian educator will be studied in terms of the interplay of her public versus private identity. Research will be conducted on how these educators’ private lives affect the way they work and navigate within the public school institution. In addition, the deconstruction of the broader field of social normativity in educational institutions will be examined. Rather than focusing only on the lesbian educator as “the other,” normativity will also be the object of educational analysis. Connections will be made between both levels – how these individual educators’ lives reinforce or challenge the dominant systems of the institution, and how the system influences their lives.

PLEASE READ THIS CONSENT FORM AND IF YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE, SCROLL TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE AND CLICK ON THE LINK.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title
Disturbing the Power Equilibrium: How Notions of Private and Public Construct the Lesbian Educator in the American School System

Researcher
Lillian Petrovich Brandt, Ph.D. candidate in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies, Loyola University, Chicago

Faculty Sponsor
Dr. Noah Sobe, Loyola University

Introduction
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Lillian Petrovich Brandt for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Noah Sobe in the Department of Cultural and Educational Studies, School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. You are being asked to participate because you self-identify as a lesbian, gay woman, or queer woman, who is an educator (a classroom teacher, an administrator, a support service person such as school librarian or counselor, etc.).

Please read this form carefully and email me with any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in this study. Please read this entire consent form. At the bottom of the page, you will be prompted to click on a link to take you to another page for more information. CLICKING BELOW INDICATES THAT I HAVE READ THE DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.

Purpose of the study
This dissertation will research the following: How do lesbian educators reinforce or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and their public lives? How does the school institution influence lesbian educators’ lives in this negotiation?

Educational institutions are places permeated with the dominant social ideology and are sites or social reproduction; that is, the form of the public school socially reproduces the white, male, heteronormative forms of the American public life. However, what is rendered invisible, private and marginalized inside the school (such as being a lesbian educator) in reality is visible, public and inundated with meaning outside the school. There is not much research that exists in the public school setting in which a “don’t ask, don’t tell” mentality prevails. By framing our personal lives as something that should not be shared in the public school setting with children, a public/private binary is formed in which oppression continues to operate even if overt discrimination is not present. My dissertation will focus on this dichotomy and attempt to shed light on this inequality.

My study will examine your own articulations/interpretations of your experiences as lesbian educators.
My study will examine your own articulations/interpretations of your experiences as lesbian educators and be placed within the larger social institution of the American school. The social construction of "educator" and "lesbian" will be analyzed while the American public school will be deconstructed vis-a-vis societal norms. The social construction of the lesbian educator will be studied in terms of the interplay of public versus private identity. Research will be conducted on how your private lives affect the way you work and navigate within the public school institution. In addition, rather than just focusing on the lesbian educator as "the other," normativity will also be the object of my educational analysis.

Procedures
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in one or both of the following:
- Approximately 100 lesbian educators will be asked to take an online survey. Questions will be asked about identification as a lesbian, how that identity affects your career and vice versa, and whether you are "out" or "closeted" at work. The survey will consist of approximately 40-50 questions.
- Approximately 5 to 10 lesbian educators will then be asked to participate in an online focus group. Just like a traditional focus group, these participants will be able to collectively answer questions or respond to each others' comments about topics.

Confidentiality
There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research project beyond those experienced in your everyday life at work or online as a Facebook user. As the online administrator of the Facebook Group, I have the ability to control some of this group's privacy settings. Only the participants in the online focus group will be given permission to view the posts. However, anyone who agrees to participate should make sure their own privacy settings on Facebook are set according to their own privacy preferences. For more information on Facebook privacy guidelines, click here. In this regard, I am limited in protecting confidentiality. The risks to confidentiality in participating should be considered similar to the everyday risks associated with using Facebook groups. The survey and online focus group will be open to participants nationwide, but no participant or school information will be identified. Only I will have access to the primary data. Responses will be kept confidential. In my dissertation and any subsequent publications, pseudonyms will be used for personal names and I will not ask for specific school names. Geographic locales will be generic, such as "a large city in the Midwest" or "a rural area in the Southwest." All participants will know my research study questions. Any original research will be kept on a flash drive which will be under lock-and-key in my safe deposit box. Upon completion of my dissertation, this flash drive will be destroyed.

Benefits
Exposing any injustices in educational school systems benefits all members of society. The goal of this research is to create new discourses and new spaces where private and public do not need to fiercely collide. Truly transformative education seeks to change values rather than just promote assimilation into the dominant institutions. Hence, this research is important because it counters the tactics that many schools take, such as implementing "tolerance" policies and "multicultural curricula" as a solution to dealing with societal differences. For education to be empowering, teachers and learners should strive toward understanding differences and use these new understandings to create new ways of being in the world — a change in belief systems. This moves us beyond the public recognition of an "other" identity and into engagement with alternative life narratives as a viable way of living in our society. Mutual understandings of one another will benefit all citizens rather than just the narrowly defined group within any particular identity. The issues are no longer only a matter of recognizing or honoring differences; rather, the issues should evolve into learning how to live with that fact and actively engage in these differences. It goes beyond recognition of "the other" and develops further into making sense of another individual.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Lillian Petrovich or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Noah Sobe. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at 773.508.2689.

CLICKING BELOW INDICATES THAT I HAVE READ THE DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.

I have read the description of the study and I agree to participate.

ONLINE SURVEY - click here to take the online survey.

FACEBOOK GROUP - click here to receive an email with further instructions for participating in interviews/discussions on the Facebook Group. This data will be used for my dissertation. You must have a Facebook account or you can create one for free.

http://homepages.luc.edu/~lbrand1/Home.html
Lesbian Educators Research Project (LERP)

Greetings and thank you for agreeing to participate in this 40-question survey for my dissertation. You are being asked to participate because you self-identify as a lesbian, gay woman, or queer woman who is an educator (a classroom teacher, an administrator, a support service person such as school librarian or counselor, etc.)

This dissertation will research the following questions: How do lesbian educators reinforce or resist the dominant ideology of the American school as they negotiate their private lives and their public lives? How does the school institution influence lesbian educators' lives in this negotiation? Research will be conducted on how private lives affect the way these educators work and navigate within the public school institution. In addition, the deconstruction of the broader field of social normativity in educational institutions will be examined. For more information, feel free to visit my homepage. http://homepages.luc.edu/~ibrand1/Home.html

General Demographic Data

1. How old are you?

2. How do you identify your sexual orientation?
   - Lesbian
   - Bisexual
   - Queer

3. How do you identify your race? (for two or more races - choose all that apply)
   - American Indian or Alaska Native
   - Asian
   - Black or African American
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - White
   - Hispanic/Latina of any race

4. I work with the following grade levels:
   - 9-12 (high school)
   - 7-8 (middle or junior high)
   - 4-6 (middle grades)
LERP Survey

☐ K-3 (primary grades)

5. I work in the following type of school:
☐ Public School
☐ Private School
☐ Charter School

6. The majority of my day is spent working as a:
☐ Classroom teacher
☐ Administrator
☐ Support service educator (e.g. counselor, librarian, etc.)

7. The majority of my day is spent working in the following department:

☐ Department:

8. I work at a:
☐ Rural school
☐ Suburban school
☐ Urban school

9. I work in the following geographic location:
☐ Northwest
☐ Northeast/Mid-Atlantic
☐ Southwest
☐ Midwest
☐ South

10. Are you tenured?
☐ Yes
☐ No

11. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Master's Degree
☐ Ph.D. or Ed.D

12. How many years have you worked in K-12 education:

☐

13. How many years have you worked in your current school?

☐

Work Life - Out or Not

1. Are you "out" at work with your colleagues?
☐ All or most know (I am completely open)
☐ Only a few colleagues know
☐ I do not disclose, but will be honest if asked
1. Are you "out" at work with your students?
   ○ Nobody knows (I hide it)
   ○ All or most know (I am completely open)
   ○ Only a few students know
   ○ I do not disclose, but will be honest if asked
   ○ Nobody knows (I hide it)

2. Are you "out" at work with your parent community?
   ○ All or most know (I am completely open)
   ○ Only a few parents know
   ○ I do not disclose, but will be honest if asked
   ○ Nobody knows (I hide it)

3. Are you "out" in your private life with your family?
   ○ All or most know (I am completely open)
   ○ Only a few family members know
   ○ I do not disclose, but will be honest if asked
   ○ Nobody knows (I hide it)

4. Are you "out" in your private life with your friends?
   ○ All or most know (I am completely open)
   ○ Only a few friends know
   ○ I do not disclose, but will be honest if asked
   ○ Nobody knows (I hide it)

5. Work Information

1. Does your school district have anti-discrimination policies in place for sexual identity?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ I do not know

2. Does your school offer domestic partner benefits?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ I do not know

3. How often do you hear homophobic remarks at school from students?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always

Additional Comments:
4. How often do you hear homophobic remarks at school from teachers?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always
   Additional Comments:

5. How often do you hear homophobic remarks at school from administrators?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always
   Additional Comments:

6. How often do you intervene when you hear homophobic remarks at school from students?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always
   Additional Comments:

7. How often do you intervene when you hear homophobic remarks at school from other teachers?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always
   Additional Comments:
8. How often do you intervene when you hear homophobic remarks at school from administrators?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always
   Additional Comments:

9. Have you ever experienced sexual identity harassment during the 2009-10 school year?
   ○ Never
   ○ Seldom
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Frequently
   ○ Always
   Additional Comments:

10. Have you ever been harassed because of your sexual identity at some point(s) during your career?
    ○ Never
    ○ Seldom
    ○ Sometimes
    ○ Frequently
    ○ Always
    Additional Comments:

11. If you have experienced harassment, did you report it to your supervisors?
    ○ Never
    ○ Seldom
    ○ Sometimes
    ○ Frequently
    ○ Always
    Why or why not?
12. Have you ever feared losing your job because of your sexual identity?
   ☐ Never
   ☐ Seldom
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Frequently
   ☐ Always
   Additional Comments:

13. Have you had any negative experiences because you are out at work?
   ☐ Never
   ☐ Seldom
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Frequently
   ☐ Always
   ☐ Does not apply
   Additional Comments:

14. Have you had any positive experiences because you are out at work?
   ☐ Never
   ☐ Seldom
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Frequently
   ☐ Always
   ☐ Does not apply
   Additional Comments:

15. Have you ever received any education specifically on LGBT issues during your teacher preparation training in college or graduate school?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
   ☐ I do not know
   Additional Comments:
16. Have you ever received any professional staff development specifically on LGBT issues at work?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I do not know
   Additional comments: 

17. Have you ever brought a same-sex partner or date to a school-related function?
   - Yes
   - No
   Additional Comments: 

18. Have you ever displayed pictures of a same-sex partner or any sort of LGBT objects on your desk at work?
   - Yes
   - No
   Additional Comments: 

19. I feel like I am part of my school's professional community.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Uncertain
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree
   Additional Comments: 

20. I feel safe at school even though I identify as a lesbian.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Uncertain
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree
   Additional Comments: 
21. I am involved in some type of LGBT professional organization outside of work.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   What type of organization?

   

22. I am involved in some type of LGBT activity or club at school.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   What type of activity or club?

   

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APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN ONLINE FOCUS GROUP AND E-INTERVIEWS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Grade Teaching</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>School Role</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Queer Femme Lesbian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>9, 12</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>English Teacher</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Lesbian/Queer</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Science Teacher</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Northeast/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Queer/Lesbian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Physical Education Teacher</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>South</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyla</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11,12</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>English Teacher/Curriculum Director</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Graves, K. (2009). And they were wonderful teachers: Florida’s purge of gay and lesbian teachers. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.


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VITA

Lillian Petrovich Brandt was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. She received a Bachelor of Art in Journalism from the University of Illinois, Champaign. She received her Master of Science in Library and Information Sciences from Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois. Before attending Loyola University Chicago to begin her Ph.D. work, she received a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Educational Leadership from National Louis University.

Lillian has been employed in K-12 education for over 20 years. Currently, she serves as an assistant principal at a high school on the north shore of Chicago.
DISSECT SKETT approval sheet

The dissertation submitted by Lillian Petrovich Brandt has been read and approved by the following committee:

Noah Sohe, Ph.D., Director
Professor of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

Kate Stippep, Ph.D.
Professor of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

Robert E. Roemer, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature that appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Director's Signature