

The Balance of Public and Private Identities for Lesbian Teachers

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Abstract

Although tolerance and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people is growing in the United States, misconceptions and heterosexism still abound. Schools are one of the institutions where traditional gender roles are promoted and homosexuality is often ignored or punished. Too often lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are bullied by their peers while teachers look the other way. LGBT teachers often fear they will lose their jobs and social standing in the community if they are open about their sexual orientation. This environment provoked me to research lesbian teachers' perceptions of heteronormativity in their private and public lives. I interviewed eleven teachers about their experiences and conducted a narrative analysis of their stories. Their experiences often hinged on how open they were about their sexuality. *Coming out of the closet* occurs at different times and with different people, depending on the situation. To come out of the closet at work is often a risk teachers refuse to take. Two of the teachers I interviewed were out at work and nine who were not. Using performance ethnography I represented the effects of heteronormativity on the lives of these teachers who identified as lesbian. It shows how their fears constrain them from coming out and demonstrates what can be accomplished when they do.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the spring of 2005 for a qualitative research class, I interviewed four women about their lives growing up in East Tennessee and self-identifying as lesbian. Two of the women were strongly opposed to coming out publicly, one of whom was a Black high school teacher, Shelley (pseudonym):

You watch who you come out to. Part of me says, no, I wouldn't lose my job if I were out. They know me. And I know that they love me. So to knock on the front door and say, "Guess what guys?" I would never do that because that would make an issue out of it.

The decision to come out or stay in the closet affects one's life both publicly and privately (Khayatt, 1999; King, 2004; Rasmussen, 2004). In my first study, as well as studies conducted by others, it was made evident that teachers are concerned about losing their jobs and losing esteem. Those first interviews for class revealed the rich store of experiences untapped among lesbians, particularly teachers. Since my doctoral work focused on cultural studies in educational contexts, Shelley's interview was the determining factor in choosing to collect stories from lesbian teachers for this dissertation. Additionally, my own experience as a college instructor who self-identifies as lesbian motivated me to pursue this topic. While I have not made my sexual orientation public at work, individual students and peers know. Living in an ideologically conservative part of the southeastern United States, I vacillate between the safety of silence and the fear of rejection. I struggled with coming to terms with my sexual orientation because of my Christian beliefs.

In my early twenties, I recognized an attraction to women that began when I was eighteen years old. I grappled with Bible passages that seemed to condemn same-sex love, simultaneously confronting discrepancies in a literal interpretation of the Bible. I was in my mid-thirties before I accepted that part of myself. Part of that acceptance came when I found out about Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), which welcomes the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community. There I found a home for many years. In addition to studying the Bible and homosexuality through MCC, I read several different scholars on the topic. Helminiak (1994) explained the difference between a literal reading of the Bible, “the text is what it says” and the historical-critical reading, “the text means whatever it meant to the people who wrote it long ago” (p. 25). The literal reading “means whatever it means to somebody reading it today” (p. 25) and the historical-critical reading comes only after studying the historical setting in which the text was written (p. 26). Through the historical-critical lens, insight into language, customs, and context changes the interpretation of the translation. Spong (1988) delved deeply into the historical and cultural context of biblical scriptures that are used to condemn same-sex relations. He purports in current society we have new knowledge and understanding that change our interpretation of the Bible. This knowledge affects contemporary understandings of what the Bible has to say about homosexuality.

In spite of a newfound belief that same-sex love is not condemned by God, different factors have kept me with one foot in the closet. I moved from Texas to take a teaching position at a private Southern Baptist college in the South. Knowing that I could lose my job if outed, I kept my personal life separate by living in a different city. Although I now teach at a state university, the community and university population is similar to that of the Baptist college. A couple of years after I moved to teach at the state university, I met two gay men who told me

they were fired from my university for being gay. Unsurprisingly, their supervisors gave them other reasons for termination. Recently I have met several gay and lesbian professors who are not out at work. Although I work in a different college and with reasonably supportive colleagues and administrators, I am cautious.

Not only do churches and educational institutions encourage silence, but families often do. Although my family knows about my sexual orientation, some members of my family disapprove on religious and moral grounds. To keep peace and maintain a relationship with them, we have implicitly agreed to ignore that part of my life. Since coming out, I have spoken with many Christian gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who shared my struggles with religion and family acceptance. Most of the members of Metropolitan Community Church would have preferred to remain active in the denomination in which they grew up. Private relationships with family and church exert a strong influence on how willing LGBT people are to be out in public. While biblical scholars have posed historical-critical interpretations of the Bible that dispel interpretations that condemn same-sex relations, many churches still condemn LGBT people as abominations (Helminiak, 1994; Jung & Smith, 1993; Scroggs, 1983; Spong, 1988). I argue that telling teachers' stories is one way to speak to the silences that result from religious and conservative discriminatory rhetoric that excludes LGBT people from most mainstream churches and continues to exclude sexual orientation from government anti-discrimination policies.

Although college professors have reason to fear coming out, history indicates that K-12 LGBT teachers have been stigmatized as a danger to impressionable children (Blount, 2005; Braukman, 2001; Harbeck, 1997; Jackson, 2004; Vicinus, 1984). Fear of reprisal has kept them silent about their experiences. Yet, storytellers believe in the power of hearing another person's story: The power to change hearts and minds. The values and beliefs declared on the National

Storytelling Network (NSN) website include, “Storytellers serve as agents of positive change in the world. NSN holds storytelling to be: Relevant, inspiring and transformative” (National Storytelling Network, 2012). I seek a positive change in the world through the telling of teachers’ stories. Despite the power of the spoken word, for teachers to tell their own stories, the risk is great.

Teachers may face homophobia more than those in other occupations because parents fear their influence on children. Regardless of statistics that refute it, one of the fears exhibited by society is that gay and lesbian teachers prey on children and seek to recruit them to a gay and lesbian lifestyle (Braukman, 2001; Harbeck, 1997; Herek, n.d.; Jackson, 2004). Studies indicate that most child molesters are males and primarily heterosexual. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 96% of offenders reported to law enforcement are male (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). A study of pedophiles done by The Able and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study between 1994 and 2001 found that 70% of the men who molest children are predominately heterosexual (Abel & Harlow, 2001, p. 12). The number of women pedophiles was so small that they were excluded from the study (2001, p. 4). However, teachers tend to believe that parents suspect lesbians and gays of pedophilia. In a qualitative study by Singer (1997), teachers in Nova Scotia confirmed this pervasive fear:

The general consensus seemed to be that parental response would be predominantly negative, in that parents would either accuse lesbian teachers of trying to recruit their children into a homosexual lifestyle, or assume that these teachers were using their classrooms and their positions as authority figures to advocate that same-sex relationships were a perfectly natural and logical extension to the “traditional family” configuration. (1997, p. 104)

Fear of homophobic reactions in the community and legal sanctions have kept teachers in the closet at work. In order to keep their jobs, Singer found that teachers think they only have three alternatives: “Remaining closeted and continuing to negotiate the ignominy of “invisibility,” proclaiming their sexual orientation and steeling themselves for the probable and pernicious hostility directed towards many lesbians in our society, or leaving the public school system entirely” (Singer, 1997, p. 5). In a similar study in the United States, Griffin (1992) found that her gay and lesbian teacher participants believed that “a public accusation would inevitably result in one of two equally negative consequences: loss of job or loss of credibility” (p. 171). As this shows, fear of unemployment and social ostracism are two strong motivators for remaining silent about one’s sexual orientation.

With the fear of being found out governing the way teachers behave, living in the closet can lead to levels of stress that result in physical and psychological health concerns (Kissen, 1993). Although the majority of scholars favor coming out at work, others have pointed out the drawbacks, especially for teachers of color (Clarke, 1998; Khayatt, 1999; King, 2004; Rasmussen, 2004; Wright, 1993). The proponents of the benefits of “coming out” at work have been White and middle-class (Rasmussen, 2004). According to Griffin (2003), “A social justice approach to educational policy and research must take into account the intersections of race, class, and other identity categories in relationship to gender oppression and heterosexism” (p. 111). This research project recognized the multiple reasons teachers might choose to remain in the closet at work, allowing them to keep their names and any identifying information confidential. The study explored their stories in a way that gave them a safe outlet rather than creating another stressful situation.

While society has progressed in resisting homophobia and heterosexism since the liberation movements of the 1960s, this deeply engrained prejudice is far from uprooted. The school system, often seen as a hegemonic arm of government, remains a stronghold of patriarchy (Christianakis, 2008). Hegemony is a form of persuasion exerted by those in power that permeates society and its institutions (Gramsci, 1975). The dominant group influences subordinate groups to accept dominant values as superior and to support actions that benefit the dominant group (Strinati, 2003). White males still hold the majority of high positions in political, business, and social institutions. By operating on a patriarchal model of male dominance and competition for resources, women, especially lesbians and other minorities, are placed at a disadvantage (Wood, 2003). Working in a heterosexist environment, fearing social exclusion, and worrying about losing one's job motivate lesbian teachers to remain silent and pass as heterosexual. The *National Study of LGBT Educator's Perceptions of Their Workplace Climate*, based on a survey of 514 LGBT teachers from all fifty of the United States, is revealing (Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008). Many of the teachers surveyed "... reported that they perceive their workplace climate as troubling, unsafe, and unsupportive. They perceived the climate in their workplace as homophobic, racist, sexist and transphobic" (p. 19). Nearly half did not feel safe because of their sexual orientation. Those who were out at school experienced increased anxiety and stress, although most agreed that it was a positive choice. That teachers' perceive their school environment as hostile to LGBT people in the twenty-first century is alarming and unsettling.

Not only do teachers find schools to be unsafe, so do their students. A 2007 GLSEN National School Climate Survey revealed three-fourths of students surveyed heard homophobic remarks frequently at school and nine out of ten students heard "gay" used in a negative way

frequently at school. The majority reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. Almost half had been physically harassed and one-fourth reported being physically assaulted (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2007, p. xii). In many cases, teachers and staff were present when verbal harassment occurred. Too many times, the teachers did nothing to address the situation. This report indicated that schools that supported and discussed LGBTQ issues provided a safer environment for students where they could discuss issues with their teachers (2007, p. 118). Until teachers stop looking the other way and begin discussing homophobia with their students, schools will remain unsafe for LGBT youth.

LGBT students' grades and attendance often suffer from navigating an unsafe environment. The 2007 National School Climate Survey found that almost one-third of LGBT students reported skipping a class or a day in the previous month because they felt unsafe. Absenteeism among LGBT students is five times higher than high school students in general (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2007, p. xiii). Fear of harassment lowered these students' grades and expectations for graduation. In comparison to a national sample of students, twice as many LGBT students did not plan to pursue post-secondary education (2007, p. xiv). Until LGBT teachers feel safe to reveal their sexual orientation, neither will students.

Working in an unsafe environment makes it more important than ever for the silenced voices of LGBT people to be heard. Telling their stories will expose a range of audiences to viewpoints counter to those told by the dominant group. This narrative analysis of lesbian teachers' interviews in the form of performance ethnography is one distinct way to bring those viewpoints to the ears and, hopefully, the hearts of society.

Statement of Purpose

Understanding the experiences of lesbian K-12 schoolteachers living as the *Other* (Vidich & Lyman, 2000) immersed in a heteronormative work environment is central to this study. Story-seeking interviews offered lesbian teachers the opportunity to recount everyday situations where their private self-identity as “lesbian” encounters their professional identity in public life. From those interviews, I developed a performance ethnography from the narrative analysis of their personal stories. I intend to tell them before live audiences; however, I hope the written version will impact readers in a similar fashion. Although LGBT audiences benefit from hearing these stories, I intend them for general adult audiences who are likely to be predominately heterosexual. The purpose of compiling a script, one example of a performance ethnography, is to bring awareness to the dominant population of the intense prejudice that lesbian teachers face. My ideal audience would be a heterogeneous group ranging from teenagers to adults with a mix of races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. The audience might be found at a university-sponsored event, a theatre or arts center, and an open and affirming church. In such a venue, narrators can experience satisfaction in hearing stories from their own interviews mingled with the interviews of other teachers. Other listeners have the opportunity to experience compassion as they develop greater understanding of what teachers face daily. When the narrators believe they must remain silent to protect their jobs and safety, telling their stories for them can positively influence attitudes among the dominant culture. The consequence of a “performance of possibilities” (Madison, 1998) is the potential for transformation and the heart of social justice.

In this study, I address the research question: What do stories of their lives reveal about lesbian teachers' perceptions of the influence of the dominant heteronormative community on their public and private lives? Related questions are:

- How have their lifestyles been shaped by dominant heteronormative attitudes in their community?
- What choices have they made responding to social expectations?
- How has membership in a silenced and marginalized group affected their public identities as teachers and colleagues?

The performance ethnography was composed from narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) of teacher interviews in response to my interview protocol that was created to elicit experiences related to these research questions. Exploring the experiences of lesbian teachers through storytelling provides insight into the challenges they face.

Performance Ethnography Informed by Cultural Studies

Social justice and praxis are maxims of cultural studies (Wright, 2001, 2002) that are fulfilled through this study. Praxis is a key characteristic of work in cultural studies. To understand praxis, one must understand cultural studies. According to Johnson (1996), cultural studies is a “process, a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge” that should not be codified (p. 75). It advances the study of recognizing, proclaiming, resisting, and transforming the hegemonic power wielded by the dominant class and/or government (Wright, Notes).

Cultural studies scholars strive for a society that treats all people with respect and gives all the same opportunities, regardless of their class, race, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, sex, gender, or sexual orientation (Johnson, 1996). While cultural studies has its home in higher education, it

resists the rigid boundaries of traditional disciplines. Cultural studies strives for interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and anti-disciplinary scholarship (Johnson, 1996).

Because of the concern for social justice, praxis has become central to cultural studies. According to Wright, praxis is “the twinning of theory and practice” (Notes, p. 4). Praxis means having one foot in academe and one foot in the world. Theory is used to analyze the real world situation of oppressed and oppressor, powerful and disempowered people. However, merely identifying and naming the problem does little to change the status quo. Therefore, those discoveries need to be shared and enacted in the public sphere of home, community, institutions, and government. When Giroux, Shumway, Smith, and Sosnoski (n.d.) addressed a praxis-driven curriculum in higher education, they posed the argument:

A counterdisciplinary praxis undertaken by resisting intellectuals would not be effective if it had as its only audience people in universities. Rather, it should take place more extensively in public. Although many universities are public institutions, we rarely consider them part of the public sphere. (p. 6)

These scholars choose to see the college classroom, not as a place of depositing knowledge into students’ minds like a banking account (Freire, 2003, 1970), but a space that “. . . allows both parties to construe themselves as agents in the process of their own cultural formation” (Giroux, Shumway, Smith, & Sosnoski, p. 4). This dual effort of scholars and citizens extends beyond the classroom into the community. Therefore, while performance ethnography of lesbian teachers’ stories is a significant piece of scholarship in the academy, it serves a greater purpose through live performance in the community. It brings theory to the people in the form of narrative that informs and builds empathy. I agree with Giroux, Shumway, Smith, and Sosnoski that “The most important aim of a counterdisciplinary praxis is radical social change” (p. 5). Radical social

change cannot happen without enlisting allies and fellow LGBT folk in the higher aim of equality for all. Theory and practice come together as praxis in a collection of personal stories that reveal the power differences between lesbian teachers and the dominant heteronormative culture.

The methodology used in this study is a combination of narrative analysis and critical performance ethnography. Narrative research focuses on the particular, giving significance to individual stories for the insights gained within individual contexts (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The narratives collected through interviews were selected for their story form and content that reflected answers to the research questions. These stories were then arranged aesthetically in a performance ethnography, evoking the teachers experiences in a heteronormative environment. It is important to note that when performed for audiences, the performance deserves equal status with written articles among scholars as research publication. The discipline of Performance Studies, once called Oral Interpretation of Literature, housed in Communication, Theatre, English or other departments, has struggled with justifying creative performance as research over the years. Once the connection between everyday life as performance (Goffman, 1959) and theatre performance was realized, anthropology became part of performance studies. In turn, performance as scholarship drew more acceptance as ethnography became a significant part of the study of performance ethnography (Schechner, 2002, 2003; Turner, 1982).

Performance Studies scholar Dwight Conquergood (1998, 2002) made it his mission to address the fallacies of revering text over performance. Calling upon Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, Kenneth Burke, and Michel de Certeau, Conquergood (2002) made a strong argument for the nuances and subtleties in spoken and nonverbal performance that texts cannot replicate. After criticizing Clifford Geertz for calling ethnography a text to be read, thereby arrogantly

situating the researcher above the indigenous people he studies, Conquergood (1998) confirmed creative performance does not replace the text as a means of relaying empirical knowledge but amplifies it.

The performance studies project makes its most radical intervention, I believe, by embracing *both* written scholarship *and* creative work, papers, and performances. We challenge the hegemony of the text best by reconfiguring texts and performances in horizontal, metonymic tension, not by replacing one hierarchy with another, the romance of performance for the authority of the text” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 151).

Denzin (2003) reinforced this by stating, “A performance authorizes itself . . . through its ability to evoke and invoke shared emotional experience and understanding between performer and audience” (p. 13). He went on to say, “I want to reread the interview, to look at it not as a method of gathering information, but as a vehicle for producing performance texts and performance ethnographies about self and society” (p. 80). In this way, interviews become performance events and narrators become performers. The interview is an active site that allows narrators to tell their stories and allows meaning to be created and performed in the process (Denzin, 2003). As a performance negotiated by the narrator and the researcher, the interview achieves another dimension of understanding through the interpretation of the performer before an audience. Madison (2005) explored the power of interviews to affect the larger community when she stated:

The performance strives to communicate a sense of subjects’ worlds in their own words; it hopes to amplify their meanings and intentions to a larger group of listeners and observers. These listeners and observers are then affected by what they see and hear in

ways that motivate them to act and think in ways that now beneficially affect (directly and indirectly) either the subjects themselves or what they advocate. (p. 174)

With the idea in mind of affecting ‘listeners and observers,’ I have composed a performance ethnography of stories that holds scholarly weight in the realm of text and in creative performance before an audience. By doing the work of cultural studies, the possibility exists to move diverse audiences to feel empathy with and compassion for the normally unvoiced experiences of lesbian teachers.

Definition of Terms

A number of the terms used in this dissertation have become widely understood among both public and academic spheres. However, for the sake of clarity, I define the terms that have a direct bearing on this research and which may have developed alternative or contradictory usage over time. Terms such as gay and queer have changed meaning over the years, being appropriated by the oppressed group in a positive way rather than a demeaning one. Terms seldom used by the public, such as heteronormative and heterosexist, similarly need to be explained.

1. Ally: “A member of a historically more powerful identity group who stands up against bigotry. For example, a man who confronts his friend about harassing women, a Christian who helps paint over a swastika, or a heterosexual person who objects to an anti-gay joke” (Clayton, 2005).
2. Androgynous: Used to indicate that the person being described has both masculine and feminine traits (as traditionally defined by the dominant culture) in dress and mannerisms. “Displaying physiological and/or psychological characteristics of both or neither male or female” (Erich, Kanenberg, Case, & Kimmey, 2009, p. 10).

3. Bisexual: “A person who has an affectional, emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to men and women. Degree of preference and choice of primary relationship partner varies for each bisexual” (GLBT Safe Zone, 2006, p. 1).
4. Butch: A term commonly used in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) society to describe a woman, usually lesbian, who is most comfortable exhibiting traditionally masculine characteristics in dress and mannerisms (Erich et al., 2009).

Today, this look is softer than it once was when women took on masculine and feminine roles in their lesbian relationships. There is still a tendency for butch and femme women to partner with each other. However, the outward look of the woman no longer indicates who is more dominant in the relationship. This name is often used in a derogatory fashion among prejudiced heterosexuals.
5. Closet, in the closet, out of the closet: Being in the closet refers to keeping one's sexual identity secret (Erich et al., 2009). A person who has not admitted or recognized herself as lesbian is as far into the closet as she can go. Coming out of the closet occurs by degrees and on a case-by-case basis. Once a woman acknowledges her lesbianism to herself, she goes through a process of coming out to others, depending on her sense of security in doing so. In this study, when I refer to a teacher who is in the closet, unless otherwise specified, she is not out at work. She may be out to coworkers, but not out to the administration or her students. When someone else reveals her sexual orientation without her permission, she has been “outed” (Clayton, 2005).
6. Coming Out: The process of first recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual orientation or transgender identity to oneself and then sharing it with others (Clayton, 2005).

7. **Femme:** A term commonly used in LGBTQ society to describe a woman, usually lesbian, who is most comfortable exhibiting traditionally feminine characteristics in dress and mannerisms (Erich et al., 2009). Stereotyped femmes are called lipstick lesbians for wearing make-up, nail polish, heels, and other external forms of feminine gender expression. These lesbians are seldom identified by prejudiced heterosexuals because they are viewed as straight.
8. **Gay:** A gay person is usually male. This term was claimed by homosexual men as a positive name for those sexually and emotionally drawn to other men. This marked a turn toward feeling pride in their sexual orientation rather than shame, which stigmatized derogatory terms like sissy, faggot, and queer (GLBT Safe Zone, 2006, p. 1). Many lesbians call themselves gay as interchangeable with or preferable to lesbian. In addition, Gay Pride parades, flags, and other insignia have grown to celebrate being LGBT people. Unfortunately, in recent years school-age children have re-defined “gay” as anything they consider stupid or uncool.
9. **Hegemony, hegemonic:** “A term developed by Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci to refer to the process by which those in power secure the consent of their ‘subordinates’ by making their position/power seem natural and normal through the use of pleasure, fascination, humor, etc. In other words, this is not a type of power that works through overt force; instead, hegemony seduces us into believing that things are the way they are because, “they’re supposed to be.” For example, the idea that men and women should only be attracted to members of the opposite gender is a hegemonic belief system” (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 185).

10. Heteronormative: The engrained societal and cultural belief that all people are or should be heterosexual. “To describe a social institution as heteronormative means that it has visible or hidden norms, some of which are viewed as normal only for males and others which are seen as normal only for females” (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 185). Heteronormativity implies that men and women are sexually and emotionally attracted to each other for the purpose of bearing children, usually solidified by forming a commitment through marriage. The perpetuation of a nuclear family consisting of a male father, female mother, and children, brought up to exhibit traditional male and female behaviors and social roles is viewed as natural.
11. Heterosexism: The attitude that assumes all people are heterosexual and conform to feminine and masculine roles based on their biological sex. It excludes homosexuality and nontraditional gender expression as deviant and unnatural behavior. It refuses to acknowledge that homosexuality exists in nature and that intersexuality is a biological trait (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 186).
12. Homophobia: Signifies an extreme aversion or fear of “homosexuals,” but also encompasses milder feelings of uneasiness and prejudice toward LGBT people. Homophobic behavior may be exhibited by showing opposition to gay rights, assumptions that LGBT people are immoral, and using language that ridicules LGBT people (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 186).
13. Internalized homophobia: Refers to the engrained acceptance of heteronormativity by LGBT people which leads to denying one's same sex orientation or hiding it (Erich et al., n.d.).

14. Intersex: Describes “a person born with both male and female anatomical/physiological characteristics (which can occur in various combinations), or when a person’s genitalia is biologically ambiguous” (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 186). Usually a sexual designation is made at birth by the parents at the physician's insistence that surgery is necessary.
15. Lesbian: A positive name for women who are sexually and emotionally drawn to other women. Some lesbians prefer to be called gay. This name for same-sex orientation in women has ties to the ancient Greek poet Sappho, believed to be a lover of women who came from the island of Lesbos around 600 B.C.E. (Harper, 2001-2012).
16. LGBT, GLBT, or LGBTQ: These acronyms are an abbreviated way to identify non-heterosexuals. L-lesbian, G-gay, B-bisexual, and T-transgender. For many years, GLBT was used, placing the male “gay” first. In order to avoid the tendency to put men first, LGBT became more common. Over the years, S for straight or A for heterosexual ally was added for political correctness. Those have been replaced with Q for questioning or queer (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 186).
17. Pass: “LGB people are said to “pass” when their LGB identity is not publicly exposed; i.e., they can “pass” as straight. Transgender people are said to “pass” when they can successfully live as their chosen gender” (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 187).
18. Queer: A political designation for anyone who is not heterosexual or straight, reclaimed to give the term a positive connotation. Although it is becoming more acceptable, many LGBT people dislike the term for its long pejorative history (GLBT Safe Zone, 2006, p. 3).

19. Queer Theory: A theory with postmodern underpinnings that claims sexuality is fluid, determined by social and environmental influences (Stein & Plummer, 1994).
20. Sexual Orientation: Refers to the belief that sexual attraction is biologically determined, but includes emotional and psychological attraction. When used to refer to same-sex attraction, it assumes heterosexuality to be the norm. Therefore, it is best used to refer to all sexual orientations (Clayton, 2005).
21. Straight: Term for someone who is heterosexual or attracted to the opposite sex (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 188).
22. Transgender: Usually refers to someone whose sexual organs and body do not match their psychological gender identity. In other words, they may have male genitalia and be attracted to women, but perceive themselves as women. They may dress as the opposite sex or undergo sexual reassignment in order to be comfortable in their own bodies. However, transgender can also include those who cross-dress, intersex, and transsexual (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 188). Although not the subject of this study, transgender people are part of the acronym, LGBT that I will be using.

This list of terms is not comprehensive but should be enough to clarify my vocabulary throughout this dissertation. Next, I describe the parameters of this research and what will be found in the remaining chapters.

Scope of the Study

With an emphasis on the particular (Abu-Lughod, 1991), a narrative study of lesbian teachers provides insight only into the lives of the women who participated in the study. The outcome of this study entails narrative analysis and forms performance ethnography. In so doing, it gives specific stories of specific individuals. Although I think that audiences will empathize

and some will relate to these experiences, generalizations cannot be made about lesbian teachers as a group.

Any script of this nature is limited by narrators' willingness to share their stories. As revealed in the data analysis in Chapter 3, narrators' stories were shaped by their culture, ages, and comfort level with discussing their sexual orientation. In some instances, they simply had not thought about the interaction between their sexual orientation and their identities as teachers. This factor affected the depth of reflection on their lives and lifestyles. In addition, the shape and impact of the final script could not be predetermined. Only after the interviews were completed could the script be developed.

I intend to follow up the completion of the dissertation by finding venues for the performance and then scheduling, rehearsing, and performing it. At this time, I plan to tell the stories myself. However, I am open to the possibility that the script may work better with multiple storytellers. In either case, I will be intensely involved in the production of the performance.

Organization of the Dissertation

This introduction offers a rationale for collecting and telling lesbian teachers' stories, the statement of purpose, the terminology I will use throughout the section, and the scope of the study. Chapter 2: The Review of Literature supports the claim that lesbian teachers are a marginalized group who grapple with societal disapproval at the least and homophobia at the worst. In working to accept themselves and fit into society, they balance differing identities in the private and public sphere. Three primary areas of research were reviewed: Theoretical underpinnings of narrative and performance ethnography as research methodologies, the psychological studies concerning development of a lesbian identity, and history of lesbian

teachers in the schools. Chapter 3: Methodology defines my critical/feminist paradigm in conjunction with providing an overview of cultural studies, feminism, and heteronormativity and shows how narrative analysis and critical performance ethnography work together to select the stories and shape them into a performance that can bring understanding to readers and listeners. The data collection and analysis are laid out fully and include a discussion of the power of telling personal stories of individual teachers to open hearts and minds and the potential to transform the narrator, performer, and listener. Chapter 4: The Performance Ethnography is the performative text of the narrative analysis of individual teachers stories as they are placed together strategically to provide drama and insight into lesbian teachers' lives. Chapter 5: Epilogue reflects on the process of forming the script, discusses what was left out, and points the way to future possible fruitful research endeavors on the subject of LGBT teachers.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Qualitative studies in feminist cultural studies are, by necessity, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. Narrative analysis may concentrate on the language and content of the narrators' interviews; however, telling lesbian teachers' stories makes up only a minute percentage of the historical, philosophical, psychological, and sociological underpinnings of the subject. It is outside of the scope of this literature review to cover all of those subjects. Therefore, I have chosen to explore three topic areas: The research approaches of narrative analysis (storytelling) and performance ethnography, the psychological development of a lesbian identity, and a look at lesbian teachers' in history. This review begins with a discussion by defining narrative and storytelling as it is used here and in narrative analysis. A discussion of these topics serves the purpose of building a foundation for describing and defining the methodology in Chapter 3 and gives an overview of the significant literature surrounding the topics of narrative inquiry and performance ethnography.

Narrative Inquiry and Performance Ethnography

Definition of Narrative

We live in a narrative world. We create narratives to make sense of our lives and we turn to narrative to entertain and enlighten. While statistical data gives us generalized information about a population, it misses the nuances and emotions of individual experiences. Narrative inquiry can unveil participants' personal stories for a close look at their particular knowledge. The personal is political. Through the personal, we get a deeper understanding of what it is like to be that person. This holds particular significance for those whose stories have been silenced by the dominant culture (Denzin, 2003; Madison, 2005). With this in mind, this section will situate narrative through a discussion of its meaning, a review of the development of the narrative turn,

an overview of narrative inquiry, and critical performance ethnography as research method.

Through this discussion, I will show the value of telling personal stories for others whose very existence has been denied.

In order to do narrative research, an understanding of the characteristics of narrative is foundational. The definition of narrative varies widely among qualitative researchers because of the multiple meanings they use. Narrative ranges from as general a definition as any prose text that forms coherent discourse to as specific a definition as the linguistic form called story (Polkinghorne, 1995). For that reason, specific parameters need to be set. Since I am interested in storytelling, I will begin with Polkinghorne's (1995) use of an emplotted narrative as a synonym for story, defining it as a "succession of incidents combined into a unified episode" (p. 7). From Polkinghorne's viewpoint, stories are about human action and their plots give them a temporally linear framework with a beginning, middle, and end. Riessman (1993) agreed: "Most scholars treat narratives as discrete units, with clear beginnings and endings, as detachable from the surrounding discourse . . ." (p. 17). She expanded the definition of personal narrative beyond linear chronological order to include causal sequencing of events that aren't chronological, and thematic sequencing, connected by episodes rather than temporality (p. 16). Her definition includes an evaluative step to the narrative: "For now, it refers to talk organized around consequential events. A teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or 'world' and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, often a moral one" (p. 3). Kreiswirth (2000) complicated the definition of narrative by noting its bivalency:

'Narrative' by its very signification and cultural use is both presentation and presented; the narratological problematic, the basic formal relationship between the what and the

how, is thus contained within the term itself and infects, to some degree, any attempt to define, legitimize, or criticize it (pp. 302-303).

Craig Roney (2009), a teacher education professor and storyteller, included the told and the telling in his definition:

In its most basic form, storytelling is a process whereby a person (the teller), using mental imagery, narrative structure, and vocalization or signing, communicates with other humans (the audience) who also use mental imagery and, in turn, communicate back to the teller primarily via body language and facial expressions, resulting in the co-creation of a story. (p. 49)

This definition recognizes three key components to the storytelling context: teller, audience, and story. Oral interpretation scholars who study performance of text before an audience (Gura & Lee, 2000; Long & Hopkins, 1997) and professional storytellers like Doug Lipman (1999) have long perceived these three elements as integral to the interpretation of a storytelling or oral interpretive event. The audience experiences the story through the interpretation of the teller. If the story is a piece of literature or, in the case of personal narrative, not written or created by the teller, then the meaning starts with the author. Once it is filtered through the teller's perception and with her performance style and skills, it is received by audience members whose own interpretation is unique to their understanding and experience. In turn, their nonverbal feedback influences the teller to adjust his verbal and nonverbal approach in response to the attitude, involvement and emotions of the audience. As Roney explained, they co-create the story.

In the case of a written literary work, it is up to performers to analyze the story, interpreting it as closely as possible to the author's intended meaning as they understand it. Still, there is room for personal interpretation, particularly when the narrative is fiction. Alternatively,

when performing personal narrative it is vital to remain as close to the narrator's meaning as possible. The story and the telling are intertwined, creating a new experience each time the story is told to an audience.

To encapsulate, narrative – particularly personal narrative – includes emplotment and a sequence of scenes that form an entire episode in a temporal order with a beginning, middle, and end (Polkinghorne, 1995). Based on a past event, telling a story is intentional because the storyteller wants to make a point (Riessman, 1993). Narrative is bivalent, consisting of the story and the act of storytelling simultaneously (Kreiwirth, 2000) and involving the co-creation of a story by the teller and listener in a particular context (Roney, 2009). These definitions work together to convey the act of storytelling. With this fundamental understanding, I move to a discussion of the construction of narrative.

Scholars from diverse disciplines (Barthes, 1977; Bauman, 1986; Bruner, 1986; Casey, 1995-96; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Labov, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993) have written extensively on narrative, story in particular, identifying what and how a narrative is constructed. While scores of theorists (Barthes, 1977; Bruner, 1986; Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Labov, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1995; Ricœur, 1973) have had an impact on the definition of narrative, for this literature review I will begin with Bruner, following his lead into a discussion of Propp, Turner, Burke, and Labov.

Bruner (1986) addressed the Russian formalism description of story as composed of *fabula* and *sjuzet*. *Fabula* (timeless) is the raw order in which events occurred in the story and *sjuzet* (sequenced) describes the way events are retold and depicted in their emplotment in the narrative. Although we can see these differences in many kinds of literary and cinematic stories today, nevertheless, they are a construction of the western mind. Bruner suggested that while

these exist in folktales and myths, it is not to be assumed that they are universal structures for all fictions (1986). Keeping a loose definition of storytelling, with room for alternative approaches to plot, Bruner proposed, “Narrative deals with the vicissitudes of intention” (1986). However, he did not leave the discussion there; referring to Victor Turner, Kenneth Burke, and Vladimir Propp, he went on to say:

In any case, the *fabula* of story – its timeless underlying theme – seems to be a unity that incorporates at least three constituents. It contains a *plight* into which *characters* have fallen as a result of intentions that have gone awry either because of circumstances, of the “character of characters,” or most likely of the intersection between the two. And it requires an uneven distribution of underlying consciousness among the characters with respect to the plight. What gives the story its unity is the manner in which plight, characters, and consciousness interact to yield a structure that has a start, a development, and a “sense of an ending.” (Bruner, 1986)

The addition of consciousness is significant because not all stories are about action and interaction. They are also about character. Propp described characters in fairy tales as fulfilling a function within a limited plot. Characters have a role to fulfill as hero, villain, helper, etc. This is similar to Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey and Carl Jung’s archetypes with the exception that Propp’s functions are more about components of plot and less about persona. Protagonists work out their role through the action of the plot producing a psychological “dual landscape” through which the consciousness of the protagonist draws empathy from the reader (Bruner, 1986). Simply put, narrative is about the unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances of life during which characters discover their roles – roles that drive the plot forward. In addition to psychology, anthropology has also addressed narrative as cultural performance.

In his studies of indigenous cultures, anthropologist Victor Turner observed a dramatic construct in cultural performance that paralleled Bruner's psychological concept of *fabula* consisting of character, plot, conflict, and resolution. Turner maintained that his theory of social drama occurs at all levels of human social order – from government to community to family. It begins with *breach* where the cultural norm is violated, it then moves to *crisis*, and is followed by *redressive* action taken by those in authority (usually in the form of ritual). If this works, then the last stage is *reconciliation*. If it doesn't and things regress to crisis again, then a *consensual recognition of irremediable breach* occurs. He gave the Boston Tea Party as an example from history of a breach that is irremediable (1982, p. 92). Turner (1982) was aware that life reflected art, as well as the other way around. He felt that ethnography needed to come off the page onto the stage to present a living culture accurately. He worked with theatre director Richard Schechner to combine aesthetic performance with cultural performance, recreating the ethnographies he wrote about the Ndembu people.

Literary critic and philosopher Kenneth Burke (1945), Turner's contemporary, also made a lasting contribution to the understanding of story as it is played out in everyday life. Burke's (1945) dramatisic pentad identifies five key parts to narrative that explain human motives for behavior: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose.

We shall use five terms as generating principle of our investigation. They are: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (agency), and the purpose. (p. xv)

Burke went on to say that while people could disagree on how to describe any one of these in a specific situation, answers to all five of these components of a narrative would be used to explain human motives (p. xv). Burke viewed the pentad as more fundamental than philosophy; they are grammatical terms on which varied philosophies could build to discuss human motives. He believed that the study of motives was a philosophic one rather than one that could be solved empirically (1945, p. xxiii). Burke's theory has had pervasive influence on the field of human communication, particularly oral interpretation of literature, now called performance studies.

Since I am interested in story as a narrow type of narrative, I studied linguist William Labov's research for another perspective on the characteristics of storytelling. Labov's (1997) research revealed a detailed look at the components to story. Having analyzed hundreds of personal narratives from research interviews, Labov identified six structural components of a well-told story: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (as cited in Labov & Waletzky, 1997). The *abstract* serves to introduce the story into conversation through a brief summary. The *orientation* prepares listeners with descriptions of the setting and characters involved in the story, much as exposition does in a play. The *complicating action* consists of an initial action, which introduces a conflict. In the *evaluation*, narrators position themselves by stating their own emotional reaction to the incident. The *resolution*, akin to the climax of a play, resolves the conflict, and the *coda*, like the falling action of a play, tells the listener what happened afterwards to the characters involved in the story. The important point to remember is that temporality is central to the story. According to Labov (1997), a temporal juncture separates two clauses such that if their order were changed, the listener's understanding of the order of events would also be changed. Certain components seem to me to be expendable

in the definition of a storytelling act. For example, the abstract and orientation may be assumed and the narrator may not evaluate the incident when it was told simply to entertain the listener.

While Labov made a strong argument for each of these six steps to be present in a well-told story, Robinson's (1981) discussion aligned more with my own thinking. He pointed out that all six components do not have to be present for a story to be complete. Stories aren't always told with an obvious point in mind. They may function as a means to connect with intimate friends or family members or serve as a way to make sense of one's experience rather than as entertainment for others. Robinson concludes that the organization of personal narratives is determined by context as "situated communications" fundamental to everyday life (p. 85).

A close look at the various definitions and components of story reveals evident overlap and alignment of terms. Whether described philosophically, anthropologically, linguistically or psychologically, they have key attributes in common. I will draw from these key attributes to describe narrative, and more specifically, storytelling. In order to accomplish this, I want to restate a key point made by Kreiswirth (2000) that aligns itself with my definition.

Of what do the narrated or narrating consist? What properly are the what and how of story that make it story and not something else? Serious students of narrative or story must recognize that both its telling (including its reception, of course) and its told (or its showing and shown, as in drama, cinema, etc.) project, participate in, and are constituted by time and sequence and that narrativity is a communicative process involving the dynamic interaction of these two temporal strands. (2000, p. 303)

While I agree that narrative occurs in various media such as live performance, texts of various kinds, and cinema, I argue that storytelling face to face is a qualitatively different experience in which the narrator and listener(s) create stories jointly. The storyteller encodes

thoughts and images into oral language, with the intent to create similar thoughts and images in the minds of listeners. As the audience attends to the storyteller, they decode that language through their own experience and imagination. In turn, their gestural and spoken responses affect the storyteller's language selection and the direction the story takes.

Stories and narratives involve a dramatic structure that revolves around a conflict that requires the protagonist to find answers and make choices. Most westerners expect the conflict to be resolved by the end of the story and the character to undergo change in the process of coming to that resolution. Although a story does not have to be told in chronological order, the entire story takes place in story time that mirrors temporality in nature. In addition, the listener only has one chance to hear what is told, while a reader has the opportunity to go back and forward in the text for a reminder or to better understand (Niemi, 2006). Storytelling takes place in real time, while the printed page makes time stand still.

Therefore, key attributes of any *story* consist of character development and interaction, conflict and resolution, a setting, and plot structure to hold it all together. For storytellers, key attributes of *storytelling* are: Live telling, interactive co-creation between teller and audience, and reliance on oral language, both verbal and nonverbal.

Finally, it is important to note that in social and staged telling, the audience expects to be entertained, regardless of the theme and point of the story (Labov, 1997; Sandana, 2003). In contrast, when told in therapy and oral history interviews, the personal autobiographical narrative is often more of an exploration or discovery, creating order out of the everyday milieu of life (McAdams, 1993). Although the resulting story can be entertaining and revealing, it is likely to be undeveloped in form. It is up to the researcher to identify the narratives that have key

elements of a story while giving insights into the research question. The stories will then have to be arranged to maintain interest and dramatic tension throughout the performance.

Narrative Inquiry

With a definition and understanding of narrative and storytelling as the cornerstone, I am ready to delve into how narrative can be a form of qualitative research. Founded on an interest in life experiences, narrative inquiry ranges from coding data into discreet categories as specific as grounded theory to collecting data as unmodified as oral history recorded for posterity. Chase describes narrative inquiry as a “subtype” of qualitative inquiry (Chase, 2011, p. 241). Narrative inquiry includes not only data, but the form in which the data is presented. Rather than a dry, descriptive, academic ethnography, scholars are writing their findings in performative ways, turning them into literary story form (Ellis, 2004). However, I have not found much focus among narrative analysis researchers on actual performance. Looking to performance studies to find narratives that were performed aloud before an audience, I was able to bridge this gap. Nevertheless, what makes narrative inquiry unique in its approach? What does it offer that traditional positivist research methods do not?

In their history of narrative research, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), located narrative thematically rather than historically. They named four narrative turns that transform the way scholars look at data and what kind of data they seek. The first turn toward becoming a narrative inquirer marks a new awareness that “they must come to embrace a relational understanding of the roles and interactions of the researcher and the researched” (2007, p. 15). Where positivist researchers claim to maintain emotional distance and an objective view, artificial walls between researcher and narrator must be bridged for narrative to be embraced as a methodology and source of data.

In the second narrative turn, researchers turn from number to word data when they realize they cannot translate contextually embedded human experience to numeric codes (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 15). Not only do researchers find numbers too sterile to represent human interaction, and numerical designation for remarks and reports peremptory, in striving to understand the meaning of human interaction they question “the integrity and trustworthiness of data where only a number is recoverable” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 21).

The third narrative turn moves from the general to the particular. “When researchers make the turn toward a focus on the particular, it signals their understanding of the value of a particular experience, in a particular setting, involving particular people” (p. 21). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) point out that the multitude of autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs are a clear indication that individual stories merit investigation by social scientists (p. 25). McAdams (1993) reminds us that narrative is not about uncovering factual data, but about believability.

Stories are less about facts and more about meanings. In the subjective and embellished telling of the past, the past is constructed – history is made. History is judged to be true or false not solely with respect to its adherence to empirical fact. Rather, it is judged with respect to such narrative criteria as “believability” and “coherence.” There is a narrative truth in life that seems quite removed from logic, science, and empirical demonstration. It is the truth of a “good story.” (p. 28-29)

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) title the fourth narrative turn *Blurring Knowing* in order to recognize that ways of knowing and understanding experience are myriad as the experiences themselves (p. 25). The fundamental difference between “scientific objectivity” and narrative research is acknowledging the relational process of knowing others that encompasses “caring for,

curiosity, interest, passion, and change” (p. 29). According to theatre scholar Richard Schechner (2002):

Narrative is a way of knowing, a search for meaning that privileges experience, process, action, and peril. Knowledge is not stored in storytelling so much as it is enacted, reconfigured, tested, and engaged by imaginative summonings and interpretive replays of past events in the light of present situations and struggles. (p. 337)

As narrators respond to the interviewer’s interest and care by exploring their past experience imaginatively, they give often chaotic life occurrences “a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of [their] lives into stories” (McAdams, 1993, p. 11). As narrators form a better understanding, researchers increase their awareness of human thoughts and emotions. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) observed that researchers seek to know how institutional narratives shape individual experiences:

Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals’ experiences but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted – but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. (p. 42)

Thus, narrative inquiry seeks the specific versus the general, concrete experience versus abstract theory, and relationships in societal contexts versus objective, detached collection of data. A discussion of Jerome Bruner’s classification of knowledge into two distinct modes of cognition illuminates the difference between empirical and narrative research further.

Bruner (1986) defines two different ways of knowing in the human mind: Paradigmatic and narrative. Paradigmatic cognition (logico-scientific) relies on inductive and deductive

reasoning. It classifies instances into categories with common attributes. The focus is on identifying characteristics that make items a member of a category. Its purpose is to find order and meaning in the world (Bruner, 1986). He pointed out that scholars have studied this mode extensively and train children to be “little scientists,” “little logicians,” and “little mathematicians” (Bruner, 1991, p. 4). Paradigmatic thinking attempts to find a verifiable, empirical truth, formulated first through hypothesis. It “seeks to transcend the particular by higher and higher reaching for abstraction” (Bruner, 1986). In contrast, narrative functions quite differently with its emphasis on the particular experiences of individual characters. Narrative cognition reveals why people make the choices they make and do what they do.

Both ways of knowing are concerned with truth. However, paradigmatic reasoning attempts to establish a truth for everything that falls into the same category while narrative reasoning strives to achieve verisimilitude (Bruner, 1986). I personally disagree with Bruner’s stance that stories cannot reveal truth. Stories appeal to universal human emotions and either reinforce widespread truths or challenge them with a different truth. Polkinghorne put it well when he said that we learn about ourselves by analogy (1995, p. 11).

For Polkinghorne, Bruner’s two forms of cognition serve as a platform to explain two approaches to narrative research. Polkinghorne (1995) identified two broad categories for utilizing narrative inquiry: analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. As he explained it, *analysis of narrative* is a paradigmatic process that starts with the collection of stories, often from interviews. These stories are then analyzed for common characteristics such as repeated themes and taxonomies of genres, characters, settings, etc. By Polkinghorne’s definition, when *narrative analysis* is used, the data collected consists of descriptions of events and occurrences that may take the form of interviews, journals, public and private documents, and observations.

They do not start out as stories. It is the researcher's responsibility to put the information together to form a meaningful story. The data is synthesized rather than separated into its constituent parts. The result can be history, a case study, or biography (1995).

When considering analysis of narrative, content analysis is one post-positivist qualitative approach that might be used. In *Narrative Research*, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998), laid out a model that fits Polkinghorne's definition of paradigmatic analysis of narrative. Their model consists of four modes for reading narrative: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, and categorical-form. The holistic-content reading focuses on the content of the entire story. Whether the narrative is one person's life story or stories of a group, this approach identifies themes in their experience (1998, p. 15). The holistic-form reading looks at the entire story for its formal aspects such as plot progression or, in psychology, changing the form to change the person's story from a negative one to a positive one (p. 16). The categorical-content reading, or content analysis, looks at specific words or segments of the narrative. This approach to narrative often ends up quantifying results (p. 17). The categorical-form reading examines formal aspects of segments of a life story (p. 17). Of these four methods, the first one, holistic-content, somewhat describes what I intended to do. I identified themes to the extent that I looked for answers to my research questions and categorize the different stories told by the narrators. However, the goal of my research is not to categorize experiences or language for the purpose of finding commonalities among the various narrators. My goal is to select from those categories the stories that best exemplify lesbian teachers' experiences in a cohesive, dramatic fashion. By grouping stories about the same topic, I can choose those that contrast and complement each other and those stories that have the components I mentioned in the previous section: character development and interaction, conflict and resolution, a setting, and plot.

However, all the narratives do not need to be developed stories to inform the reader/listener and add interest and completeness to the narrative analysis.

Linguistic analysis is another paradigmatic approach to narrative. William Labov (1997) studied narratives linguistically to identify the structure of a personal story that could be classified as holistic or categorical-form reading. His five elements of structure: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and coda are all based on identifying clauses. He analyzed clauses, turn taking, and social context in determining the reportability of the narrative and the credibility of the narrator (1997, pp. 10 -11). Although how people speak and what they say interests me, it is not the focus of my research. Labov's elements of structure do serve to inform me as I select stories that are well formed. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) and Labov (1997) provided two examples of ways that analysis of narrative may be used. As Polkinghorne expressed, narrative analysis has an entirely different focus.

Polkinghorne (1995) described narrative analysis as a historical type of research. The researcher collects data from multiple sources and organizes them to tell the story of a person's life as a case study, biography, or part of history. It is significant that he didn't classify personal narratives as part of the data collected even though the data consists of "events and happenings" (p. 16). It seems to me that personal stories are as likely to happen in the interview as the collection of descriptive data. Regardless, according to Polkinghorne, the outcome of narrative analysis is a story. The end result is not the same as researchers writing up their conclusions in a narrative form. Instead, when all the data is synthesized, the final product is a story. The story is the analysis. Autoethnographic narratives and dramas such as the story of an abortion by Ellis and Bochner (1992) and *Mirror Image* about the loss of a cousin (Rose, 2006) are examples of narrative analysis. Polkinghorne (1995) indicated that the resulting story is often told from the

researcher's point-of-view within a plot she constructed. The resulting script is evaluated on the pragmatic basis that it provides insight and understanding to the reader (p. 20).

Oral Performance in Narrative Research

In the extensive, although not exhaustive, reading I have done on narrative, I have discovered very little, if any, emphasis on the oral aspects of narrative. In the various methods surveyed, the interview must be transcribed and made textual before it can be analyzed. Casey's (1995-1996) thorough discussion of the history and development of narrative research, particularly within the field of education, concluded, "New forms for reporting subjects' speech are waiting to be invented" (p. 235). Yet the variety of ways she gave for reporting narrative research consisted of examples from writing history and presenting oral history in written form. While there are some indications of alternative approaches to presenting narrative scholarship, such as poetry, layered stories, anecdotes, vignettes, pastiche, and drama (Ely, 2007), performance is not mentioned. Among human science scholars, Carolyn Ellis (2004) is an exception to this rule. In discussing autoethnography, she asserted:

Performance takes personal narrative another step . . . The audience is there with the performer, and the performer is present bodily and in dialogue with the audience. There is no place to hide and little distance between the performers and their roles, the performers and their audience, as there might be in fiction or poetry. (p. 208)

By looking at the Middle English and old French words for performance, Turner (1982) demonstrated that performance is more than a manifestation of form, but is "the processual sense of 'bringing to completion' or 'accomplishing'" (p. 91). It can be seen from these two definitions – that live, oral performance moves the experience of performance beyond a written text, completing the narrative act. Certainly, this can be seen in the performance of drama. Typically,

traditional drama differs from storytelling because it relies solely on dialogue, lacking narrative description which gives insight into characters' thoughts and feelings. At the same time, it utilizes performance to give life to the dialogical encounters on the page. As will be seen in the next section, performance ethnography utilizes both drama and narrative to bring a culture alive.

Performance Studies and Performance Ethnography

In my search for oral personal stories, I found that among performance studies scholars, personal narrative performance is widespread. Until the 1980s, performance studies departments were called oral interpretation of literature. Since the early 1900s, oral interpretation was established as a form of literary analysis through oral performance. The emphasis was on literary analysis through performance, bringing the literature alive with the vocal skills of the interpreter. In June 1986, at a summer conference of the Oral Interpretation Division of the Speech Communication Association, Kristin Langellier (1986) brought personal narrative to the forefront, pointing out that to be completely realized, narrative must be performed. Although performance has always been a tenet of oral interpretation, it was time for the emphasis on literary criteria as the “domain of aesthetic communication” to be superseded by performance (p. 136). At this pivotal conference, a movement that was taking place at key sites such as Northwestern University (where notable scholars like Dwight Conquergood were shaping performance ethnography) began to sweep through struggling oral interpretation programs to become performance studies.

Alexander (2003) acknowledged this repositioning of the discipline from emphasis on performance of literature to a wider perception of text as “the scope of cultural practice and articulated human expression” (p. 414). This shifted the focus from “*text to context*” and the role of interpreter expanded to include all social beings as *performers* (p. 414). Conquergood took

this to another level by questioning the textualizing of cultural performance (1998). He unpacked the “world-as-text model in ethnography and cultural studies” expressed in Clifford Geertz’s well known quotation, “The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (as cited in Conquergood, 1998, p. 28). In a thoughtful and insightful discussion, Conquergood illustrated how text has been the tool of the elite and those in power since scribes could write. Black slaves in America and other subaltern populations, have been ruled by the laws and demands of texts, their only recourse to resist through performance with their bodies, sounds, songs, and other non-textual symbols. He interpreted the quotation by Geertz to indicate the aloof, superior, literate ethnographer gazing unsolicited over the shoulders of the people (1998). He concluded that textuality remains the province of the White, western academy, serving as a control mechanism that shuts out undesirable populations. Conquergood challenged the hegemonic control of scholarship as writing, and asked questions about how performance can become another form of published scholarship. This is still disputed today, as even performance studies scholars are compelled to legitimize and record their performances on paper. As Conquergood (1998) declared:

Performance as both an object and method of research will be most useful if it interrogates and decenters, without discarding, the text. I do not imagine the world, particularly the university world, without texts, nor do I have any wish to stop writing myself. But I do want to keep thinking about what gets lost and muted in texts. (p. 33)

Performative writing as a textual form of performance has become more accepted as a form of research. It is relational because you care about the audience of readers for whom you write (Madison, 2005, p. 192). Not only does it attempt to do on paper what is accomplished in

performance, the focus is on the process of writing rather than the product (Conquergood, 1998; Ellis, 2004). Nevertheless, articles consisting of performance ethnography or personal narrative cannot convey the sensual nuances of live performance. With this understanding, I move on to the kinds of performance ethnography that align best with storytelling.

Today, performance ethnography, autoethnography, and critical performance ethnography have inundated the disciplines of performance studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, nursing, medicine, and other fields. Alexander gave one simple definition of performance ethnography when he stated, “Performance ethnography is literally the staged reenactment of ethnographically derived notes” (2003, p. 411). This is more deeply defined by looking to Turner, who stated, “To perform ethnography, then, is to bring the data home to us in their fullness, in the plenitude of their action-meaning” (1982, p. 91). Yet, performance ethnography does not necessarily have to include “thick description” of field notes to be ethnography. Much of the resulting research is centered on the words of participants themselves, usually garnered from interviews. At the risk of sounding too broad, Heddon (2008) used autobiographical performance to encompass “solo autobiographical work, community and applied drama, oral narrative and oral history performance, verbatim drama, documentary drama, testimonial performance, and performance art” (p. 11). However, she limited these with exacting attention to forms that include “auto” and “bio.”

By establishing that performance ethnography is directly involved with personal narrative, I want to go a step further to look at how critical performance ethnography can serve marginalized populations. According to Alexander (2005):

Beyond the *practical pedagogical* or the *pleasure of the performative*, performance ethnography is moral discourse in the tradition of all qualitative research. It is situated

activity that locates the participants, researchers, and observers in the world – a world in which the implications and complications of being and knowing others can be negotiated in mutually beneficial ways. (p. 417)

In other words, through performance we come to know each other in ways we never did before. This can open up audiences to listen to the stories of formerly silenced subaltern groups. Madison (2005) expanded this notion by examining how the subjects, audiences, and performers of critical performance ethnography benefit. She called staged cultural performance a “performance of possibilities.” In a performance of possibilities, the possible suggests a movement culminating in creation and change (p. 172). She explained the motivational benefits of hearing the stories of others:

The performance strives to communicate a sense of subjects’ worlds in their own words; it hopes to amplify their meanings and intentions to a larger group of listeners and observers. These listeners and observers are then affected by what they see and hear in ways that motivate them to act and think in ways that now beneficially affect (directly and indirectly) either the subjects themselves or what they advocate. (p. 174)

With the confirmation from key scholars that storytelling can be used for social justice, I looked to performance studies for examples. The vast majority of articles written on the subject reflected a prevalence of autobiographical narrative performances. Taylor (2000) and Gingrich-Philbrook (1997) dealt with being lesbian and gay respectively through autobiographical narrative. Actor Tim Miller (Gentile, 2003; Heddon, 2003) has made a career of performing autoethnographic one-man shows where his own life is the showcase for issues of gay rights and oppression.

Remembering oral history performance, edited by Pollock (2005), includes performing the voices of other narrators. Actor and Professor Anna Deavere Smith is an artist whose

scholarship lies entirely within performance. Smith spent years traveling around the United States interviewing people in a project she calls *On the Road: In Search for American Character* (Bernstein, 2000). Years of work have produced award-winning one-woman shows that are built of multiple monologues directly taken from her interviews. Her most recent production, *Let Me Down Easy*, aired on PBS in January 2012 (see www.pbs.org). Another working actor, Eve Ensler (2000) also traveled the country boldly interviewing women about their vaginas. Often shocking, heartrending, humorous, and touching, Ensler's show, *Vagina Monologues*, is still performed on college campuses today in conjunction with V-Day, a movement to end violence against women and girls around the world (see www.vday.org). Although not an academic scholar, her work exemplifies the kind of work that is living and transforming the community. As Norman Denzin (2003) confirmed, "Critical ethnographers go beyond thick description of local situations to resistance performance texts/events that urge social transformations" (p. 33).

Revealing the silencing that occurs through a heteronormative worldview and telling the experiences of lesbian teachers has the potential to bring about change. As Madison (2005) stated, "The performance strives to communicate a sense of subject's worlds in their own words" and can be a form of advocacy (p. 173). This benefits the subjects or narrators because human beings need to be heard and acknowledged by others. Madison noted that even when the listener doesn't like the performance, "one cannot completely undo or (un)know the image and imprint of the voice (inside history) upon their own consciousness once they have been exposed to it through performance" (p. 173).

Yet, what constitutes giving "voice" to those who have been silenced? Is this possible? Is it presumptuous? Perhaps the real problem resides in the listener. As Casey stated, "The

problem, after all, is not with the voices that speak but with the ears that do not hear” (1995-1996, p. 223). I’d like next to explore the ethical concerns around speaking for others.

When one chooses to tell the stories of others who have been overlooked, hidden, or demeaned by the dominant culture, the assumption is that they have been silenced by more powerful voices. As history bears out, women authors, inventors, philosophers, etc. have only recently been included in history books. The private, domestic sphere of life has not been deemed worthy of mention. The same can be said for minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and so forth. Women and minorities have been struggling for the past fifty years to be included in textbooks and history books, cinema, and television as contributing citizens and not just criminals in the evening news. While strides have been made, full citizenship is yet to be experienced. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender persons seldom see themselves portrayed as people who work, love, hope, and dream. I am hopeful that giving voice to minority voices will bring empathy and understanding from other cultures, both dominant and subaltern, giving them a sense of empowerment. Minh-ha said, “Tell it so they can tell it” (1994, p. 482). This could be the mantra for cultural studies scholars who choose to interview others and tell their stories for them. Yet, there are limitations to such an endeavor.

First, one needs to take care to avoid reinforcing stereotypes and social standing in telling others stories. Researchers must listen closely and work to understand the culture of those for whom they speak. In fact, it is easier to gain the trust of participants when you are a member of their group. Researchers have learned that ethnographers eager to collect Native American stories at the beginning of the twentieth century were often given made-up stories or only the stories that Indians thought they would understand and enjoy. Referring to Zora Neale Hurston, Conquergood (1998) pointed out that Blacks gave information to White ethnographers to occupy

them while not revealing their inner selves. “Oppressed people everywhere must watch their backs, cover their tracks, hide their feelings, and veil their meanings” (p. 30).

Second, in telling your own autobiography, you must tell the stories of other people in your life. Heddon (2008) discussed the sticky wicket of determining what should be said and how those we are close to ought to be presented. Do they have any say in the matter? What ethical standards do we use to make these decisions? Do we impose a prior set of rules to our scripting or do we choose them on a case-by-case basis? What responsibility do we have toward the people in our stories? While Heddon gave no answers, she opens the issue for consideration.

Third, it is questionable whether or not you can give someone else a voice. It depends on what is meant by that statement. Madison (2005), stated, “By voice, I do not mean the representation of an utterance, but the presentation of a historical self, a full presence that is in and of a particular world” (p. 172-173). She proposed that performing “subversive and subaltern voices” acknowledges their existence, making listeners witnesses to them, embedding them in the listener’s life experience (p. 173). She went on to show how the subjects, the audience, and the performers benefit from the performance. The subject benefits from being heard by “Others” (p. 173). The audience benefits when, as outsiders, the performance pulls them inside. The performers are more intensely involved with the world of “Others” than are the audience. Even traumatically so: “Because the transportation is mentally and viscerally more intense than traveling to the world of Others” (p. 177). A performance of possibilities is just that. What could happen and what will happen are not always the same. Yet, it is through performance that change is made possible. As Lawrence (1998) wrote of her one-woman, one-act autobiographical play:

A theatrical event – the very act of providing entertainment and of being entertained – is undeniably a social phenomenon. If, during their experience of this social event, the

audience is stimulated to heightened emotional responses or intellectual reflection, learning takes place. Used in this way, theatre can be an educational tool for increasing awareness of psychological and of societal issues within a given culture. (p. 288)

Using post-performance interviews, Lawrence discovered that her performance on the lived experience of Apartheid in South Africa moved her audience to look at racism in the United States in a new light (1998). It is my intention to arrange a script creatively that allows the narrators to speak for themselves through stories. The script will tell the stories of a silenced minority, providing the listeners with the possibility of transformation. One way to give voice to those who cannot speak out is by retelling their stories in a staged performance.

My position in the research is both that of an insider and outsider. As a lesbian and teacher, I empathize and share similar stories of living in and coming out of the closet. As a scholar and researcher, I am an outsider who will contribute insights from an academic perspective, while at the same time sharing insider stories as a lesbian. Knowing a person's story and sharing that story with others can bring awareness to the larger community of the challenges faced by marginalized people.

This section has explored the definition of narrative, settling on a traditional story format. The performance experience has been explored in considering how storytelling involves the teller, the story, and the listener. In exploring performance studies, I found critical performance ethnography to be the closest fit to what I want to do in a storytelling script of narratives from lesbian teachers.

In order to produce a performance ethnography of personal narratives which exemplify lesbian teachers' experiences and how cultural context shapes their lives, a review of psychological and historical literature provides background into the intersection of lesbian

teachers' sexual orientation and their public and private lives. The next section discusses identity development of lesbian teachers, starting with personality theory. The last section of Chapter 2 presents a historical survey of women in education, leading to a discussion of social, political, and cultural influences on lesbians.

Lesbian Identities

Maintaining lesbian relationships in a heterosexist world, particularly when one works in the school system, is a delicate matter. The stories I collected reveal how lesbian teachers perceive themselves in relation to societal expectations for women and teachers. The social groups to which they belong and their willingness to conform for group membership factor into their identities as lesbians, teachers, and women. Integral to this study is the difference between who they are in private settings and the image they project in public. It follows that an understanding of identity development aided me in selecting stories that reflect their responses to social influences. In discussing the core concepts of my research, a good place to begin is by unpacking the meaning of heteronormativity. Next, I define identity in preparation for a discussion of identity development. Third, I discuss various theories on lesbian identity development. Fourth, I apply Krane and Barber's (2003) method of social identity theory to the *personal* construction of identity and the *social* construction of identity in lesbians and lesbian teachers. Finally, I discuss the effects of living in the closet vs. coming out on how lesbian teachers negotiate identities in relation to their public and private lives.

Heteronormativity and Identity Defined

Heteronormativity is a key component of my research question and was a central factor in selecting and arranging the stories in the performance ethnography script. Coming from a critical/feminist paradigm ensconced in cultural studies, I do not view my research through the

eyes of queer theory. Nevertheless, queer theorists offer an in-depth understanding of the concept of heteronormativity. Therefore, I begin with a definition by Valocchi (2005):

For queer theorists, heteronormativity means the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organize homosexuality as its binary opposite. This set of norms works to maintain the dominance of heterosexuality by preventing homosexuality from being a form of sexuality that can be taken for granted or go unmarked or seem right in the way heterosexuality can (Corber & Valocchi 2003, p. 4). (p. 756)

As heteronormativity pervades our institutions, Valocchi emphasized, “Individuals internalize the norms generated by the discourses of sexuality and gender as they are circulated by social institutions such as schools, clinics, mass media, and even social movements” (p. 756). Sumara and Davis (1999) put it plainly when they said:

“Normal” and “heterosexual” are understood as synonymous. This means that all social relations and all forms of thinking that exist with these relations are heteronormative. To put it crudely, heteronormativity creates a language that is “straight.” Living within heteronormative culture means learning to “see” straight, to “read” straight, to “think” straight. (p. 202)

Regardless of sexual orientation, I have seen many “straight” rules for behavior exhibited by gays and lesbians. This is evident in dress, hairstyles, a belief in monogamy and marriage between two people, butch/femme dress, and actions that follow heterosexual norms for masculinity and femininity as well as acceptance of social norms of behavior for men and women in the workplace. While there are those who defy gender role stereotypes, they are often younger gays and lesbians and those who have always lived outside of the hetero/homo binary: intersexed, transgendered, and bisexual people. Namaste (1994) argues that queer theory in

sociology must address the limitations of this binary. To declare and define homosexuality is to bolster heterosexuality as the dominant form (p. 226). She proposed, “The most effective sites of resistance are those created by people who refuse both options. A critical sexual politics, in other words, struggles to move beyond the confines of an inside/outside model” (p. 230). Most citizens, however, are still unaware of the power heteronormativity has over their lives.

Heteronormativity does more than hegemonically persuade people to accept heterosexuality as the logical behavior for men and women. In so doing, it has ostracized and even demonized those outside of the norm. Psychiatric scholar Gregory Herek (1990) defined heterosexism in terms similar to heteronormativity, except with the focus on the prejudice that results from a heterocentric society:

Heterosexism is defined here as an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community. Like racism, sexism, and other ideologies of oppression, hetersexism is manifested both in customs and institutions, such as religion and the legal system (referred to here as *cultural heterosexism*) and in individual attitudes and behaviors (referred to here as *psychological heterosexism*). (p. 316)

Herek went further to emphasize that cultural heterosexism is as ubiquitous as the air we breathe (p. 317). He explained that western society views sexual behavior as private with public displays frowned upon. However, heterosexuals have institutional and socially accepted displays of their heterosexual behavior through celebrations of marriage, childbirth, and legal rights such as tax deductions and naturalization for immigrants. When homosexuals attempt to parallel any of these sanctioned public displays of their relationships, “they are accused of ‘flaunting’ their sexuality and thereby are perceived as deserving or even “asking for” retribution, harassment, or assault”

(1990, p. 321). Frequently in the media, we see stories of the fight for gay marriage as a means to assure same sex couples receive the same social benefits as heterosexual couples. While individual states have legalized gay marriage, many governments, both state and national, have fought to maintain heterosexual normalcy as the only “right” relationship sanctioned by marriage. Several teachers I interviewed reinforced their own acceptance of the public/private dichotomy for same-sex relationships. When I asked one teacher about her degree of being out of the closet, she put it, “As far as, you know, just socially out and about, I don’t hide it or anything. But I don’t flaunt it.” (Rock) Another teacher claimed, “I think I’m just, I’m comfortable in my skin, uhm, I’m not one to, to wave the rainbow flags and the stickers and things on the car, I’m just me.” (Shelley) Although both women appear to be comfortable with their sexual orientation and out to their friends and family, neither one professes to be out at work or to want to draw attention to their sexual orientation as an identity.

Dominant society conspires to keep men and women in acceptable gender roles with acceptable sexual expression. The far reaching implications of these norms are that people who exhibit right behavior for their sex are given privileges and others are not. A social stratosphere of power differentials exists and is maintained hegemonically, reaching into our institutions as well as our personal lives. While hegemony affects gender, sexual expression, race/ethnicity, religion, and class throughout all of our institutions, the school is the institution important to this research. As this discussion reveals, the blind acceptance of gender roles has become institutionalized, directly affecting the hierarchy of educational institutions. Christianakis (2008) mentioned that, “Marxist feminist theory argues that models of production in a capitalist labor market are gendered with men enjoying higher employment status. While the majority of teachers are female, those who maintain power and run universities are men” (p. 102). This has

particular impact in elementary and secondary education. By treating teachers as technicians and workers who have nothing to offer educational research and production, their expert knowledge is demeaned and they are relegated to a cheap and exploitable labor force. This maintains the patriarchal model with men in administrative positions and women as teachers. Telling lesbian teachers' stories of balancing private and public personas is one way to expose heteronormativity in society. The gender attributes people learn to exhibit are directly connected to their identities, which the rest of this section reviews.

Before going into the different stage theories for personality development, a definition must be given for "identity." There are a number of ways to define the term "identity." Social psychologist Chryssochoou (2003) offers a clear explanation. Identity has become part of common sense knowledge over the years. For that and other reasons, she argues that identity is a "social representation" and that "Identity . . . should not be seen as an individual property from which actions and behaviors originate. Identity encapsulates simultaneously the way we think about ourselves and about the world in which we live" (p. 227). According to Chryssochoou, identity is about the relationship between the world and the individual, involving three components: *Cognition* (self-knowledge); *claims* about myself (self-action); and *recognition* through the actions of others who acknowledge those claims and may share them. Cognition-claims-recognition interact cyclically, each one spurring the other in different situations and at different times to shape identity (see Chryssochoou, 2003, pp. 228-234). This seemingly fluid perception of identity does not negate the powerful effects of our parents and environment on shaping our personalities in early childhood. It does suggest that we adapt and change as we find groups to which we relate or we would like to belong. In order to understand identity formation,

I begin with a discussion of identity development in men and women from the feminist point of view.

Feminism and Identity Development

Feminist sociologist Chodorow (1989) named mothers responsible for perpetuating the consistent differences between male and female development. Layton (2004) took this stance further by proposing that narcissism occurs in the polarization of the gender development of males and females. She pointed to familial upbringing, sexism, racism, homophobia, and class inequality as causes of pathological narcissism: “Narcissistic wounds are caused when cultural and familial gender expectations restrict the many ways that one can be agentic and relational to two ways: those that define hegemonic masculinity and femininity” (p. 33). This splitting of the two ways of being causes males and females to expect the other sex to complete them. However, Layton assured the reader that since we have a multiplicity of gender choices, humans still have an opportunity for healthy development. I turn now to Block for further clarification of the gender split between girls and boys.

In 1973, Block published research on sex role identity and ego development that was conducted internationally over six western countries with male and female university students, with no mention of race or ethnic designations. The countries surveyed were Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, England, and the United States. Block utilized Loevinger’s hierarchical stages of ego development, incorporating her own descriptions of sex role development based on Erikson into the model. She also applied Bakan’s two fundamental modalities of *agency* and *communion* to the data. According to Bakan (as cited in Block, 1984), agency manifests through self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion. Communion reveals the individual’s place

within the larger organism and the sense of being one with other organisms. The mature organism is most effective when agency and communion are integrated together.

Block confirmed that in the early stages of development, both boys and girls exhibited “unmitigated agency” as they struggled for autonomy. However, when they reached the level of conformity both developed sex-role stereotypes, diverging sharply. Block’s research confirmed that boys are discouraged from expressing feelings and grow more agentic while girls are discouraged from expressing aggression and assertiveness, becoming communion-oriented.

At the next level, conscientious individuals begin to compare internalized personal values with cultural expectations. Awareness of deviation between their personal values and society leads to critical self-examination. In the process of balancing both modalities, a few individuals will integrate the two together, attaining the highest developmental phase. For Block, this phase or goal attainment in sex-role identity development was not about achieving the polarized social norms of masculine and feminine, but about being secure enough to exhibit androgynous characteristics. Block (1984) found that males who were highly socialized gained positive masculine and feminine traits, achieving greater androgyny. However, women who were highly socialized became more “nurturant, docile, submissive, and conservative,” as they denied any personal qualities that could be defined as masculine (pp. 21-22). This further illustrates the unhealthy effects on women caused by expecting them to meet male norms of development. Chodorow (1989) confirmed that the interpersonal dynamics for boys and girls are different during the first three years of life. She stated:

It seems likely that from their children's earliest childhood, mothers and women tend to identify more with daughters and to help them to differentiate less, and that processes of separation and individuation are made more difficult for girls. On the other hand, a

mother tends to identify less with her son, and to push him toward differentiation and the taking on of a male role unsuitable to his age, and undesirable at any age in his relationship to her. (p. 50)

As girls pose no sexual threat to their mothers, their relationship does not change. However, mothers push boys away, forcing them to individuate (Gilligan, 1994). This compels men and women to suppress aspects of human nature to meet social expectations. This insight into how women become communal nurturers and men become agentic individuals is built on a heteronormative outlook. LGBT people do not always fit into these patterns of thinking and behaviors. The next section looks at theories of stage development of lesbian identity.

Formulating a Lesbian Identity

Although no less nurturing and community-oriented than other women are, lesbians do not fit neatly into this strict acculturation of men as agents and women as communal. To show that lesbians have achieved a mature self-identity, Ellis (2000) gave a feminist twist to Canadian developmental psychologist James Marcia's (1966) Identity Status Model which was built on Erikson's (1993) identity theory. Ellis began by reviewing a study by Eliason applied Marcia's scale to sexual identity in 1995. As cited in Ellis (2000), Eliason's research on sexual identity formation in heterosexual students revealed 33 percent of women and 50 percent of men in the study unquestioningly accepted heterosexuality as imposed upon them by social, religious, and gender, or familial expectations. This means that they fell into the category of foreclosure on Marcia's scale. Ellis explained that additional feminist researchers such as Wilkinson and Kitzinger (as cited in Ellis, 2000) supported the finding that heterosexual women accepted heterosexuality by default (2000, p. 149). She further showed how lesbians met Marcia's qualifications for identity achievement.

According to Ellis (2000), growing up in a heterosexist society rules out the possibility of lesbians having a foreclosed sexual identity. Published narratives support the fact that “lesbians have had to pass through a period of exploration to reach a point of accepting, identifying or taking on board a lesbian identity” (p. 149). Disproportionate numbers of heterosexuals accept their sexual orientation through foreclosure or diffusion, (considered lower order statuses on Marcia’s scale) while disproportionate numbers of lesbians accept their sexual orientation through moratorium and identity achievement, considered higher order statuses. Ellis concluded that lesbians are “better adjusted in terms of sexual identity development than their heterosexual peers” (p. 150). This might be the case in some lesbians, although I suspect that living in a society with pervasive homophobia may complicate positive sexual adjustment in others.

Starting with Freud (1920), psychoanalysts firmly established the stage theory of identity development tied to the physical age of the person. Erikson (1993) recognized that identity development did not stop with adulthood. However, it wasn’t until feminists challenged inclusion of females within male development stages that gender differences were identified (see Block, 1984; Gilligan, 1994; Moses, 1978). During the 1960s and 1970s, the era of social movements in the western hemisphere brought awareness that multiple identities intersect in most people. Social movements, based on civil rights, began with Blacks and extended to women’s liberation and gay liberation. Research on these identities followed. Identity development differs among oppressed groups such as African Americans, Latinos, women, and gays in relation to their different agendas (Layton, 2004). At the same time, multiple identities intersect in each person. Models of racial identity development and models for the development of a gay/lesbian identity and racial/ethnic identity laid the groundwork for further studies

(McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Marginalized groups often face the difficult decision of trying to maintain membership in multiple groups that are essentially opposed to each other.

Once psychiatry relinquished the pathological designation for sexual orientation in 1975 (Conger, 1975), scholars recognized that stages of development for gays and lesbians often did not begin until adulthood. They found this to be particularly true of women (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Research on gay/lesbian identity was prolific in the late 1970s and 1980s (Cass 1979; Faderman, 1984; Sophie, 1985-1986; Chapman & Brannock, 1987). Numerous stages were named, most of which were not fully supported with empirical research. Nevertheless, they shared commonalities. Since men were still considered the norm, lesbian development was assumed to follow that of gay males, making lesbians invisible. In order to situate a model for lesbian identity development, McCarn and Fassinger developed their own model by incorporating strong points from earlier models into theirs.

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) found that early stages of most models were reasonably accurate, but that latter stages varied. They also considered the conflation of personal and social development a weakness of prior identity models. They realized that Cross's (1996) racial identity model involved two different categories: personal identity, which includes self-evaluation and self-esteem, and group identity that develops as race awareness grows. They applied both of these factors into the design of their own lesbian identity development model. Incorporating what they learned from race, gender, and sexual orientation models, they came up with a four phase, two-strand model that recognized all lesbian and gay people were not free to come out publicly. Disclosure (and subsequent political commitment) is a component of healthy social identity, but not required for a healthy personal identity.

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) chose to use the term “phase” instead of “stage” to describe development as circular instead of linear. Beginning from a state of nonawareness, the phases were: (a) awareness; (b) exploration; (c) deepening/commitment; and (d) internalization/synthesis (p. 521). These are listed with two concurrent strands: One of “individual sexual identity” and the other of “group membership identity.” Although reciprocal, they are not simultaneous.

In the awareness phase, the individual acknowledges feeling different in sexual orientation (e.g., the individual sexual identity strand) while experiencing a growing realization of the existence of non-heterosexual orientations in people (e.g., group membership identity). In the exploration phase, the individual experiences strong/erotic feelings for women or for one in particular. On a group membership level, the individual regards one’s position as a member of the larger group of lesbians and gays. In the third phase of deepening/commitment, the individual makes a firm commitment to her choices about sexual orientation. On the group membership level, she becomes more aware of oppression and the consequences of choices. In the last level of internalization/synthesis, the individual confirms her love for women, her sexual choices, and overall identity. She is likely to have already spent years in emotional and sexual self-exploration. On the group membership level, she sees identity as a member of a minority group across contexts. Although she may choose to remain closeted in professional contexts, her decision has been made thoughtfully: “It is the process of resolving these questions that creates integration, not the content of their resolution” (p. 523).

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) were able to establish the validity of their model through an initial Q-sort methodology. Their distinction between personal and group identity development is a significant addition to the sexual identity model because they acknowledge that

the two identities are not the same. In addition, removing coming out and open political involvement as criteria for a healthy personal identity make this model preferable to others. However, there are still questions in my mind about the perception that a fully integrated person must embrace a lesbian identity. This model does not account for those who work through these phases, but still question their sexual preferences.

By now, the ideas of personal identity and social identity have been introduced. But how are they different? According to Hogg (2003), they were defined in the early years of social psychology and social identity theory in this way:

Social identity referred to commonalities among people within a group and differences between people in different groups and was associated with group behaviors . . . Personal identity referred to self as distinct from other people or self as defined in terms of specific relationships with other individuals and was not associated with group behaviors. (p. 463)

Essentially, people take on identities associated with groups with which they have something in common. As pointed out by McCarn and Fassinger (1996), personal and social identities overlap and yet remain separate. Often, lesbians must separate their social and personal identities to remain in the closet, particularly to keep their jobs. Coming out of the closet is often associated with developing a lesbian identity. The few studies on lesbian teachers' social identities have been in the area of sport. Sykes (1996) was one of the first to examine the struggle of lesbian physical education teachers and students between their personal and social identities. Since identity research exists in the area of women in sports, I turn to the findings of sport psychologists Krane and Barber (2003) to parallel lesbian classroom teachers' experiences. An overview of social identity theory as described by Krane and Barber (2003) lays the groundwork for comparison.

Over the years, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people have experienced increased pressure from their peers to come out of the closet. Yet, there are occupations and avocations that are bastions of heterosexism, making coming out risky. The fields of sport and K-12 education are two such heterosexist institutions. Krane and Barber (2003) have laid out a useful approach to the lesbian experience in sport that uses social identity theory as its framework. This perspective can also be applied to the experience of teachers in K-12 education. Female athletes feel greater pressure to pass as heterosexual because they have been stereotyped as lesbians. Pervasive heteronormativity stigmatizes lesbians, compelling straight female athletes to distance themselves from lesbians and present themselves with hyper femininity. Historically, society expects classroom teachers to model appropriate gender behaviors, indicating a heterosexist agenda controls them as well (Blount, 2005). The prevalent parental fear of teachers converting students to homosexuality or sexually abusing them further stigmatizes lesbians who teach (Griffin, 2003).

Krane and Barber (2003) gave a detailed explanation of social identity theory and applied it to lesbians in sport intending to provide a social psychological approach that incorporates the lesbian experience into theory and practice, thereby creating accepting sport environments. They acknowledged the importance of social context in their research, taking a social identity (SI) perspective that attempts to understand the social behavior of individuals through their group membership (2003, p. 330). In brief, SI perspective hypothesizes that one means of maintaining a positive self-image or self-esteem is through positive evaluation of group membership. Evaluations of group membership are accomplished by comparing groups to which one belongs to other groups. Simply put, positive group membership equals positive self-image. Membership in social groups creates a social identity distinguished from the personal identity. Since group

membership gives one a sense of belonging and is context-specific (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation), marginalized group members tend to prioritize the group identity over the personal one when the group is threatened. For example, if a gay or lesbian individual has developed a sense of pride and belonging to a social group of gays and lesbians, they may not only take on similar attributes such as clothing, language, and nonverbal communication, but they may participate in Gay Pride parades and demonstrations for gay rights. As Krane and Barber (2003) explained, in comparing your group to another there is a tendency to stereotype the other group in trying to build higher status for your group. For gays and lesbians, this might be demonstrated by calling homophobic people rednecks. On the other hand, if a lesbian, such as an athlete, fears recognition as a lesbian, she may pass as heterosexual to be part of the higher status group while denying her personal identity.

According to Krane and Barber (2003), social categorization and social comparison are central to SI and help individuals order their social environment. Categorization leads to stereotypes based on group memberships that are not always negative. Through social comparison, individuals compare groups and their values to determine which group is more desirable or appropriate for the individual. Belonging to a group creates collective esteem. However, social competition exists between groups. Depending on the attitude of the individual, moving from a low status group to a higher status group can be desirable and possible. Mobility strategies are engaged in attaining membership in a higher status group. This could mean literally leaving one group for another. It can also mean passing as a member of the higher status group. The particular context governs what is involved in passing and entails hiding characteristics of the low status identity and social group. Passing occurs among lesbians in both sports and schools: "If an individual can provide the right bits of information within a given situation to

create a stereotype of normality, then (s)he can pass” (Moses, 1978, p. 14). According to SI, individuals make choices that will provide positive self-image through social identities (Krane & Barber, 2003). With these terms in mind, I now apply SI perception to lesbian teachers in a manner similar to how Krane and Barber applied these concepts to lesbian athletes and coaches.

Invisibility is a significant roadblock to self-categorization with lesbian social groups for women in sports (Krane & Barber, 2003). In the same way that silence is the norm in mainstream sport, silence occurs in the classroom. Many lesbians in sport have internalized the belief that to come out would threaten their careers – a parallel easily drawn with teachers. As Krane and Barber (2003) pointed out, silencing lesbians is an effective form of social control that supports heteronormativity and perpetuates negative stereotypes about lesbians. Clarke (1998) also emphasized, “(Work) spaces are neither pure nor innocent, for not only are they gendered, but they are also racialized, sexed and (hetero)sexualized” (p. 86). In schools, lesbian teachers maintain silence through fear of losing their jobs, which leads to stress and low self-and collective esteem. Griffin’s (1992) participatory study with thirteen gay and lesbian teachers (with two lesbian university professors) revealed participants feared public exposure of their sexual orientation would cost them their job or lose credibility with their students, colleagues, and parents. They also feared accusations of child molestation and recruiting students to the gay or lesbian lifestyle. In addition, they worried they would be recognized when attending a gay-identified place or event.

In order to categorize oneself within a group, there must be a way to make a social comparison. The fear of discovery keeps lesbians in the closet and allows only one social group to exist at work: The dominant one. As Clarke (1998) emphasized, “These spatial binaries (public/private) lead not only to the maintaining of hegemonic heterosexual ideologies but also

to deafening silences about sexual oppression, and contribute to the belief that there is no problem here” (p. 88). SI suggests that social competition exists and lesbians will pass in order to benefit from membership in the higher status heterosexual group; however, the assumption is that they are already members of that group. While Jackson (2004) called passing “co-opting” straight behaviors, Clarke (1998) called heterosexual performance “compulsory” for social approval: “Rather it is the nature of schooling and the socio-political context requires that they learn their heterosexual parts convincingly so as to be able to repeat them as and when required” (p. 91). Just as women watch men because they belong to a higher status group and minorities watch Whites because of their higher status, lesbians and gays observe how to perform heterosexuality. Those LGBT individuals who have chosen to immerse themselves in the gay culture identify primarily with the group, forming collective esteem and building psychological walls against outside influences. They are more inclined to adopt group identity forms of dress, language, and mannerisms. However, as teachers are part of a group expected to teach and enforce dominant cultural ideals and values, they tend to avoid outward displays of their sexual orientation. Teachers, like many LGBT persons, want to appear normal and unspectacular. When Kissen (1993) asked a teacher, “What would your life be like if homophobia ended tomorrow?” She said, “I could take all of me to school ... I could really put Sandy’s picture on my desk” (p. 8). After speaking to so many teachers who are in the closet, I recognize and have experienced the lack of connection caused by this self-imposed silence. Even though lesbian teachers identify with teachers as a group formed by their shared occupation, keeping their private life separate from their public life isolates them from their colleagues.

Krane and Barber (2003) indicated that individuals use “mobility strategies” to move from a lower status to higher status group. Since society assumes teachers are heterosexual (a

higher status group), rather than mobility strategies, lesbians use identity management strategies to hide their sexual orientation in order to maintain heterosexual membership. These strategies consist of outward behaviors that reinforce the appearance of a heterosexual identity to coworkers, family members, and neighbors. To accomplish this, the private must be kept out of the public eye. Griffin (1992) realized that identity management is a daily, person-by-person process that requires strategies for concealment of one's personal identity. Although the participants in her study were conscious of political drawbacks from staying in the closet, they used four strategies for protecting themselves from public exposure at school. First, they strove to be the best teachers possible and developed a reputation that would be above reproach. Second, they carefully prepared for the possibility of questions about their personal lives including their sexual orientation. Third, they used regulation by continually monitoring their self-disclosure, their physical appearance, what they said in defense of gays and lesbians, and how others reacted to them. The fourth strategy was of separation. By "living in two worlds" and "wearing a mask," they strove to keep their personal and professional identities separate (1992b, pp. 173-174).

In her article, Jackson (2004) noted that in the studies she surveyed participants used coping strategies that helped them "pass" as straight among their colleagues. "This suggests that co-opting the dominant groups' language, appearance, and mannerisms provided what closeted teachers saw as protection against being fired or harassed for being gay" (p. 57).

Individual teachers in various studies have admitted how far they would go to pass as heterosexual. One teacher stated that she went to school activities alone rather than bring her girlfriend because she couldn't allow herself that "privilege." She also admitted to claiming her gay male friend was her boyfriend (Moses, 1978).

Many lesbian teachers must look outside of the workplace and its associated professional organizations for social group membership. While professional organizations exist for women teachers, they do not necessarily foster or provide an opportunity for lesbian teachers to meet and form friendships and gain support. When lesbian teachers work with other LGBT people, they seldom interact or come out to each other. Since self-categorization and social comparison are inseparable (Krane & Barber, 2003), teachers find themselves isolated at work or passing as heterosexual to feel part of the higher status heterosexual group. In Griffin's (1992) participatory research with thirteen gay and lesbian educators, after fifteen months of meeting together they developed a strong sense of collective esteem and identification with each other and their struggles. The group became a place of emotional and professional support as they discussed ways to address homophobia in their curriculum and communication with students and faculty. Collective esteem, therefore, can result from synthesizing professional and personal sexual identities if LGBT people have a group with which to share their experiences safely.

In contrast, most lesbian teachers often live their personal identity only in their private lives. In private life, they may be out to varying degrees. The degree to which they are willing to identify as lesbian in public affects their social group status outside of work. If not out, they may attend family holidays and functions without their partners or bring them along as a "friend." Some teachers even refuse to go out to restaurants with their partner. In east Tennessee, some closeted lesbians meet in each other's homes and have a small cluster of lesbian friends with whom they socialize. I have noticed in some cases lesbians who are deeply closeted have few, if any, social identity groups. The local gay or lesbian bars may be the only way to meet one another; however, bars appeal primarily to younger women. Teachers who are not out will drive great distances to attend gay bars in a city where they are unlikely to be known. I have known

lesbians who made long term friendships with other lesbians when they played together on a community softball team. Team sports seem to provide the opportunity for athletic lesbians to form friendships.

I am personally aware of lesbians who are not out at work, yet feel comfortable attending a gay friendly church or participating selectively in Gay Pride events. They usually avoid situations where the media is present, but have no qualms about socializing with their partner and friends in public locations such as restaurants. Rural areas and small towns seldom offer public places for the LGBT community to meet. Although I have heard the Tri Cities of Tennessee have a large LGBT population, there is only one gay bar. A social group exists for women over 40 called Lesbifriends and PFLAG meetings have become a safe place to meet others. In the spring of 2012, a group of individuals began developing a community center for LGBT people. However, that has not yet materialized. Although the majority of churches condemn homosexuality, Unity Church of the TriCities, Holston Unitarian Universalist Church, and First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethton are welcome and affirming to gays and lesbians. Even with these options, often lesbians choose to remain in the closet as a member of their preferred denomination while others leave organized religion altogether.

Ironically, lesbian teachers face pressure to stay in the closet from the heterosexual world and pressure from the LGBT community to come out. Rasmussen (2004) discussed this dual pressure in her article, *The Problem of Coming Out*: “Students and teachers who fail in their duty to come out may be marked as lacking, while those who do come out may be celebrated as role models promoting tolerance and inclusivity, empowering themselves and others” (p. 145). As Rasmussen discussed the politics of coming out, she brought attention to the difficulties of youth who fear losing financial support of their families and people of color who feel that coming out

adds sexual orientation to an already compromised social position. Jackson (2004) reminded us that being out of the closet is not a simple either/or choice but consists of “a continuum or process of fits and starts” (p. 1-13). This experience contradicts the idea that sexual identity moves through chronological stages, an understanding McCarn and Fassinger demonstrated in their proposed model which named phases in lesbian identity development instead of stages.

Unfortunately, the stress of maintaining vigilance over one’s personal identity in the school has provoked gay and lesbian teachers to leave the teaching professions. As referenced by Jackson (2004), Olson’s (1987) survey of gay and lesbian teachers who left teaching revealed that over 50% did so because of their sexual orientation (p. 1-8). Other teachers have experienced harassment, whether out or closeted. Ferfolja’s (1998) interviews with six lesbian high school teachers in Australia disclosed that all of them had stressful experiences and received little or no support from faculty and staff. Three of the six women felt compelled to take a leave of absence for stress due to harassment. One of the teachers was out with students and faculty, but no longer felt comfortable responding to students’ questions about sexual orientation, as she once did.

Moses’ (1978) study of lesbian women living in southern California in the late 1970s revealed that the primary stress of managing lesbian identity was with those family, friends, and associates who were straight and with whom one was not out (1978). One woman remarked, “Quitting my job has helped me tremendously in accepting myself as a homosexual. When you have to hide an aspect of your life in order to protect a job, it’s hard to feel good about that particular aspect of your life” (p. 66). From personal experience, I would have to agree that remaining in the closet is stressful. I no longer feel afraid I will lose my job; however, I don’t want to lose the esteem most students seem to have for me. Internalized homophobia may be the

reason many LGBT people are not open about their sexual orientation. Living in a heteronormative world makes it hard to accept that same sex attraction is normal, which also erodes self-confidence (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009).

It appears, therefore, that coming out influences how a lesbian teacher negotiates her identity in relation to sexual orientation, professional, personal, and religious aspects of personhood. It is certain that far more lesbian teachers remain in the closet at work and in other aspects of their lives than come out openly. Internalized homophobia, working in a heterosexist environment, and fear of exclusion and losing one's job motivate lesbian teachers to remain silent and pass as heterosexual (Smith, Wright, et al., 2008). While studying individual lesbian identities and their social negotiation gives insight into the experiences of lesbian teachers, it may not be enough to change the world.

Applying SI perspective with social categorization and social comparison theory reveals lesbian teachers' struggles to maintain two separate identities: the personal and the professional. This differs from heterosexuals who usually connect personal identity with social group memberships. Gay and lesbian teachers often become overachievers to compensate for their deviance. What they accomplish as "super teachers" comes at the expense of their own health and self-esteem (Kissen, 1993). Sykes (1996) put forward, "It could be argued that researching lesbian identity places an overemphasis on the individual lesbian subject at the expense of analyzing ways institutions construct hegemonic and marginal sexualities" (p. 465). She contended that institutions must be examined for change to take place. As long as institutions promote the dominant ideology without regard to others, individuals who are on the margins will not belong.

In conclusion, reviewing psychoanalysis and social psychology has been fruitful. Early theories of identity stage development (Freud, 1920, Erikson, 1993), Marcia, 1996) exposed male bias that continues to overlook the female perspective. Through reading about lesbian identity development, the limitations of a stage model are brought to light. The four-phase model of lesbian identity development proposed by McCarn and Fassinger (1996) is a useful alternative because it separates personal from group identity development and does not assume each phase is sequential or complete before entering the next one. In addition, social identity theory as applied by Krane and Barber (2003) provides an insightful way to analyze the interaction of public and private in the lives of lesbian teachers.

The last section consists of a historical overview that positions lesbians as teachers in the classroom. Through this review, knowledge of women's roles as educators establishes historical and social influences on women teachers that can also be found among those who are lesbian.

Lesbian Teachers in History

History of Women Who Teach

Fear of coming out or being brought out of the closet by others creates an unsafe climate not only for teachers but students. There is no reason to believe that schools will be safe for LGBT students if their teachers are not free to be open about their sexual orientation. One must ask how schools remain such a bastion of homophobia in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, the invisibility of LGBT teachers in the heterosexist school environment provides sparse research on lesbian teachers. However, a close look at the history of women teachers in the United States gives some plausible explanations for how this situation came to be.

In my search for the history of lesbian teachers, I discovered lesbians have only been the focus of research for the last 35 years. Blount (2005) has the most comprehensive history of

lesbians in education with Harbeck (1997) running a close second. Focused primarily on gays and lesbians since 1970, Harbeck's study of court cases over the years was illuminating. Blount discovered writers such as Vicinus who wrote on the intimate same-sex relationships of girls and among the female faculty in boarding schools at the turn of the 20th century. In reading some of Blount's sources, I took a roundabout route through numerous critical-historical studies of women teachers. While these articles made little reference to lesbians, this scenic route illustrated the setting in which lesbians also worked. In order to have a better understanding of the status of lesbians in the school system today and their own silent acquiescence to the dominant culture, I take the reader through an abbreviated history of women in the teaching profession. This review gives insight into a discussion of social perspectives of lesbian teachers, particularly since WWII.

Over the years, teachers have been an extension of the government in that it has been their role to promote and teach civic pride, patriotism, and moral behavior. Even today, they are considered role models for children and upholders of social propriety in the community. As we have seen, teachers are expected to support White, middle-class, Christian beliefs. Many of the teachers in the past have been White, middle-class, and educated. Until recent years, Black women have been confined to all-Black schools. When desegregation was enforced in the 1960s and 1970s, they often lost their jobs because Black students were bussed to White schools. White teachers and administrators maintained their positions whereas Black teachers and administrators lost theirs (Vaughn-Roberson, 1984). As usual, standards for White women have been different from those for women of color. Because most of the research I read focused on White women, and they make up the majority of teachers in the past and present, most of the discussion in this

section will deal with them. With this in mind, I will trace the history of women in education, starting with the birth of public education in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The United States of America is a young country. Therefore, public education is young. Public education can be traced to the 18th century before the American Revolution. After the founding of a new country, public schooling grew with our nation, following settlers into the frontier. Altenbaugh (2003) pointed out in his text, *The American People and Their Education: A Social History*, that industrial capitalism was a significant factor in the development of the public school system (p. 71). Prior to that, families worked together either farming or running a small cottage industry such as shoemaking. Work was not regimented and every member of the family had a job in running the household and the family business. However, industrial capitalism, with its factories, work shifts, and orderly processes of mass production, separated family members, leaving children on their own. As a result, urban common schools began to take a caretaking role for working parents (Altenbaugh, 2003). Thus, during the first half of the 19th century, the common school became the answer to a perceived lack of parental instruction and church-instilled values. Early public schools in rural communities were funded by contributions, tuition, and taxes. Schools were often in disrepair with few, if any, supplies. Classes ran in the summer and the winter, the older children attending only in the winter after the crops had been harvested (Altenbaugh, 2003).

Historically, men were the schoolmasters. However, during the summers, women taught the younger children. People believed that women could handle small children, but only a man could discipline older students and teach the more difficult subjects. At this time, what has since been called “the ideology of the Republican mother” took hold. It became important in New England and the Mid-Atlantic for women to be educated so that they could instill in their

children the values of the new republic (Jensen, 1984). Boys and girls were taught the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, while boys were to be prepared for occupations in the public sphere, girls were trained to be loyal family members, wives, and mothers. Women were to uphold and teach community standards of etiquette, morals, and culture (Vinouski & Bernard, 1978).

Early schools were often established to teach the Bible and to provide an education for the poor. In the last decade of the 18th century, Benjamin Rush established the Philadelphia First Day School Society as an interdenominational approach to teaching poor children in Sunday schools because they worked in factories six days a week. This approach was patterned after a similar method used in England. The idea soon expanded to other cities in both the North and the South (Altenbaugh, 2003). Another schooling approach imported from England was the infant school which provided day care for working mothers and served to instill the “proper” values of middle class citizenry (p. 77). The Quakers provide an exemplary example of actively establishing schooling for moral and religious purposes.

The Quakers were vital to education from 1790 to 1850. They led the way in southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware by providing education for girls and young women before the common school, state colleges, and universities became widespread (Jensen, 1984). Producing a Republican motherhood was not the motivating factor for Quakers, as the majority did not support the Revolutionary War. However, they were motivated to teach women so that they would provide a proper religious education for their own children. As early as 1746, they were exhorted to provide education for all, including the poor and free Blacks, extending into rural areas (Jensen, 1984). Nevertheless, as late as the 1770s, men were still the preferred schoolmasters. Men were paid three times what women were paid to teach children in the

advanced elementary and secondary schools. While women taught reading and writing, even in the early 1800s, there is no record of women teaching arithmetic (Jensen, 1984).

It is noteworthy that the progressive Quakers had women in the ministry. In 1794, female ministers took the lead in advancing education of the poor and females (Jensen, 1984).

According to Jensen, several factors may have led to the growth in women teachers among the Quakers. Growing affluence among the middle class meant fewer duties around the house for young women. They also were marrying at a later age, leaving them with “idle” time on their hands, a concern duly noted by female ministers. Of the Quaker women born after 1786, only 45 percent married. For these and other reasons, there were more educated, single, Quaker women available to take the less desirable teaching positions (Jensen, 1984). By 1853, one third of the teachers in Pennsylvania were women (1984). We can see through the efforts of the Quakers that women were trained for the teaching profession, moving women beyond the private sphere of “Republican mothers” into the public sphere of “teaching daughters” (1984, p. 17).

The 19th century saw an exponential growth of women in the teaching profession. Although men were the preferred choice, due to low teacher salaries they typically left teaching after a few years for more lucrative work. They were often young college graduates who wanted to gain work experience and earn money in preparation for their future careers. Unfortunately, citizens viewed the men who stayed in teaching as laggards, incapable of much else. In fact, the public perception was that anyone could teach children and often a ne’er-do-well or transient was hired for the job. However, progressive education brought the common school. As it expanded around the country, more teachers were needed. By the mid-1800s, women were entering the teaching field in droves. Academies and women’s seminaries cropped up, preparing young women for the first time for the non-domestic workforce. The growth of the common school

provided ample jobs for new teachers. Since young women were paid significantly less than men, they began to be hired over men (Blount, 2005). However, this growth of women teachers did not come without surmounting societal objections.

Because of the “separate spheres” philosophy of men and women’s work and lives, teaching became a dilemma for married women who now had to answer to two authorities: their husbands and their employers. Catherine Beecher, who was a single woman, had the answer to this conflict: Hire single women to teach (Blount, 2005). Beecher believed in separate spheres of work for men and women and that professionalization of women’s traditional work would bring equality. For Beecher, teaching was the profession most suited to the mothering, nurturing, and cultivating traits of women (Burstyn, 1974). Paradoxically, Beecher didn’t enjoy teaching but resorted to education as a field that could limit men’s power by increasing women’s, using teaching as a means to “establish cultural hegemony” (Preston, 1993, p. 533). By promoting the idea that women teachers would remain single, the notion that they were sexless became ingrained in the culture. Their behaviors were monitored by the community, to ensure that they presented themselves as chaste and virtuous role models. These expectations fed into the rationale that teachers should leave the profession once marriage and childbearing ensued (Quantz, 1985; Strober & Tyack, 1980).

Another objection to settle was over male authority. The concern was voiced that women would take on manly traits if they ran everything. For that reason, male supervisors who had little or no understanding of teaching were assigned to go from school to school doing maintenance and observing the teachers. This also served to preserve the family role model for students of a male head and female subservience. After the Civil War, schools expanded throughout the United States. During this time schools were divided into grade levels. Following

the same arrangement, they only needed one male principal to supervise a covey of lower paid women teachers (Blount, 2005).

Massachusetts Secretary of Education, Horace Mann, was another key reformer in the progressive education movement who aggressively promoted the hiring of women. He re-directed Beecher's claims of female superiority in the classroom to argue that women were naturally suited because of their lack of ambition, dedication, and vision, making them more suited to the duties of teaching and uninterested in striving for rewards and promotions like men (Mann, 1891). He argued the temperament of women "lead them to mildness rather than severity, to the use of hope rather than of fear as a motive of action, and to the various arts of encouragement, rather than annoyances and compulsion, in their management of the young" (p. 359).

At no point did Mann intend to place women on the same plane with men. While Beecher and her female contemporaries advocated women-run, liberal arts institutions of the same caliber as Harvard, Yale, and Brown, Mann planned on state-run teacher-training schools limited to teaching pedagogy (Preston, 1993). Contrary to reform rhetoric, Preston's (1993) study of the writings of ninety-two female teachers revealed that women believed in their intelligence and ability to be independent and self-actualized: "Nineteenth-century female teachers were intellectually motivated and keenly interested in higher wages, improved working conditions, and expanded life opportunities" (p. 542). By 1888, women encompassed 63% of the national teaching force and 90% in the cities (Altenbaugh, 2003, p. 114).

As the United States expanded west, teachers moved west. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, women teachers trained in the east traveled west to teach in the frontier. Beecher was largely responsible for this movement and she sent her books and innovative teaching ideas west

with them (Carter, 1995). Among those who went west were young women who took teaching positions with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In the 19th century, federally funded boarding schools for Indians grew with lightning speed as a result of promising education to American Indians for ceding their lands to the federal government (Carter, 1995). Viewed as more spiritual than men, White women were also chosen because they “were expected to be more compliant, work for less pay, and appear less threatening to American Indians than Anglo men” (p. 58). However, the six women Carter (1995) studied did not fit the intended mold. They went for better pay, a change of scenery, and adventure. Neither did they have any desire to convert Indians to Christianity. Unfortunately, working and living conditions were grim and the turnover rate was high (1995).

Another example of teaching in the “Wild West” occurred in Oklahoma. The call to spread civilization as moral leaders brought many women to Oklahoma as a territory and state at the turn of the 20th century. The women examined by Vaughn-Roberson (1984) lived through the period of expansion and the period of stagnation caused by the Depression. Some migrated west with their parents, others with their husbands, but a significant number came alone, even spending the night out in the open to claim a piece of land as their own (Vaughn-Roberson, 1984).

In conclusion, as more women entered teaching, more men departed. Low income and working with women drove men away. Men started leaving teaching after the Civil War when the financial toll reduced male teachers’ salaries significantly from pre-war salaries. They also could find other jobs with better pay and more prestige. As the certification process and education requirements grew for teachers, men did not think the time and money for training was commensurate to the pay scale. Those who did teach found themselves surrounded by women

and children and under the leadership of a male supervisor. This “feminization” of schools also drove them away (Blount, 2005, p. 25). Ultimately, male teachers who stayed found ways to create male spaces in the schools: sports, manual trades, math, and science, as well as administration were the province of men by the early 1900s (Blount, 2005). Administrative positions were the most desirable for their greater pay, authority, and emphasis on masculine gender traits. After the turn of the twentieth century, a few women were hired as administrators when men were not available and funds were low. But they worked hard for less money (Blount, 2005).

As can be seen by this brief review of early education in the United States, gender and hegemony were instrumental in defining roles of men and women in education. Patriarchy prevailed in the hands of men in power, such as Horace Mann. Normal schools became familiar, training primarily women teachers for the daily duties of the classroom. The hierarchy of school systems followed the family model with male heads of family in administrative roles and subordinate women teachers responsible for training children. The ideal of teaching through “moral suasion” furthered the gender norms of women as compassionate nurturers. In addition, the requirement for women to remain single, assured that their time with schools would be brief and salaries low.

Cultural Demands on Teachers

Classroom management became the hub for all the issues surrounding classrooms. Teachers were held accountable as individuals, condemned for using corporal punishment, yet often forced to turn to it as the only means to maintain control. Even though teachers shared daily ideas and techniques for teaching, they considered themselves solely responsible for classroom management due to the ideology of being a caring, virtuous role model to students.

Therefore, they did not consider banding together for their collective good an option. They thought the problem was with the individual teacher, not the institution (Rousmaniere, 1994).

Richard Quantz (1985) studied the phenomena of teachers' individualistic attitudes to uncover why unions did not successfully form in the 1930s. The metaphors he used to explain their behavior may also explain the experiences of other teachers.

Quantz (1985) studied the lives of teachers from Hamilton, Ohio, who worked in the 1930s. Through analysis of oral history interviews, he detected four metaphors that framed their experience: Metaphor A: The Subordinate Authority Figure; Metaphor B: The School as Family; Metaphor C: The Natural Female Avocation; Metaphor D: The Dual Self. By considering each one independently, I will demonstrate the parallel experiences of Hamilton women with other teachers in the first half of the twentieth century.

Metaphor A: The Subordinate Authority Figure addresses the dichotomy of women teachers who are authority figures in the classroom while subordinate to the administrators over them. They expected respect from children and were expected to be respectful to their superiors (Quantz, 1985). Strober and Tyack (1980) found that since women were accustomed to patriarchal authority, they were most likely to follow orders given by male superiors. Teaching opened the door to middle class status for young women from respectable working class families while appealing to women of higher status because of its respectability as a profession. This contrasted with lower status factory and domestic work (Strober & Tyack, 1980). However, this respectability came at a price. For example, Rousmaniere (1994) found in the 1920s that detached administrators in New York City expected women teachers to inspire discipline with patience and nurturance while they faced cold, vile schools with inadequate facilities and large classes filled with a diverse group of students. Teachers were solely responsible for the students

in their classes. Their helplessness and self-blame reinforced to their students their subordinate gender roles. Their subordinate position related directly to Quantz's next metaphor.

Metaphor B: The School as Family identifies the images of a "work family" relationship in teachers' discourse. They sometimes referred to fellow teachers in sisterly terms and motherly terms, as well as toward their students. Even so, women were expected to remain single while teaching. A ban on hiring married women in the Hamilton school system did not lift until World War II. In spite of how they felt about the ban, for years teachers acquiesced to the decisions of the school board and superintendent, reinforcing the image of subservience and their need to find a sense of family with the children in their classrooms (Quantz, 1985). The issue of hiring married women was nationwide (Blount, 2005; Carter, 1984; Donahue, 2002).

Metaphor C: The Natural Female Avocation is founded on the assumptions that women are naturally qualified to be teachers. Some of the teachers Quantz interviewed always wanted to teach and work with children. Others, however, found this to be the logical job for them because it was the best paying job around (Quantz, 1985).

The pressure to govern the classroom through nurture and compassion left many women drained and disillusioned. As Rousmaniere (1994) revealed in her study of New York City teachers in the 1920s, social expectations for women to teach out of devotion with no interest in financial reward attained a level of religious fervor. When teachers resorted to corporal punishment to achieve discipline in the classroom, they felt their failure keenly, ignorant of how working conditions affected their choices (Rousmaniere, 1994). Quantz's final metaphor seals the fate of women teachers, reaching into the present.

Metaphor D: The Dual Self describes the status teachers had in exchange for their willingness to meet social expectations. They were a respected part of the community. While

some teachers took the obligation to be an integral part of the community in stride, others felt that they were censored by the social mores of the community. Their role as model citizens prohibited them from appearing sexually attractive. They had to drive to another town to go out dancing and even married secretly until pregnancy forced them to admit it and quit. Teachers understood the duality of their roles and implicitly agreed to a “conspiracy of silence” to protect themselves and their colleagues (Quantz, 1985). Even though the dominant discourse prevailed in public, it wasn’t always a part of individual women’s personal code of ethics. For example, due to geographic remoteness, BIA teachers were unable to work collectively to achieve reform within the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, they refused to give in to unreasonable expectations and difficult living conditions. In addition to writing home about their living and work conditions, they resisted by disobeying pedagogical rules, refusing orders, stealing food, and holding unsanctioned parties, among other things (Carter, 1995).

These four metaphors explain the lack of motivation among the majority of teachers to form unions that addressed unfair work conditions. To join a union would mean they put their career before family and their husbands. The attitudes Quantz pinpointed with these four metaphors are likely to still affect teachers today. As this section illustrates, from colonial times the doors into teaching opened for women because they were cheap labor, considered malleable, exhibited feminine gendered characteristics, and were apt to promote the dominant ideology. Those opposed to women teachers were won over for financial reasons and by arguments that women were naturally suited to work with children due to their assumed nurturing characteristics.

The remainder of this section examines those women who did not leave the teaching profession to marry: women who found companionship and love in the company of other

women. By considering their experiences in the United States school system, we will better understand why most still pass as heterosexual and hide their sexual orientation from their fellow teachers and administrators.

Lesbian Teachers

Although most of the history concerning women teachers ignores the issue of homosexuality, Jackie Blount (2005) mined the subject deeply. Current attitudes of fear and loathing toward gay and lesbian teachers can be traced back to the earliest schools. In the 1880s, the separate social and professional spheres of men and women were mirrored in boarding schools. Boarding schools consisted of a single gender in faculty, administration, and student body. It was thought that boys living with men would better learn to emulate masculine traits and girls living with women would emulate feminine traits. As it turned out, boarding schools were also sites of gender transgression (Blount, 2005). Younger girls fell in love with older girls, younger boys with older boys, and the same-sex faculty formed lifelong relationships with each other (Blount, 2005). In English girls' boarding schools, raves – crushes of younger women on older ones – were popular among residents (Vicus, 1984). These intimate same-sex relationships did not concern the public until women became social reformers. Vicus (1984) drew the conclusion that as educators emphasized careers for women – along with civic and professional duties – the lines between the domestic, private world of women and the public world of men became blurred. Their growing public voice brought repercussions.

Journalists reacted to the growing activism of suffragists in the late 1800s by intermittently attacking friendships between women teachers as unnatural and claiming raves warped girls' natural desires to be with men (Vicus, 1984). However, it was not until around 1900 that parents began to worry about their daughters having passionate friendships. Sex

researchers like British Havelock Ellis (as cited in Vicinus, 1984) began to write on the dangers of same sex love, describing it as “involuntary and uncontrollable sexual behavior” (p. 619). Since lesbians were accused of behaving like men, women who took an active, public role for reform and suffrage were labeled as “sexually variant” (Vicinus, 1984). As both the public and parents scrutinized the behaviors of girls and boys in boarding schools, faculty members began to deflect attention from their own romantic same-sex relationships by monitoring and punishing open displays of affection between their students (Blount, 2005).

As the numbers of women teachers increased, they began to share housing, especially in boarding houses in urban areas and teacherages near the schools in rural areas. Women began to form close communities and long-term relationships. This freed them from the need to marry for financial reasons. Women in these social communities also became involved in social action and the struggle for suffrage (Blount, 2005). Self-supporting educated single women became a threat to patriarchy. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall (as cited in Blount, 2005) wrote of single, college-educated women as a third sex who neglected their preordained role as mothers. President Theodore Roosevelt spoke out against single college-educated women for committing race suicide by not marrying (Blount, 2005). Once respected for their sexual innocence, society now maligned single teachers.

Women’s self-reliance grew during World War II and gay and lesbian communities formed in cities after the war ended (D’Emilio, 1983). Yet, the post-WWII era brought the Cold War. With it came McCarthyism and paranoia concerning communism. Between 1956 and 1965, Florida became a hotbed of anti-civil rights and anti-homosexual activity (Graves, 2007). As a reaction to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (FLIC) was formed by Senator Charley E. Johns to investigate the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP) and other civil rights activists (Graves, 2007, p. 8). When the committee was about to expire, without much success in prosecuting the NAACP, they found a new reason for their existence: claims that homosexuality was spreading among Florida teachers (Graves, 2007, p. 8). For nine years, the FLIC sought out civil rights activists, homosexuals, and leftist intellectuals. Braukman's (2001) study examined FLIC's focus on routing out and firing lesbian teachers. She stated:

Seizing the psychiatric model of homosexuality as pathological, the cultural model of homosexuality as predatory and youth directed, and the political model of homosexuality as subversive, the FLIC was in many ways a logical embodiment and extension of postwar anxieties about the undermining of traditional political, sexual, and racial values and, in turn, the health and vigor of the state and the nation. (p. 554)

The Johns Committee, so named after Senator Johns, was prompted by fears associated with the increase of multiple ethnicities in the lower part of Florida and the belief that homosexuality was a contagious disease spread through association and active recruitment (Braukman, 2001, p. 560). During this time, authorities linked lesbians with male homosexuals as predators of young people. Investigators subjected women teachers to embarrassing and threatening interrogations that went into detail about their sexual actions, supposedly to discover their inclination toward aggressive recruitment of innocent children in their classes. At the end of the interrogation, they were forced to hand over their teachers' certificates (Braukman, 2001; Graves, 2007).

Ten years earlier, the Kinsey report hit the bestseller list and brought shocked awareness to Americans of the widespread existence of homosexuality. This led to the belief that homosexuality was a rapidly growing menace to society (Braukman, 2001). The Johns

committee reflected the growing concern that “sexual perversion was seeping into and undermining the institutions held as cornerstones of American democracy: family, the government and schools” (p. 558). By conflating lesbians with gay men as predators of youth, the FLIC was able to conduct illegal interrogations that led to the removal of at least 320 homosexuals, of which 65 were women (Braukman, 2001, p. 573). The work of the FLIC was brought to an end in 1965 when they published a pamphlet entitled “Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida” that included graphic pictures and language that outraged the public (Graves, 2007).

Unfortunately, the hippie movement in the 1960s did little to end the purging of schools by radical heterosexuals. Neither did the American Psychological Association pronouncement that gays and lesbians were not mentally ill change assumptions that their behaviors were dangerous to others (Conger, 1975). Once again in Florida, homophobia targeted gay and lesbian teachers. In 1977-1978, celebrity Anita Bryant spoke out vociferously about the “homosexual conspiracy” to recruit unsuspecting children to the depravity of the gay lifestyle and take over society (Harbeck, 1997). A resident of liberal Dade County, Bryant reacted to passage of a local ordinance to protect LGBT people from housing, employment, and public accommodation discrimination. Even though schools were not included in the ordinance, Bryant rallied local opposition to revoke the ordinance, forming an organization called “Save Our Children.” Proclaiming homosexuality an abomination to God, “Save Our Children” promoted fear that homosexuals would become socially acceptable and that “special privileges” would lead to legal acceptance for all kinds of sexual deviance among schoolteachers (Harbeck, 1997). After a 5-month campaign that included increased violence against gays and lesbians in Florida and California, the voters of Dade County overturned the ordinance.

At the same time, the “Save Our Children” fervor spread to other parts of the country. Five other major cities followed Bryant’s lead and revoked similar housing ordinances. Fear spread through irrational arguments by the Far Right which linked pedophile mass murderers to allowing homosexuals to teach (Harbeck, 1997). In California, Senator John Briggs submitted Proposition 6, which would give school districts the right to refuse employment to teachers who supported and/or lived a gay lifestyle. Although Briggs managed to get the proposition on the November 1978 ballot, it was defeated by a 2:1 margin after groups like the California Teachers Association, AFLCU, and Metropolitan Community Church joined together to oppose it on grounds of unconstitutionality. Governor Ronald Reagan also spoke out against Proposition 6 (Harbeck, 1997).

Current Climate for LGBT Teachers & Students

Unfortunately, politicians still oppose gays and lesbians on all fronts, particularly in schools. During the 2010 senate race, Senator Jim DeMint in South Carolina stated that he didn’t think teachers who were openly homosexual should be teaching in the classroom. He included single, pregnant women in his list of immoral teachers. Although he later apologized, it wasn’t to the LGBT community or women. It was for speaking out as a U.S. Senator on a policy outside of his jurisdiction (Terkel, 2011). In spring 2012, the Tennessee State legislature came close to passing a controversial bill prohibiting the discussion of homosexuality in grades K-8. Greatly criticized, the “Don’t Say Gay bill” made national headlines. Even though the bill was likely to be passed, state representative Joe Hensley withdrew the bill with the promise that the Department of Education and state Board of Education would send a letter to all Tennessee K-8 schools prohibiting them from teaching about homosexuality the subject (Humphrey, 2012). As the Tennessee State Legislature continues to try to pass anti-gay laws, local governments are

fighting back. The city of Knoxville passed a non-discrimination ordinance in the city to protect city government employees from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (Thomaston, 2012).

These issues directly affect youth in schools. Since Matthew Shepard was murdered 1998 because he was gay, bullying of LGBT youth in schools has gained visibility in the media. According to The New Civil Rights Movement (Badash, 2010) nine teen boys aged 13-19 committed suicide in September 2010 because of anti-gay bullying at school. Soon afterward, journalist and news pundit Dan Savage made a video to tell young LGBT teens that life gets better after the difficult teen years. This video went viral on YouTube and spawned others made by gays and lesbians as well as celebrities and President Obama. To date, the online It Gets Better Project™ has become a worldwide movement (<http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>). With growing awareness, many schools have anti-bullying campaigns in place, but the problem has not gone away. On June 2, 2012, another out gay boy, 16-year-old Brandon Elizares, committed suicide in Texas after receiving death threats from classmates (Chavez, 2012). Matthew Shepard became the icon of hate crimes against gays, bringing awareness of the problem. Yet it took 11 years and repeated failed attempts to pass a federal hate crimes law to protect minorities, including LGBT people in October 2009 (Pershing, 2009).

In spite of these negatives, schools that support LGBT teachers and students are growing. Students are often the ones to take the initiative by establishing Gay Straight Alliances in their schools (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2007). If my own childhood experiences and the childhood experiences of the teachers I interviewed were any indication, lesbians and gays did not even exist, much less marry and have families. (see Appendix F for recent developments on LGBT rights) If you asked me twenty years ago if teachers and students would ever openly discuss

homosexuality in schools, I would have answered with an unequivocal no. Yet, acceptance is growing in certain parts of the country. While change takes time, I now believe change is possible.

Summary

This literature review lays the groundwork for research that includes the voices of lesbian teachers. I have defined story and storytelling for the purpose of using narrative analysis of lesbian teacher's personal narratives through critical performance ethnography to better understand their perceptions concerning living in a heteronormative world. A review of stage theory of identity development demonstrates that some patterns of lesbian identity formation are shared, yet individuals do vary. Applying social identity theory reveals that lesbian teachers often pass as straight in order to be accepted and keep their jobs. A look at the history of women teachers, particularly lesbians, demonstrates that heteronormativity permeates our schools and political system. This creates an unsafe environment for teachers and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. In addition, teachers tend to work individually within a patriarchal system that lends little emotional or substantive support. In spite of that, teachers often unwittingly promulgate the dominant ideology in the classroom. Interviewing lesbian teachers and performing their stories may reveal they share common values with their heterosexual peers while maintaining silence about their sexual identity to avoid prejudice. Narrative inquiry and performance ethnography is one way to begin dismantling prejudice based on fear and ignorance. In the methodology section, I will address how data will be collected and presented in this research project.

Chapter 3 Methodology

In this section, I introduce methodology by first situating the study within a critical feminist paradigm framed by cultural studies. Next, I explain the application of narrative and critical performance ethnography as a methodology and the methods for collecting the data. Since my paradigm influences all subsequent choices, I begin with the critical and feminist paradigm.

Critical and Feminist Paradigm

The field of cultural studies gives particular insights into what happens to lesbian teachers in schools. While cultural studies is defined as interdisciplinary and anti-disciplinary, Casella (1999) proposed that cultural studies is more of a research paradigm than a discipline, providing a framework for doing research, particularly in education. He emphasized the need to reconnect with activist work in cultural studies. Gray (2003) argued that “. . . one of the key characteristics of cultural studies is that of understanding culture as constitutive of and constituted by ‘the lived,’ that is the material, social and symbolic practices of everyday life” (p. 3). Interviewing lesbian teachers about their daily lives at home and at work gives insight into their culture.

Another key concept of cultural studies is the identification of power differences between the dominant culture and subcultures in order to achieve social justice (Wright, 2001-2002). As a student and scholar of cultural studies, the pursuit of social justice in a democratic society is central to my paradigm of critical and feminist thought. As a storyteller, it is important to form connections between the performative act and social justice. Norman Denzin (2003) made the connection between performance and cultural studies clear:

Obviously, cultural performances cannot be separated from power, politics, or identity. In cultural performances, identities are forged and felt, agency is negotiated, citizenship rights are enacted, and the ideologies surrounding nation, civic culture, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are confronted. (p. 231)

The daily performance of roles within the family, community, and work reveal much about the status of an individual within the hierarchy of society. Delving into teachers' recollections of experiences inside and outside of the classroom has the potential to reveal cultural constraints on their self-concept and behaviors. Performance ethnography brings asymmetries among social groups into sharp relief. Once focused on class differences, Denzin (2003) corroborated cultural studies now encompasses every aspect of difference that oppresses groups of people, including gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation. With its focus on class struggles, it took the growing number of feminist scholars in cultural studies to broaden its scope (Balsamo, 1991). Johnson (1996) credited the women's movement and struggles against racism for its critique of cultural studies that "... deepened and extended the democratic and socialist commitments that were leading principles of the first new left" (pp. 76 -77). Feminism brought new insight into how gender roles reinforce economic differences.

Feminist theory has grown to infuse cultural studies over the years, bringing gender into the scope of power differences encompassed by cultural studies. As Krane (2001) explained, "Feminist cultural studies specifically examines the role of gender within our cultural interactions and the reproduction of gender inequality" (p. 406). Wood (2003) defined gender as socially constructed, in contrast to sex as biological:

Gender is a socially created system of values, identities, and activities that are prescribed for women and men . . . Feminist theorists note that gender refers to deeply ensconced

social relations that define women and men and structure relationships between them. (p. 260-261)

Patriarchy plays a powerful role in establishing and maintaining defined roles for men and women. Feminist theory analyzes patriarchy as a system that affects the behaviors of both men and women. Patriarchy protects male privileges in a society that upholds the superiority of men's experiences, values, and interests, while rebuffing women's experiences, values, and interests (Wood, 2003). Its influence is pervasive and hegemonic.

Gender roles keep women and men in socially accepted roles. Feminism's focus on gender issues in otherwise nonsexual circumstances reveals how deeply embedded masculine and feminine stereotypes and the pervasiveness of patriarchy are. However, the concept of patriarchy as a hegemonic influence is incomplete without thinking in terms of human sexuality. Like feminists, queer theorists examine how socially acceptable sexual behavior influences every aspect of society. They go beyond the masculine/feminine binary to analyze how the heterosexual/homosexual binary governs how we are classified as sexual beings (Seidman, 1997; Valocchi, 2005). Just as masculinity needs to juxtapose femininity to define itself, heterosexuality juxtaposes homosexuality to define itself. Without the other to contrast, "right" gender roles and "right" sexual behaviors cannot be defined or enforced (Namaste, 1994).

Heteronormativity encompasses the socially entrenched acceptance of heterosexuality as the "right" and "natural" way of expressing sexuality. Thus, it follows that only certain behaviors are classified as sexual or natural, even among heterosexual couples. Through the power of hegemony, racial/ethnic minorities, women, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community succumb to the status quo, regardless of the harms they experience. Cultural studies and feminism confront these harms.

Within the naturalistic realm of qualitative inquiry, narrative analysis, with its focus on the particular, makes it a research methodology suited to cultural studies and feminism. Hatch (2003) affirmed that the critical/feminist paradigm is one of the qualitative paradigms for which narrative research is useful:

The products of critical/feminist work are critiques that seek to expose structures that ensure the maintenance of control by those in power, to reveal the kinds and extent of oppression being experienced by participants, and to call for awareness, resistance, solidarity, and transformation. Narrative work within the critical/feminist paradigm usually takes shape in stories of oppressed individuals. (p. 18)

I use this conflated term in the same way as Hatch. As a paradigm, I view this project and the world through a critical feminist lens. The performance of stories collected through interviews with lesbians as “oppressed individuals” lends itself to a critical feminist paradigm that reveals power relationships. Those with more cultural capital in society have more power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For instance, our male dominant society regards the domestic sphere, traditionally the domain of women, as irrelevant. Even though women are expected to be adept at skills attributed to the private sphere, their domestic role is socially disempowering (Lather, 1994). The dominant heteronormative society considers women, particularly lesbians, who resist the limitations of the domestic sphere deviant (Moses, 1978). Deviancy extends to those who eschew traditional masculine and feminine behaviors. Women who do not exhibit acceptable, feminine behaviors are often viewed as too masculine and stereotyped as “lesbian.” Women in general and lesbians in particular have gone to great lengths to pass as heterosexual (Griffin, 1992; Krane & Barber, 2003; Sykes, 1996). Feminism seeks to expose the oppressiveness of these socially embedded beliefs. Critical theory (Kinchloe & Steinberg, 1997) seeks to transform

society by bringing social awareness through the empowerment of marginalized groups. Critical pedagogy (McLaren, 1994) expands that purpose into schools, challenging teachers to go beyond the status quo by providing minority students the opportunity to discover how hegemony keeps them in a disempowered social position. Critical pedagogy exposes the claim that teachers can be politically neutral in the classroom as a mask for supporting the dominant ideology. Critical theory and feminism work together to achieve fair and unbiased treatment for all types of people.

One way to bring critical theory and feminism together in an activist manner is through storytelling. Telling the personal stories of lesbian teachers as a staged event has the potential to bring awareness of their experiences to audiences. With the goal of performance in mind, I next define narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) and performance ethnography (Ellis, 2004) as methodologies grounded in a critical feminist paradigm within a cultural studies framework. The methods for collecting the data are also discussed.

Narrative Methodology

Knowing an oppressed person's story and sharing that story with others can bring awareness of the challenges faced by marginalized people to the larger community. One way to give voice to those who cannot safely speak out is by re-telling their stories in a staged performance. According to theatre scholar Richard Schechner (2002), storytelling is a way to seek knowledge:

Narrative is a way of knowing, a search for meaning that privileges experience, process, action, and peril. Knowledge is not stored in storytelling so much as it is enacted, reconfigured, tested, and engaged by imaginative summoning and interpretive replays of past events in the light of present situations and struggles. (p. 337)

Storytelling does not consist of empirically stated “factual knowledge;” instead, it is a living entity born of feeling and responding to the needs of the situation. As Bruce Jackson (2007) states, “Storytelling is active, organic, responsive, reactive; it is here and now” (p. 9).

Storytelling happens in the moment. Although storytelling can occur in different media, I am referring to the face-to-face interaction of conversation, interviews, and staged performance before a live audience.

As established in Chapter 2, the term *narrative* encompasses such a variety of forms that the definition of narrative is ambiguous among qualitative researchers. Story is a specific form of narrative that has common characteristics among western civilizations. Polkinghorne (1995) described story as an emplotted narrative that consists of a “succession of incidents combined into a unified episode” (p. 7). Storytelling is defined by the National Storytelling Network as “The interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener’s imagination” (“What is Storytelling?” n.d., para. 5). One of the characteristics included with this definition states that storytelling is interactive because it involves a storyteller and one or more listeners. As in conversation, the listener influences the storyteller and the story that occurs “emerges from the interaction and cooperative, coordinated efforts of teller and audience” (“What is Storytelling?” n.d., para. 7). Typically, a story involves character(s) involved in a conflict that is resolved (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). The act of telling a story involves interaction between the story, the teller, and the listener to co-create a unique experience.

Within the context of the interview, the researcher and the narrators work together as co-participants to create narratives that describe narrators’ experiences. The interview situation circumscribes the stories narrators tell, making them new, even if told before in other settings.

Together, the researcher and narrator seek a way of understanding the narrator's experience through storytelling. In similar fashion, when performers tell their stories before a live audience, the narrator, performer, and audience have the opportunity to learn and grow in knowledge (Madison, 2005). Narrative inquiry studies the particularity of individual stories on many different levels.

Narrative reasoning does not rely on a cumulative generalization from studying multiple individual cases. Instead, each case is particular and individual. We learn about ourselves by analogy (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11) In their essay describing the four narrative turns in social science, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) stated, "When researchers make the turn toward a focus on the particular, it signals their understanding of the value of a particular experience, in a particular setting, involving particular people" (p. 21). Through narrative inquiry, ordinary experiences of individuals are valorized. At the same time, their stories reveal social, cultural, and institutional influences on their lives (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Narrative inquiry begins and ends with individuals' personal stories that have the capacity to reveal the cultural and institutional influences that shaped those stories. As narrative inquiry offers a broad selection of approaches to qualitative research, I turn to Polkinghorne to narrow the approach further.

Referring back to Chapter 2, psychologist Donald Polkinghorne (1995) grouped narrative inquiry into two encompassing categories: Analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. He aligned analysis of narrative with paradigmatic cognition and narrative analysis with narrative cognition. When analysis of narrative is used, researchers collect stories, usually through interviews, and analyze them to identify their common characteristics. When narrative analysis is used, the researcher takes events and happenings from the interview data and forms her own stories. The product is a synthesis of the data, rather than a separation into its constituent parts . I

have utilized both analysis of narrative and narrative analysis to form a script from the interview transcripts. Analysis of narrative came into the process when I coded by story form, selecting those narratives that contained the elements of a complete story. As described in Chapter 2, I looked for character development and interaction, conflict and resolution, a setting, and plot structure. In the process, I identified topics that were discussed in answer to the interview protocol to identify stories that reveal answers to the research questions. Next, narrative analysis guided my production of a storytelling script consisting of the narrators' experiences as they recounted them in the context of an interview.

Performance Ethnography

Narrative analysis provides a clear framework for this study, even though it occurs predominately in written form among human science scholars. Personal narrative performance is widespread among performance studies scholars (Alexander, 2005; Gingrich-Philbrook, 1997; Madison, 2005; Pollock, 2005; Taylor, 2000). Therefore, I looked to performance studies to find examples of storytelling used for social justice. The vast majority of articles written on the subject reflect a prevalence of autobiographical narrative performances. Taylor (2000) and Gingrich-Philbrook (1997) addressed being lesbian and gay, respectively, through autobiographical narrative. Actor Tim Miller performs his own life experiences as a platform for addressing issues of gay rights (Corey, 2003). Often undressing before the audience, Miller embodies his vulnerability in a homophobic world. As Spry (2011) emphasized, “The material body cannot be erased in composing autoethnography; rather the corporeal body is made fully present in performance and represented through critical reflections on the body’s social constructions” (p. 508).

Although emphasis in recent years has been on autoethnography, performance studies scholars also collect and perform the stories of others. For example, *Remembering Oral History Performance* edited by Pollock (2005) includes a variety of approaches to using personal narratives. Pollock (1999) engaged the embodiment of stories in her research on birth stories detailed in *Telling Bodies Performing Birth*. One-woman multi-vocal shows on race relations by Anna Deavere Smith (1993) and on women by Eve Ensler (2000) as well as *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman about Matthew Shepard's murder are interview-based performances that speak to social justice issues (Brown, 2004). As Bryant Alexander (2005) proposed, performance ethnography can *incite culture* and “seek to frame performance as a *critical reflective and refractive lens* to view the human condition and a form of *reflexive agency* that initiates action” (pp. 411-412). In other words, personal narratives are a culturally inherent dramatic form that provides a medium to bring about awareness and change.

Consequently, performance ethnography of life experience stories collected from lesbian teachers is an established way of doing research. I maintain that the personal narrative of the individual can give insight into a heterosexist worldview that denies the legitimacy of a LGBT person's experience. One's identity is shaped by experience and how one interprets the hegemonic influences of our institutions. Through performance, those groups who are often silent can be heard.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before I could use narrative analysis to produce a performance ethnography, I had to collect data from interviews with teachers. My initial means of contacting prospective teachers was by word-of-mouth. As I prepared for this study, I purposefully spoke with lesbians with whom I am acquainted and obtained leads from others. Due to the private nature of the lesbian

social network, snowball sampling was the logical approach to recruit potential participants. As Browne (2005) explained, snowball sampling is “a recruitment method that employs research into participants' social networks to access specific populations” (p. 247). This technique often works when collaborating with populations that consist of low numbers and may not be easily identified (Browne, 2005).

In addition to making individual queries, I sent an email to three email lists to which I belong: “Lesbifriends” a local social group, the Metropolitan Community Church of Knoxville, and *OUTLOUD!: Celebrating Diversity and Challenging Homophobia*, a listserv of storytellers who support the LGBT community. I made a concerted effort to identify willing participants who intersect racial, ethnic, age, and social class (familial) lines to insure voices from oppressed groups as well as the dominant White, middle class culture are heard; however, without targeting minority populations specifically, I was unable to reach more than two Black women. The remaining participants are White. Because women who knew me were in my age bracket, the majority of women in the study were fifty years of age and older. One woman was in her forties and another was in her early thirties.

Participants

I interviewed eleven women to collect a range of stories that answered my research questions. Not all of them were still in the classroom. I had one woman volunteer for an interview who taught as a full time substitute for a couple of years and spent the remainder of her time working as a freelance artist in the schools. Two were administrators who had taught in the past and two had just retired. Two women were Black and nine were White. They are listed here by their pseudonym:

- ◆ Anna Prescott: teaches elementary and middle school music/band; age 50+; White; taught

30+ years

- ◆ Evelyn Woodruff: taught physical education; principal; college professor; age 63; White; has been an administrator longer than a teacher.
- ◆ Jean Long: taught first grade. Retired one year; age 50+; White; taught 30+ years
- ◆ Karen Hart: teaches fifth grade; age 64; White; taught 30+ years
- ◆ Kelley Sutter: teaches ninth and 11th grade English; Black; taught 2 years
- ◆ Laura Church: taught special education; administrator; age 50+; White; taught 25+ years
- ◆ Marci Leonard: taught physical education; retired one year; age 54; White; taught 30+ years
- ◆ Rock Cavanaugh: teaches high school math and coaches; age 43; White; taught 20 years
- ◆ Rio Mathes: teaches fifth and sixth grade; age 32; White; taught 5+ years
- ◆ Sally Lake: taught elementary school; age 56; White; taught 2 years; artist in schools 20 years
- ◆ Shelley Compton: teaches high school biology; age 51; Black; taught 25+ years

All narrators were interviewed at a location of their choice. I went to the home of most, met one teacher at her classroom on a Saturday and another at her father's business. One woman with whom I am acquainted came to my home for the interview. I interviewed one teacher by Adobe Connect from work. That interview was the only one that had video. Since she was out, we recorded the video, although I only listened to the audio when transcribing the interview. Speaking through a screen with time-delayed audio was less comfortable for me. The narrator seemed at ease, although I found it annoying to have to press a button in order to be heard every time I spoke. It was much easier to accidentally interrupt or talk over the narrator because it was harder to tell if she had finished what she was saying. All interviews ran from 90 minutes to 2

hours in length. I did not do any follow-up interviews because I had enough stories.

Because my goal was to be able to tell their stories, I collected ample data from eleven women. While each woman's experience was unique, stories began to repeat, reaching saturation. According to Bowen (2008):

Data saturation entails bringing new participants continually into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication or redundancy. In other words, saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added. (p. 140)

Saturation is a term usually applied to grounded theory research and constant comparative analysis (Bowen, 2008) where theories are being developed that can later be applied to items with similar characteristics. However, I apply the term informally to narrative analysis to indicate the stories collected were no longer adding new information. At that point, data collection reached saturation with ample data to draw upon for the creative process of performance ethnographic writing.

As the interviews took place, I recorded them with digital audio recorders and had them transcribed professionally. The transcribers signed a confidentiality statement before beginning (see Appendix C). Although video recording was an option, I chose audio because it is less intrusive. Lesbian teachers tend to be in the closet and most of the participants preferred using a pseudonym. Therefore, having only an audio recording to identify them helped assuage their concerns. Video recording was not necessary, as it was not essential to portray the actual person telling her story or to mimic her exactly. Audio recording provides an accurate record for constructing the script and portraying her words and thoughts in performance (Stuckey, 1993).

As the researcher doing a solo performance, I have access to the recordings and can listen closely to the narrators' speech patterns when developing character voices. Without video, I will have to create the characters based on what I know of them, which may be very little. I will keep in mind the goal to indicate enough difference in the characters for the audience to know which one is speaking. If I direct an ensemble performance of the script with various actors/storytellers, they will not be able to listen to the recordings because names and places will be revealed. They will have to do character analysis based on reading the transcriptions to develop a characterization that is believable, if not wholly accurate. In both approaches, solo and ensemble, some creative license will have to be taken.

To equalize the interviewing situation as much as possible, I used interactive interviewing (Ellis, 2004) which included time to become acquainted and build trust through self-disclosure on my part, encouraging narrators to self-disclose. Casey (1995-1996) points out power relationships are an important consideration between the researchers and the narrators whose stories we seek. She states that narrative interviews are to be unstructured, inviting narrators to speak in their own voices and to control the flow of topics (p. 234). For the most part, that is what happened. I asked open-ended questions that allowed narrators to discuss their experiences freely. A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) approved by the Institutional Review Board guided the discussion, although I did not ask questions that were answered by the narrator or were not applicable to their situation. Consequently, I referred to them when the conversation lulled and to ensure that I covered the topic completely with each narrator.

Feminist oral historians have also given helpful insight into this process. Minister (1991) made a number of insightful suggestions for conducting interviews with women. One point to

keep in mind is to equalize the interviewing situation as much as possible by using a collaborative approach, which includes getting to know one another and promoting mutual self-disclosure. Keeping the interview unstructured and open-ended with verbal reinforcement and metalanguage is a technique that seems to work well. Minister (1991) also suggested group interviews for reluctant speakers. This may be why I found the focus group to be an effective format for engaging all the participants in a previous class pilot study of mature East Tennessee lesbians. In this research project, few if any of the narrators were acquainted or lived close enough to easily form a focus group. For that reason, and confidentiality, all interviews were individual.

Anderson and Jack (1991) also reinforced the idea that oral history interviewing needs to allow women to probe their feelings about the subject they are discussing. They suggested allowing the narrator to interpret her own experience and acknowledge her feelings about the events she is describing, instead of steering her in the direction the interviewer wants to go. Paying attention to your own reactions during the interview can give researchers insights they might otherwise miss (1991). I believe this approach helped me to keep the narrators at ease. At the same time, I found it was necessary on several occasions to prompt the narrator and give examples of what I was interested in learning from them.

At this point, the question of ownership of the script and research comes into play. How much should the narrators be involved in this process? Feminist researchers encourage equalizing power by sending transcripts and drafts to narrators for approval and input (Gluck, 2002). This, however, has its drawbacks. Researchers have encountered narrators who object to the transcript of their speech because they believe their colloquial and disjointed oral style appears uneducated on the page. They may wish to rewrite their own words, not understanding

the difference in oral and written language. They may disagree with the implications of what they said, or the researcher's interpretation (Borland, 1991). When given free rein to edit and censor their words, they may undermine the emotional and potentially controversial, yet revealing, power of the script.

I take the position that researchers need to respect and include their narrators as much as possible. Nothing should come as a surprise when they view the performance. Therefore, transcripts of the interview were sent to the narrators for their input (Gluck, 2002). The final written performance ethnography was also sent to them before it was published or performed. Doing this gave the narrators an opportunity for input, although they requested few changes.

In order to provide the participants with full knowledge of their rights in the research process and to meet Institutional Review Board requirements, I gave them an informed consent (see Appendix B). This document, including a release form, explained their right to confidentiality and to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time. It also explained how I would use their interviews. While there are no inherent harms in doing these interviews, any time a sensitive subject is broached, psychological distress is possible. For lesbians, the experience of acknowledging their sexual orientation, coming out to others, and struggling for self-acceptance is emotionally charged. They may have been kicked out of their homes, churches, and places of employment. They could possibly be victims of hate crimes. Any of these and other unforeseen events makes it imperative that participants know what I expect of them and what I will do with their stories. I also provided contact information for counseling in case the interview process revealed suppressed traumatic experiences. However, I have had no indication from any of the participants that they were unduly stressed by the process.

As I acknowledged the potential harms, I didn't want to neglect the benefits inherent in the research. I explained to participants the significance of participating in this creative and scholarly space. They are contributing to knowledge of lesbian issues that goes beyond a recording in an archive or a reference in an academic journal article. Praxis (Wright, 2001-2002) involves the intertwining of research and action. The live performance of their life stories can help achieve social justice for LGBT faculty and students and the larger community. By participating in this study and having their stories told for them, audiences will hear their voices, even if they must use pseudonyms to keep their teaching positions.

Data Analysis

Transcriptions were completed as soon as possible after each interview was finished. Unfortunately, that does not mean quickly. It took months to transcribe the interviews, even though I paid others to do the initial transcription. After receiving the transcriptions, I went over each one thoroughly, making corrections and additions to the transcription. Initially, the interviews were formatted for pauses and emphases loosely following Gail Jefferson's guidelines (see Appendix D) as recorded in Wood and Kroger (2000) because of their practicality. Although I gave Jefferson's guidelines to the transcriptionists, most of them used their own style of transcribing, using dashes, ellipses, periods, and commas to reflect the phrasing and rhythm of the narrator's speech patterns without attempting to show every change in dynamics, rate, and pitch. After the interviews were completed and transcribed, the work of scripting began.

Analysis began with listening and transcribing. Once the stories were collected and transcribed, I employed analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995) to identify parallel or contrasting themes that answer the research questions. I also analyzed them for dramatic structure with a conflict and resolution (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). A creatively arranged

performance ethnography that allows the data to speak for itself through their stories is the result. The script uses narrators' words verbatim and drew from their words to maintain the oral cadences and patterns of the spoken word. In a few places I altered the sequence of the telling, deleting ramblings that took away from the flow of the story or combining segments from different parts of the interview that either added detail to the story or linked similar experiences for clarity of meaning, fluency, and artistic expression. When excessive disfluencies such as repetition or the use of verbal pauses like "Uhm, you know, like, etc." interrupted the flow of the language, I edited them out. However, I did not remove all of them because I did not want to alter the oral style of the spoken word. I did use the literary convention of quotation marks around dialogue to make them easier to read on the page.

The selection and editing process of performative writing is not as involved as coding narrative for repeated and parallel uses of phrasing, syntax, and semantics, for example. I identified common themes that fell under codes generally established by the research questions and detailed by the interview questions (see Appendix A). Very few answers respond to the research questions specifically, an issue I address in Chapter 5. However, my interview questions probed their experience of coming out, knowledge of gays/lesbians as children, influences to behave heterosexual, romantic relationships, encounters in the classroom addressing homophobia and supporting LGBT students, job security, experiencing prejudice and homophobia, and what they would change if they could. The following lists are the categories (in upper case) and the codes (in lower case) I identified. Some stories fit in more than one category, but I put the story in the category I thought was strongest. I went through five rounds of edits with 128 pages of coded data for the first round which I reduced to 37 pages by the fifth round. I did not think I could narrow the grouping further without writing the performance ethnography.

Only by placing the stories in relation to each other could I see which stories were redundant and which stories worked better together.

Growing up

- childhood influences
- college experiences
- parental attitudes
- awareness of orientation

Coming out to Self

- First relationships
- College experiences
- Self-acceptance

Experiences in teaching

- Deciding to teach
- Combatting heterosexism
- Encounters with students
- Encounters with parents
- Dealing with teachers/administrators
- Out at work

Relationship with family

- Coming out
- Acceptance
- Encounters with community members
- Social life with partner

What they would change

Meaningful quotations

Stories were placed under the categories of Growing up, Coming out, Teaching, and Relationships. Instead of stories, the last two categories identified pithy statements that might serve as transitions or to drive home a point in the script. In one category I included what they would change about the situation for lesbian teachers, a question on my interview protocol. For the meaningful quotations category, I selected statements from each woman on the basis of particular insights that came up throughout the interview. The majority of the data was selected for forming emplotted narrative (Polkinghorne, 1997) and the elements of story as described in the next section.

Developing the Performance Ethnography

During the first round of edits, I analyzed the interviews for story structure. During subsequent rounds I narrowed the data further to those excerpts or combined excerpts that follow the dramatic story structure of characters in an identifiable setting with a conflict to resolve (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). Continuing to narrow the number of selections allowed further scrutiny to identify the stories with the strongest story components as well as the most pertinent insights into the research questions.

Having narrowed the transcript material to stories that describe coping with sexual identity in its public and private expression, I next engaged the creative process of arranging and ordering each woman's story. Some serve as monologues that stand alone as a complete story. Some are partial stories or personal insights. To create a cohesive, dynamic script, I intertwined the monologues, alternating from one character to another. I also found several stories could not be told without the interviewer in the scene. Instead of excluding those stories, I included two of

them because of the interaction between the narrator and me. I was able to include something from each woman I interviewed, even though, by necessity, they could not all receive the same attention. Understandably, those who had more to say and said it the best were used more frequently.

In the beginning of the study I thought I might need to create a composite character to combine several women into one. This did not work for me for several reasons. To begin with, two women lived in the same town and explained two of the same experiences. When I tried to combine their words it seems artificial to me because their personalities and manner of speaking were different. Intending to use their language verbatim, I did not want to change what they said. Also, eleven participants were not so many teachers that I could not use something from all of them in the performance ethnography. I wanted to honor each of them by including them.

Originally, I hoped to let the teachers speak for themselves without any commentary. However, I discovered that the stories needed to be introduced and transitioned in the script. For that reason I stepped in with my own stories, brief explanations, and statistics to emphasize the significance of their experiences. Although I play an integral part by positioning myself as the empathetic researcher in the ethnography, I do not consider this to be autoethnographic. What I have to say serves to introduce and link their stories, rather than have equal status. I have maintained throughout this research that my position as a college teacher places me in a less risky environment because I teach adults. However, I share much in common with them as a teacher and a lesbian and am able to show that I relate to particular experiences of theirs.

I added one more convention to the performance ethnography: lyrics from a song. The song by Jennifer Berezan serves to hold the script together thematically because the lyrics tell the story of a teacher who was fired because she was gay. Although the song does not explicitly state

she was lesbian, Berezan is a lesbian musician who addressed the issue when she wrote and produced the song on the album *The Eye of the Storm* in 1988. Verses of the song are placed at intervals throughout the performance ethnography to add variety and to serve as transitions between different ideas expressed in the stories. The lyrics are powerful when read, but if the audience can hear the tune, the emotions behind the lyrics have greater impact. For that reason and to add another artistic dimension to the performance, I intend to sing the song when I perform it before live audiences.

I would like to summarize by describing the order in which this process took place. Keep in mind that some ideas had been germinating for some time before I actually began coding and arranging the stories. For example, before I made it to my third interview, I thought music would enhance the script. Jennifer Berezan's song was already in my possession so I remembered its power and had in mind to use it. Later, as I was going through the transcriptions, I played the song and knew I would find a way to include it. It was just a matter of deciding where to use it in the script.

Analysis began with (1) listening and transcribing. The next step (2) was to identify parallel or contrasting stories addressing the research questions. These were coded per person as the segments were copied and pasted into a new document. Step (3) involved combining the stories of all the narrators under categories. In that process, some were edited from the list. In step (4) further editing and categorizing occurred, reducing the number of pages to 128. Steps (5), (6), and (7) followed the same process of honing the list of stories to those with dramatic structure that addressed the research questions in the most interesting manner. At Step (7), I had reduced the interview segments to 37 pages for the fifth and last round of that winnowing process. I was ready to begin putting them together in the performance ethnography. For Step (8)

I made a list of criteria I wanted to meet in selecting the stories and sent the criteria and list of stories to storyteller David Novak. Over several weeks, David and I met two times in person for several hours to mull over the possible combinations of stories. During the first meeting, he had put a descriptor for each story on a slip of paper and we began to sort through them, noting their topics and connections. At Step (9) I finally had a breakthrough when I put the slips of paper on a magnetic board where I could see the stories in order and move them around. I typed up my first draft and sent it back to David and to my advisor, Dr. Anders, for input. On Step (10) I took their feedback, rearranged the script two ways and put the ideas together with my own for a final version. This version was edited and revised as I returned to the individual transcripts to see if I had missed any stories I wanted to add. That was an effective choice because I added a few new stories that did not make it through the culling process earlier.

In the final script, narrative analysis guided the placement and interaction of these personal narratives structurally and topically. The performance ethnography arranged in a narrative script serves as narrative analysis both in its written form and, ultimately through oral performance before an audience. This final step in the process, or perhaps the first step for social justice, will be taken after completion of the dissertation, giving voice to those narrators silenced by society: The possibility of transformation exists.

The next chapter is the performance ethnography in its entirety. Names of the narrators and any places or people associated with them have been changed to provide confidentiality. The narratives themselves provide analysis of lesbian teachers' perceptions of heteronormativity and its effects on their public and private lives. The final chapter, Epilogue, will discuss some stories that weren't included and my perceptions of their experiences.

Chapter 4
Performance Ethnography
Does It Show? Teachers' Tales on Being Lesbian

Narrators: (In alphabetical order)

Anna Prescott: White elementary and middle school music teacher in her 50s

Delanna Reed: White college instructor in her 50s

Evelyn Woodruff: White PE teacher, school principal, college professor in her 60s

Jean Long: White newly retired first grade teacher in her 50s

Karen Hart: White fifth grade teacher in her 60s

Kelley Sutter: Black high school English teacher in her 50s

Laura Church: White special education teacher, school district administrator in her 50s

Marci Leonard: White newly retired elementary and middle school PE teacher in her 50s

Rio Mathes: White fifth and sixth grade teacher in her 30s

Rock Cavanaugh: White high school math teacher in her 40s

Sally Lake: White elementary school teacher and artist in residence in her 50s

Shelley Compton: Black high school science teacher in her 50s

Delanna: When I was a girl I liked to play ball, climb trees, explore the creek and ride bikes. I imagined myself living on the frontier. I loved plaid, flannel shirts, but they didn't make them for girls. When I went shopping, I looked longingly at the bright plaid shirts in the boy's section of the store, but I didn't dare consider buying one. Girls weren't supposed to wear boys' clothes. In public, I constantly monitored my femininity, especially as a teenager. Did I carry myself in a feminine manner? Did I cross my legs the right way? Were my gestures too boyish? Why couldn't I sway my hips? Even as social rules changed and stores offered flannel shirts for

women, I was trapped by the spoken and unspoken expectations of my Christian upbringing and my family.

Sally: The long and short of it is I did marry a man. I'm sure a lot of it had to do with, uhm, just being Catholic, being Italian, and it just sort of fit the paradigm--I grew up with a family that was pretty traditional. I didn't see any diversion from that. And the other thing was, I was very absolutely certain that I wanted to be a mother. Oh I knew that with all of my heart for a very long time and uhm, there was nothing around me that was visible about there being another way to do that. So I just went along my merry little way and, and I did fall in love with the man I married, I mean that's very true. I think I believed in a lot of fairy tales and I was young and naïve and ignorant. And, like I said, I did not see other options around me.

Jean: Well, I grew up in a small town and uhm, just like most small towns, you grew up going to church, you know, just doing what you were told to do by your parents and trying to do what you thought was right. And trying to be the perfect child. (laughs)

Delanna: Homosexuality wasn't discussed when I was growing up. When I was in grade school I remember asking mom what queer meant. She wouldn't say. She just said it was a bad word and not to call people that. I never even considered two boys or two girls could like each other the same way a boy and a girl could.

Sally: Sometimes when I think, when I look at the whole picture I recognize some things. I remember in the second grade, my God, I thought my teacher was a movie star. And I just

thought she was beautiful. And I'm telling you to this day I can feel her breath on my neck when-when-when she leaned over and we were learning to do, uh, cursive. I still remember the sensation of her leaning over, it was my right shoulder (laughs). You know, I-I-I-I remember that. So I think in my later years I kind of went, "Hmm, I wonder if that was the beginning of something?" You know?

Jean: Unfortunately, at an early age, around seven or eight maybe, I really knew or discovered that I had an attraction to women. I didn't know it was right or wrong. It was so innocent and umh, I really didn't know what a lesbian was until I picked up *Life* magazine when I was about 12 years old and read something about lesbians there and I thought, "Oh, I'm not supposed to have feelings for women," and I think at that point in time, that's when I really became aware of my sexuality and that I couldn't be, or I wasn't supposed to be 'cause society was telling us that it was wrong.

Delanna: Recently I went to *Toys R Us* to look for board games. Colorful banners showing children playing with toys hang above the aisles directing the consumer to the right toys for the right child for the right occasion. Sounds like a good idea, doesn't it? As a woman in the 21st century, I couldn't believe my eyes. Each banner depicts children playing with toys based on their sex. Boys are the ones playing with action heroes, trucks and sports equipment. Girls are shown playing with dolls. None of these pictures depicted boys with dolls or girls with baseballs. The entire store was gender coded by color--you guessed it, blue for boys, pink for girls. No wonder we learn prescribed gender roles at an early age.

Kelley: I was a pretty good athlete, so I remember I was about fifteen and my father was my coach and he, uh, he told me about this semi-pro women's softball team that wanted me to play. I was a catcher, and they wanted me to play on their team and my mother went through the ceiling. I mean she just went through the roof, because apparently, I mean it was years later I found out why I couldn't play on the team, but it was because my mother felt the team was mostly lesbians and, uhm, well, my mother didn't use that particular phrase, she used the more derogatory "dyke" phrase, and she would not let me play.

Evelyn: I was a teacher from the time I was born. It's innate, it really is. When I was six years old, the only thing that was on television—you had, like, one station—and on Saturdays it was Sky King and Hop-Along Cassidy and Dale Evans and Roy Rogers, and My Friend Flicka, and Fury and all those, and Captain Midnight of course. And then in the afternoon, there was baseball. And Dizzy Dean and Tony Kubeck were the announcers. And Dizzy always had Dizzy's Corner. And he would, he would teach, show how to throw a knuckle ball or a spit ball or a fast ball or a slider or batting stance, or sliding in [home]. So I'd go in and I'd watch Dizzy and then I'd go back out and get everybody else, "Come here I got to show you this." And I'd started teaching. So I've taught forever. I just always wanted to teach. I am a teacher.

Delanna: Evelyn grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. As television expanded its channels and programming, shows like *Father Knows Best*, *I Love Lucy* and *Leave it to Beaver* reinforced domestic gender roles for women and portrayed fathers as authoritarian figures in the home. Like the media and toy stores, schools are places that shape normative behavior. Unlike most teachers, Rio is out at work and confronts stereotypes, even with her students. On the other hand, Marci

works in a repressive environment where teachers are expected to support the status quo by promoting and teaching the values of the dominant society. Not only do teachers strive to educate students to be productive members of society, they reinforce rules of etiquette and social expectations for their students. In many ways society still polarizes the sexes and shapes gender identity by what we do, say and wear.

Rio: We do a lot of our curriculum through individual reading conferences and a kid was telling me about his book the other day, uhm, and, there was a party and there was a prize that one of the kids caught and the prize was a doll, and he was like, “Yeah, I guess he didn’t want a doll, obviously, so he gave it to somebody else.” And I said, “Oh, so he--he just didn’t like dolls?” He looked at me, he said--he said, “Well, no, he didn’t.” “So, how did you know that, did it say that in the book, he just wasn’t into dolls?” “ ‘Cause he’s a boy.” “Well, so what makes that--what makes the toy match your sex?” He kept trying to define it. And it was like, you could just see his brain, Rrrrr! trying to wrap around it.

Marci: In our school district, this is one of the things we tell them on the first day of sex education class. There are subjects that we won’t discuss with them: abortion and homosexuality. We can define them, but we cannot discuss those with them and the reason that we give them for that is that they are such controversial issues, that we feel like it would be better discussed--not in the public schools, but in some other environment either with their family or church or something like that. And the district has said, “We won’t talk to you about it.” And so for that reason, I said, if you ask me a question about it--they all know what they are anyway--these are ninth grade kids, you know, I can’t--I’m not gonna talk to you about it.

Delanna: We don't see it, but it is there: In our schools, our businesses, our churches and homes. The rules that say men and women are different, men and women marry, men and women create more men and women ... all of whom, of course, are heterosexual. What do lesbian teachers do? Being lesbian has taken them outside the boundaries of heteronormative behavior. I decided to interview lesbian teachers to find out how living in a heteronormative world affects their lives, their jobs, their families and their loves. These are their stories.

They wanted me to teach them to dance,
find joy in moving.

So I gave them my time and my care,

I took a chance.

Now you say you don't need me anymore,

I can't stay here anymore.

I can't teach here anymore.

'Cause I don't live like you do,

I don't love like you do,

I'm an outcast, a stranger.

The children would be in danger

if there were teachers like me in the schools.

(Song by Jennifer Berezan)

Sally Lake: I had a girlfriend from high school and she and I played guitar together at a restaurant. I remember before I married, I said, “You know, I have not yet gone to California to see Cindy and that’s something I want to do.” I wanted to go out, I knew I wanted to go out there. So, you know, I made my plans to go.

In the meantime, throughout all these years of talking to Cindy and keeping in touch, I thought she was gay. So anyway, about a year into our marriage, I said to my husband, “I think that Cindy is gay. I’m not sure, but-....” I remember saying to him, “If something should happen, come up between her and me, I’m not going to say no, and you need, you need to know that.”

So anyway, I went out there and I was absolutely right about everything.

I’ll always remember it, I could see it coming. I could see it coming and I wanted it. I wanted to know. I was not afraid. She put her Barbara Streisand tape on (laughs), and we had a bottle of wine. We get all snuggled up on the couch and she asked me if I would go to bed with her and I said, “Yeah. But, I don’t know anything about this.” And I remember she said to me, “Oh, I think you know all about love.” And--and we went to bed and I’m telling you, I put my, I put my hand on her breast and I thought, “How have I lived this long without knowing this?” It was incredible to me. I remember when she laid down on top of me it felt like roots. It felt like roots going, just sprouting into me. I felt roots set in.

But at any rate, I cut my visit short, because I said, you know, “I have already made my choice,” and there wasn’t a whole lot further that conversation was going to go. So then I get home and my-my world is-is really torqued, but once again, I was married. I knew I wanted to have children and it was going to go that way. And I felt--I felt privileged to have had a really intimate experience. And that was cool. That was enough.

Delanna: As the oldest child, I was expected to go to college. At the same time, my grandmother bound me with the New Testament's vision of how a woman should be. I was supposed to marry, obey my husband, and bear children. Through that, I would be "saved" in the eyes of God. Saved from what, I didn't know. So, I went to college, not knowing what to do. I wanted to learn, but what good is a career if you aren't going to work? I expected to marry a man who went to work while I stayed home and took care of the house and kids. I knew I needed something to fall back on in case my husband died or became disabled. Divorce was out of the question. Like many of the teachers I interviewed, I never expected what happened ...

Laura: I really didn't deal with it in high school because I'm, yeah, I think the pressure was on me, especially being an only child--you get married, you have grandchildren, you do what you do. I know this sounds silly, but I knew I enjoyed being with women. But I guess, I think, I thought I wouldn't fall in love with one. I guess I thought, "Well, this is something kind of cool to do and it's just a phase, or it's a novelty, but I guess I didn't realize at the time that my emotions could also be involved. And then I grew up, and uhm, got engaged and was engaged to Dan through my junior and senior year of high school and my first year of college.

Rock: My freshman year in college the people that I was in the dorm with formed a football team, flag football team. I was on it but I never really got to play because I had 18 hours of classes and I was working about 60 hours a week. I also had a boyfriend at the time that I had dated for, uh, I guess a year and a half, two years. We probably would have gotten married quickly thereafter just because I was so miserable at home. I just really liked that group of people. And we went to New Orleans for the National Flag Football Championships. So, it was

12 or 15 of us in a Winnebago camper going to New Orleans. Yeah. And the majority of everybody was lesbian. I didn't know it. Everybody was being real hush-hush around me. It never crossed my mind. Uhm, and, so when in New Orleans I kind of figured out the big picture, and, and I was like, "Oh, wait a minute." And started hanging out more with these people, and one night we had this huge party at the dorm, and I kissed a girl that night. All through high school I was very stand-offish to my boyfriends. I didn't want to kiss 'em in the halls or hold hands. But when I kissed her it was like, "Oh wow, okay." This is what it is. And I immediately got rid of the boyfriend.

Laura: I went to a gay bar. Debbie Cobb, she was doing her doctorate at the time and I took a sociology class with her. And what she was doing her dissertation on was taking people into gay bars and then you had to write a thing on "how did you feel?" And she took people that were normally the majority. She took White, straight people. And you had to write a thing about how you felt going into a bar and being the minority. And I went into the bar and I met a lot of people and I thought, "This feels good." (Laughs) You know. And I think I went to the bar the next weekend. Not, with Debbie and the class, though. (Laughs)

And then I met a girl and fell in love. I loved Dan, but we did the dating when we were sixteen and seventeen and, you know, you go steady, then you get engaged. We did what you're supposed to do. He was a wonderful guy, still is. And then when I met Wendy and fell in love, I mean, I fell head over heels. I fell hard. And I left him, and I loved him. I had already picked out my bridesmaids gowns and everything. But when I fell for her, I'd just had never, never felt like that about anybody. So. The rest is kind of history. I met a girl and I fell in love and I was with her eighteen years. I've been that way ever since.

You wanted me to teach their bodies and their minds.

Or so you told me.

But you didn't say your own was so confined.

Now you say you don't need me anymore.

You can't stay here anymore.

You can't teach here anymore.

'Cause you don't live like we do,

You don't love like we do,

You're an outcast, a stranger.

The children would be in danger

If we had teachers like you in the schools.

Delanna: I heard this song by Jennifer Berezan in the early 90s. Although I didn't teach children, I understood what the teacher in this song meant. My first full time teaching position was at a private Baptist college in Kentucky. In order to teach there, you had to profess faith in Jesus Christ. I did. What they didn't know was that I had just come out as a lesbian. I found out after I started working that homosexuality was right up there with illegal drug abuse for expulsion and termination from the college. I wasn't surprised by this, but it made me cautious. Years later, being gay and a teacher is still taboo. As late as 2010, a state representative in South Carolina declared that gays and lesbians should not be teachers. In 2012, Tennessee legislators came close to passing a law prohibiting the use of the words homosexual and gay in elementary

and middle schools. Living and working in this homophobic environment, I wanted to know how teachers who identified as lesbian feel about living in a society that not only denounces them but considers them a danger to the children they teach.

Marci: [Teaching PE], that's a stereotype to begin with. But the last several years I taught PE I went from a elementary position where it wasn't quite as bad 'cause you weren't in a locker room, back into a middle school PE where the girls were supposed to be dressing out. And pretty much when I was in the locker room, unless there was a problem, I stayed in the office where I could hear and just look out. But I made it a point not to 'cause middle school girls are not to be trusted. (Low chuckle) And I'm not putting myself in a position to where any of them are going to say that. "Cause some of the girls at my school were saying something about a PE teacher who came there after me. They were just mad at her. But that's all it takes. And she's not a lesbian. At least I don't think she is. But, you know, especially as I got older I really tried to watch my step.

Rock: I think that's why I did not get rehired at West Highland. And the principal, all he would tell me--of course they don't have to tell you anything. All he would tell me is that he just thought that there would be a better place for me to fit in at, or something like that. That I just didn't fit in here. But, then, there were some kids in my room who--oh what year would it have been? That would have been '98 maybe, when the kid out west, Matthew Shepard, they tied him up to a fence and beat him. That incident was going on and I think they had it on Channel One. And I had a class, a couple kids in there, one in particular that when that came on said stuff like, "Yeah, I'd hate for that to happen to someone here," and made different comments that were

very threatening to me. I was very uneasy. And I mentioned what was happening and I got no support whatsoever. That was at West Highland.

Kelley: I taught freshman composition, freshman English on the collegiate level, junior college, for six or seven years, while I was working at Xerox because I enjoyed teaching. When things went south at Xerox, and especially after I filed the law suit, I'm, I guess forty-eight at the time, forty-nine at the time, and it's like, now what do I do? That was the only job I'd ever had in my life, right? So Lynn said, "Take your time and figure out what you want to do. Don't just get a job to have a job." And so I thought about it and I said, "Well I really enjoy teaching, why don't I do that?"

When I said that Lynn said, "Well, how are you going to do this?" I was making six figures, had been making six figures for, I don't know, ten, fifteen years. And she said, "You know this is a drastic reduction in income?" And I said, "I know." I said, "Are you concerned about us being able to live on less?" And she says, "Oh no!" We definitely could live on less than what both of us make." And I said, "Well, teaching's probably going to be, you know, maybe a third of what I was making. I mean, that's a pretty significant cut." She said, "Kelley, I don't worry about money with you." I said, "Okay." So I did it and love it.

Anna: It wasn't an issue then to me. It was not until I got out of college, my first year of teaching. Yep. My first year of teaching. I--I just fell in love with the wrong person is how I thought. We were both in a pit orchestra for community theatre. So we just became friends, she was another music teacher. And, we went to a conference together and...went to bed together and went... "Oh my God, what have I done?" (Laughing) I, and, uhm, I was a newbie. She had a

relationship before, so she knew what was going on. (Laughing) And I thought, “Everybody is looking at us. They know--they can tell. Oh dear, we shouldn’t be seen together.” So we finished out the conference and continued living apart for another 6 months I guess.

Delanna: I knew several dedicated elementary teachers over the years who were careful about coming out as lesbians because they worked with children. I taught adults, but when I worked at the private Baptist College, I was afraid I might run into my college students when I went dancing at a gay bar. Or even a colleague. And it happened. I walked into a club with my girlfriend in a city seventy miles away from work and ran into the athletic trainer and two students from my school. What do you do? After all, they were there, too.

Shelley: I was dancing with a woman in a gay club across the state line. I’m not drunk or anything like that. I’m just dancin’ and havin’ a good time. This girl dances up next to me and says, “Hey, I know you!” And I’m like, “Oh, shit.” I turn around and say, “No you don’t.” And I just kept dancing. I didn’t run away, I stayed right on the floor. Here she comes again, “I know you!” “No you don’t!” And this went on for like two minutes. And every time she came closer she would give more details. “You’re from Allen City.” “You teach high school.” “My best friend had you for class.” I was dyin’ and I finally just turned around to her and I said, “Well, now, I’m the coolest teacher you know, right?” She goes, “Yeah!” And that was it. That was it. So, you know, I didn’t make a big deal out of it.

Delanna: While Shelley remains in the closet at work, years later she lives her life so openly, friends don’t always know she keeps her sexual identity private.

Shelley: You said that I move through things—how is it? That I'm so comfortable living my life as it is, that other people are comfortable with me living my life. And they think that I must be out to the world because I'm so comfortable. And I-I've thought about that. And you would not believe the number of people that make comments to me as if I am totally out to the world. For example, two weeks ago--two weekends ago I think it was, maybe three, we had a teacher rally, you know the rally down by the mall and all the teachers come out sayin' support teachers, yaddy-yadda. The guy who's coordinating that knows me, Connie, he knows the boys, loves our family, loves us. And I am standing next to one of the teachers at Kyle's school. She's like a first grade teacher. She knows us, she knows me and the boys, she knows Connie, but I haven't told her I was gay, but I know she knows. That-that's a little bit different. But now I'm talking to her about the coordinator. "Do you know Jim? He's the one that's coordinated this and if he comes through I'll introduce you." So, sure enough here comes Jim and before I can say, "Jim this is..." he says to me, "Shelley, it's good to see you! Where's that thug wife of yours and those beautiful adorable kids?"

Now here's the teacher and her daughter and three older people and he's just talking. Like I am sweating bullets. I give him a big hug and I just say, "Oh, she's at home with the boys" like that. Then I say, "Jim, this is Ms. Douglas, she's a teacher at Westside; Ms. Douglas, this is Jim." I mean (laughing) I'm like okay! I have thought about that. And, it-it's funny. It is funny.

Delanna: I wish I could say being in the closet was as unthreatening to most women as it is to Shelley. But it isn't. Teachers aren't just at risk when colleagues find out. Students can also cause them problems when they resent or dislike them.

Evelyn: I coached volleyball just so the kids could play. Well I had this girl named Lou Harper, I'll never forget her, obviously, and I cut her off the team because she was just a, she probably was a borderline personality, but I didn't know that then, but she just disturbed, disturbed, disturbed all the time. She didn't have the skills. So I cut her off the team.

And the next thing I know, I go into the school and the principal's saying, "There's a rumor that you are involved with Miss Davis from Montgomery High School." And I said, "Where in the hell did you get that?" And Lou Harper had started that rumor. I said, "Well, that ain't so."

And so, (laughing) I go to the gym and this one group of sophomores, and I can still remember them just because of their little attitudes, but uh, they were in the dressing room and they were just sitting there on strike. They weren't going to dress out. And I said, "Okay, let's put it this way." I said, "I know the rumor you're hearing." I said, "It is a rumor. You can either believe me, or you can not believe me. It's up to you. But I'm telling you it is not true. So, that being said, I am your teacher. I have the grade book. And if you don't get your butts dressed and on the floor in five minutes you're going to fail." (laughing) And they got dressed. And they came out. I had been brought up with this belief that you just didn't quit. You just don't quit, you know.

And so I talked to the guidance counselor. That was years ago, forty years ago. And uh, I said, "I just, I don't feel like I need to stay here but I don't feel like I can quit." And she said, "Why not?" I said, "I'd like to go back to school, but I just don't feel like I can quit because somethin' like this has happened." And she said, "You can do whatever you want for whatever reason you want. It's nobody else's concern but yours." And she said, "You need to do what takes the best care of you." And I went back to school 'n got my masters.

Delanna: Evelyn faced homophobia forty years ago. But is it still that bad? Last summer I spoke to a school counselor who was fired for being lesbian. Several teachers who were invited to join my study refused to speak. They were afraid of being outed and losing their jobs. While teachers can be out in some locations around the country, the majority still don't feel safe to do so. A 2008 national survey of LGBT educators found that 86% hear comments in school they consider homophobic. Many of those teachers find their workplace to be an unsafe place. Even those who were out at school experienced increased anxiety and stress.

Song:

They come to me and they ask me
why I'm leaving.

Why don't you like us?

I smile and say you'll soon forget you knew me.

You'll like your new one,

She's so much like me, she's so much like me.

She don't live like they do,

And she don't love like they do.

She's an outcast, a stranger,

but the children would be in danger

if there weren't teachers like her in the schools.

Rock: I don't know if it's because of my sexual orientation or not, but I will never be alone with a student. Any student. Whether it be male or female. Being a coach, a lot of times I have to put my hands on students to show them how to hold their arms, their bodies or something. And I always tell them, "I'm getting ready to touch you. Is that okay?"

Karen: I don't think being lesbian makes a difference in me as a teacher. I don't think it makes a difference in me in the world at all. I think the difference is in other people's minds, in their perception. I think I'm a decent person. Uh, I think I'm a responsible person. I won't say that I'm a great teacher, but I will say I try harder than anybody else I know. And I do have a passion for it. But so far as me being lesbian, I don't think it enters into it. Now, I know other people do. And what troubles me about that is, if people think you're a lesbian, they think you're also a pedophile. That really, really bothers me. You know, that's sick. I guess I could be more affectionate with the kids if I weren't wary of them thinking that. And I am. I call 'em sweetheart and it'll come out before I know it's comin' out. Because that's what I'm thinking and I'm feeling. And, uhm, I'll pat 'em on the back, and the teacher next door to me, she'll hug 'em and it's okay for her, but I don't think it's okay for me. And I really am bothered that I can't do that, and be okay with it. If somebody thinks I'm a pedophile or, that weird idea that lesbians recruit children to their way--I'm cautious about that. I think that's the only way it affects my teaching. I don't think it enters into it. And I really don't see why it would. 'Cause I don't think a heterosexual, being heterosexual enters into their teaching or the way they approach students. I really don't.

Kelley: I just started teaching the last couple of years and, I guess two and half years, and I'm out to the administration. So the principal, the vice principal – vice principals, we have five – most all of the ninth grade teacher pool, okay, not just the English folks but the teacher pool, I'm out to. But I'm not really out to the kids. And that was recommended by the teachers, my co-workers, they said, "It's really none of their business, so don't feel like you have to be out to them." And I think part of it is because of the reaction I may get from a kid going home and telling their parent, you know, "Oh, Miss Sutter is a lesbian." And a parent getting upset. I guess, I don't know.

Anna: And then we moved in together and she was teaching in one little town, and I was teaching in another little town, and we picked the one in the middle to live. So we didn't want to live in the same town as we taught, because I could not go anywhere without some little kid saying, "Mom, there is my music teacher...she's in the grocery store!"

Delanna: As you can see, there are degrees of being out: out to yourself, a few close friends, family, and at work. The fact is, if you aren't out, you are assumed to be heterosexual. We all are. Because she isn't out to her students or her colleagues, Karen limits what she will discuss with her fifth grade students.

Delanna: So, do you hear that a lot?

Karen: Calling each other gay?

Delanna: Uh-huh.

Karen: Yeah, they do it as an insult.

Delanna: Are they really referring to same-sex attraction?

Karen: They are, but they're not referring to sexual acts themselves.

Delanna: Right. Have you ever called them down for using that term?

Karen: Yes.

Delanna: What do you tell them?

Karen: Um, because I know they're using it to be mean, I tell them they shouldn't be treating each other that way. You shouldn't be mean to each other. They mean it to make them angry, or to hurt them. And they shouldn't do that.

Delanna: But you don't say anything about what it means?

Karen: No.

Delanna: Why not?

Karen: I'd be fired.

Kelley: Okay, well you have to remember that this is high school so there's lots of bullying going on and it's not just gay or lesbian, it's for everything. They gotta find something to pick on each other about. One of the popular sayings still is, "That's so gay." Right? So I told them I said, "Guys, what does that mean?" And they would say, "Oh you know, it's just like, you know, like that's so gay you know." And I said, "No, I don't know. Because it sounds like you're using it in a very derogatory way." And they said, "No, no. We don't mean anything by it. It's just kind of like one of those sayings." And I, eventually, I got to the point where I told them, "I don't want you to say it when I'm around or in this classroom. If I'm around, or in the hall and I hear you say it I'm going to call you on it." They're like, "Wow, don't get so serious about it." So anyway, they don't, consequently. Every now and then they'll slip up and I just look at them and

they're like, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." I said, "See, that's what happens when you have a bad habit. It just slips out, right? That means you need to not use it, even when you're not in this classroom."

Rio: There was a kid last year that kept saying, I think he kept saying, "That's so gay." I had this really nice relationship with this kid but he just—he just wasn't getting it. And I stopped him and educated him about it a couple of times and then he said it one more time and I just, I just took him by the shoulder and I was like, "I'm gay!" "Do you know that not only is that, you know, contributing to this environment where that's not okay, but it's personally hurting me every time you do it." And he just looked back at me. And I don't think he ever did it again.

Kelley: So anyway, one of the kids said something about another student, who is gay apparently. And he said, "Oh, I'll never be anything like this kid. That's just nasty." And this one student, Black female, she spoke up she said, "I heard what you said, and I'm gay. So what kind of problem do you have with that?" And he just kind of stopped and looked. And I looked at him and I said, "Now you guys understand my point about when you say 'that's so gay,' you have no idea who you may be offending. Because they're not taking it as, 'Oh it's just a saying that we say.' They're taking it as something mean, something not quite right, because that's the way I took it." And the whole classroom just got absolutely quiet. And they don't say it anymore, but about the [girl], I thought, I said "good for you, for speaking up, for saying something."

Delanna: Bullies come in all shapes and sizes. They can appear in your family, on the street, in the workplace and in the schools. Unfortunately, a majority of LGBT students find their school

an unsafe place. A 2007 GLSEN National School Climate Survey revealed three-fourths heard homophobic remarks frequently at school and nine out of ten students heard “gay” used in a negative way at school. The majority reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. Many had been physically harassed and even physically assaulted. Shelley makes sure her high school students understand there will be no bullying of any kind in her classroom. While she isn’t out at school, gay and lesbian students know they can turn to Shelley for support.

Shelley: Yeah, I've had students who will come to class and they're upset and I'll say, “What's going on?” I had 2 girls and they were dating and they walked down the hallway holding hands. And they came in there, “You know people are so stupid. Just because we are holding hands, dah, dah, dah, dah, they have to call us names and stuff like that.” I had one girl say, “Tell me, who is it?” “I don't know, just some people. They sit out there by the busses.” And I said, “Okay, tell me when you're gonna walk by there tomorrow.” And they said, “We go by every day when we get off the bus, come in and go to our classroom.”

So a couple of days I just stood right where they were, where those kids were, just to hear what they would say. And they would say stuff like, “Here come those lezzies.” And I'd just go up to them and say, “That's not necessary. People just want to go to class. They just want to hold hands, what's the problem? It's not necessary.” So, the next day I'm there and either they're moved or they kinda watched their language.

And then I told those girls I said, “You know what? People are gonna do this no matter where you are, if you're gonna hold hands and people are not going to like it. They're gonna say stuff, so what are you going to do to protect yourself? If you can go a different way, then go a different

way. If you wanna just stop and look at them and say 'shut up,' then-then you can do that, but it's gonna happen. It's gonna happen. People are stupid."

Karen: Tenure really doesn't count for what the public thinks it counts for. Now I have good evaluations, but if I offended someone they would find a way to get rid of me. For one thing we've had superintendents who would send you to the furthest part of the county, give you a grade level you weren't acquainted with. Uh, I had a principal that put me with the worst children every year and he wouldn't tell me which room I had or which group I had until the in-service day before we started school. So I couldn't prepare for it. And then I'd have to move my furniture. Then I'd have to get the books and study them. And he gave me split grades, he moved me from room to room up and down the hall, he moved me to the upstairs, he moved me back downstairs. But basically the message was "I don't like you. I don't want you. I'm going to make you miserable. You will leave." Well, he's gone and I'm still there.

The first day I went to that school, I sat on the steps for nearly three hours because he wouldn't tell me what room I would have. And people would pass and look at me and I just sat there. I had no place to go! And I guess he thought that I would leave. I thought, 'Well, you have to tell me some time. 'Cause I'm here and I'm not going to leave.'

The school that I had been at before had a female principal. And she had left her principalship two years before that and gone to this school as a teacher. And what I didn't know until this happened was she had gone down there and when she heard I was going to be there, she told the principal a bunch of stories and lies on me about being a lesbian. She didn't know for sure, but she knew what it would do. And I've never really done anything to the woman. The thing is she

didn't know my family. She knew nothing about my personal life. She just knew I was a certain age and I wasn't married. That's all. There was nothing more than that.

Marci: I thought before, you know, if everybody had the guts to do it--if all the gay and lesbian teachers actually came out, probably people would be going, oh! Just amazed. And I think it would be wonderful if all of them, you know, could-could come out, could share their life and it's not going to change how they teach. People would see that it would be okay, you know. I just think it would be a lot easier for students to deal with themselves if they have those feelings or with friends who have those feelings. Just because you're gay or lesbian doesn't mean you're not a good person, or not a good teacher, or not a respectable citizen, or whatever... But, it's gonna be slow coming.

Rio: I've always had this major sense of justice and wanting to change things for the better. I've always been really conscious, and so, going to college and getting that--getting some vocabulary out of sociology and some of my diversity classes, I was like, "Yeah, okay here's the way I can talk about this stuff and here's how it fits into history and sociology." So that's kinda how I am in the world in general, is through this lens of understanding people through race, class, gender, what they're bringing to the table. So, I'm super conscious of the kind of language that I use and the kind of classroom that I set up.

So it's a teacher-run school, and we're in these meetings and I think I have a really important voice for helping people. I mean, it's -- as progressive and amazing and educated as our teachers are, most of them are straight. And, so I definitely try to give a perspective of more marginalized voices that a lot of times people don't necessarily see.

This year, we decided to participate in *No Name Calling Week*. I read this book to my kids, *The Misfits*, which was like really – I mean, we had this big ‘ol meeting about it, you know. And, uh, there’s a – it’s a group of kids and, you know, one of them gets made fun of for being super tall and smart, and one for being fat and one for acting like a girl. So I read this out loud to my kids and there’s this boy who comes out and he ends up liking a boy, and, I mean it felt really cool to read that out loud and kind of address things like he has the word faggot written on his locker. I mean, really neat to talk about that kind of stuff.

So, it felt good to read this knowing all of the straight teachers at school read it, too, and all thought it was great. As out as I am, it’s a little bit weird sometimes to be the queer teacher doing the queer book, having the rainbow posters. You know what I mean, when you’re the only one doing it, it feels like it’s my agenda. Which my agenda is all people.

Delanna: Both Kelley and Rio take an active role in planning curriculum that includes diverse authors and diverse lifestyles. They have found their colleagues open and supportive of their suggestions. Kelley told me about the curriculum planning meetings the ninth grade English teachers have at her school. They work together on lesson plans and choose the literature they will use. As an African American woman, she advocated for using more minority writers.

Kelley: And the teachers, they’ve been wonderful. I said, “I’d like to make sure that we use as many minority writers or authors as we possibly can. And if we could use Hispanic great, but I don’t want to just use Black authors during Black History Month. That was always a pet peeve of mine when I was growing up.” And they were like, “Okay, that’s cool.” So there’s a list, and we

all kind of pick from that list but we're not all, we're working on the same genre perhaps but not necessarily using the same literature piece.

So I've been able to lean toward authors, writers, but on the poetry part, one of my favorite poets is lesbian and I use her. She's one of my absolute favorites. And so I told them, and they of course didn't know anything about her, I said, "But this fits into what we're doing. I want to use it." "Okay, that's fine." And you know, I had a story about her I could tell my kids. I met her several times. I've got signed books, books of poetry by her I shared. They were enthralled. And I told them, "She's a lesbian." And they're like, "So? She's kind of cool." Okay. All right. But I didn't leave that part out, is what I was gettin' at, she's Black, but I didn't leave the part out that she also identifies as being lesbian.

Delanna: Because the poet isn't publicly out, Kelley didn't feel comfortable saying her name. Heterosexuals don't have to publicly identify themselves as straight because heteronormative society assumes we all are. On the other hand, gays and lesbians have to "come out of the closet." Coming out affects every aspect of their lives: work, family, politics, health, and legal rights.

One issue in the media constantly these days is same sex marriage. Men and women who marry are seen as more than sexual beings. They are seen as parents, grandparents, neighbors, etc. On the other hand, gays and lesbians are defined by their sexuality, not as people who happen to love a person of the same sex. Lack of legal and social support for gay and lesbian relationships undermines the respect for commitment between gay couples.

Ever since the Defense of Marriage Act was signed into existence in 1996, state, county and local governments have been passing laws defining marriage as between a man and a woman to

prevent the legitimization of loving commitments between same sex couples. Since 1999, six states have legalized same sex marriage, while 36 states have passed laws prohibiting same sex marriage. The latest was North Carolina. Just weeks before they went to the polls, I was invited to tell a story at a fundraiser for the Campaign for Southern Equality, a small but determined organization in North Carolina that is fighting for gay marriage. I was honored to tell Kelley's story of going to Vancouver, Canada to legally marry her partner of 25 years.

Kelley: When we were, I guess we'd been together for about ten years, and I told Lynn I said, "Why don't you marry me?" And she said, "No, not until it's legal." And I said, "Well, it's legal elsewhere, let's go elsewhere and get married." And she said, "No, I don't want to do that." And then, uhm, I guess Massachusetts had the Same Sex Common Law, and then in California, and she said, "I'm not going for any of those, it's only recognized in that state." And then we found out that you had to be a, you had to live there, so anyway, the twenty-fifth rolls around and she goes, "What do you want to do for our twenty-fifth?" And I said, "I don't know, what do you want to do?" And she said, "How about we get married?" And I said, "Are you proposing?" And she said, "Yes." I said, "Well, where are we going to get married?" She said, "We're gonna go to Canada." So, uhm, she had some family and relatives who live in Vancouver and, uhm, so we shot-put out an internet E-mail invite to her family, my family, and all our friends, and you know, this is when we're gonna go, we're gonna get married, anybody want to go, you're welcome. And we thought we were going to have to get a witness from the hotel. (laughs) But it turned out, it turned out very, very nice. We ended up with like sixteen family and friends who made the trip. And, uhm, her oldest sister stood up for her and my oldest brother stood up for me. Both of our moms were able to make it. I had an aunt, one of my older--my older sister, and then

we had some friends from Texas, and some friends from Houston, and some friends from Kansas City that made the trip so it turned out to be very, very nice. And we got the certificate and we probably--we may end up retiring there.

Delanna: Churches like Metropolitan Community Church have conducted wedding ceremonies for same sex couples for years. Most churches do not. Many gays and lesbians who were rejected by their denomination find a home with Metropolitan Community Church, which has congregations around the world. When Troy Perry was rejected by his church in the 1970s, he founded MCC as a welcoming church for LGBT people. I considered MCC my church for years. I remember being afraid I'd be seen the first time I attended. The message of love from the warm and vibrant pastor began a healing process for me. I could be myself there, when I couldn't at work. Like me, Anna found a faith community with MCC.

Delanna: What was it like the first time you went--to MCC? How did you feel?

Anna: Afraid, nervous, didn't want to drive your own car. Uhm, didn't want to stay for communion--or didn't want to stay. It was always a long service. I thought it was a little too long. (Laughs) When they did communion, you went up and had communion and that kinda drew attention to yourself, so I didn't really want to do that. So, that was a gradual process, too. But, you know, you keep going and, I guess you haven't been burned at the stake yet, so you think you get a little stronger and--what else? And also people would talk about their churches and now I can't even talk about my church.

Delanna: Uh hum.

Anna: You know?

Delanna: Uh hum, uh hum.

Anna: So another thing that I couldn't talk about.

Delanna: I relate to that very much, especially at Mountain College.

Anna: Yeah...and here they're saying, "Are you a member of a church?" Well, what do you say? I guess I remember saying it's a Community Church--and trying to leave it like that. Or non-denominational. You couldn't say MCC. What's that?

Delanna: It's a church with a special outreach to gays and lesbians. (Both laugh)

Anna: Oh.

Delanna: Of course, I'm not lesbian.

Anna: That's right. I'm witnessing to them. (Continued laughter)

Delanna: It takes a long time to change deeply entrenched heterosexism in a culture. Just as Marci said, "It's gonna be slow coming." Legalized support for gays and lesbians is necessary to bring that change. We have seen it with women's rights and civil rights. For the first time in history, a United States president, President Obama, has spoken out in support for gay marriage.

Laura: It would be hard for me to come out in this county because I'm not connected. I made a comment the other day at work, "To get a job because of who you are is okay, that happens all over the world. To keep a job because of who you are is ridiculous." We have teachers and assistants that absolutely have no business being in the system, but because of who they are, nobody will give them a bad evaluation, you know. A huge, huge, huge percentage of everybody

we hire is because of who they are. I have heard principals and supervisors both say they're never allowed to hire anybody based on credentials. You're told who to hire, uhm, you know. But see, the superintendent's an old Perry County guy. He knows everybody. He gives, everybody that voted him in, he gives their relatives jobs. Uhm, and so I think some of the people that are grounded enough here could easily come out and be okay. The teacher that got in a fight with one of the other teachers, you know, everybody knew what the fight was over. That they had just broken up, been caught having an affair actually, and got in a fight, but because of who she was she's still in the county. Everybody knows she's gay and it's okay. But the other woman, who was not grounded politically was let go.

Shelley: One time, and again, speculation! After school, I'm goin' down the hall and meet up with the math teacher and she goes, "Shelley! During our class when the students get off topic, we get into a lot of great discussions. But I just want you to know that the other day one of the students said that you were gay!" Now she is an old high school friend and also one of the reps from our teacher union. She goes, "I told them you were not because I knew you from high school." And I was like, oh my God! And so she goes, "I wanna know, are ya?" Well, of course I said, no. I just flat out said, "No, I'm not." Because, she is a part of the union and that has great potential to get back. I know she didn't ask that as a union person, but as a friend. She probably doesn't care, but I don't know what would have happened if I had told her I was. Again, it goes back to speculation. If I'd said, "Yes," she would know for a fact.

Anna: When I moved up to this area and I knew that I was going to be within 45 minutes of my parents and my family--I did not want to lie to them. I mean, in Florida I would talk to them on

the phone and say, “Oh, we went to a concert.” “Who did you go with?” “Oh, some friends.” It was always plural and I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to be able to say who I was with and maybe even bring them to a family function. Uhm, I mean I did bring my girlfriend up, for Christmas or Thanksgiving once or twice, but it was just a friend, you know. And, I didn’t want to do that.

So pretty early on when I moved up here, I came out to my parents, and, uhm, that was interesting, it was. I spent the weekend with them, so, you know, you postpone it as long as you can. Then you’re getting ready to leave that morning. And so it was at breakfast, uhm, when I had to leave. I said, “There is something I need to tell you.” And my--I think my mom said, “You don’t have to, you don’t have to say anything.” She didn’t really want me to say it. And, so I don’t know if I used the word lesbian, I think I said, “I’m gay and I just want you to know.” I was not in a relationship, and I didn’t--I wanted to do it before I got into a relationship so they couldn’t blame it on somebody else. And, didn’t want them to go through the old, “What have I done wrong?” kinda thing. So I tried to tell them they hadn’t done anything wrong. This is just the way I am. And that I’ve already done the counseling part of it and this is really who I am and I’m okay with it, and I’d like them to be okay with it. And they both said, “It doesn’t matter, we love you.” And I guess that is what every gay child would like to hear. My dad, an hour later, as I was getting ready to leave, he said, “Well, thanks for coming out this weekend.” (Laughs)

Shelley: I told my brother, “You will be an idiot if you ever tell her you’re gay.” I said, “Don’t.” Why? ‘Cause she loved the guy that he was dating at the time. And just as friends, Mom loved these people, bought ‘em Christmas presents. She knew Connie before I told her anything, loved Connie. It’s great, great, great. And then, uh, Connie was living in Missouri for a year with her

practice, and so, when she was leaving Missouri, she was going to move in with me. So I was telling Mom about Connie moving in, dah, dah, dah. She says, “Now, is she gonna get her own place?” I said, “No, she's gonna stay here. She’s gonna move here.” “She's gonna move in your house?” I said, “Yeah, yeah,” still trying to not--and everyone said you'll know when it's the right time to tell your mom. And I’m like, “All right.” She says, “Now I don't understand why she's gonna move in with you.” I said, “Mom, Connie and I are together.” And it was dead silence. “Oh man,” I thought, “I have just been marked off the list.” It was terrible. I can't even remember when we started talking again.

Delanna: Teachers remain in the closet for a reason. We have already seen how the teachers I interviewed confront homophobic comments. Shelley and Rio, in particular, provide a safe environment in their classroom for LGBT students. What experiences have they had that make them stand up for what is right, even when they fear exposure themselves? What motivates people like Rio to teach against stereotypes with her students?

Evelyn: When I was in college, 1966, my freshman year in the dorm I had never even heard of “lesbian.” I mean, I grew up in the sixties, early sixties, and in a small town which was, even though more progressive than a lot of places, was still pretty backwoods, you know? Bible thumper kind of place and I mean, you didn’t even really see “queer” written on the wall anywhere, much less ain’t nobody ever heard of “fag,” you know? So uhm, “lesbian” was totally unheard of (laughs) in my, in my community. So uhm, I got a call to the dean’s office three weeks before school was out, my freshman year, and she informed me that I could be put out of school if I didn’t change my behavior. And I said, “What are you talking about?” Because I was

a girl scout, I mean I really was. I was good kid. I always followed all the rules. I knew I was different, but I didn't know that being different was so bad, you know. And so uh, and there was nothin' at all, except a rumor had started in the dorm. This girl, uh, this girl was a, was an Alpha Omega Pi, in a sorority dorm. Anyway, she was a, she was just a little bitch. She started the rumor. And so the dean calls me in and I'm going, "I don't know what you're talking about." I was devastated. I went home that weekend and so help me God I looked it up in the Encyclopedia Britannica. I had no clue what the woman was talking about. (Laughing) My homosexual behavior. And I went, "What are you talking about? You're wrong!"

Kelley: I worked for twenty-two years with Xerox Corporation. I was in sales, and I traveled. The first half of that twenty-two years was, oh gosh, I was on the road at least four days, maybe five days a week. And I didn't want to have to pussyfoot around so I would tell every manager I had, I'd say, "This is my partner. If you have a problem with it, let's get it on the table right now, 'cause I'm not leaving her." So you know, I never had one manager until my last year at Xerox that had an issue with it. In fact, most of them would tell me about members of their family or friends of theirs who were gay or lesbian who were very closeted, and they appreciated that I was just so out there.

And then I left there not, not on the most pleasant of terms. I ended up suing them for wrongful termination and discrimination. My last year there, my manager had a big problem with my being a lesbian, and I was very out. Very out when things went south at Xerox. And especially after I filed the law suit, which I won by the way. They tried to, they tried to use that I was a lesbian in court and it totally backfired on them, just totally backfired. It took five years to settle it.

Rio: Yeah, I mean, the university has a nice, great gay community or at least it did. But there's also this really big frat boy, middle class kind of drinking thing, so you kind of learn, don't be out, you know, on Friday or Saturday when the bars close and be me or be a girl walkin' with me. Because, I mean I looked, I had super short hair, I had it colorful or spikey or whatever, pierced up face and all those visual cues that make you think – that person's gay. And so I would get, people would go by and scream, "Fucking dyke," or, I got some snowballs thrown at me. Once I had a car drive by and threw a bottle at me, but it missed and hit this wall and shattered by me. I remember walkin' with my friends, a bunch of queer girls, uptown and people saying, "What is this, a fuckin' gay parade?" You know, that kind of stuff. So that was fairly common. We were used to that.

And then, one time I got physically harassed. We were coming out of this great restaurant, after dinner. It was maybe a Tuesday at 6. It wasn't even that late. An-and I walked out with my two friends, who were a couple at the time. Uhm, these three boys were passing by, and uh, started just kinda messin,' I think, saying some things. I've always been really de-escalating. I was saying, "Alright, just let us go ahead and go on by." And then, I don't know if I got an attitude. I might've gotten to the point where I was saying something, some smart aleck remark. I don't know. And this guy ended up taking me by the throat, throwing me up against the outside of a wall, off of the ground, with his hands. I don't remember how it transitioned into him grabbing me and putting me up there, but I remember realizing—he's big. And he was saying all that gross stuff that a guy would say, like, "Aw, I'll show you what you're missing." I ended up with finger marks on my neck. Nobody had cell phones. So his friend finally was like, "Okay, you're taking this too far," and got him to stop. And then we ran up to this apartment and called the

police and ended up watching them going to a bar and got the police and they arrested them. And I remember looking at them taking the pictures of the marks, bruises on my neck. I remember being contacted about going to a trial. I don't think anything really happened. I moved away before the trial, but at least I got to walk in and point to them, and the police went and took 'em. So that was the worst of it.

Anna: Am I really this terrible person that they are writing about? You know? I go to church. I pay taxes. How can I be this terrible person? I have family and values. How can they--how can they claim the term family values? How can they get that all to themselves? That's not fair. I have a family. Am I a bad person, just because I love this person? I am in a monogamous relationship and they are calling me a bad person. And then, you hear all these Republicans with their affairs in Congress and—then, sometimes the most homophobic straight White man gets caught for getting male sex in the bathroom. You know, we didn't ask to be gay. It says in the Bible we are made in God's image. Well, isn't that enough for you?

Delanna: All people, straight, gay, white, brown or black, men and women have the power to bring positive change to those around them. Sometimes, though, it's the people who know what it feels like to be the last one picked to play ball who show respect and acceptance for others. Lesbian teachers aren't the only ones making a difference, but their sexuality may give them the compassion and insight to bring understanding to their students and others and ultimately, help make society a kinder and gentler place to be.

Shelley: Kind of a funny story: Kyle when he was in preschool, said they were all sitting around and his teachers know he's got 2 moms and some of the kids know. They'll say things like, "Kyle your brown mommy's here."--or "Your White mommy's here." (laughing) I remember once picking up Kyle and we were leaving at the same time as another little boy. And the little boy was asking his dad, "Why do Kyle and Chad have two mommies?" (laughing) And the dad was-- I don't know what the dad was, 'cause we were behind them. I heard it. But I couldn't see his face, so I just thought, "Well, let's just see what he says." I didn't say anything to Kyle and Chad. And the dad didn't say anything. And the son said, "Dad, how come Kyle has two mommies?" like that. And, uh, by then we had kinda caught up with them, you know, they were goin' their way, and we were behind--close to them and I said, "That's a good question!" Like that. And the dad said to me, "What do I say?" I didn't even acknowledge. But he said, "No really, what do I say?" And I said, "Oh!" I said, "We tell our boys that there are all kinds of families. And we said some families have a mommy, some have a daddy, some have a mom and a dad, some have grandparents, some have 2 moms, some have 2 dads. So we just say there are all kinds of families." And then I said to the little boy "How's that sound? What do you think about that?" He said, "Pretty good." You know, and he went on! So it's--it's funny, I think parents are, you know, a little more antsy about things, more so than their kids are. And kids are cool with it!

Rio: Everything we do as adults and as parents and as teachers is like a billboard of a message, you know, and what do you want that message to be? I had a conversation in the teacher's lounge with a parent, a substitute teacher parent about her taking her little boy and her kid's friend skating. They were seven or six. First or second grade. And it was couple's skate, and he went to go ask his friend to go skate with him 'cause what he saw was paired up people out there

skating and she said, “No, honey. That’s for boys and girls.” This is like a progressive, White, middle class, educated woman.

And I looked at her and said, “Golly, they’re six years old, you want him trying to date—do boy/girl things, like now? Like he can’t skate with his friend?” I mean I just had this discussion with her and said, “If he, if he were to end up being gay, he would end up feeling weird about it. If he wasn’t, any time he sees two boys holding hands or being together, he’s gonna feel really weird about that and know it’s not right and that it’s not okay. He’s not even allowed to skate with his six-year-old friend. He loves that little boy right now, you know? Couples skate, for six year olds, are not romantic, so why in the world are you discouraging him from skating with this boy?” At the end of the discussion she ended up crying, “I had no idea I was giving that kind of message.”

Kelley: I’m a big sister and I’m taking my little sister to Chuck E. Cheese tomorrow. Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Yeah, this is my third little sister. And I’ve always had someone around 12–13-years old, and she’s seven. I’ve never had one this young. On the application, I’m very straight-forward. “I am married. I am in a same-sex relationship, have been for years.” And they did all the follow up and all that. But that’s never been an issue. My being a lesbian has never been an issue with any of the past “littles” that I’ve had.

The first meeting is always with the case manager from Big Brothers, Big Sisters, uh, and so the case manager said, asked the mom why did she pick me for her little baby’s big sister? And she said, “You know what, I know that some people would have an issue about your being a lesbian, but, when I saw that you’re a teacher that trumps everything in my opinion, in my mind.” And I go, “Well, good for you.” She said, “I want my daughter to have a really good role model. And

she's already, they're already trying to put her in resource." They call it "resource" now but it used to be special ed. But anyway, they're already trying to put her in resource and she said, "That's a stigma. I don't want it. I want her "big" to be able to help her from an educational standpoint." And I thought, "How strong of you, for one." But then, if like she had any kind of bigotry or anything, she said, "I don't care." (Laughs) So, I was like, "Cool." So we go out tomorrow.

Evelyn: I have kids come back now that thank me. Still! Just the other day, well, about four months ago. I stopped at Pilot. And so I pulled in there, and went into the restroom and then came out and got a coke so I could fill back up and went to the counter and this young man was standing there. A clean-cut, good-looking kid and I saw his name tag was Andrew and he said, "Dr. Woodruff?" And I said, "Yeah?" And he said, "I've got to give you a hug." And he started tearing up. He said, "You saved my life." And I thought, "Who in the hell are you, kid?" Because I knew him, but I couldn't put a name with it. And he came back around the counter, and he gave me a big hug and I said, "What's your last name, because I don't know it, Andrew." I said, "Your face is familiar but I can't, I can't pull you into focus." And he said, "That's because I only stayed with you a semester." He said, "You let me in school, because I got put out for beer at a ball game but, then I decided that playing hockey would keep me out of trouble so I moved to Massachusetts." And he said, "That didn't do it so I moved to Connecticut. I went to a really good school." And I said, "So what are you doing now besides working at Pilot?" He said, "I'm at the university. I need eight classes to graduate." And he was still, he was almost in tears the whole time. What was incredible was the amount of emotion this young man still felt and he said,

“There were very few days that went by that I didn’t thank God that I had run into you.” He said, “Because if it hadn’t been for you and your school and your letting me in, I would be in the penitentiary today and I know it.” He said, “I know it Dr. Woodruff. You saved my life.” But is that not, is that not a phenomenal story?

Delanna: There’s a legend told when King Arthur had an altercation with a mysterious black knight. The knight spared Arthur’s life for one year to find out what women wanted most. If he didn’t find out, he would die. When the year was up, King Arthur went to meet the black knight with pages and pages of answers – all of which he knew in his heart were wrong. On his way, he encountered Lady Ragnel, a hideous creature who gave him the answer: What women want most is to determine their own destiny, to rule over themselves. Her answer saved Arthur’s life. Isn’t that what lesbian teachers really want? Isn’t that what everybody wants?

Anna: What change would I like to see? Probably being brave enough to come out--to make a difference. Who is the Olympic diver? Greg Louganis. When he wrote his book and came out, and he was on Oprah and then they had someone who heard that, and it gave him hope and made his life worth living that...he wasn’t the only one. And if Greg can do it, I can, too. What a difference it made in his life. I don’t know if--I know I have affected kids in a positive way but, you know, how many more could have been helped along the road if I had been an out teacher. I don’t think the South has allowed that. And our own representative said 3 months ago something about teachers shouldn’t be allowed to teach if they’re gay. And that was not ten years ago. I mean that was 3 months ago. So the hate is still out there or the misunderstanding or the fear or

the needing to have a group to put down, to make somebody else feel better. I think that has been a lot of it through the years.

Rock: The way I look at it is, if I lose my job, I'm a math teacher. I'm gonna find another one tomorrow. With what I've overcome in my life, it's not worth it. If you don't like me for who I am – I do a good job. I have excellent test scores. Uhm, I've had a successful volleyball program. I'm a hard worker. If you don't like me for who I am, then I don't need to be there.

Sally: My finger snap would say, everybody just get over it. Just get over it. I mean, there are so many, there are so many other desperate issues that really need immediate, direct, focused and long-term attention to solve. I just don't understand why the gay thing carries the weight that it carries. If you want to pick something, if you feel like you need to pick something to get crazy about, get crazy about something that really needs that kind of time and attention.

Shelley: I don't like labels. I think that is the key for me because, being black, being female, being bisexual, or whatever, there are all these labels. I really think it's important to get away from those labels. I have friends who say "If you had to describe yourself, wouldn't you say, 'Oh, I'm a lesbian?'" I just wouldn't do that. I would say, "Well, now, I'm a mom, I'm a teacher, I'm a drummer -- there's so many different things that describe me. I think I'm just comfortable in my skin. I'm not one to wave the rainbow flags and put the stickers on the car. I'm just me. I do believe that there is a correlation between moving through society as, say a gay woman, and moving through society as a Black woman. I do believe those paths are very similar. I believe they are similar because to the Black race it's about, "Accept me as who I am. Not by the color

of my skin.” It’s the same thing with sexuality, “Know me for being a mother, a teacher, a drummer or whatever I do, not for who is in the bed with me at night.”

Delanna: When it is all said and done, lesbian teachers want the same thing straight teachers want: respect. They want the chance to find love and happiness with a partner, family, and friends. They want to do their job unhampered by prejudice and labels. They choose to teach kids because they care about their future. They want to make a difference. And they do.

Evelyn: I was a teacher from the time I was born. It’s innate, it really is. The thing that being lesbian did was it put me on the road to growth. And it made me much more accepting of other people because I have already walked the path. And I learned. I’m a student of me. And so, I think it really helped develop, I was always a compassionate person, and I’ve always had empathy, but I think that the depth of me was improved by the path that I have walked. If that makes sense, because I’ve studied how I’ve handled things, what I’ve done, what life’s circumstances have been, and I’ve grown to accept myself and to love me for who I am. And so to share that with someone else, that’s a big piece of teaching. Because the number one thing in the classroom is caring. My kids know that I care. So I’ve taught forever. I just always wanted to teach. I am a teacher.

We don’t live like they do,
 we don’t love like they do,
 We may be outcasts, strangers,
 but the children would be in danger

if there weren't teachers like us in the schools.

They wanted me to teach them to dance ...

Chapter 5

Epilogue

One cannot fully represent or tell the stories of others. Once the story is told and recorded it becomes a text interpreted by the researcher to give meaning to the research itself. Checking back with the participants can prevent distortion, but interpretation is filtered through the experiences, knowledge and values of the reader. Interviews can provide extensive data, but time and space only allow for a limited number of selective choices among all the words, thoughts and feelings offered in a single interview. As Kinchloe and McLaren (2000) asserted regarding reflective and critical ethnography, “The goal of both these approaches is ...to rethink subjectivity itself as a permanently unclosed, always partial, narrative engagement with text and context” (2000, p. 301). I saw something new to consider each time I worked with the text. This performance ethnography represents a portion of the stories given by the teachers who willingly shared their lives and experiences with me. They serve as a snapshot in time because their lives go on, as does mine. Those stories may or may not carry the same significance to them a day later, a month later or a year later. My perspective, personality and preferences cannot be separated from the end product (Erickson, 2011). My sexual orientation gave me an understanding and level of trust that a heterosexual might have to cultivate in order to do the study. Straight or lesbian, someone else would have asked different questions, picked different stories and organized them differently. Nevertheless, the choices I made provide one doorway into the study of lesbian teachers. In this chapter, I examine the process of writing the performance ethnography, participants’ attitudes and knowledge in light of heteronormativity as it is posed in the research questions, constraints on the study and what direction future research may take.

Shaping the Performance Ethnography

The majority of quotations used in the previous section were not included in the performance ethnography. In this section, I would like to describe the thought process that went into selecting and arranging stories from the interviews. In Chapter 3, I discussed the coding process I underwent to narrow down the research material. After I had narrowed the number of stories to thirty pages, I reviewed the research questions and interview questions to ensure selection of stories that responded to those questions. This process has advantages and disadvantages. The research questions and semi-structured interview protocol limit the researcher's choices. This can be an advantage when you find yourself unable to narrow the data to a manageable size. However, with a less structured research question and interview protocol, the participants might have explored topics and experiences I didn't consider in advance. That could have increased my options for writing the performance ethnography by giving greater richness to the data selection. With the original intention for the stories in mind (to bring understanding to general audiences of lesbian teachers' everyday lives in hopes of giving voice to silenced teachers and transforming listeners), I made a list of criteria for the final ethnography. The combination of stories must:

- Promote social justice for lesbian teachers
- Present the effects of heteronormativity on teaching (public life)
- Present the effects of heteronormativity on social life (private life)
- Give insight into their identities as lesbians, teachers, and lesbian teachers
- Include stories with the basic dramatic elements of character, setting, plot and conflict
- Be ordered for dramatic effect
- Appeal to heterosexuals as well as homosexuals

- Be written for the eye and the ear (written and oral form)

The first four criteria derive from the purpose for the study: promoting social justice, presenting the effects of heteronormativity and giving insight into their identities. The performance ethnography would be hard pressed not to promote social justice for lesbian teachers. Perhaps the only way that might happen would be to present them in a negative light. I wanted to present the range of personalities, beliefs and lifestyles of the teachers I interviewed. At the same time, I wanted to present them as interesting, likeable and responsible women. That wasn't hard to do because they are all of those things, but there were some stories that heterosexuals with a negative perception might use to support an unfavorable view of lesbians and teachers. For example, stories of sexual encounters, particularly those that indicated cheating on a husband or a one night stand were considered carefully before including. I did not want to leave out dramatic moments because they involved sex, however. Therefore, it was a balancing act between art and audience appeal.

I also did not want to only present cheery, positive stories. For the purpose of social justice, it is important that people in the dominant group understand the prejudices faced by an oppressed group. These stories needed to be offset by humor, ordinary life, and positive affects the teachers have on their students. I wanted to present a serious topic in a serious manner with the occasional humorous story to reduce tension.

It wasn't hard to achieve the next two criteria: presenting the effects of heteronormativity on teaching and social life. Most of their stories demonstrated one or the other. However, it was important to make sure the audience could see those effects, since it takes education and awareness to realize the hegemony of the dominant culture on our lives. This needed to be stated in a way that was not academic and didactic since the performance ethnography is meant to

convey teachers' experiences through stories. Audiences should not have to be scholars to understand and appreciate it. In the first draft, I started by describing the theory and then revised it to use a more palatable way to accomplish the same through examples and stories of my own. Although I don't consider this to be an autoethnography, telling my own experiences serves to not only frame theory in lay terms, but to position myself as the researcher in relation to the Other. Madison (2005) tells us positionality is reflexive as we question why we are doing this research, what our own power position and biases are and what the effects of our efforts are. "We are accountable for our research paradigms, our authority, and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation" (p. 14). I have my own qualms about coming out in this performance ethnography and recognize if I expect my participants to be forthcoming, I must be as well.

Showing a range of experiences both public and private, accomplishes the next criterion: giving insight into their identities as lesbians and teachers. Since coming out is central to developing a lesbian identity (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), it seemed appropriate to me to include stories of coming out to oneself and to family and friends. Stories of the decision to come out or stay in the closet with colleagues and administrators provide awareness of the unique conflicts lesbian teachers face. As discussed through the review of personality theory in Chapter 2, coming out at different times to different people continues to occur as one becomes more comfortable with her sexual orientation. Thus, stories of coming out or not coming out in social settings and at work are included.

There are stories of identity struggles I did not include because the ethnography would be too long for viewing audiences. For example, Jean's story of meeting her lover at a gay bar she frequented with her husband did not make it into the final version. The story required too much

background necessary to understand the pathos of her situation. There simply wasn't time to build empathy for a woman who left her husband for another woman. She had stayed in a marriage for 32 years and felt this was her last chance to find a woman she could spend her life with. When she did, her joy was evident, as was her husband's chagrin. Her struggle to accept her sexual orientation and finally do what was right for her, remaining faithful to a man who had not been faithful to her, and giving up everything she owned could not be presented in such a short space of time. Hers is a story I would like a chance to tell in another setting.

Irrespective of their sexual orientation, these teachers had stories to tell about the classroom. I was able to use a few stories just about teaching, although the intersection of lesbian and teacher identities received the most attention. It was important to show how these teachers treated the subject of sexual orientation with their students. The stories of curriculum that Rio and Kelley told serve as a linchpin for what teachers can accomplish if they are out as lesbians. For that matter, any teacher can include LGBT subjects in her curriculum if she is convinced of its relevance. Unfortunately, the fear of being labeled a lesbian has prevented a number of these teachers from addressing the topic in their classes. Teachers like Shelley and Evelyn are not explicitly out at work, yet live their lives in such an open way that they are implicitly out (Iannotta & Kane, 2002). "Comfortable in her own skin," Shelley readily stood up for lesbian students in her class. Rio and Kelley's stories illustrate what teachers who are comfortable with their orientation and the subject can accomplish if it is legal in their state to discuss the topic or the administration is supportive.

The next four criteria deal with the artistic components of script writing: including stories with dramatic structure, ordering for dramatic effect, appealing to heterosexuals as well as homosexuals, and writing for the eye and the ear. By asking the participants open-ended

questions and suggesting they tell me about a time when something happened, I was able to gather a sufficient number of narratives. As described in Chapter 3, I selected narratives that had the elements of a good story (compelling characters, dramatic structure that builds to a climax, a resolution and imagery) while simultaneously looking for content that answered the research questions. I looked for and identified stories with characters, an initiating incident that built to a climax and a resolution. I also identified less developed stories that were brief and did not include all of those components, but implied them. Finally, I identified pithy, insightful and thought-provoking statements that would make good transitions and provide moments of reflection or emphasize important points. The stories went through a lengthy winnowing process which involved culling the stories with the least amount of imagery, fluency and detail. In some cases, I edited the stories together from the disjointed approach that often happens in conversational storytelling when someone has not thought through the story in advance. In a few cases, I took segments about the same topic from different parts of the interview and put them together to make one cohesive whole.

After I reduced the stories to a manageable number, the process of deciding the order began. I wanted to represent each woman I interviewed. Some had more to say than others and some were better storytellers. However, everyone had something important to contribute to the overall picture I wanted to create. Other than that, I knew I wanted the order of the stories to build on each other to a climactic point to maintain interest through dramatic tension.

At this point in the process, I was uncertain how to proceed. I had compiled two prior scripts - one that served as a pilot study based on interviews with four lesbians born and living in East Tennessee and another twenty minute script for a conference using three of the teachers I had interviewed for this project. In both cases, the stories were arranged topically. They started

with stories introducing the personality of each woman and then went to various topics reflecting the themes that the interview questions drew out. The short script for the conference was arranged into six topics covered in the interviews. They were: (a) Introduction: Get to Know Me, (b) Coming Out, (c) Relationships with Colleagues, (d) Relationships with Students, (e) Relationships with Administration, and (f) Who I Am Now. This type of arrangement worked for three speakers, but to go through eleven speakers all addressing the same topic would be redundant and hard to follow (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). That is when I decided to enlist outside help.

Looking for an experienced perspective, I engaged professional storyteller, David Novak, as a consultant. Following his process of putting a brief description of each story on a slip of paper, I began manipulating the order of the stories, mixing them up for variety. Novak suggested I start with teaching and return to teaching for each segment. I found this difficult to do, although it made sense to make teaching the fulcrum on which the other stories balanced. I finally had a breakthrough when I used a large magnetic board to arrange the stories where I could see them. I attempted a loose thematic connection from one story to the next and a build to the most emotional or traumatic stories. The ending stories came back to teaching and gave the positive outcomes of having lesbians as teachers. Although the order changed several more times, that process moved the script toward its final form.

Along with selecting dramatic and aesthetic components to shape a set of stories, the audience also has to be taken into consideration. My original intention was to strive for a positive influence on heterosexual listeners who may hold conservative views toward gays and lesbians. As I arranged the stories to also meet the criteria for this research project, it dawned on me one approach may not achieve both goals. Novak's perspective as a straight, White male made me

realize early in the performance ethnography more time must be spent building common ground between straight people and lesbian teachers. Stories that are interesting and important to me could alienate them if told too soon in the performance ethnography. Even though this particular performance ethnography attempts to build commonalities before diving too deep or into stories of mistreatment of lesbian teachers, I see the need to create different versions for different audiences.

When telling these stories in a live setting, I want audiences to know beforehand the subject of the performance. This means that those who most need to hear the stories probably won't attend. Nevertheless, it is possible that those who are open to hearing more and reconsidering their stance toward gays and lesbians will be in the audience. It is also likely that more women will attend than men because there are no stories about men. The best I can do is present the performance in different venues that provide opportunities for a range of people to attend. I believe colleges and universities, conferences and open-minded churches will provide the most likely venues for this performance ethnography.

I intend for the first presentation to be for an invited audience, including the narrators whose stories are being told. Since this will be a closed performance, I will inform them in the invitation of the discussion afterwards. I will have some questions for the audience planned in advance to spur discussion. I will also be open to comments and questions they volunteer. Their feedback will be valuable in revising and honing the arrangement of stories for different audiences. In fact, as an educational form, performance ethnography is often followed up by audience discussion. Mieniczakowski (1995) is known for using this technique in ethnodramas staged from ethnographic narratives on various health issues. He included informants throughout the process of rehearsal and presentation, changing the script for different audiences based on the

feedback received. He was not the first to do this, however. He patterned his approach after Augusto Boal, who utilized post performance forums in Theatre of the Oppressed, which continues to this day. It has become a frequently used feature of performance ethnography and oral history performance (Alexander, 2005; Pollock, 1990).

The last criterion is for the performance ethnography to be written for the eye and the ear. Ultimately, it will be taken off the page and performed live before an audience. In that form, oral communication skills come into play. The performer will utilize vocal elements like rate, pitch and volume to create character voices, indicate emotion and attitude and maintain aural interest for the listener. Nonverbal communication such as gesture, movement, posture, eye gaze and facial expressions also convey the meaning of the narrator's words. The stories are already transcribed from an oral form to written and are full of false starts, disfluencies and verbal fillers. These are appropriate to use for the oral performance to remain authentic and true to the narrator's original words. However, in written form, this does not always convey the speaker's attitude, tone and intent to the reader.

Indeed, oral communication does not translate to the page easily. Over the years, attempts have been made to create transcription markings that take a three dimensional event and make it visible on a two dimensional plane. To read through such transcriptions is laborious and requires readers to learn the transcription symbols to understand what they are reading. Anthropologist Schieffelin (2005) pointed out that while a performance can be detailed moment by moment through transcription, "impoverishment can result from excess" (p. 91). In other words, when looking too closely at each nuance of the voice and/or body, the words, the flow and connection of the sounds and movements are lost. This is not a choice I wish to make. Folklorist Foley (2005) asserted: "A performance is not a text, no more than an experience is an item or language

is writing. At its very best a textual reproduction—with the palpable reality of the performance flattened onto a page and reduced to an artifact.” (p. 233). The artistic elements of verbal performance go beyond the words. Words are composed of symbols on the page that come alive when spoken. It is the speaker who produces rhythm, a range of volume, pitch and duration with the voice.

Since these are voice recordings, visual information is minimal in the written version. Through using standard prose markings that indicate pauses of varying lengths with a comma, ellipse or dash and period, the reader is able to make sense of the transcript. In addition, I used quotation marks around dialogue and thoughts expressed like dialogue by the narrator. I intended to keep as much of the oral flavor of the stories as possible while editing for fluency and coherence.

Oral storytelling before an audience is another affair. While I intend to replicate the narrators’ vocal and linguistic style as much as possible, I think it is important to remember performance skills are needed to convey conversational speech in a way that is engaging to the audience as well as authentic to the speaker. Anna Deavere Smith (Rose, 2011) is known for speaking in the words of the narrator, using their intonation, accents and speech patterns. However, if you see her perform, it is evident that she is telling these stories for an audience on a stage. To mimic the conversational story of someone who speaks in a colorless or monotone manner would lose the interest of the audience. One must go beyond mimesis to poesis. Kinesis comes into play in enacted storytelling. Movements, gestures and facial expressions will have to be chosen to reflect the attitudes, and emotions found in the voice of the narrator. Since the interview recordings do not include video, I will have to create bodily movements and gestures to distinguish each narrator from the other.

Thoughtful analysis, careful listening to the interviews and reflexivity are necessary to conduct narrative analysis of the stories selected. Successful performance ethnography will answer the research questions, reflect the attitudes and experiences of the participants and engage the audience aesthetically both as readers and listeners. In the next section, I discuss examples of heteronormativity as it affected different aspects of the participants' lives.

Shaping the Study: The Participants

In this section I scrutinize the responses of the participants in light of what interview questions (see Appendix A) revealed about heteronormativity. In review, through my interview questions and during the course of shaping the performance ethnography, I addressed the research question: What do stories of their lives reveal about lesbian teachers' perceptions of the influence of the dominant heteronormative community on their public and private lives? The secondary questions are: How have their lifestyles been shaped by dominant heteronormative attitudes in their community? What choices have they made responding to social expectations? How has membership in a silenced and marginalized group affected their public identities as teachers and colleagues? With these in mind, I expose and engage heteronormativity as expressed through the teachers' narratives.

Heteronormativity Revisited

Since teachers' perceptions of heteronormativity play a crucial role in the research, I begin there. Heteronormativity is not a term commonly understood by society. Most adults use the term homophobia. I chose to use heteronormativity instead of homophobia in my research because it more clearly identifies the pervasiveness of heterosexuality and explains why acceptable gender expressions for men and women are still polarized. Perhaps it would help to revisit the definition of heteronormative given in Chapter 1. Heteronormative refers to the

engrained societal and cultural belief that all people are or should be heterosexual. “To describe a social institution as heteronormative means that it has visible or hidden norms, some of which are viewed as normal only for males and others which are seen as normal only for females” (Interrupting Heteronormativity, 2004, p. 185).

Heteronormative rules are primarily understood behaviors that define a society of two sexes only: male and female. As queer theorists have emphasized, sexual orientation is not only fluid, it encompasses more than two biological sexes (Green, 2002). On average, 1 in 1500 people are born with atypical genitals (*How common is intersex?* n.d., para 2). Today, the ethics of sex assignment surgery at birth for babies with ambiguous genitalia is finally being confronted (Dreger, 1998). Not only does the sexual binary of heteronormativity assume the invisibility of intersex and transgender people, it makes gays and lesbians whose gender expression contradicts the binary a threat to society. As a threat, society constrains them to keep their sexual orientation a secret or suffer a range of disturbing and dangerous consequences. For example, without legal marriage rights, lesbians and gays forfeit as many as 1,138 federal legal protections granted to married couples (*An overview of federal rights and protections*, n.d.). As established in Chapter 2, lesbian teachers fear losing their jobs due to parental fears that they recruit children to homosexuality and are pedophiles (Griffin, 1992; Singer, 1997). In this context, I would like to look at some of the teachers’ responses.

Understandably, few of the teachers showed familiarity with the term heteronormative. I hoped the act of telling about their experiences would enable them to discern heteronormative influence in their lives, whether they called it that or not. While some of them may have recognized its affect, only three women indicated they understood the hegemonic influence heteronormativity had on their lives: Rio, Kelley and Evelyn. Rio, in her early 30s, is the

youngest woman I interviewed. She studied postmodernism and feminist theory in college. She also seemed to be the most politically and socially liberal person in the group. Rio attended a major Midwestern university in the 1990s where she was exposed to classes that dealt with women's rights and gender issues. She teaches fifth and sixth grade Language Arts at a progressive charter school with a social justice agenda. The school has a social justice statement on their website that describes them as an inclusive community that promotes social justice and human dignity. In addition to including all ethnicities, abilities and socio-economic status, they include sexual orientation in their statement. As an out lesbian, Rio perceives her teaching responsibilities to include combatting sexism, heterosexism and racism through the literature she teaches and the prejudices she confronts. In Rio's words:

I've always had this major sense of justice and wanting to change things for the better.

Uhm, I mean I – I would get angry about litter on the side of the road as a little kid. You know, I've always been really conscious, and so, going to college and getting that – getting some vocabulary, out of like sociology and some of my diversity classes and my democratic education program and all this kind of stuff, I was like, 'Yeah, okay here's the way I can talk about this stuff and here's how it fits into history and sociology.'

Rio had the most to say about diversity and what being out as a lesbian means for her as a teacher and in the world. In fact, I was surprised and impressed with her frank and open attitude toward her students. In her interview it was clear her convictions carried over into teacher meetings to discuss curriculum and with her students. She remarked that her room was one place effeminate boys felt safe. However, she wasn't the only one who was out and used that to her advantage in the classroom.

African American Kelley Sutter became an English teacher in her fifties after a long career with a major corporation. From the day she met her partner of over 30 years she has been out to her employer and everyone she met. This carried over into teaching. During the first couple of years when Kelley taught ninth grade English, her fellow teachers counseled her to keep her sexual orientation from the students because of concern over parents' reactions. However, in 2011-2012, she came out to her 11th grade students because her partner was undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. She wanted to be able to take off work to go with Lynn to the doctor and supported her by shaving her own head. It was important for her to be up front with her students, particularly so they wouldn't think she was the one with cancer. Overall, her students and colleagues were supportive. The experience has been rewarding for Kelley and has been an important learning experience for her students.

When I interviewed Kelley, it was clear she is aware of the influences of heteronormativity and confronts the use of slurs against gays and lesbians along with including literature from minority writers. Several stories in the performance ethnography are told by Rio and Kelley to illustrate what openly gay teachers are able to accomplish in the classroom. Another teacher turned principal and then college professor also grasped the concept of heteronormativity right away. While Evelyn did not proclaim her sexual orientation openly at work, she demonstrated her dedication to providing educational opportunities for students who the system consigned to failure.

Evelyn began her career as a physical education teacher in the 1960s. This may explain why she was accused of being a lesbian twice: once by a fellow college student and a second time by a vindictive student athlete. Marci also felt the sting of being stereotyped as gay because she taught PE. Today, female athletes still fear being labeled (Krane & Barber, 2003). Evelyn

returned to college for her master's degree and later became a principal. In 2000, Evelyn founded a private school for grades 6-12. As the principal, she hired several lesbian teachers, providing a curriculum that was centered on social justice. Parents who could afford it sent children who were struggling in school because of learning disabilities and behavior problems. This school was the last opportunity for students who otherwise may never have finished high school. Unfortunately, after eleven years of operation the doors closed in 2009, due to the economic downturn. When I interviewed Evelyn, she was working as an administrator and professor of education for a private college. Although she had been out of the K-12 classroom for over five years, her extensive and varied experience made her an invaluable research participant.

The remaining eight teachers gave little or no indication they understood the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in their lives and schools. I believe Karen, a fifth grade teacher, Laura; a special education teacher turned administrator, and Marci, a retired physical education teacher, were probably the most closeted of the group. They showed the least familiarity with the cultural influence of master narratives on our beliefs about gender and sexual roles. For example, Karen felt strongly that her lesbian identity and the heterosexual identity of her peers played no part in her approach to teaching. As she declared:

I don't think it makes a difference in me as a teacher. I don't think it makes a difference in me in the world at all. I don't think it enters into it. And I really don't see why it would. 'Cause I don't think a heterosexual, being heterosexual enters into their teaching or the way they approach students. I really don't.

Karen seemed to make a marked distinction between her personal lifestyle and teaching the content of the curriculum. Except for disciplining students for calling each other names and using "gay" as a pejorative term, she indicated no attempt to bring diversity, particularly sexual

orientation, into her curriculum. In fact, she refused to define “gay” for the students because she believed she would be fired. Marci, Anna, a middle school and elementary music teacher, and Jean, a retired first grade teacher, also avoided discussion of sexual orientation. When Marci taught sex education classes, the school district prohibited the discussion of homosexuality and abortion. However, Marci, along with Shelley, a high school biology teacher, Sally, a full-time substitute and arts educator and Rock, a high school math teacher, acknowledged homosexuality by accepting it among their students and offering support whenever possible. Otherwise, they gave no indication of addressing sexual diversity in their curriculum.

Almost all the teachers I interviewed recalled a time they showed support for gay and lesbian students in their schools. Although they may not have included sexual orientation in the curriculum, they addressed name calling, particularly the defamatory use of “gay.” When I asked if they were aware of students who called their peers names or bullied them because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, I was intrigued that the first thing they thought of was hearing students call each other gay. Each woman confronted that kind of name calling either head-on by asking what the students meant by the word or obliquely addressed name-calling as unkind. Since nine out of ten students surveyed heard “gay” used in a negative way frequently at school (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2007, p. xii), it is significant that lesbian teachers confront its use.

Heteronormativity and Appearance

Having established a point of departure for discussion of the influence of heteronormativity on lesbian teachers, I turn to what teachers might do to “pass” as heterosexual. I consider this one area where the influence of heteronormativity is most visible. This correlates with two sub-questions of my research question: How have their lifestyles been shaped by

dominant heteronormative attitudes in their community? What choices have they made responding to social expectations? In order to appear heterosexual, a woman would need to wear clothing styles that straight women admire or consider feminine. They might wear skirts and blouses, dresses, heels, scarves and carry a purse. They might choose to wear make-up, long hair and polish their fingernails and toenails. This could be a deliberate choice to hide their sexual orientation. At the same time, some lesbians enjoy these feminine accoutrements. Passing as straight may come naturally for them. Learning the proper dress and mannerisms for a woman or man is integral to heteronormative directives. For example, at birth the sex is so important to society that children are identified as boys with blue blankets and clothing and girls are identified with pink.

When I attempted to find out how these teachers were influenced to hide their sexual orientation, few disclosed they did anything overt to appear straight. Most of them dressed in a fashion that would not label them as femme or butch. In other words, they may not wear dresses, but their clothing probably came from the women's section of the department store and their mannerisms blended in with straight women. Laura sees herself as a highly feminine woman who admits that she has always enjoyed dressing up, fixing her hair and wearing make-up. I also saw her that way based on her dress, nail polish and mannerisms. Therefore, she never had to try to look straight. I found it ironic that she insists being in the closet makes her sexual orientation a non-issue on the job when passing as straight may be the reason. Simply put, if one exhibits accepted heteronormative behaviors, one is assumed to be heterosexual. It is the women who dress in clothing from the men's department, wear their hair short and use strong, assertive movements who are viewed as gay.

Kelley, however, presents another attitude toward feminine-styled dress. She had to wear skirted suits to “dress for success” in her early days at Xerox. At one point she rebelled and confronted her female boss about dressing more comfortably:

The early years of Xerox from '83, '84, until probably the early '90s, it was business dress and for women the preference was for a skirt and a blazer of some sort. And I hated that. When my, one of my managers, one of the Black managers that I had early on in my career, she said, I had really long hair and we straightened our hair and all that, so it wasn't a nice little nappy fro, and I told her, I said, “I'm traveling and my hair, it takes like thirty minutes, forty minutes just to get my hair straight, right, you know, I'm going to cut it.” And she was like, “No, don't do that.” So the first time I told her, I said, “I'm wearing slacks and I'm not going to have a blazer with it, I'm in south Texas or I'm in Puerto Rico, I mean it's hotter than hell. I'm not wearing panty hose anymore.” She really pushed back and it was more of the corporate structure than anything. So I was really happy once the middle nineties came around and it was like, okay, it wasn't that big of a deal for you not to wear hose and heels and a skirt and all that.

Because Kelley was in a corporate job, she was constrained by corporate policy to dress in a manner that was considered business attire for women. She was to maintain her femininity while looking professional by wearing skirted suits. She rebelled as much for practical reasons as for personal reasons. In addition to looking feminine, she had to look less Black by straightening her long hair. Kelley had to navigate heteronormativity and White norms. I am impressed that she rebelled and insisted on doing what was comfortable and right for her.

Rio, who is twenty or more years younger, has never compromised on her appearance at work. As an out teacher working for a charter school, she described her appearance at a previous job:

I was well received in the school system for sure. People thought I was a great teacher. I mean there was a little bit of like, (whispering sound) I found out later. At first like, ‘woo, who’s that,’ you know. But, uhm, you know, they – I was like the teacher everybody wanted their kid to be in their class, which felt really good. ‘Cause I always looked – like I said, I had piercings and short hair and I used to have an eyebrow ring and labret and a bunch of earrings and like a Mohawk kinda hairstyle. I just recently, I’ve just grown my hair a little bit and I got a little bit tired of the, uh, but you know, I wear short sleeves all the time and don’t look traditional, [she has tattoos on both arms] so that’s always been fine. I mean, it’s not fine to work at Wendy’s with these things in, but you know, I have a professional job, and I do my job really well.

Times have certainly changed when you can have a professional job and wear piercings and tattoos to work. In my experience, Rio does not reflect the majority of teachers in typical school systems. While it is acceptable to dress casually in slacks or even jeans, the teachers I have observed in public schools are conservative in their appearance, remaining within the parameters of heteronormativity.

In the 1980s, corporate America had strict guidelines for women’s business attire. Since men were the norm, women’s professional clothing had to match theirs, within the realm of what was appropriate for women: hosiery, pumps, make-up and conservatively styled hair. Kelley’s rebellion against those norms was more about being comfortable than expressing her lesbian identity. Since she was already out, she didn’t have to pass as straight. Over twenty years later,

Rio, also out as a lesbian at work, considered professionalism something that frees her to dress as gay-identified. She compared being a professional to working in a fast food restaurant. Even today, I doubt anyone could dress the way Rio does at Xerox. In fact, I am surprised she was able to work in a school with piercings and tattoos visible. I believe Rio's dress tackles heteronormative controls and confronts what is considered appropriate attire for professionals. It is refreshing to know there are schools where teachers can dress in a manner that reflects their identity.

Heteronormativity and Work

Not only was I interested in knowing if they dressed to fit in, I wanted to know what they did about their partners when they attended social functions at work. Those who weren't out simply left their partners at home and, as Anna explained, "I guess what I noticed most is that, you know, that sitting at the faculty table at lunch and the women are telling about their weekend...what they do with their husbands...I just wouldn't tell. I was quiet." In order to avoid bringing attention to having a female companion, Anna would refer to weekend activities as a group outing so she could use the pronoun "they" instead of "she." While many of these women kept their private lives separate from work life, none of them pretended to be dating a man. Although she didn't bring a male date to school events, Karen recalled knowing lesbian teachers who would "get a beard" for extracurricular functions. Karen identifies as a private person who believes her personal life is nobody's business. Therefore, at work she says little that isn't work-oriented. Still, most wanted to be able to share their personal lives with fellow workers and did so once they knew the other teacher was either lesbian or accepting.

When Laura broke up with her lover after 15 years, she found the pain unbearable at work because she couldn't turn to colleagues for support. She finally took a chance that a fellow teacher would be sympathetic, explaining:

It was horrible. It was horrible. And nobody knew what was wrong. I couldn't tell anybody. You know, uhm, that's when I went to Brenda. I just said, "I gotta tell somebody." And I guess I was just at a point that night where I thought, "If you turn on me, then you just do." But I had to have somebody to talk to. Brenda is, like I said, she's an old hippie. She's very accepting of anybody and everything. She's a wonderful person. But I think, in my heart of hearts I knew there was a really good chance that she was okay with it.

Fortunately, Laura's confidence was not betrayed.

Shelley still says she is in the closet at work, although people all around town see her with her partner and two boys. She told me, "My friends say, 'Shelley, you are so out! And you just don't know it.'" Some years back she was asked if she was gay by another teacher at work. She answered, "No." She also felt it was her responsibility not to put the administration in a vulnerable position by coming out:

You watch who you come out to. Part of me says, no, I wouldn't lose my job if I were out. And the reason is – they know me, all the way up to the superintendent of schools. 'Cause I'm in the school system here. They know me. And I know that they love me. So to knock on the front door and say, "Guess what guys?" I would never do that because that would make an issue out of it. It's back to that speculation thing. You can say, "I heard or I think," but you didn't hear it from me.

Shelley related a story to me, included in the performance ethnography, about a time she was outed by a colleague to a teacher from another school. It made her aware a number of people assumed she was out because she lived her life so openly.

It takes conviction and courage to be out at school. As comfortable as Rio is with being out at work, she has had moments when she realized she is the exception to the rule: “I was well received in the school system for sure. I mean there was a little bit of like, (whispering sound) I found out later. At first like, ‘woo, who’s that,’ you know.” She enjoys teaching in a charter school that is teacher-run because she isn’t the only one using books with gay children in them:

So, it’s a little bit – as out as I am, it’s a little bit weird sometimes to be like the queer teacher doing the queer book with the – having the rainbow posters. You know what I mean, because then it – it’s like you know it’s important, but you, when you’re the only one doing it, it feels like it’s my agenda or whatever. Which my agenda is all people.

Rio doesn’t let feeling conspicuous stop her from teaching about diversity to her students.

The choices these teachers made in the public and private sphere reflect the ideas discussed on social identity theory in Chapter Two. Krane and Barber’s (2003) research with lesbian athletes suggests that through social comparison lesbian athletes perceive heterosexual athletes to have higher status. In a similar vein, lesbian teachers identify heterosexual teachers as the higher status group, signifying a need to be perceived as heterosexual. They can appear to be a member of that group by choosing to overtly appear heterosexual or to remain silent, promoting the assumption that they are heterosexual. (Clarke, 1998; Griffin, 1992; Jackson, 2004; Krane and Barber, 2003) Due to their fear of exposure, nine of the eleven lesbian teachers I interviewed chose to stay in the closet. This reinforces the dominant master narrative that heterosexuality is the legitimate and only acceptable sexual orientation. As Clarke (1998) noted,

“These spatial binaries (public/private)” promote silence among lesbian teachers, “. . . and contribute to the belief that there is no problem here” (p. 88).

Heteronormativity and Family

Two more areas of their personal lives struck me as significant barometers for measuring the impact living in a heteronormative society has on lesbian teachers. One is their relationship with their families and another is their social life, including church membership and social activism. First, let me consider their relationship to family.

It was encouraging to find that the majority of lesbian teachers I spoke to were accepted by their parents and most of their siblings. I included a humorous story of Anna’s experience of coming out to her parents in the performance ethnography. In it, her father unwittingly thanked her for “*Coming out* this weekend.” Like Anna, Rio found her parents accepting and nonjudgmental when she came out to them. Rock also has complete acceptance from her family. Interestingly, Anna, Kelley and Shelley have a brother who is also gay. While Kelley’s younger sister has not accepted her relationship, her mother and brother, along with her partner’s mother and sister traveled all the way to Vancouver to celebrate and witness their legal marriage. Kelley’s wedding story was delightful and encouraging. I did not put it into the performance ethnography at first, because I had more stories about life outside teaching than those about teaching. Since this study is about lesbian teachers, I didn’t want to outweigh stories related to teaching with stories about personal experiences. The research questions allow for both kinds of stories, however. It was just a matter of finding a balance between stories representing private life and stories representing public life. It would have been interesting to find out what these women thought was most important by having a more open research question and an unstructured interview instead of a semi-structured one.

The only person who mentioned a negative reaction when she came out was Shelley. She came out to her mother over the phone by explaining that her partner was moving in with her. Her mother's response was complete silence. For a painfully long time after that, Shelley's mother communicated seldom and only on a superficial level. However, when Shelley and Connie adopted their first son, her mother was excited about being a grandmother. In contrast, Laura's mother accepted her sexual orientation. However, Laura felt she disappointed her mother because she was an only child and her mother would never get to enjoy a wedding and grandchildren. Like Shelley and Connie, Laura and her partner adopted a child. Today, her mother dotes on Laura's daughter. Even so, accepting your child because you love her is not synonymous with embracing her sexual orientation. As Rio stated about her mother:

You know, it's not like that was a happy celebration for her. She was like, "It doesn't surprise me, I totally get it." But, and she would have never said anything outrightly negative like, "I'm upset with you," or "You're not mine," or anything like that. But she didn't – you know, it's been an evolution of training her away from ignorance of the matter and giving her some language for things.

However, the degree of acceptance these women experience with their families is better than the rejection some gays and lesbians experience. For example, numerous studies on LGB youth and young adults have indicated a correlation between lack of parental support and depression, suicide and drug and alcohol abuse (Needham & Austin, 2010).

A few avoided the risk of rejection by not coming out to their parents or other family members. For example, Karen did not say whether her parents knew or not, diverting the question by stating: "Oh, my goodness. (laughs) My family is a whole other story. Dysfunction, oh my gosh. Uhm, well my sisters' delight, delight in telling things to people to try to cause me

trouble. Both of them.” Evelyn also did not say she came out to her parents, and described a difficult childhood with an alcoholic, violent father and controlling, co-dependent mother. After her freshman year at college when she came home, she told her mother the Dean accused her of being homosexual (something she didn’t realize about herself, yet). This is how Evelyn described her mother’s response:

When I got home after finals and everything, I told my mother what had happened and instead of her talking to me and consoling me, of course she cried and I had to console her. And I’m going, “There’s something wrong with this picture,” you know. But that was always our relationship, too. Very much so.

When she was older, she came out to her aunt who said she already knew. Her aunt reassured her that her grandmother, who was deceased by then, also knew and understood. Considering how daunting it can be to come out to family for many people today, it isn’t surprising that Evelyn chose to remain silent. Growing up in the 1950s when the media was busy reinforcing traditional roles for men and women (D’Emilio, 1983; Ryan, 2009), LGBT people were especially invisible. While it may have felt safer to Evelyn to stay in the closet with her family, her aunt’s disclosure would indicate Evelyn sacrificed getting to be herself with them because of her choice. I know from personal experience that hiding or remaining silent about private life with a partner and social life with lesbian and gay friends to maintain peace in the family distances me from them. They only share in a small portion of my life which leaves a feeling of emptiness. The same can be said when keeping your sexual orientation private occurs in professional settings for the sake of job security and emotional safety. However, the loss is not as great. It is important to have friends with whom you feel safe being yourself to offset the times you cannot be open.

Jean is another woman who didn't say if her parents knew. She is also the one teacher in the group who didn't fully acknowledge her sexual orientation until she was over fifty years old. After 32 years of marriage she finally divorced so she could live the life that felt right to her. Her husband knew she left him for a woman and threatened to tell their two sons. In fact, he did tell one son and the other found out from his girlfriend's mother. Fortunately, both sons still accept her.

Jean told me she began to have an emotional meltdown right before her youngest son left for college. She cried continually and her son kept asking her what was wrong. At that time she knew she had to make a decision.

I really knew what I was and I needed to come out with it. I needed to be, even if we would go to a gay club, I felt safer there. I felt that was where I needed to be, with people that I could identify with. One year we [she and her husband] went to Chicago and we were riding our tandem bike and we went to the area you could go through, you knew you were in the gay community because there would be poles, rainbow poles up, and you, and you felt safe in that area because when you were with people that were like you, you feel okay.

For some time, Jean tried to be bisexual. She would go to a gay bar with her husband. He wanted them to swing with other couples, but that only lasted a couple of days. When she left him, she left all the furniture in the Victorian house they spent their lives renovating, rather than further disrupt home for her sons. Jean had just retired from teaching when we talked. Because her husband ran his own business he has no retirement and receives half of Jean's retirement, \$900 a month. Although she regrets not seeking legal counsel, she is happy. Embracing the gay lifestyle has its costs.

Hearing an individual's coming out experiences, one better understands the influence heteronormativity has on gays and lesbians. Working in an occupation where they are in daily contact with children adds another layer of risk. According to McLean (2008), when scholars study the master narratives of society, they find out how people shape their identity stories to align with the master narrative. They also find out whose stories are silenced because they don't fit. This is particularly revealing when it comes to studying the narrative identities of lesbians and gays. As McLean (2008) noted:

The fact that gays and lesbians need to "come out" is evidence of their isolation from the canonical narrative, placing a burden on them to overtly acknowledge their difference from the mainstream narrative, unlike heterosexuals who assume the canonical narrative as their own with no need for public acknowledgement. (p. 1696)

Until LGBT people say differently, most heterosexuals assume the master narrative speaks for everyone. Those who aren't straight are silenced. Since gays and lesbians don't fit the master heterosexual narrative, they have to "come out of the closet" to own their sexual identity, starting with themselves. Unfortunately, being identified by their sexual orientation means they are seen as sexual beings, not just people who happen to love a person of the same sex. To come out changes every aspect of their lives: Work, family, friends, faith and politics. I turn next to their faith.

Faith and Sexual Orientation

My interview questions did not address spirituality and religion specifically, but several women referred to Christianity as an important part of their lives. Both Marci and Anna attended Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in their small town. I also joined MCC and found it a haven from the condemnation I was sure to find in my denomination. Founded in 1968 by

Reverend Troy Perry, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches encompasses 40 countries on six continents (Metropolitan Community Churches, 2012). Troy Perry was a gay Christian who wanted to provide a safe haven for gays and lesbians (Perry, 1972). Although the denomination strives to appeal to heterosexuals as well as homosexuals, the majority of members are LGBT people. Oftentimes disenfranchised LGBT Christians will maintain dual membership with their home congregation, attending MCC in the evenings. That was the case for Marci. She found the local MCC services comfortable because of the similarity to her home church:

I would go to my church on Sunday morning, and that service [MCC] met in the evening and I would go there in the evenings and I really can't believe I was doing this because it was in a -- it met in a church in a community where I was teaching elementary school P.E. I mean, you know, some of the parents could have very easily seen me going in, but I went and it was fine and nothing ever came of it, uhm, but, uhm, I really enjoyed that for a while. I don't know if freedom's the right word, but, I grew up in the United Methodist Church--so the liturgy was--a lot of it was very similar, exactly to what I had grown up with and, uhm, but for a while I felt a real closeness to some of the people there.

Anna, a friend of Marci's who went to the same MCC described a similar experience in her interview which is included in the performance ethnography. I included it as a dialogue between the two of us because of the dynamics involved in sharing our experience of having to hide our church affiliation at work. Anna, Karen and Jean struggled with the moral issue of being lesbian which stemmed from their religious upbringing as well as societal attitudes. Anna described how

her struggle to accept herself as gay affected her first relationship. She went through therapy to better accept her sexual identity:

Well, I went through the hard time of going--questioning, and, uhm, wondering what have I done. And for the longest time it was I just fell in love with the wrong person. Do not call me the “L” word. It does not apply. Uhm...which I think bothered her [girlfriend] a little bit because I think she had already gone through that. So I went through therapy just for that. And at the same time I was a music director at a small Methodist Church--well not a small Methodist church--a big one for the community. And, uhm, so then I really thought every Sunday that I sat there or stood up that everybody was going, “Do you think she is?” (Laughs) And so I always wondered if it was written on my face, you know, or my chest like the big “A.” I had the big “L.” (Laughs)

Shelley, a high school biology teacher, had a revealing experience with church life, one that is positive yet couched in church tradition and fundamentally opposed to homosexuality. Although Shelley doesn't profess to be a Christian, she agreed to bring her boys up in the Roman Catholic Church because it is her partner's faith. She told me a striking story of the time their first son was baptized. Her family came for the event and the priest invited the church members to attend. Shelley described their meeting with the priest humorously: “And, it was not even a big deal when we sat down with the priest. And, I just flat out said, “So, what are you going to do when everybody asks about this boy havin' two moms?” And he said, “I don't know. I'll cross that bridge when we get to it.” She went on to say that everyone wanted to come hold the boys after church. Nobody openly proclaimed them to be lesbian, yet everyone accepted them as a couple. In our interview for this study, Shelley told me a story about an issue that came up concerning a family picture for the church directory:

And we go in and we have our picture taken; it's a cute family photo--great, it's like one of our favorite photos. And then about a month later when they were starting to put it together, we get a call from the lady who's organizing it. She said, "You know we need to redo your family picture." Uhhhhh...And she's kinda stammering. She's talking to Connie, she's like, "What we could do is, if you come in and either picture with you and the boys and then Shelley by herself, or Shelley and the boys and you by yourself, but we just need to ..." And, Connie was like, "What are you talking about?" And basically, she's saying we can't have a family in there, in our directory, with two Moms and two kids. We just can't do it. Even though we're very accepted like that. And Connie was really upset about it. And I was like, "You know why? 'Cause you know that's the church policy. Just because this church is not as strict, it's still from the Pope. They can't do that." So you know, she went in and mentioned it to a couple of people who are pretty loud, and said, "This is what they want us to do." And they're like, "Well, if you're not getting your picture in there as a family, mine's not gonna be in there either." And so, one by one, people started saying, "I'm not gonna have mine in. Take my picture out. If you're not putting them in as a family, then take mine out, too." And it ended up that they never did a directory. (Laughing) Which is pretty cool.

This story illustrates the changes that some mainstream Christian churches are undergoing. In this case, the Pope still dictates the policies of the church. Although the priest and individual members do not necessarily agree with the organization's stance on the subject of homosexuality, it was easier to refuse to put their own family photos in the directory than to include Shelley and her partner together with their children. Deciding not to publish the directory

may not affect the Vatican, but it did offer support to Shelley and Connie, building solidarity among the members.

Church affiliation affects individual LGBT people both positively and negatively. Though Laura indicated no bitterness toward Christianity, she does not attend church because she refuses to support or listen to condemnation of homosexuals. My experience discussing faith with other LGBT people reveals various responses. Some leave their faith, disillusioned and bitter. Others do not wish to leave their traditions and find a way internally to reconcile their religious beliefs and their sexual orientation. There are those who grow from their rejection and find a new faith community or a new understanding of spirituality. Educators are expected to support the dominant ideology; therefore, as revealed through the lens of social identity theory (Krane & Barber, 2003), lesbian teachers are likely to pass as straight. As discussed and illustrated in Chapter 2, group affiliation is important to collective self-esteem. Since being heterosexual carries higher status and identifying as lesbian carries risk for teachers, they are inclined to remain in the closet. This becomes more complicated in tight knit social groups like a church community. Anna's fear of being conspicuous as a lesbian to congregants at the church where she directed music and Marci's acknowledgement that she could have been seen by her students' parents when she attended MCC sheds light on the delicacy of identity management when trying to pass as straight. One of the strategies Griffin (1992) found in her study of gay and lesbian teachers was that of separation. They attempted to balance living in two different worlds by keeping their personal and professional identities separate (pp. 173-174). Those two identities often blend in public social situations like a church. Since self-categorization and social comparison work together in forming group alliances (Krane & Barber, 2003), LGBT people sacrifice a part of themselves to be considered heterosexual. They often sacrifice community and

church membership if they come out as gay. Similarly, those who work in a church-affiliated institution, as I did, find themselves isolated from colleagues who attend the same church and work together. It is more conspicuous to remain silent about your own church membership and family when your colleagues blend their personal and professional identities. However, there are those few, like Shelley, who are fortunate enough to find a mainstream church where their sexual orientation is not an issue to the other members.

Church membership often offers a social outlet for people. However, not everyone can or wishes to rely on a church for their sense of community. Social outlets for lesbian teachers depend on the availability of social groups for lesbians in their area and the degree of interest they have in strictly LGBT friendships and/or straight friendships. As it turned out, none of the teachers I interviewed were strictly lesbian-centered in their friendships. Anna and her partner now go to a mainstream church together and have friends who are both straight and lesbian. Kelley and her partner, and Shelley and her partner are part of a circle of straight and gay friends.

Even though she is Black, Shelley told me the majority of her close friends from childhood to adulthood have been White. She recalls being the only Black student in her classes during elementary school. She explained that being in academically advanced classes in school prevented her from developing close friendships with other Black children. When she was older, she joined band and ran track. These students were primarily White and became her friends. Shelley also grew up living in government assisted housing, often called the “Projects.” Many of her neighbors were White because she lives in a part of the country with a small population of African Americans. She was criticized by her Black peers for having White friends:

But, uhm, most of my friends were White, so I didn’t feel weird about that. But, sometimes I kind of got, you know, a little wigged up by the Black kids because I didn’t

live in a Black neighborhood and I didn't, you know, attend the Black churches, so it was kind of like, you know, either one, I don't know you, you don't know me or more on their line I kind of felt like they were like, so, you know, you're too good to go to our church, you're too good to hang out with us here in the hallway.

We did not have an opportunity to explore the connection between her childhood and her choice of friends today. However, since her mother was a teacher and Shelley became a teacher, she continued to be associated with White people. Therefore, it is natural for her to feel comfortable around them.

Shelley identified as heterosexual for some years after she started teaching. By the time she started dating women, she already had a core group of straight friends who have lasted to this day. Marci has a distinctive story. Although she is in her fifties, she has had no long-term romantic relationships. While she knows and socializes with lesbians, she is closest to a group of straight friends. She says they know she is gay because they tease her about women, but she has never really come out to them.

I was touched by Karen's story. Apparently, her private nature coupled with a partner afraid of being identified as gay kept her from forming a network of lesbian friends. She recalled with nostalgia a social group of lesbians that formed in her area years ago. She and her partner at the time enjoyed the group's monthly meetings and potluck dinners greatly. She also reflected on a time when she and her present partner would go out with another couple. Unfortunately, when they moved away, that social outlet ended. Years of taking care of aging and ill relatives, including those of her partner, have isolated her. However, I suspect in some ways her experience is analogous to the experiences of heterosexual women who act as caregivers for elderly and invalid relatives due to the amount of personal time such care demands. Caring for an

invalid can tie a caregiver to the home, making it difficult to leave the house for social engagements.

Before I leave the subject of heteronormativity, I would like to couch the experiences of these women in a historical context. Since the majority of these women are over fifty years old, they have been influenced by the backlash on women that occurred after WWII. During WWII, women moved out of the domestic sphere and into factories because they were needed to supply the war with fuel and ammunition. Once men returned home from fighting overseas, many women returned to the private, domestic sphere or were forced to take lower paying jobs in order to reinstate male soldiers back into the workforce. Once women tasted the freedom having their own paycheck gave them, they were reluctant to give it up. A number of gays and lesbians found a community in the cities and remained there to work (D'Emilio, 1983).

Our Miss Brooks was a popular radio show from 1948 – 1957 that transitioned to television. Although the main character was a teacher, the fact that she longed to be a wife and mother overrode her role as a professional woman. As television grew more popular, it became a primary tool for indoctrinating society with traditional images of men as authoritarian breadwinners and women as subservient homemakers (Ryan & Terzian, 2009).

Most of the women in my study grew up during a time when television programs like *Father Knows Best*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *I Love Lucy* and a myriad of others portrayed the ideal “nuclear family.” Magazines such as *Redbook*, *Women's World* and *Good Housekeeping* reinforced the domestic role of women. With influences such as these, it is understandable that so many of these lesbians remained in the closet. While today we have a wider range of magazines for women and television shows that portray women in a variety of

professional roles, stereotypes still abound and healthy, positive images of lesbians are still hard to find.

Political Involvement and Social Life

Sometimes social networks are built upon gay activism. Except for Kelley and Rio, this group of women is too cautious to be political activists for LGBT rights. That is not to say they don't vote against discriminatory laws, but they won't be seen at an event like a protest or a Gay Pride parade where they could be identified. Nevertheless, some have gone to large marches like the March on Washington or camped out for the weekend at a women's festival. Kelley told about a time when she and her partner protested a KKK March downtown in a nearby large city:

This would have been in the middle '80s. I want to say '85, '86. Somewhere around in there, and the KKK had petitioned to rally and the city was not going to give them the permit. And so it hit the news of course, all these fags can get permits to have their parade but we can't have our right to freedom of speech parade. Eventually they did get the permit, so once they got it, we were watching TV, watching the news. And we said, "You know, we should go down." And we did, and there were more people who protested the KKK being there than there was folks in the Klan parade. And it really was maybe, I'd say maybe forty, forty or fifty, KKK members. And several hundred, probably a thousand or better, of people who were surrounding them that were following them as they were going down Main Street. Nothing really bad happened, as far as with us, other than there were a lot of gay and lesbian people who were there.

Kelley also remarked on going to the March on Washington. Marci was the only other teacher who recalled a time she took an activist stand.

Marci told me about writing a letter to the county council where she lived when the 1996 Summer Olympics were held in Atlanta. Her county had just passed a resolution stating homosexuality was incompatible with community standards. When the Olympic committee found out about it, they refused to carry the torch through the county. As she explains:

So basically it [the torch] came up the interstate or wherever it went...and when it got to the county line, they put it in a car and brought it down to the city limits and let the guy run it down through the city. But, you know-- there was a big hullabaloo about that. And I actually--I actually wrote a letter to my--to all the county councilmen and one of them was a guy I grew up with. And you know, I didn't identify myself as a lesbian in that letter, but I stated the fact that I didn't think what they had done was right. And this guy wrote me a letter back and talked. And I'm sure he knows that's where I was coming from, but it was never mentioned.

Living in such a small and homophobic community, taking a public stance was a courageous step for Marci to take.

In summary, the lesbian teachers I interviewed were out to others in widely varying degrees, ranging from just a few close friends to most people in the community to work. While several were out to one or two teachers at work, only two were completely open about their sexual orientation. Those who were out at work and in their personal lives did the most to provide diversity in the classroom. Even though the others weren't out, they were aware and protective of students who appeared to be or were gay. The women we do not hear from in this study are those who refused to participate. I was surprised at the women who declined to do the interview, in spite of reassurances that pseudonyms would be used. Perhaps they are right to think they could still be outed, since they live in a provincial part of their state. One contact of

mine talked to two women who adamantly refused to be interviewed. When I met them later, they conceded they were concerned about being outed and losing their jobs. Another associate of mine contacted a young gay male teacher who knew several lesbian women in the school system. He passed along word of my study to them more than once, but nobody contacted me for an interview. I believe the stories I heard were from women who felt secure in their jobs and were out to varying degrees. I would have liked to hear the stories of those women who did not feel secure in their jobs, as their voices are the most silent.

Coming Out and Identity Formation

The identities of these teachers are evident in their stories. It brings additional insight to return to the discussion of identity formation for lesbians discussed in Chapter Two. If we apply the model developed by McCarn and Fassinger (1996), we can see why it is important to separate personal identity formation from public identity formation. Their choice to categorize the development of a lesbian identity in phases instead of stages suits these women better for the fluidity and circularity intimated by the term. To facilitate this brief analysis, a review of the model is in order. Beginning from a state of nonawareness, the phases are: (a) Awareness; (b) Exploration; (c) Deepening/Commitment; and (d) Internalization/ Synthesis (p. 521). These are listed with two concurrent strands which reciprocate but are not simultaneous: One of Individual Sexual Identity and the other of Group Membership Identity. In the stories narrators told me, it was evident that they had moved from initial awareness to internalization and synthesis. It is also evident that these changes did not occur in a linear fashion. Rather than trace each of these women through these phases, I will give select examples to illustrate.

Several of the teachers I spoke with were thrust rather suddenly into an awareness of feeling different because they fell in love with a woman. Anna's first sexual encounter thrust her

into Phase One of awareness of her sexual inclinations. Since her lover was already out, her first encounter made her aware on a group level that there were others with the same feelings. Before she had time to contemplate her sexual feelings, she was made aware of the potential for oppression identified in the third group phase because the encounter occurs at a music teacher conference where she felt conspicuous. Although Anna seemed to be taken by surprise, indicating she did not have a gradual awareness occur before her first relationship, her process seemed to follow the phases in a fairly sequential fashion. During her first love relationship, she went through Phase Two, exploring her feelings on an individual level and going into therapy to attain a level of commitment to her sexual orientation in Phase Three. On a group level, she became aware of other lesbians through meeting women through her lover. As she moved through Phase Two and Three, she learned about women's music which enlightened her more to the awareness of oppression and the consequences of choices lesbians endure as a group. Having lived with her partner of twenty years, she has grown into Phase Four where she has confirmed her love for women and her identity as a lesbian. Although Anna isn't out or a public activist, she realizes the significance of being a member of a larger oppressed group.

Rio, Evelyn and Rock claimed to be clueless until their first romantic encounter with a woman. For both Rio and Rock it just took that first kiss to leave their boyfriends and begin dating women. While both became aware of lesbians around them on campus and in the dormitory, their awareness phase and exploration phase were truncated. They realized their sexual orientation through that kiss and moved directly into Phase Three on both the individual and group level. They committed to their sexual orientation and developed a circle of friends. Rock has remained in the closet at work, but acts comfortable with her sexual orientation and membership in the lesbian community. On the other hand, Rio came out in college and has

moved fully into the group membership of Phase Four, taking an activist stance toward improving the minority status of LGBT people.

Jean provides another look at coming out as a lesbian. She was a child when she first recognized her attraction to women. At age 12 she read about lesbians in *Life* magazine and became aware that it was not okay to feel the way she did about other women. She went through the awareness phase early, but stifled her feelings and skipped the second phase of exploration for many years. Marrying after college, she didn't begin to explore her feelings for women until she fell in love with an older woman who shared her feelings. The other woman thought homosexuality was immoral and ended the relationship. Having admitted to herself she was attracted to women, Jean began going out to a local gay bar with her husband. She didn't actually have a circle of LGBT friends, but she acknowledged feeling safe and comfortable with them at the bar. Although she called herself bisexual, Jean transitioned to Phase Three of deepening her commitment to her sexual orientation when she started going to the gay bar. The night she met the woman who became her lover, Jean entered the bar with a prayer on her lips:

I thought, now, I said to God, I said, I was ready to make a move, okay? I said, "God, you know, we're going to the bar tonight. Please let her be there. And if she's not there, I'll be straight for the rest of my life." That was what I had decided, you know. I thought, well maybe in my next life I can come back as a lesbian. I had come to that conclusion.

Her years of stifling her lesbian identity ended when she began a relationship with a woman, ended her marriage and became fully lesbian-identified with a circle of lesbian and gay friends. Having retired from teaching, she no longer feels the constraint to remain in the closet and is outspoken for gay rights. I would say that she has fully moved into the fourth and last phase on an individual and group level.

Taking a look at these teachers through their stories and in light of identity theory reinforces the flexibility of McCarn and Fassinger's (1996) model, demonstrating that it applies to the coming out process of lesbian teachers' as well as to other lesbians. Concurrently, the stories of this small sample further support the historical conclusions in Chapter Two that teachers tend to be conservative in their outlook and inclined to support dominant ideology. Only two of the eleven teachers interviewed for this study are out at work and apply their unique perspective as members of an oppressed group to teach children to accept difference in others.

Over the years, women teachers have been trained to accept male authority, work in isolation, and nurture the children in their classes (Blount, 2005; Preston, 1993; Quantz, 1985; Strober & Tyack, 1980). The woman who did much to establish the education and hiring of women teachers, Catherine Beecher, argued for women teachers because of their feminine qualities (Burstyn, 1974). While teachers have been dominated by expectations to be a nurturing, feminine influence on children, lesbian teachers are also beset by the public perception they are dangerous to children. It has not been long since efforts to purge the schools of gays and lesbians occurred in Florida and spread to other parts of the U.S. (Braukman, 2001; Graves, 2007; Harbeck, 1997). These factors have made teaching and the homosexual lifestyle incompatible to the general public, giving lesbian teachers reason to hide their sexual orientation. At the same time, even closeted teachers in the study found ways to oppose or resist the master narrative by insisting on living their private lives as lesbians and finding ways to support LGBT students, even if covertly.

It would be easy to develop a victim mentality concerning the oppressed situation of many lesbian teachers. Iannotta & Kane (2002) found this to be a skewed result from past studies on lesbian teachers. "Narratives that focus on victimization obscure the various and powerful

ways in which individuals actively resist discriminatory ideologies and practices” (p. 347).

However, even when they were not verbally out of the closet at work, some of these teachers exhibited resistance to hegemonic influences to be heterosexual. Iannotta & Kane (2002) analyzed the narratives of lesbian coaches in private colleges who were not explicitly out, but who took a more subtle approach to expressing their sexual orientation. These professors brought their partners to work and did nothing to hide their relationships with women. When students and staff told new students they were lesbian, they did nothing to confront or deny it. In so doing, they created an environment where students felt comfortable being gay and discussing their own relationships with the teacher. They demonstrated that teachers do not have to verbally come out to be a positive influence on their students. Iannotta & Kane (2002) concluded:

What the personal narratives consistently reveal is that lesbian coaches use a multiplicity of strategies when engaged in performances of sexual identity. As we have seen, these strategies are non-linear, fluid and contextualized. As we have also seen, an additional element—the notion and performance of “silence” where a coach has not explicitly named herself a lesbian, but who engages in other types of nonlinguistic actions that clearly mark her sexual identity—is also extremely important for scholars to recognize.

(p. 364)

Teachers in this study, like Shelley and Evelyn, used similar “strategies of resistance” (2002) that may be as effective in providing a safe environment for LGBT students as Rio and Kelley. I will next discuss ways the study was constrained and close with considerations for future research.

Constraints

The effort to locate willing participants for the study was reasonably fruitful. Yet, there were surprises, frustrations and disappointments along the way. As my research questions

indicate, I began with the expectation that the interviews would reveal varying degrees of inequity in the schools regarding lesbian teachers. I was convinced that the stories I would hear were those of women who were oppressed because of their sexual orientation. I thought I might hear stories of women who deliberately tried to hide their sexual orientation by bringing a male date to social functions or even marry a man to hide their orientation. (None of these women did that.) I expected to hear more about prejudice directed at them or experiences that made them certain they would be fired. I thought I might even get stories of teachers who were harassed or threatened, either physically or verbally.

As it turned out, the women I interviewed appear to be well-adjusted people who do not live under constant fear. Yes, Rio told me a frightening story of being attacked when in college. Karen told a story of a principal who tried to bully her out of the school. Even so, overall, there are few stories of experiencing overt prejudice. Yet, it is important to remember how living in a heteronormative world limits their freedom to be themselves. If they are in the closet they cannot place a family photo on their desk at work or walk down the street holding hands or kiss in public. They constantly monitor their behaviors and words in public. At times, a teacher's partner or friends are more afraid of being discovered than the teacher herself. When the teacher might willingly bring her partner to a faculty party, like Karen's partner, she refuses.

Many of these women were older; therefore, they had lived and taught long enough to feel comfortable with their lives and somewhat safe in their occupations – as long as they maintain silence about their sexual orientation. Those who were closeted found ways to resist the effects of heteronormativity by maintaining a professional distance at work that insulated them from social involvement with straight coworkers who might out them. (Shelley, whose family life is visible for all to see, is the exception.) Only one woman, Karen, stated she would be fired

if she mentioned gays and lesbians to students in school. Coincidentally, she teaches in the same county where Rock once worked and suspected her contract wasn't renewed because they were suspicious of her sexual orientation. It is not within the scope of this study to measure the degree of stress lesbian teachers have grown accustomed to enduring, unaware of the toll on their mental and physical health.

Clearly, the women I interviewed shaped the design of this performance ethnography. The number and range of participants, their degree of participation and what I found to be significant and engaging in their interviews make the final analysis unique. I believe interviews with other lesbian teachers would reflect themes in common with these. However, their ages, when they came out, where they live, and where they teach could paint a different picture altogether.

By their common work experiences, teachers form a culture and by their common life experiences lesbians form a culture, and by their common work and life experiences, lesbian teachers form a culture. Yet, for the most part they work and live in isolation from each other. No single performance ethnography can give a complete picture of that culture. All of the teachers in this study live in the southern part of the United States. Two of them grew up in the Midwest, one of whom now lives in a large city. Those two happen to be the ones who are out at work. Kelley, who began teaching in her 50s, was always out at work, as was Rio, in her 30s. Judging by her age, one might expect Kelley to be less open about her sexual orientation. It seems that both women were influenced more by their personalities, self-confidence and convictions than when and where they grew up. The stories might differ greatly if the teachers worked in another part of the country. However, judging from the statistics of a 2008 study, *A National Study of LGBT Educators' Perceptions of Their Workplace Climate*, which shows the

majority of LGBT teachers around the nation feel they work in an unsafe, unsupportive and homophobic environment, the stories might not differ much at all (Smith, Wright, et al., 2008).

The women who participated in this study provided a variety of perspectives and experiences. Of the eleven teachers I interviewed, two were women of color, the rest being White. A statistical study of teacher demographics conducted in 2011 revealed 84% of teachers in the United States are White and 7% are Black (Feistritzer, 2011, p. 14). Although I would have liked to find teachers from other ethnic and racial groups, I am satisfied that the racial mix of my participants reflect the percentages of those who are teachers today.

Who I could access was limited by time and location, as well as the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). For example, since I did not get prior permission from the IRB to contact specific organizations of which I was not a member, I could not deliberately seek out lesbian teachers, particularly women of color. The IRB prohibited me from soliciting interviews from teachers I did not know. I could send out information about the study to people I knew and ask them to pass it along, but I had to wait for interested teachers to contact me before I could act.

Using the snowball method to find participants also meant that the majority of the narrators were over fifty years of age. Since my initial contacts came through women I was connected to socially, it makes sense that they and their friends fell into my age bracket. One participant is in her early 30s and one is in her 40s. Two women are in their 60s. I would have liked greater representation from women in their 20s and 30s to reveal more about differences in their experiences from lesbians who grew up in the sixties, seventies and eighties. As society has grown increasingly tolerant of LGBT people (Smith, 2011), I anticipate that to be reflected in the attitudes of younger lesbian teachers. Nevertheless, having women represent a span of four

decades provided a range of ages for the study. In future studies, I would like to broaden the scope of teachers to include a more diverse group.

Another change I would like to make is to have greater participation by the narrators in the study. I think IRB requirements on the consent form, meant to protect the participants, may have limited their involvement. Considered a vulnerable population, care had to be taken to hide their identities. Since so many of the teachers who participated were in the closet, that was reasonable. However, the consent form defines their level of responsibility to the project in such a way that their roles in the research appear to be no more than providers of information to me as the researcher. In addition, the IRB required the interview questions be determined in advance. Although I needed to have some questions, it may be that the questions were so specific they actually limited participants' responses. I did not follow them in any specific order, but questions point the conversation in one direction and away from another. Finally, the consent form only required participants to be available for 1 – 2 interviews, leaving the impression that there was nothing more they could offer. This created a situation for the study to be more researcher dependent than I would have liked.

On the other hand, I am not sure if this disparate group of women wanted to be more involved than they were. Once the interview was over, no one contacted me to find out the status of the research. I expected them to ask about the transcription of their interview when it took several months to transcribe them. I did member checking twice. The first time, when I sent the transcripts to them to review, it took several reminders to get a response. (In almost every case, they requested the transcript be sent by mail instead of email.) The next time I contacted them, I sent the first draft of the performance ethnography for their input by email. (By this time, all identifying information had been removed from the script.) I got a quick response from all of

them, which I attribute to the fact that I gave them a time limit of two weeks in which to respond. The fact that they were busy teaching when I sought feedback could also explain the brevity of their communication with me. Both times, other than minor corrections, nobody had any changes, additions or opinions about the stories. Several women had positive comments about the final project, but offered no critical discernment. Since they were easy to please, I did not have to jettison anything I thought was insightful. At the same time, without their participation, I was limited to my own perspective of which stories were the best to use. Of course, I received input on the draft from my advisor and I sought artistic input from a professional storyteller.

From another perspective, it is possible the teachers felt connected to the project, but saw the interview as their primary contribution. I believe I could have done more from the beginning to encourage their input. Considering the constraints on the study, I am not sure how that would be done. It is also true that this is not participatory action research where there is a community working together for specific social change. Few of these women knew each other, although some are acquainted. If concerns about confidentiality can be assuaged, it might be possible to get the narrators involved through hearing a performance together. Their input could serve as a follow up and refinement of the current writing. I will weigh the possible approaches I can take to involve participants when I continue this type of study in the future.

Future Research

Because this performance ethnography of personal narratives only told the stories of a small group of people, the field is ripe for more investigation. The ages, ethnicities, races and geographical location of lesbian teachers play a big part in their experiences. I would like to expand on the current research by interviewing more lesbian teachers to give a broader range of experiences, particularly seeking out younger women and women of color. I am interested in

discovering if other states or regions of the country have more women who are out. However, it would also be helpful to focus on teachers in a particular region. In doing so, cultural influences would be more apparent. Since the majority of teachers I interviewed were from the South, it makes sense to either focus narrowly on the part of state in which I live or to expand throughout the southern states. However, there are concerns about focusing on a narrow geographical area. If I do that, teachers who are not out are less likely to participate because it would be easier to identify their schools and them.

I chose to interview lesbians because research has shown that women are already a historically oppressed group. Coupled with their sexual orientation, they have to guard against prejudices that erupt from a heterosexist, patriarchal culture. As a lesbian and teacher, I have a personal interest in working toward an accepting, egalitarian world for women like me. Then again, gay men face their own dilemmas as “deviant” members of society. For one, they are more likely to be considered pedophiles when working with children. Their stories would give further insight into the consequences of living in a heteronormative society. Finally, the experiences of the students need to be told. I would prefer to interview high school students, particularly those who are involved in a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) at their school. Due to their powerlessness as minors, gaining permission from the IRB and parents to interview them would be a difficult hurdle to surmount. An alternative could be to turn to colleges and universities to find adult participants who can reflect on their high school experiences while the memories are still fresh. Whether lesbian, gay male teachers or students, each group has important contributions to make to building understanding and acceptance.

Another area of research that came up through this study was the experience Christian LGBT people have with their home churches and the difficulties they face in finding a church

that accepts them and nurtures them in the way that they need. We see a face-off between conservative churches that rally around anti-gay rhetoric and mainstream churches like the Episcopal Church that are opening their doors and ministry to LGBT people. While I found a few articles on reconciling religious beliefs and being gay, this subject has only begun to be mined.

Research has shown that heterosexuals who know gays and lesbians are more accepting (Herek, 1997). In a survey administered five times between 1988 and 2008 by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) on attitudes toward homosexuality in 42 countries, “Overwhelmingly, societies have become more accepting of homosexual behavior” (Smith, 2011, p. 2). And, according to a number of different polls, support for same sex marriage is growing quickly around the United States (Religious Tolerance). With political leaders like President Obama and Vice President Biden speaking out for legalized gay marriage, the time is ripe to voice lesbian teachers’ stories to bring understanding and respect to them for the work they do. Their stories can transform the world.

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Appendices

Appendix A Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your childhood. What did you like to do?
2. When did you first realize you were attracted to women?
3. How did you feel about being a lesbian? Can you tell me about your first love or romantic relationship with another woman?
4. What was the community like for lesbians (and gays) when you were growing up?
5. How did you connect with other lesbians? What did you do for fun?
6. Can you describe ways that society influenced you to conform or rebel to feminine stereotypes? Can you tell me about a time when you deliberately dressed or acted as if you thought you were supposed to act? (Rebelled)?
7. Describe for me the degree that you are “out” in your personal life. How does being a closeted/out lesbian affect your personal life?
8. What kind of social circles do you have as a lesbian? Are you a member of a closely-knit group?
9. Can you tell me about a time when someone or some institution discriminated against you or your friends?
10. Tell me about your career as a teacher. How long have you taught?
11. What motivated you to become a teacher?
12. How does your sexual orientation affect your behaviors at work?
 - A. If you are **not out** at work, what do you do to prevent colleagues, parents and children from questioning your sexuality? Can you relate an incident where you had to conceal your sexual orientation?

- B. If you **are out** at work, can you tell me about an encounter, positive or negative, that you have had with students or colleagues?
13. Can you tell me about a time that your job security was threatened?
- A. Do you recall any stories of other teachers who lost their jobs because of sexual orientation?
- B. If so, how did that make you feel?
14. How does it feel to be out/closeted at work?
15. Tell me about a time when students picked on or made fun of students who did not fit heterosexual norms. What did you do?
16. How do students feel about LGBT people at your school? Do you recall an instance of same-sex attraction between students?
17. What does your school do to teach heterosexual gender roles? Can you tell me about a time when a student rebelled against these stereotypes?
18. If you could change anything about your how society affects your lifestyle, what would it be?
19. Is there anything else you would like to tell me before we end this interview?

Appendix B
Informed Consent Statement
 Balancing Identities for Lesbian Teachers

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a human research study conducted by Delanna Reed as a PhD candidate at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. To fulfill the requirements of the PhD in Cultural Studies in Education, this dissertation explores the stories of lesbian teachers and their experiences balancing a lesbian lifestyle in a work environment that often condemns same-sex relationships as unnatural and promotes heterosexual gender norms for boys and girls. The purpose of this study is to collect and transcribe oral histories from licensed K-12 teachers who identify as lesbian, to reveal the challenges they face and how they cope with those challenges. These stories will be published as my dissertation. The long-range goal will be to perform these stories in a range of settings and to publish them in a book and in professional journal articles. By signing this agreement, you are giving the researcher the right to include your interview material in a script in the dissertation, performances of that script in multiple venues and as part of journal articles written to share this research with other scholars. It is also possible that the script will be published in book form and made available to the general public.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in one or more audio-recorded interviews during which we will explore your experiences as a lesbian and a teacher in your community. The first interview will take 1 – 2 hours. Any follow-up interviews will take no more than two hours. The total number of interview sessions will be determined jointly by the participant and researcher, but are unlikely to exceed 4 hours.

Each interview will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. The researcher will take notes occasionally during the interview to aid her memory. Afterward, a professional transcriber and the researcher will listen to the audio recordings and transcribe them into a written document.

The transcript will be given to you for review. It may be delivered in person, by U.S. Mail or email, depending on your preference and the proximity of your location. While your name and address must be used for the mailing, your name will not be identified anywhere on the document. The final script of teacher stories will include experiences related by you and other teachers, in response to the interview questions. You will be given an opportunity to review the script and give your input before it is finalized.

RISKS

Telling personal experiences in a private setting of your own choosing is seldom a risky endeavor. However, lesbian teachers who work in a homophobic environment may fear the loss of their jobs if their sexual orientation were known. To relieve that concern, the researcher

_____ Participant's initials

pledges to maintain confidentiality by using a pseudonym in place of your real name and by removing all references that will identify your place of employment or where you live. Participant's names will only be disclosed to Delanna Reed and a transcriber, who must sign a pledge of confidentiality. All references to your name, the names of people you know, and specific information that could reveal your identity will be deleted from written documents; specifically the handwritten notes, transcripts, script and dissertation.

It is possible that broaching a sensitive subject could cause psychological distress. For lesbians, the experience of acknowledging their sexual orientation, coming out to others, and struggling for self-acceptance is emotionally charged. For that reason, at any time during the interview, if you indicate a desire to change the topic because it is painful or are overcome emotionally, the researcher will stop the recorder and allow you to compose yourself. You may terminate the interview and further association at any time. In the case of such termination, written notes and recordings will be destroyed. In addition, If you wish to talk to a mental health professional you may call these toll-free numbers:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: 24-hour helpline for treatment services near you; 1-800-662-HELP (4357). To locate local mental health clinics, go to <http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator>.
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

BENEFITS

The benefit of participating is that your stories will be told. Through the safety of a pseudonym, your experiences will be shared in writing and in oral performance. This study will contribute to the understanding of the pressures faced by lesbian teachers on a daily basis. Bringing these stories to scholars and public audiences has the potential to change prejudices through furthering their compassion and understanding. In addition, you will have a copy of the story or stories to keep. You will be invited to attend a performance of the script of stories when the researcher schedules it.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link participants to the study.

The signed consent form will be kept in a locked file drawer in Delanna Reed's private office in Johnson City, TN. When the study has been completed, it will be kept for five years in a locked cabinet designated for such documents in the Educational Psychology & Counseling Department on the University of Tennessee campus in Knoxville, TN. After five years, it will be shredded.

_____ Participant's initials

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Delanna Reed, at P. O Box 70311 Johnson City, TN 37614 or room 205C Warf Pickel Hall, East Tennessee State University, and 423-943-6782. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature

Date _____

Participant's name (Print clearly)

Phone Number

Email Address

Mailing Address

Investigator's signature

Date _____

Appendix C
Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

As a transcribing typist of this research project, I understand that I will be hearing recordings of confidential interviews. The information on these tapes has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these recordings with anyone except the primary researcher of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Signature

Date

Print Name legibly

Appendix D Transcription Markings

The transcription follows a simple version of Gail Jefferson's system found in Wood, L.A. & Kroger, R.O. (2000). *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

[Square brackets indicating overlapping speech.

]

Example: P1: ... couldn't be a hundred percent (1) [clear

 WL: It might be]

↑↓ Up and down arrows to indicate the pitch of the speaker

(()) Double parentheses to insert nonspeech sounds.

[] Brackets used to insert comments or description by the researcher

° ° Circles before and after a sentence spoken at a low volume

:: Colons to indicate an elongated vowel sound. "What about::t – clothing?"

- To indicate a brief pause in the middle of a sentence or between thoughts

(.) An untimed, audible pause

hah Laughter

.hh Audible inbreath

hh Audible outbreath

end of line= Equal sign indicates latching (no interval) between utterances. Denotes
=start of line no break between sentences or thoughts by the speaker in this
 transcription.

Appendix E
First Script for 2011 Southeast Women's Studies Association Conference

Does It Show? Teachers' Tales on Being Lesbian

Cast of Narrators

Shelley: High school biology teacher

Jean: First grade teacher

Rock: High school math teacher and coach

Get to Know Me

Shelley: I guess my story is very different because, first of all, I identify as bisexual. My partner now is a female and we have a wonderful relationship. Does that make me gay, lesbian? What does that do? I don't know. I don't like labels. I think that is the key for me because, being Black, being female, being bisexual, or whatever, there are all these labels. I have friends who say, "If you had to describe yourself, wouldn't you say, 'Oh, I'm a lesbian?'" I just wouldn't do that. I would say, "Well, now, I'm a mom, I'm a teacher, I'm a drummer -- there's so many different things that describe me. I think I'm just comfortable in my skin.

Jean: Well, I grew up in a small town in Virginia and uh, just like most small towns, uh, you grew up going to church, you know, just doing what you were told to do by your parents and trying to do what you thought was right. (Hah.) Unfortunately, at an early age, I really knew or discovered that I had an attraction to women. I was probably around seven or eight, maybe around that age. Uh, I really didn't know what a lesbian was until I picked up Life magazine when I was about 12 years old and read something about lesbians there and I thought, "Oh, I'm not supposed to have feelings for women," and I think that's when I really became aware of my sexuality and that I couldn't be, or I wasn't supposed to be because society was telling us it was wrong.

Rock: I never wanted to do anything else. Never thought about doing anything else. Um, I wanted to be a PE teacher. And my stepmother refused. She said, ‘No.’ I don’t think she ever really wanted me to be a teacher. I think probably because of the pay. She said, ‘No. Pick something else.’ And of course I picked math because there wasn’t any reading involved. It was a struggle. It wasn’t easy and I was not a great math student. I don’t have a memory. So, if I don’t use it every day, I forget it. So basically, when I started teaching, I had to teach myself how to do that math.

Coming Out

Shelley: I started teaching in ’91, so somewhere around ’89 or ’90 I was hanging out with some really good friends. They’re all straight, and they’re all dating and all falling in love or married and I kept thinking, “Well, how come I’m not? What’s up with me? What’s going on?” You tell yourself you’re waiting on that prince in shining armor to come through. One night I went downtown with my friends to hear Sonya of Disappear Fear. So, we’re sitting there and there are tons of women in there. The music was great. While I listened, I looked around the place and saw women all cuddled up. I saw two women kiss for the first time in public, and I was like, “Oh my God.” For the first time ever! “What’s that about? So the next day I’m talking to my friend Carrie - we’re yakking on the phone and I said, “You know, Carrie, maybe it’s not a prince, maybe it’s a princess that I’m looking for.” And, she was like, “Well, what do you think about that?” And, I said, “I don’t know. It’s a choice. I don’t have an aversion to that.” That just opened my eyes a little bit and I thought maybe it’s a woman. I had never thought about it before.

Jean: If it hadn't been for Claudia I'd never, I would have never, I had seen Claudia for about year come into the local gay club. I thought, I said to God, I said, God, you know we're going to the club tonight. Please let her be there. And if she's not there, I'll be straight for the rest of my life. So going in that night, we get there and we're walking in and lo and behold, here comes Claudia and she's got some other friends with her. And I said, 'Thank you, Jesus.' I mean, you know, I was like, yeah. And finally she came in from outside smoking and I met her and we talked and I guess I came out and said, 'Well, I'm really a lesbian,' and she said, 'Well, I know.' But I mean, all these people knew this, but me. We talked a while and finally we kissed. Yeah, my husband saw it. And then later on we met and had dinner and spent New Year's at the club together and of course, my husband was there, and then it just, we started texting back and forth and it just got really, that's when it became, things became hostile at home.

Rock: My freshman year in college the people that I was in the dorm with, um, we formed, they formed a football team, flag football team. I was on it but I never really got to play because I, you know, had 18 hours of classes and I was working, like 70 hours, about 60 hours a week. I also had a boyfriend at the time that I had dated for, uh, I guess a year and a half, two years. We probably would have gotten married quickly thereafter just because I was so miserable at home. Um, (pause) I just really like that group of people. And uh, we went to um, New Orleans for the National Flag Football Championships. So, uh, I went with 'em and, it was 12 or 15 of us in a Winnebago camper going to New Orleans. Yeah. And the majority of everybody was lesbian. Um, I didn't know it. And, it was like, everybody was being real hush-hush around me. It never crossed my mind. Um, and, so when in New Orleans I kind of figured out the big picture, and, and I was like – oh, wait a minute. And then I started hanging out more with these people, and

one night we had this huge party at the dorm, and I kissed a girl that night. And that's when I realized, "oh, okay." I, you know, all through high school I was very stand-offish to my boyfriends. I didn't want to kiss 'em in the halls or hold hands. But then when I kissed her it was like, "Oh wow, okay." This is what it is. And I immediately got rid of the boyfriend.

Relationships w/colleagues

Shelley: One day after school, I'm goin' down the hall and meet up with the math teacher and she goes, "Shelley! During our class when the students get off topic, we get into a lot of great discussions. But I just want you to know that the other day one of the students said that you were gay!" Now she is an old friend from high school and also one of the reps from our teacher union. She goes, "I told them you were not because I knew you from high school." And I was like, "Oh my God!" And so she goes, "I wanna know, are ya?" Well, of course I said, no. I just flat out said, "No, I'm not." Because, she is a part of the union and that has great potential to get back. She probably doesn't care, but I don't know what would have happened if I had told her I was. Again, it goes back to speculation. If I'd said, "Yes," she would know for a fact.

Jean: After I came out, I never, you know, I was very careful. I didn't come out at school. Like I said, if I went into, one time Claudia and I were going into O'Charley's. And I got to the door and I said, 'We can't go in there,' 'cause sitting right there waiting for a table was my janitor at the elementary school where I worked. And I just, I couldn't I go in there with her. But I thought I had this, like I said a big L, I thought it was written all over me as to what I was.

Rock: Um, well, I'm completely out to my family. They know everything. Uh, as, you know, as far as, you know just socially out and about, I don't hide it or anything. But I don't flaunt it. So, um, and then at school, with a few of my close teachers, um, I guess it's not really been talked about, but I guess it's been assumed over the years. I mean it's been 10, 11 years and BA and I've been together the whole time. There's one other teacher who(se) sister is a lesbian, and she and I have talked about it.

Relationships with Students

Shelley: I was dancing with a woman in Asheville at Rumors. I'm not drunk or anything like that. I'm just dancin' and havin' a good time. This girl dances up next to me and says, "Hey, I know you!" And I'm like, "Oh, shit." I turn around and say, "No you don't." And I just kept dancin'. I didn't run away, I stayed right on the floor. Here she comes again, "I know you!" "No you don't!" And this went on for like two minutes. And every time she came closer she would give more details.

"You're from Tennessee." "You teach high school." "My best friend had you for class." I was dyin' and I finally just turned around to her and I said, "Well, now, I'm the coolest teacher you know, right?" She goes, "Yeah!" And that was it. That was it.

So, you know, I didn't make a big deal out of it.

Jean: Once when that spring, there was a student that asked me. Uh, his parents, I know for a fact, bought insurance with my husband. And this is pro---, he may have heard it through the grapevine at school, but he also may have heard it from his mother that we were split up and you know, that I had a girlfriend. And he was asking me that out loud in front of the whole class one

day. We were walking outside to do some stuff outside and, the question just kind of dropped there, or I probably would've said, you know, that's, that's something that you don't need to be concerned about or something like that. Because I would not openly discuss my sexuality with students at school. It's just not the professional thing to do, in my opinion.

Rock: I do not allow the bullying or the talk, you know. Um, in my room or around me. Name-calling and things like that. If they have questions or if they bring it up, I'll say something about it. I'll – I'll try to get 'em on topic about it to see their feelings and, and try to broaden their – not – not try to push my feelings on them, but to show them other people's feelings or how other people might feel, or something. I, you know I always look for teachable moments. Um, I have had a student who's, a couple students whose parents are lesbians. And I've talked with, um, I know one in particular. And I think there was another. But, the one girl, she's still there at school. And I've talked with her about it, and, and how she's had to deal with people and stuff.

Relationship with Administration

Shelley: My friends say, "Shelley, you are so out! And you just don't know it." But, I don't really feel that way. You watch who you come out to. You can speculate all you want, you can think, and you can say, "Oh I heard," but until I tell you myself, you don't know. Part of me says, no, I wouldn't lose my job if I were out. And the reason is – they know me, all the way up to the superintendent of schools. And I know that they love me. So to knock on the front door and say, "Guess what guys?" I would never do that because that would make an issue out of it. You can say, "I heard or I think," but you didn't hear it from me.

Jean: Everybody heard about my divorce through the grapevine, whatever. But everybody was very nice. My principal, especially at my school, they were very accepting of me. Uh, one of the females, school board members was a retired teacher. I was taking a first grade class back inside one day and here she comes out. And I'm going, 'Oh, God.' Here it comes, you know, the dreaded question. She says, "Is it true what I hear, that you are separated." I said, "Yes." She said, "You have a girlfriend?" I said, "Yes I do." I mean, I wasn't gonna lie. And she said, 'Well, good for you.' And I thought, whew, and at that point in time, that told me that she probably was a lesbian, too, but is not out. Would she ever come out? Probably not. That's just the way a lot of people live.

Rock: And I think that's why I did not get rehired at West Highland. And the principal, all he would tell me, of course they don't have to tell you anything. All he would tell me is that he just thought that there would be a better place for me to fit in at, or something like that. That I just didn't fit in here. But, then, there were some kids in my room who - oh what year would it have it been? That would have been '98 maybe, when the kid out west, Matthew Shepard, they tied him up to a fence and beat him. That incident was going on and I think they had it on Channel One, or something. And I had a class, uh, a couple kids in there, one in particular, but the rest supported him. Um, that when the- you know, that came on, said stuff like, "Yeah, I'd hate for that to happen to someone here," and made different comments that were very threatening to me. And I was very uneasy. And I mentioned somewhat what was happening and I got no support whatsoever. That was at West Highland.

Who Am I Now?

Shelley: I do believe that there is a correlation between moving through society as, say a gay woman, and moving through society as a Black woman. I do believe those paths are very similar. And so, know me as a teacher, as a mother, as whatever I'm doing, but, not by the color of my skin. It's the same thing with sexuality, "know me for me being a mother, a teacher, a drummer or whatever I do, not for who is in the bed with me at night."

Jean: I was trying to figure out, how am I gonna do this, okay, I'm going to stay home until both of my sons get out of college. And finally, I just thought, this is not fair to anybody. And that's when my husband said, "Well, just leave." And I did. I was married for 32 years. Two sons. I left everything.

Everybody has their own destiny or their own karma or whatever you want to call it. I think I had to go through the experiences I went through to get to where I am today. I've had a great life.

Rock: I'm not afraid of losing my job because I'm lesbian. The way I look at it is, if I lose my job, I'm a math teacher. I'm gonna find another one tomorrow. If you don't like me for who I am – I do a good job. I have excellent test scores. Um, I've had a successful volleyball program. I've done, you know, I'm a hard worker. If you don't like me for who I am, then I don't need to be there.

Appendix F

Recent Developments in LGBT Rights

In the last few decades, Americans have seen an increase in rights for gays and lesbians and rising tolerance by heterosexuals in the United States. Yet, the dominant culture, supported by vocal conservative Christians, is still in the fray. Opposition to gay rights occurs on all fronts. There are countless instances of fear and hatred toward LGBT people in all aspects of society. Gay marriage and gays in the military have become major controversies reported on in the media. From the day the Defense of Marriage Act was signed into existence in 1996, state, county, and local governments have been passing laws defining marriage as between a man and a woman to prevent the legitimization of loving commitments between same sex couples. Since 1999, six states have legalized same sex marriage. Yet that victory has been undermined by 37 states that passed laws prohibiting same sex marriage. The most recent state to pass an amendment was North Carolina in April, 2012 (Hartfield, 2012). Yet, for the first time in history an incumbent president supports gay marriage. After Vice President Biden voiced his support for gay marriage, President Obama took a stand. Quoted in the New York Times on May 9, 2012, he stated, “ At a certain point, I’ve just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married” (Calmes & Baker, 2012). This immediately became a campaign issue because Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney opposes gay marriage (Bailey, 2012). Other positive changes have occurred during the Obama presidency. During four years in office, President Obama has repealed the ban on gays in the military (Lee, 2010), expanded federal hate crimes law to protect LGBT people and helped ensure same-sex couples have visitation and medical decision making rights in hospitals (Presidential Memorandum, 2010).

Vita

Delanna Reed was born in Dallas, Texas. There she attended high school, community college, and graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Speech and Drama from East Texas State University. (Now Texas A & M at Commerce) She worked in television for two years before deciding to travel around the United States and Canada visiting National Parks.

Returning to Texas, she worked again in television before returning to college for her Master of Arts in Speech Communication and Public Address with the intention to teach college. During that time she learned of storytelling as a profession and became a storyteller. After graduation she worked as an adjunct professor and lecturer in the Dallas area before taking a full time tenure track position teaching communication at Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Kentucky. While at Cumberland College, she directed forensics, traveling regionally and nationally with her award winning speech team.

After ten years at Cumberland College she took a position at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee to teach storytelling for the only Master of Arts storytelling program in the country. Delanna received tenure at ETSU in 2005. While at ETSU, Delanna studied Cultural Studies in Education at the University of Tennessee, receiving her PhD in August 2012.