ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: SPOKEN STORIES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON THE
                              LIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF "OUTSIDER
                              TEACHERS"

                              Sara Makris, Doctor of Philosophy, 2012

Dissertation directed by: Professor Linda R. Valli
                              Department of Education

When a teacher enters a classroom, a story begins. The plot is informed by its characters and setting—the students, faculty, and the surrounding community. If a teacher comes from outside this community—whether in terms of race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability status, or culture—the plot thickens.

Existing literature examines the roles that these identity characteristics play in the classroom. Literature currently addresses "outsider teachers"—those whose identity characteristics cause them to stand out among their school communities, and in some cases, within many other communities—but it does so often at the exclusion of a holistic view of the teacher. The research tends to focus on teacher experiences in terms of only a single facet of teacher identity within any given study. This study looks at the experiences of "outsider teachers" with the intention of creating a more layered narrative by encompassing the many facets of identity that interact to create the intricate experience of an individual human being.

The experiences of these outsider teachers, the ways in which they characterize their identities, and in particular, the ways that they articulate their approach to pedagogy, provide valuable insight for the teaching community at large. Using narrative inquiry, this study explores the experiences of a group of six "outsider teachers," including the researcher. The images of the participants present a more complex picture than those found in studies that examine teacher identity based upon only one or two identity categories, to the exclusion of others. Informed by intersectionality theory—which emphasizes the nuanced interaction of identity categories—the study seeks to portray depth and subtlety in descriptions of participants. This effort has implications for the viability of intersectionality theory in the discipline of education.

In the telling of their stories, participants described the use of proactive inclusiveness, in which they sought to create safe spaces within their classrooms for all students. This proactive inclusiveness emerged from participant experiences of their own intersecting identities. They had felt the complexity of belonging to multiple groups— some of which did not accept the existence of others. Because of this, they came to understand that a group of students might seem cohesive on the surface, but that outsiderness often dwells just below. Proactive inclusiveness, thus, represents a mindset that acknowledges the invisible barriers and struggles that exist within all groups of individuals.

They leveraged insider characteristics, using common identity characteristics to gain student trust and challenge embedded stereotypes. Participants stressed the importance of accessing memory as a tool for connecting with students whose characteristics are different from their own, arguing that the existence of an adverse

experience in one's life provides some ground for connection with others. In addition, participants described a commitment to giving their students access to broader points of view in an effort to combat the inherited bigotry that can feed societal inequality. Findings also include a potentially expanded definition of "outsider teacher," to describe one who employs a teaching philosophy guided by a desire to focus on inclusion of marginalized students and the development of empathy, acceptance, and open-mindedness among students.

SPOKEN STORIES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON THE LIVES AND
EXPERIENCES OF "OUTSIDER TEACHERS"

by

Sara Makris

Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2012

Advisory Committee:

    Professor Linda Valli, Chair
    Professor Francine Hultgren
    Assistant Professor Maria Hyler
    Assistant Professor Victoria-Maria MacDonald
    Assistant Professor Noah Drezner

Dedication

For Cheryl and Theodore Makris.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

What we say about ourselves in passing is usually swept away, the detritus of discourse, and it takes a rupture in the normal unfolding of everyday life to bring it into view and remind us of its value as identity's bedrock.

–Paul John Eakin (7, 2008)

This study gathers information and insight on the experiences of a group of self-described "outsider teachers." Outsider teachers are those who possess identifying characteristics that differentiate them from their student populations. Race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and social class, all constitute potential elements of difference. Teachers may diverge from their students at the intersection of a number of these characteristics. This study examines and analyzes the experiences of self-defined "outsider teachers," including the researcher, who possess social identifiers that set them apart from their students.

The term "outsider teacher" is flexible. It may refer to teachers who come from the dominant culture—a predominantly white, middle class population—and teach students of color (Howard, 2006; Irvine, 2003; Kearney, 2008; Michie, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999). As Kleinfeld, McDiarmis, Grubis, and Parrett (1983) put it, they may be "teachers…cop[ing], often for the first time, with the experience of being a minority person, of being a symbol of a resented majority culture" (p. 88). "Outsider teacher," may also refer to teachers with identities that are marginalized regardless of their setting, for example black teachers in white schools and immigrant teachers in United States public schools. Based upon their struggles for legitimacy and

acceptance, teachers with disabilities, and transgender, gay, and lesbian teachers in any public school system may also consider themselves outsider teachers.

Troubling the Term: Outsider

The term, "outsider," may seem problematic to some. Its connotations include exclusion, judgment, or situation outside the norm. Because of this, some readers may object to its use here. The term, "outsider," is presented here with full awareness of its potential for negative implications. As one of the self-described "outsider teachers" participating in the study, I appreciate the term for its ability to portray a stark reality.

The participants who joined me in this study have embraced the term to varying degrees, all of which are represented here. In most cases, the term rang true, and they felt it applied to their experience. Three participants—Jamie, Maria, and Kyong—embraced it from the outset. One participant, Winnie, who, unbeknownst to me, initially rejected the term, came to believe that it applied to her and fit her circumstances. Lisa, ultimately, chose not to be defined by the term, preferring to use "other" instead. Her words to that effect appear later on in the text.

The Outsider Teacher in the Literature

The experiences of outsider teachers have received attention in the scholarly literature according to categorical descriptions. In other words, researchers have looked at outsider teachers based upon individual categories: gay teachers, foreign teachers, black teachers in white schools, and transgender teachers have participated in research. Less commonly have teachers participated in research that examines their identity in its more complex forms: teachers, for example, who are outsiders

along several lines, whose identities complicate their perception and experience, and potentially enhance their subtle awareness, of classroom dynamics and the profession as a whole.

Existing research looks at isolated groups to varying degrees. White teachers of students of color and, to a far lesser extent, black teachers in white schools have received attention in the literature. Lesbian, gay, and transgender teachers have also participated in research on their experiences. Teachers who immigrate to the United States to teach in this country have been documented. The experiences of teachers with disabilities appear in the literature significantly less frequently than all of these groups.

Some groups receive more attention than others in the literature. Some groups also take more active roles then others as research participants. As the representation of a group in the literature decreases, so too does the prevalence of individual voices of study participants from that group. A large number of studies exist on the experience of white teachers in urban, African American schools. The voices of individual participants can be heard throughout these studies. Studies involving teachers with disabilities, on the other hand, are rare. And few as they are, such studies tend not to feature the participants as co-constructors of knowledge, sharing their own stories and experiences. Perhaps because of cultural taboos, research on teachers in the LGBT community was scarce until the 1990s, and though some research on LGBT teachers occurred during this time, much of it is characterized by a significant focus on participant testimony. Research on immigrant teachers, similar to that with teachers in the disabled community, has less

often featured participant descriptions of events and participant-generated analysis, tending to rely more heavily on researchers' interpretations and generalizations.

Research has also tended to divide teachers into groups: research looking at teacher race exists, as does research examining teachers marginalized by sexual orientation. Significant research has not occurred to take into account the experiences of teachers who belong to more than one group. People of color, people of working class backgrounds, immigrant groups such as Latinos, and people with disabilities have less representation in the academy. This may account for their lack of representation in the literature.

Possibly because they are in the majority, white middle class female teachers are among the few who have participated in studies that both attempt to take into account teachers' complex identities and attempt to invite their participation in the construction of meaning. Researchers have looked at the ways that race, class, and gender define the experiences of this group, and researchers have also created space for these participants at the center of the research process, giving participant voices privilege of place in published studies. Among more marginalized groups, however, this has yet to occur widely.

Thus, there exists a need for research that offers teacher participants the opportunity to bring their entire selves to the table—not to have to select a single aspect of their identities. The movement toward intersectionality theory—based upon the concept that individuals may experience simultaneously multiple systems of oppression and social domination (Crenshaw, 1991)—has taken root in sociology and feminist studies. Our ideas about what it means to be an outsider teacher may

have been overly simplistic. But where did they come from? The popular media can serve as a possible source.

The Outsider Teacher in the Public Eye

Twentieth century popular culture contains an enduring archetype of the "outsider teacher." In film and literature, this person, a white/black/middle class/educated stranger from far away, unaware of the customs that govern a particular village/island/ghetto, enters the urban/rural/impoverished/chaotic classroom, and brings knowledge/intellectual curiosity/civilization to the needy/ignorant/coarse young people who dwell there.

Two well-known narratives, the 1967 film *To Sir, with Love,* and the 1972 book *The Water is Wide* take on the figure of the outsider teacher. In both pieces, a stranger enters a classroom in which he stands out dramatically, an alien among his students. The film profiles the fictional character of Mark Thackeray, and the book's narrative revolves around Pat Conroy's work in South Carolina as a young man. The audience bears witness to transformative experiences on the parts of each.

Both works may have unwittingly planted the seeds for future Hollywood renditions of teacher-turned-savior characters entering the classrooms of what the audience is meant to perceive as imperiled, underprivileged youth. Each, however, contains critical moments that set the stage for this exploration of the scholarly literature on teachers who come—literally and figuratively—from far away to their classrooms. Thackeray, a Guyanese engineer unable to find work in his field, takes on teaching in a predominantly white working-class public school as a means to make ends meet while he looks for work in his field. The young Conroy, a southern,

white "college boy," after much self-conscious, missionary-like "do-gooderism" (p. 37) and zeal, begins to comprehend the many ways that United States society has failed his southern, rural African American students.

In Thackeray's experience at the school in the East End of London, many class-related conflicts rise to the surface (though race hardly bears any mention). Thackeray spends the first portion of the film at odds with his students, in an ineffectual attempt to control the group of unruly adolescents on whom one teacher after another has given up. His frustration grows as he tries, unsuccessfully, to run a traditional classroom where students inherently respect him and willingly follow his directives. One of the most striking images of the film, which pertains to the goal of this piece, occurs at several points when the teacher sits alone in his classroom. The camera backs away to reveal the tall ceilings and windows of the prewar structure, with a desk slightly elevated on a platform, among thin columns. Thackeray pauses there, gazing about the room at the empty student desks, struck by the weight of the day.

This aspect of the film—the image of the teacher from far outside his students' world, sitting in his classroom and reflecting on his lonely work—begins to set the stage for this study. At the close of the Conroy text, the author reflects on his experience as an outsider among his students. In spite of his initial view of the group as deficient and in need of salvation, the outsider teacher has shown the reader the many ways his students have educated him.

A strength of both works lies in their representation of the experience of entering alien territory and making oneself relevant—and experience with which

outsider teachers may find some connection. The book and film also acknowledge broad inequities in public education systems in a manner sufficiently engaging for moviegoers and trade paperback readers. Both may oversimplify the outsider teacher experience, however, supporting a binary approach to identity categorization. Although such simplification may be expected in popular culture, the qualitative research community seeks to embrace the complex realities of human experience in order to generate research that strives for authenticity.

The Outsider Teacher in History

The notion of the outsider teacher, as exemplified in Conroy's work, does not emerge from the imagination of a creative writer, nor is it a rarity. British missionary teachers traveled to India in the late 19th century, where they "…reenact[ed] the drama of the coloniser and colonised" with their adult female charges, in an unsuccessful attempt to instill Christian beliefs and British behaviors among "pure heathens" (Forbes, 2, 1986). White teachers traveled from the north to educate newly freed black southerners, and expressed disbelief when they encountered a population satisfied with its own pedagogy, expressing a desire to continue without their help (Anderson, 1988). Outsider teachers of the colonizing variety may, in Delpit's (2005) words, "…hold on to their worldview with great tenacity, insisting that *all* of the others are wrong, peculiar, undeveloped, heathen, or uncivilized" (p. 74).

Outsider teachers have facilitated the spread of languages, religions, worldviews, and political commitments of dominant cultures. They are missionaries and "do-gooders." Some of them are recent college graduates teaching in the low-income urban schools of the US. Outsider teachers are also individuals who belong

to marginalized populations. They are teachers with disabilities, teachers from the LGBT communities, and teachers of color teaching in the classrooms of the white and affluent. In spite of a lengthy legacy of outsider teachers who originate in dominant cultures, a different phenomenon concerning outsider teachers has developed. In contrast to the outsider teacher-as-missionary archetype, the outsider teachers who create this phenomenon are teachers whose sometime-marginalized identities have followed them into mainstream public classrooms. Teachers from low-income backgrounds are teaching the children of the upper middle class. Teachers with disabilities are participating in student teaching activities in their colleges of education. Teachers from around the world are teaching in mainstream public schools in the US. A body of literature has begun to document experiences of these emerging groups of outsider teachers.

Terminology and Research Questions

The term "outsider teacher" appears on occasion in the literature. Michie (2007), quoting Valenzuela, writes, "'…a community's interests are best served by those [educators] who possess an unwavering respect for the cultural integrity of a people and their history.' That requires a sincere and committed effort on the part of 'outsider' teachers to put themselves in the role of the learner. But it is far from impossible" (p. 7). Subedi (2008a) describes a Pakistani-born teacher in the United States as a "cultural outsider" (p. 58). And Anyon (2005) describes teachers whose "social class and often race differentiate them from their students" as "outsiders and bicultural brokers" (p. 180). I define "outsider teacher" as one whose identity characteristics set her apart from her students—outsider teachers are those who cross

cultural, class, ethnic, linguistic, racial, gender, ability, religious, and sexual orientation-related boundaries in order to perform their work as teachers and school colleagues. Teachers can be outsiders along one or many lines, and I believe that this experience engenders insights that can benefit all teachers.

This study describes the experiences of some outsider teachers, and it generates conclusions about their experiences that shed light on classroom interaction, communication, and pedagogical decision-making across difference. It explores the following questions.

1. How do self-identified "outsider teachers" discuss the influence of this identity on their professional practice and interactions with students?

2. What characterizes the experience of "outsider teachers?"

3. How can the knowledge gained about "outsider teacher" identities inform pedagogy?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

As Berta-Ávila (2004) writes, "many students of color can go through their entire public school experience without ever coming into contact with a teacher from their same ethnic group and […] White students can complete their K-12 education without ever having a teacher of color" (p. 67). According to Michie (2007), "As student populations in K-12 schools in the United States continue to diversify and the teaching force remains largely White, *cross cultural teaching is an increasingly common phenomenon*" (p. 3, emphasis mine).

Although middle class, white females represent the largest group of teachers—outsider or otherwise—in the United States, studies of their experiences as

well as those of others can tell us a great deal about the role that teacher identity plays in the classroom. Studies can also inform our understanding about whether and how cross-cultural teaching happens effectively from group to group, who qualifies as an outsider, and whether such a definition fits within the obvious boundaries of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, or whether our understanding of the nature of belonging and identity categories themselves warrant examination.

Ultimately, the role of the teacher is inherently one of an outsider—the only adult in a room full of young people, isolated among coworkers and peers in other fields. Meanwhile, teachers remain in constant contact with a segment of the population with whom few other adults ever sustain lengthy exchanges of ideas. Thus, this study—with its focus on teachers who feel defined in part by the qualities that render them outsiders—may have theoretical and practical implications affecting all teachers. Whether implicit or explicit, the quality of "outsiderness" plays an inherent role in what it means to teach. Outsider teachers may possess relevant wisdom to share.

This study originates in my own experience as an outsider: I had experience as a cultural, ethnic, and religious outsider long before I became an outsider teacher. The study also responds to many promising beginnings in research on the experiences of marginalized individuals in the K-12 teacher population. It is conceived on the premise that outsider teachers hold perspectives, insights, and skills that can significantly contribute to theory, research, and teaching in an inclusive, pluralistic, and democratic society. Most importantly for the purpose of establishing

positionality, the study grows out of moments of "outsiderness" in my life—

moments that showed me that some aspect of myself set *me* apart.

As the research stems from my own experiences as both an outsider and a

teacher, my initial definitions of those terms required adaptation into a concept that

could accommodate participants as well as a broader audience to the study. I

developed the notion of "dimensions of outsiderness" in order to create a space for

the ambiguousness surrounding the concept of what it might mean to consider

oneself an outsider. The notion of dimensions of outsiderness seeks to accommodate

the many shades between self-definition as an outsider and being defined as such by

others or by society, as in the case of those whose race designates them as outsiders

according to colorist perspectives—or belief in the superiority of lighter-skinned

people (Hunter, 2007)—as compared to those whose ethnic identity sets them apart

but does not manifest in the form of an accent, for example.

Although I may have felt like an outsider among my Baltimore City students

based upon my nationality, race, and religious background, my white skin and

native-sounding English grant me wide access to U.S. society in general. Although

these identifiers *still* give me outsider status among my African American students, I

must acknowledge the insider privileges I possess, whether I want to or not, for they

add nuance to the very outsiderness I seek to define here.

The idea that multiple dimensions of outsiderness exist may accommodate

many degrees of outsiderness, for example in the case of a teacher who keeps her

gay sexual orientation concealed as compared with one whose nonconforming

gender identity defines her in the eyes of others. The outsider experiences of an

individual whose disability is readily apparent to observers will likely be different from those of someone whose religion engenders an internal sense of exclusion from the mainstream but is not expressed outwardly.

The concept also acknowledges the manner in which identity categories intersect to complicate the notion of outsider status. Thus an individual's race may place him at a disadvantage in one setting; however, his gender identity will bestow status upon him in another. A gay white male's sexual orientation may render him an outsider, while his gender and race may grant him status in the classroom and in the school as a whole. A white female teacher may find herself marginalized according to her gender while exerting a privileged status according to her race.

The Role of Personal Narrative

I use personal narrative in this study for several reasons. According to Ellis (2004), "I start with my personal life, and pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call 'systematic sociological introspection' and 'emotional recall' to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life, as Reed-Danahay says" (p. xvii).

I include personal narrative to stay true to the origin of this research in my own experience. Contemporary qualitative inquiry relies on statements of researcher positionality in order to claim a level of authenticity. By keeping track of the elements of my experience that brought me to this place, I hope to make my motivations and my thinking clear. I also wish to partner with my participants— rather than keeping a distance—in a sincere effort toward gaining insight.

By establishing myself in the role of participant, I also hope to gain the trust of other outsider teachers, to inspire them to share their stories. Rather than placing myself at a distance to conduct research *on* others, I choose to conduct research *with* the participants in the interest of discovering our truths together. As a means of clarifying the context in which my autoethnographic vignettes occur, I will share a basic chronology of my life. I was born in Athens, Greece, in 1977 to a Greek father and a Jewish American mother. My parents had met and married in New York and had returned to Greece following the collapse of the military junta in 1974. We stayed in Greece until I was two and a half years old. I was bilingual at this time. In 1979, we moved to Los Angeles, where my mother had relatives and my father hoped to find work.

On our arrival in the US, I refused to speak Greek in public, eventually only speaking English. After six months in Los Angeles, with limited job prospects for my father, we drove across the country to New York. I stayed with my grandmother in Brooklyn as my parents looked for a house, and eventually we moved into a rancher in Long Island. My father built a studio in the basement and set up shop as a commercial photographer.

We stayed for six and a half years. I turned nine, my father lost a major client, and my parents decided that we would return to Greece, where some past professional connections remained. My mother developed breast cancer that year, 1986, and she spent the spring and summer before our move in the hospital and then undergoing treatment. In August, we left the US and moved into my aunt's apartment in Athens, where we stayed for six months. I began my fourth grade year

in an international school, in a city whose language I had forgotten. On New Year's Eve, 1986, my family and I spent our first night in our new apartment, sleeping all together on mattresses in the living room. I graduated from that school in 1994 and travelled back to New York to attend college.

I establish my personal narrative here, in this first chapter of the study, with two vignettes. Three additional vignettes appear in chapters three, four, and five. In each vignette, I narrate an experience in which I felt reminded of my outsider status. Beginning in adolescence, the experiences continue with the story of my early self-identification as an outsider teacher.

Childhood Narrative

In the fall of my eleventh grade year, I am fifteen. I am visiting my friend Suha's house for the first time, with another friend, Melina. Suha unlocks the front door and we enter the apartment and start down the dark, narrow hallway. It opens onto a dining area on the left with a living room beyond the cream lacquered dining room set with gold detailing.

On the wall above it hangs a Palestinian flag. A door to the right opens slightly into a tiny bedroom. Suha softly says, "My brother," and I see why I have never been invited here before. In a wheelchair just inside sits a skinny figure. He has Suha's pale complexion, dark hair, and dark eyes. His body folds in on itself and his thin face gazes up. He vocalizes excitedly when he sees Suha. His long arms reach toward her. She reaches back and moves over to hug him. "Hi, Hisham." A strand of spittle hangs from his open mouth.

"How old is he?" asks Melina.

"He's fifteen."

"Suha! You're home?" calls shrill voice from deeper inside the apartment, all sharp rolling r's and strong consonants.

"Yes, mom," Suha answers.

A tiny woman appears in the doorway, "Come out, come and eat something. Suha, introduce your friends."   She looks us over and continues speaking in Arabic.

"Okay, mom, we'll wash our hands," says Suha. "My mom is so protective over my brother," She says, turning to us.

"I don't want you to bring bacteria into the house!" says Mrs. Shawa.

"Yes mom. Mom, this is Melina and Sara."

"Hello girls."

"Nice to meet you," we both mumble.

"Mom, we're gonna go to my room."

"Okay, Suha, but…" and they speak quickly back and forth in Arabic. Suha motions for us to move down the hall. Melina and I enter her room and flop down on her soft twin bed. We titter over the Bon Jovi posters tacked on the wall, pulled out of teen magazines imported from the US. Leather-clad rock stars crouch and slink across the pale pink walls.

"That girl loves rocker dudes," says Melina and we both crack up, letting our school bags fall to the carpet as we shimmy across the bed to sit against the wall with our feet dangling over the side. Suha bursts into the room and closes the door, leaving bags and belts swinging back and forth on a hook behind her.

"Want some?" She throws a roll of vanilla sandwich cookies at Melina, who starts working the end loose.

"Your mom is nice," says Melina. Looking back on this moment now, I think of how well Melina presented herself around adults, especially people's parents. She was like a teenaged publicist.

"She's cool," says Suha. "Let's go smoke."

"Where?" I ask.

"We'll go to the park across the street. I'm just gonna tell my mom." She leans out the door. "Mama! We're going for a walk!" I hear her mother call something back. Suha looks over her shoulder at us. "She's watching The Young and the Restless now. No one can bother her. Let's go."

Melina tucks her Camel Lights into the pocket of her black leather biker jacket. Leaving our bookbags in a pile on the floor, we take off. In front of the apartment building, we cross the street into a park filled with the pine trees native to Attica. We slip between the iron motorcycle barricades and move into the park. Suha looks up at the apartment building. "Let's keep going. I don't want my mom to see us."

On a secluded bench under a low hanging tree limb, Melina passes around cigarettes. I light mine off of hers. "So where's your family from?" Melina asks Suha.

"Palestine," says Suha. I remember my father telling me that Palestinians do not have a country.

"Where's that?" asks Melina.

"Right next to Israel," says Suha with a scowl. With hardly a pause, she continues. "I hate Jews."

"Why?" asks Melina. I listen, rapt, for Suha's response. My stomach churns. You see, I am Jewish. I'm really Jewish, as I have often been reminded, because my mother is Jewish. Brooklyn, New York Jewish: Her grandmother passed through Ellis Island a young Hungarian girl. When my family returned to Greece—my birthplace—we moved from a heavily Jewish enclave. I went from celebrations— Hanukkah and Rosh Hashanah and the odd temple service—to total silence where this part of me was concerned.

Since our return to Greece, where I had not lived since age two, I had briefly met only one Jewish family, but Judaism was virtually nonexistent in this country. I had heard "Jewish" used as a pejorative on many occasions, even among family friends seated around a dinner table, and I had looked to my mother to gage her response. There never was one—just silence. Looking back on this story almost twenty years later, I wonder what silenced my mother. What degree of fear did she

feel? Was it social anxiety, or a primal fear channeled through the decades since

Germany had wiped out nearly all the Jews of Greece?

"They're disgusting," says Suha. I know that my face shows nothing of the

chaotic mess inside me.

"You can't say that. That's prejudiced," says Melina with such ease that I am

amazed. For years after, I will feel the same amazement when I think of how easily

those words seemed to come for her. I would find out, eventually, that my uncle on

my mother's side had enlisted in the Navy in the late 60s, only to face anti-Semitic

harassment that culminated in an honorable discharge. And I was also Greek, per

my father, though never baptized, but my national ID card identified me as Orthodox

Christian in the section marked "religion." Everyone was Orthodox, I thought. The

section need not have existed.

Research Methods

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry, as a methodology

"in its infancy," stating that it underscores "a view of human experience in which

humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (p. 477). "Narrative inquiry,"

Clandinin and Connelly continue, "the study of experience as a story, then, is first

and foremost a way of thinking about experience" (p. 477). The narrative inquiry

approach developed by Clandinin and Connelly forms the basis for the methodology

used in this study. The use of Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry allowed me

to represent my own "storied life" as well as those of participants. I have done so

through the use of personal narrative and portraits of participants. The portraits make

use of participant stories told in their own words, organized around the stories of our conversations.

Bringing participant testimony and experience to light, Anderson, Keller, and Karp (1998), Jennings (1994), Ladson-Billings (2009), Lareau (2003), and Valenzuela (1999), to name a few, have generated research that not only includes meaningful portraits of teachers but functions as a viable source of ideas about classroom practice. Obidah and Teel (2001), along with McCarthy (2003), have generated research guided by the voices of participants. Marx (2008) gathers her data by surveying the students as well as members of the administration. She finds that the teachers who had experienced struggles in their lives were best able to "relate to their students in some valuable ways" (p. 59). Subedi (2008a) finds a similar experience among immigrant teachers, as do Flores (2003) with Filipina teachers in US schools, Duquette (2000) with disabled teachers, and Jennings among lesbian and gay teachers.

Kissen's (1996) text, *The Last Closet,* devotes an entire chapter to the experiences of gay and lesbian teachers of color, as well as those in a religious minority or from a low socioeconomic background. Writing that "…people who are 'different' can feel uncomfortably obvious at the same time they feel invisible" (p. 32), Kissen addresses the outsider experience shared by her participants. She opens up the conversation about complex identities among teachers, and ultimately expresses the possibility that these teachers' experiences truly strengthen their work with marginalized students.

Apart from Kissen, few researchers have produced thorough and lengthy engagements with intersectional identities among classroom teachers. Intersectionality, describes the multiple systems of oppression and social subordination individuals experience simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991). While intersectionality theory may not have explicitly informed all of the studies here, its effects manifest themselves in public schools everywhere and surface throughout the literature.

There exists no agreed upon methodology for theorizing about or studying intersectionality, but this does not mean that researchers should not begin creating an appropriate discourse and applying existing methodologies to examine intersectional phenomena. Race, class, ability, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality do not function as isolated features in society, despite a tendency to treat them as such. Individual identities often overlap and redefine categories, and researchers must begin the difficult work of looking more closely at this.

Within the outsider teacher literature, little research exists on teachers with disabilities; slightly more on teachers in the LGBT community and the experiences of black teachers in predominantly white schools. All of these areas merit greater study. In many cases, teachers with disabilities may be excluded or discouraged from entering mainstream classrooms. Therefore studies of those who teach in public schools would generate a more complete picture of this phenomenon.

LGBT teachers in K-12 settings may have the experience of being de facto outsiders, particularly in cases where they conceal their true identities out of legitimate fear of losing their jobs or experiencing even more dangerous

consequences. Much of the research examined in this study presents images of individuals who are members of the LGBT community as well as being thoughtful, reflective teachers. Research must also begin to disseminate images of teachers with disabilities. My study involves participants who will add their voices to those in the existing literature, in the hopes of bringing new sounds to the conversation about who is teaching our children, and how teachers negotiate difference in order to bring deeper communication into the classroom.

A story from *One Teacher in 10* (Jennings, 1994) describes a student who confides in her lesbian teacher. Though she remains in the closet, the teacher shepherds the student through the process of coming to terms with having a gay sister. The student finally begins to question the teacher's sexuality, and the teacher puts her off, eventually saying that she will reveal her sexual orientation to the student on the last day of school. Once the student's eighth grade graduation comes and goes, she approaches the teacher to inquire about her sexual orientation. The teacher admits that yes, she is a lesbian. "After that," writes the teacher, "Lynne told me many of my other students had figured out that I'm a lesbian because I talk about lesbian and gay issues in my classroom. 'The only people who talk positively about lesbians and gays are lesbians and gays. None of the other teachers talk about it,' she explained." (p.154)

Howard (2006) has argued that white teachers must take up the cause of teaching about, including, and demanding equity for all racial and ethnic groups. Similarly, straight teachers must address gay issues, and able-bodied teachers must address issues affecting those with disabilities. Inequity in schools and classrooms

concerns all educators, and research must continue to uncover its many iterations. The idea that identity is a linear, easily defined, and easily segmented entity may engender research that follows suit in its treatment of teacher identity. The statement of the student in the example alludes to a further reason that study must continue that questions and purposefully blurs identity boundaries.

Data Gathering

The data gathering process occurred in stages. I generated personal narratives throughout the process, and I gathered information from the five participants through interviews and guided journal writing.

The research design required that participants involve themselves for an ongoing period of time as a means to encourage introspection and sustained thought and reflection. Participants were selected based on personal connections to engender trust on their part and accountability on mine. The number of participants allowed for sufficient time to analyze their written and spoken words.

Research conducted by Sanlo (1999) looks at the experiences of sixteen gay and lesbian teachers in depth, "in an attempt to learn how their sexual orientation affected their experiences within the school setting." (p. xxvii) Sanlo expresses the hope that

> lesbian and gay educators themselves may learn from their colleagues who participated in this study. Although they may not acknowledge their sexual orientation openly in the public school system, they may see the similarities in their own lives through the documented experiences revealed by gay and lesbian teachers in northeast Florida. (p. xvii)

Sanlo's interviews generate personal narratives that reveal complexity and depth of experience among her participants. She focuses in particular on five of her participants in the published text—participants who she felt shared their stories to a remarkable extent, producing interviews that reveal their experiences in depth. Sanlo's self-identification as a gay woman may have granted her entry into the homes and lives of her participants, however, she chose to leave self-exploration out of the study. The research speaks to the multifaceted experiences of my participants, our dialogues in person and on paper, and to the teacher population—a society of outsiders. Ideally, the research will touch those individuals who feel their "outsiderness" sharply—as teachers and otherwise.

In order to conduct her research, Sanlo may have had to grapple with a sense of her own identity as she navigated the space in which she conducted research. In the following vignette, I tell a story of my experience entering academia. In this story, my sense of being an outsider in my graduate school reminds me of an earlier experience of outsiderness. Within the context of my first doctoral-level class, I begin to understand the possibilities offered by self-reflection and analysis of one's own life.

The story of the class, and its accompanying remembrance, laid the foundation for this research study. Entering graduate school may give a taste of outsiderness even to those who have rarely felt like foreigners. It marked the beginning of a new stage of identity formation for me, and caused me to embark on a deeper acquaintanceship with myself. In this early experience, I had no sense that the process had already begun.

Student Narrative

It is the first day of my first semester of graduate school. I am late for my first class—a seminar. I think of the stapled paper handbook with the dull mauve cover, printed with the name of the university and my doctoral program, Minority and Urban Education. I remember how this handbook sat atop a row of books on a bookshelf in my house for two years before I even said out loud that I wanted to apply. The book had arrived in the mail and I had almost immediately placed it out of view. In the first few weeks after it came, I would pull it out and scan course titles, my eyes glancing over the words. "The Sociology of Race Relations." "Black and Latino Education." "Power, Privilege, and Diversity in Education." The titles of courses hinted at notions I could not yet articulate—truths I lacked the words to back up.

When I get to campus, the enormity of the parking lot stuns me. A snaking line of cars behind me, I flit up and down the rows, hunting for an open spot. Breaking a light sweat, I clip toward the building, climb the stairs, and clomp down the shiny hallway under fluorescent lights, taking in the beige tiles and glossy white painted cinderblock walls. I find the room number and try to turn the knob silently, inconspicuously.

In the small, carpeted, windowless room, I see walls and furniture clad in a drab institutional palette. I take an open seat near the door, looking down. I sit a minute before pulling out a notebook. I breathe, letting my sweat dry. I have already been told that Dr. Irvine is important, though I haven't yet read any of her books. I know I am a stranger here, a feeling I find familiar.

I notice a touch of gray in Dr. Irvine's hair and regret appearing fifteen minutes late for class, embarrassed at the thought of showing a lack of respect toward an elder. I think of my father always telling me to give up my seat on the bus when anyone older boarded. I remember coming to New York and watching people ignore each other on the subway—even pregnant women left to shift their weight from one leg to the other. Focusing on her words now, I decide to somehow redeem myself through a show of intense concentration and attentiveness. I commence vigorous note taking.

Dr. Irvine reels me in with her lecture. She paints a picture of the varied experiences of young people growing up in different areas—urban and poor, wealthy and privileged. She mentions that one of the advantages affluent children have is in their experiences with travel. They learn so much during the trips that their families take. This is privilege, she explains. She qualifies the generalization of "travel," though. Letting us know that we should not confuse the experiences of children of military families who travel with those of wealthy children traveling for leisure and experience, she notes the isolated existence associated with life on a military base. She then mentions the xenophobic tension that can develop among US military personnel and natives of the countries that they inhabit. I feel suddenly welcome in this room.

Mentally, I revisit my eighth grade Home Economics class. Two American bases still exist in Greece, an active presence for decades, before the socialist government's mid-90s rule removes them permanently. I sit with my friend, Alexandra, Greek, near two American girls. Pale skinned and slight, their light

yellow hair cut in an outdated feathered style, they wear black jersey stirrup pants and sweatshirts. One sneers at me and asked, "Where did you get that pen?"

I look down at my blue ballpoint, and picture Pallas, one of the many stationery stores in Athens—stores I love to visit, their counters covered with containers of every kind of ballpoint, drafting, felt tip, ink, thin, fat, colorful, ordinary, and exquisite pen. I love them all. In these shops, I indulged my love for the accessories of writing and drawing. I would run my fingers along the tips of the pens standing straight up in their plastic, cylindrical containers, looking for the perfect one.

"It looks like the kind they only sell at the commissary," spits the tiny blond girl. "And you can only go there if you're allowed on base." The "base" was the American military base in Nea Makri, north of Athens, on the coast. The base brought active duty military personnel to Greece, many of whom sent their children to our school, where the majority of the instruction occurred in English, though the majority of the students were Greek.

The military children stuck together and tended—I thought—to disparage Greece. They seemed disgusted by the food and the people, stubbornly nationalistic. In my mind emerged a blond-haired, blue-eyed, English-only image of what "American" might mean. Somehow, once I had relearned my Greek and had fallen in with my group of school friends—many of whom were also Greek—my view of myself as an American grew foggy.

These girls did not consider me a compatriot, certainly not friend material. I did not consider myself one of them, either. Nor did I associate myself with the

American tourists who roamed Athens yelling slow English at shopkeepers. I remember saying the word "American" with a certain tone—one that implied "not me." I look at Alexandra, whose dismissive glance makes me chuckle.

<< Τι λεει αυτ□;>> ("What is she talking about?") I ask in Greek.

<< Ξερω εγώ;>> ("How should I know?") she answers.

We shut them out with the language they refused to learn. Their insinuation, that I had crossed a line into their space and had taken something they were entitled to, seemed absurd, disproportionate. I knew then that it was silly, yet it stays with me.

In a year, the US would invade the Persian Gulf. My school would close briefly for security reasons. When it reopened, guards would patrol the gate. Bomb scares would become a monthly, sometimes weekly occurrence—in high school, a celebrated event. Once the bomb dogs appeared and began sniffing their way through buildings, we knew that afternoon classes would be cancelled for sure. During that period, my mother and I refrained from speaking English in public. I think that she, too, was not certain where she stood, as anti-American sentiment increased and security tightened.

Sitting between Alexandra, a through-and-through Greek girl, and these two girls who used the term "American" as praise and "Greek" as a pejorative, I knew and didn't know. I belonged and simultaneously did not. I was an American, too, but somehow, not their kind of American. When surrounded by Greek friends like Alexandra, with no full-blooded Americans to dissociate myself from, I felt less and less of anything. I sometimes bluffed my way through conversations, knowing all

the words but faking recognition of Greek idioms and commonplace religious references. I spoke slightly more formally than other young people because I lacked a full working slang vocabulary—such terms censored by my father's old world education and mid-century commitments to the language.

I haven't thought about this experience once since leaving Greece fourteen years earlier. Within minutes of my late arrival to Dr. Irvine's class, she has—through an extended reach that encompassed even my peculiar-seeming background—summoned it directly.

Dr. Irvine has forced me to recall an early outsider experience I had. She has accounted for the inequity faced by low-income kids, students like the ones I taught in Baltimore. When conversations about international issues don't always seem to have room for US economic inequity or racism, I have worried that focusing too much on US issues excludes my non-American half. In this room, the conversation is big enough for everything and everyone. I feel included.

I share this story here to juxtapose the experience of being an outsider with the feeling of acceptance that comes from inclusion. The memory of the confrontation described in the story highlighted experiences with feeling left out, but the framing narrative shows the welcoming environment that can develop when a teacher anticipates difference among her students and strives to accept and accommodate it.

In this chapter, I have outlined the group of teachers on whom this study focuses. These are outsider teachers, or teachers whose identifying qualities differentiate them from the students (and often communities in which) they teach. I

have shared two autoethnographic vignettes that address aspects of my own outsider

identity. Through this, I have attempted to demonstrate my membership in the group

of outsider teachers, and to illustrate some sources of my involvement with the

phenomenon of outsiderness.

In the next chapter, I examine scholarly literature that has looked at the

phenomenon of teachers who may be considered outsiders. The groups studied

include teachers teaching students of a different race, ethnicity, or class; teachers

who may consider themselves outsiders based on their gender identity or sexual

orientation; and teachers who may consider themselves outsiders based upon their

ability status.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature on Outsider Teachers

This review of the literature examines some ways that scholars and researchers have attended to the experiences of "outsider teachers." The review aims to address the following questions: How has the scholarly literature represented the experiences of outsider teachers in the following areas: race and class, gender and sexual orientation, ability, and nationality/ethnicity? What are the theoretical and methodological strengths and weaknesses in this research? What are its important contributions? What research still needs to be done, and why?

Selection of Studies

In generating a review of the literature on teachers who cross boundaries to access their students, I began with seminal works in the field. These include *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*, by Angela Valenzuela (1999), the cornerstone ethnography on the life of a Mexican American school; *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 2009), which examines both black and white teachers who demonstrate effectiveness in the classrooms of African American children; *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* by Annette Lareau (2003), for its examination of the impact of social class on teacher-student and teacher-parent communication; and *Because of the Kids: Facing Racial and Cultural Differences in Schools*, by Jennifer Obidah and Karen Teel (2001), which documents a lengthy inquiry into the challenges of a white American teacher with African American

students as well as the difficulties of communicating across racial lines for the white and Caribbean research team.

I looked at *White Teacher* by Vivian Gussin Paley (1979, 1989, 2000) and *We Can't Teach what We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* by Gary Howard (2006), two critical works that examine the roles and responsibilities of white teachers as they come to terms with their own identities as well as those of their multiracial and multicultural students. I included the texts *One Teacher in 10*, edited by Kevin Jennings (1994) and *Unmasked Identities: An Exploration of the Lives of Gay and Lesbian Teachers*, a book-length study by Janna M. Jackson (2007). Both looked at the experiences of gay teachers in K-12 classrooms. I reviewed *Enhancing Diversity: Educators with Disabilities*, a volume edited by Ronald J. Anderson, Clayton E. Keller, and Joan M. Karp (1998).

I also searched for studies using the following databases: EBSCO, ERIC, PsycInfo, JSTOR, and SocIndex. I employed the search terms "outsider teacher," border crossing," "white teacher/African American students," "white teacher/ black students," "white teacher/Latino/a students," "white teacher/students of color," "black teacher/white students," "African American teacher/white students," "teacher of color/white students," "gay teacher," "transgender teacher," "disabled teacher," "blind teacher," "teacher accent," "foreign teacher," "Asian teacher/US school," "Filipino/a teacher/US school," "American teacher abroad," "teaching English abroad," "urban teacher," "white teacher/urban school," "teacher race," "student race," teacher student communication," "Teach for America race," and "teacher identity." In addition, I mined the bibliographies of works I read, sourcing additional

works therein, and crosschecking multiple studies for repeated sources. I made sure to include repeated sources that contained aspects pertaining to this review.

This review looks at the following groups of teachers: white teachers teaching students of color, middle class teachers—or those with middle class tendencies toward "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, p. 219) on the part of parents, teachers whose nationalities—and/or accents—designate them as outsiders among their students, black teachers in white schools, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) teachers, and teachers with disabilities. In the cases of LGBT teachers and teachers with disabilities, the research has tended to frame their experiences as inherently fraught with isolation. For LGBT teachers, this may manifest in a situation of staying "closeted" among students and peers or facing any number of risks associated with coming out.

Among teachers with disabilities, "outsiderness" can exist in varying degrees along a continuum of mainstream acceptance, credibility in terms of teacher effectiveness, and ready availability of accommodations as well as in the degree to which a teacher's disability is apparent. The review tends to center on the experiences of teachers in the United States, though several works look at studies that occurred abroad. The studies examined also look at K-12 public institutions— particularly those in urban settings.

Categories and Themes

The literature can be classified into several overarching categories: race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability. Although these categories tend to intersect (Crenshaw, 1991) in their real-world manifestations, only few

researchers—according to the findings here—account for this intersection explicitly (Irvine, 1985).

Some researchers allude to intersections of identifiers or mention these intersections as incidental qualities of their research (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Duquette, 2000; Subedi, 2008a, 2008b). Relatively fewer researchers use the term "intersectionality" (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991), or indicate, through the use of other descriptions, that intersecting systems and identities influence the phenomena they are studying (Chen & Cheng, 2009; Jennings, 1994).

I devote one section to a sampling of the literature on intersectionality as both a theory and a methodological approach. Most of this literature comes from the legal and sociological fields—not from scholarship on education. I feel its inclusion is important as it represents the scholarly community's present attempt to look at human experience taking into account the many characteristics that make up identity, as well as the ways in which complex identities are interpreted by society.

The studies examined here tend toward the qualitative, though significant variation exists within that broad methodological category. The review contains examples of case study (Castagno, 2007; Chen & Cheng, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Marx, 2008, McCarthy, 2003), ethnography (Lareau, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999), autoethnography (Jennings, 1994), and (Endo, Reece-Miller, Santavicca, 2010; McCarthy, 2003). Several quantitative studies represent some of the earlier research reviewed here (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Irvine, 1985; Simpson & Erickson, 1983).

Race and class.

Of all identifying characteristics among outsider teachers, race receives the most attention by far in the literature. This section will shed some light on the importance of context when looking at the situations of outsider teachers, their colleagues, and their students, in terms of race and class. Researchers have looked at white teachers' interactions with their white, Latino/a, African, and African American students (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Castagno, 2007; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1985; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Marx, 2008; Obidah & Teel, 2001; Simpson & Erickson, 1983; Valenzuela, 1999) as well as preservice white teachers' perspectives on urban schools (Hampton, Peng, Ann, 2008; Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2008). They have also examined issues faced by African American teachers in primarily white settings (Mabokela and Madsen, 2003; Kelly, 2007). All of these areas of research are important to developing an understanding of the intricacies of the experiences of outsider teachers.

The experience of outsider teachers affects their interactions with students in the classroom, and the results can have a significant impact. As Irvine (1985) writes, "…teachers engage in as many as 1,000 exchanges with students per day. The exchanges, however, differed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Some students received as few as five contacts a day and other students as many as 120" (p. 338).

The impact of teacher-student interactions holds even greater significance when the teachers are outsiders in the students' communities. Hope and Saffold-Grice cite "the overwhelming probability that Black children will experience mostly White teachers in their education" (p. 186), and Howard (2006) writes that the

population of the United States is unique in the sense that "the richest adults and the poorest children of any Western nation" reside here. He adds, "This discrepancy is a function of both race and economics, since children of color are disproportionately represented among the ranks of poverty" (p. 65). The context of inequality that Howard describes adds considerable weight to the interactions between outsider teachers and their students of color in urban classrooms. When they are members of the dominant culture, outsider teachers have the luxury of choosing to what degree they will adapt to their surroundings.

Howard (2006) describes a population of teachers that is "primarily White and culturally isolated" and teaching "a student population that is increasingly diverse" (p. 5). In describing the cultural status of these teachers, Howard writes, "The possibility of feeling good about oneself is a privilege that often comes invisibly to Whites as a mere function of our historical position and racial dominance" (p. 64). Howard calls upon teachers from the dominant culture to begin a process of introspection that will allow them to begin to gain perspective on their situation within the larger population.

Researchers looking at outsider teachers who come from marginalized communities—teachers of color, for example—have found that their research participants face fewer choices and greater challenges when it comes to entering the community. As Mabokela and Madsen (2007) write,

> Teachers of color in suburban desegregated schools often must deal with
> extremely complex social dynamics. For African American teachers, part of
> their acculturation into desegregated suburban schools, where they often face

stereotypical perceptions about their contributions as professionals, requires

that they acquire the necessary socialization patterns to understand their

colleagues' codes of power. (p. 90)

Research has shown that the experiences of outsider teachers vary

dramatically depending on their status within the culture in which they teach.

Teachers with higher status as members of the dominant culture have more choices

as they navigate their schools, and teachers with marginalized backgrounds teaching

among members of the dominant culture tend to face greater hurdles in their efforts

to gain acceptance. The literature has shown that, for many outsider teachers,

communication with other members of a school's community and the teachers'

perspectives on their students and school communities are of critical importance as

well.

In the landmark work, *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African

American Children,* Ladson-Billings (2009) shares the stories of a group of teachers

deemed "successful" with African American children. Two of the six participants in

the original study were white, and Ladson-Billings visits their classrooms and speaks

with them to make determinations regarding the sources of their effectiveness.

Although one of the teachers hails from the predominantly African American

community as her students, this is not the case for the other—or for the group of

white teachers Ladson-Billings spotlights in the second edition of the book.

In that edition, Ladson-Billings (2009) finds that, regardless of a teacher's

race, the teaching practices she employs and the commitments she holds will

determine the success of her students. By spotlighting the experiences of white

teachers of various backgrounds, Ladson-Billings shows that teacher education, level of caring for students, and investment in student culture and community play critical roles in the effectiveness of all teachers, including those who might be considered outsiders. "It is *the way* we teach that profoundly affects the way that students perceive the content of the curriculum" (p. 15, emphasis hers).

Various researchers over the last two decades entertain, as Ladson-Billings does, the question of whether white teachers should be teaching students of color. Ladson-Billings comes to the realistic conclusion that no current alternative exists. She writes, "…even if we were to convince all of the current minority collegians to become teachers, we would still have a shortage of minority teachers" (p. 143).

Angela Valenzuela's 1999 text, *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*, examines white teachers in a predominantly Chicano school in Texas. A striking racial divide dominates the faculty there: "Most of the school's staff neither live nor participate in their students' predominantly Mexican community" (p. 63). In contrast to Ladson-Billings' study, in which excellent outsider teachers share their skill with the researcher, Valenzuela looks at one community's allotted pool of teachers. Valenzuela discovers complex realities—a white teacher who openly derides student motivation and ability in the classroom teaching alongside an African American teacher whom students proclaim "the best teacher I ever had" (p. 101)—however, the qualities she observes in outsider teachers who are able to connect with students coincide with those found in the classrooms visited by Ladson-Billings. According to Valenzuela, teachers who "initiate relation" (p. 104) put in time getting to know their students and clearly take

pride in their work (to the point of subverting administration or district rules) tend to receive the highest praise from students.

Because of the Kids: Facing Racial and Cultural Differences in Schools, Obidah and Teel's 2001 work, takes on interracial dynamics between a white teacher, Teel, and her African American students—and in so doing, between Obidah, the African American researcher, and Teel. Through a series of observations and memos back and forth, followed by in-depth discussions, the research consisted of Obidah's ongoing feedback on Teel's work in her classroom of African American students. The researchers carefully review moments of misunderstanding, conflict, and confusion that occur in Teel's classroom and discuss the implications through the lens of racial inequality. Throughout the process, the researchers repeatedly consider abandoning their work. They uncover negative undercurrents in teacher-student communication that Teel often finds too painful to contemplate. Obidah often finds herself at odds with Teel when she senses that Teel has withheld her thoughts out of a fear of confrontation.

By staying with the process, Obidah highlights elements of Teel's communication style that cause lapses in understanding and respect on the part of Teel's African American students. Teel makes changes to her teaching style as a result of this, notably beginning to think of her students as her own children, thus beginning to demand more of them both behaviorally and academically. Obidah and Teel document Teel's transformation as she begins to understand the racist underpinnings of behaviors she exhibits in the classroom. Ultimately, the experience transforms both researchers: Obidah writes in detail about confronting the distrust

38

she has felt toward Teel throughout the study. They emerge friends, having created

an unusual document of teacher-researcher collaboration to study race in the

classroom. The work closes with conclusions and advice for teachers, in particular

white teachers working with African American youth. Teel writes,

> I am not saying we are all racist. However, when we really stop and think
>
> about the history of African American people in this country, we can't help
>
> but consider the possibility that somewhere deep down inside each of us—
>
> especially those of us who are White—are some patronizing, distorted
>
> attitudes toward and perceptions of African American people. The attitudes
>
> manifest themselves in secret reservations we may have about our African
>
> American students' potential for high achievement and in the ways we work
>
> with them. (p. 94)

One of the relatively few studies that examine the influence of class in public

schooling, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* by Annette Lareau

(2003), focuses primarily on the households and families of children from various

economic and racial backgrounds. Lareau and her research team visited schools

attended by the children as part of their study. The schools attended by the poor and

working class students hold particular significance for this review: In all schools,

distinctly middle class attitudes and outlooks dominated, which put teachers of poor

and working class students in the position of dominant outsider.

Teachers of poor and working class children repeatedly critique their

students' families for taking a passive role in the students' education.

Misunderstanding the parents' belief that they should leave their children's

education to the experts, teachers repeatedly cite a lack of help outside school as the main cause of the academic difficulties that students face. Teachers seem to ignore the alienation that parents feel when it comes to interacting with them and potentially advocating for their children. Lacking what they feel would be the correct vocabulary to speak with teachers about student progress, as well as the necessary expertise, parents often prefer to let the teachers take the lead in pedagogical decision making.

According to Lareau, this sentiment tends to place them in a category of deficiency in the perspective of teachers. The situation might be read as the teachers' use of their power to shift their outsider status onto the parents of their students—a function of their position as members of the dominant culture. These teachers are outsiders within the communities in which they teach, though they are not marginalized outsiders. Nor do they take on the role of "bicultural brokers," that Anyon (2008) recommends. Rather than learning about their students' lives and families, these outsider teachers rely on unearned status, potentially alienating their students in the process.

In the study entitled "Legitimating whiteness through silence," Castagno (2008) describes a recurring situation she witnessed among minority students and their white teachers in a Colorado school. She observes that when white teachers discipline their Latino/a students, the students often comment on the interactions in terms of race, for example by accusing their white teachers of disciplining them because they are students of color. White teachers in this school do not show evidence of concern that their students might negatively perceive their actions.

Although they exist as outsiders in their students' world, they seem content with maintaining a separate status.

Castagno's research shows us that when an outsider teacher comes from the dominant culture, she may have the option of relying on her status as a means for ignoring race altogether. The white teachers Castagno studied do not seem particularly concerned with how students, or the researcher, perceive them. Typically, when a student brought up race in the context of being disciplined, Castagno observed teachers responding by castigating their students for mentioning race at all.

Castagno (2008) found that white teachers tended to react to minority students' references to race by either ignoring them or forbidding the students from discussing race altogether. Castagno observes discomfort among white teachers when the subject of race surfaced in the classroom, and she never observes any white teachers confronting the topic. "Engulfed in a system meant to benefit us, White people have much to lose by explicitly addressing race and racism" (p. 330). A white teacher can also make the choice not to address or justify her own presence among students of color.

Conversely, Marx (2008) looked at white teachers who were considered "popular" among their Latino/a students in a Nevada high school attended by a 77% Latino/a student body. This qualitative study documented the histories, experiences, and student observations of four teachers on an all-white faculty. Marx gathered her data by surveying the students as well as members of the administration. She found that the teachers had all experienced struggles in their lives that helped them "relate

to their students in some valuable ways" (p. 59). The surveyed students attested to feeling as if the teachers cared about them, and the teachers talked about their enjoyment of their students.

Marx notes, however, that the teachers also seemed to subscribe to stereotypes about their students. She writes, "they continued to hold very negative images about their students' homes and cultures that were rooted in racism" (p. 59). Only one of the four teachers comfortably discussed the topic of race and actively worked at relating to her students or—when she could not—finding mentors who could. Though all of the teachers received commendations from their Latino/a students, they could not "relate to their students' experiences as racial and cultural beings" (p. 60), thus limiting the degree to which they could ultimately grow as teachers.

Marx expresses surprise at the degree of the teachers' emphasis on the unimportance of race and culture. She notes that most studies of white teachers teaching multicultural students deal with novice or pre-service teachers, and that these teachers had been teaching for an average of twenty years. They were exempt from required multicultural education classes, and in spite of their success with students, they accepted widely held biases even when they had seen evidence to the contrary.

Just as with studies of practicing educators, studies involving preservice outsider teachers may inform the outsider teacher discussion. Saffold and Longwell-Grice (2008) approached the issue of white outsider teachers in urban classrooms populated primarily with students of color. They looked at the perspective of

education students training to become teachers and working as interns in urban classrooms. By qualitatively analyzing the experiences of three white student teachers in an education program, they gathered information about the students' "changing views on urban teaching" (p. 193), as well as their expressed "colorblind" approach toward students, and their ability to apply pedagogical theory to classroom practice. They found that all three of their participants began with a deficit-oriented perspective when it came to their students. One participant seemed to change her thinking as the study went on, expressing a more positive sense of her students' abilities. The other two participants appeared to hang on to their beliefs about the students, even when—just as with the Marx study participants—students defied negative stereotypes.

In a qualitative study of Teach for America (TFA) teachers' experiences, Veltri (2008) documents some key notions expressed by the teachers regarding outsider status. Veltri frames the study by noting the abundance of emergency certification programs in low-income areas that are difficult to staff. Drawing on prior research, she noted that, "[t]he proportion of teachers 'on waivers' from certification are 61% higher in high-poverty school districts nationwide than in all other districts" (p. 512).

As a means to further contextualize this finding, Veltri describes the situation that currently exists in the United States, in which affluent communities would most likely not accept public school teachers who lacked full credentials and training. It is considered acceptable, however, for teachers with no experience and little preparation to teach poor and minority students. The researcher argues that

programs like TFA have contributed to the acceptance of teaching in poor areas being likened to "community service" rather than a bona fide occupation (p. 513). This finding also emerged in the study done by Bell (2002) that compared perceptions of work in urban schools among black and white teachers.

Veltri (2008) examined TFA teachers' written impressions of their experiences as teachers in urban schools. One teacher writes, "I never realized how I would still feel like an outsider in a school with kids who were all outside the mainstream" (p. 522). Teachers expressed a range of reactions to the situation that they, as outsiders, were confronted with in their teaching jobs. Though one teacher writes, "I wince every time I hear a teacher call them by their 'English' names, as they call them. Jorge becomes George, and Diana's name takes on such an inflection it is unrecognizable to her" (p. 522). Another writes "[t]hese students seem so lazy. I don't think the laziness is inherent; I think it comes as a result of the educational experiences they've had" (p. 523). These teachers express discomfort at the overt biases of colleagues, though in some cases, they also maintain deficit thinking about their students as they enter the classroom. The following observation from a second generation Iranian American TFA teacher echoes some of Paley's earlier interpretations of her experience:

> Teaching in the [region] helped clarify the complex issues of identity I have
> struggled with all my life. The daughter of Iranian immigrants, I was raised
> in the homogeneous suburbs of Chicago, where I felt like an outsider. The
> experience of my students mirrored this discontent with self and agency. (p.
> 525)

Quantitative studies have also assessed white teachers' interactions with and view of their students, according to race. Just as in qualitative studies, quantitative research has found that white teachers address African American students in a more negative manner than that with which they address white students (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Irvine, 1985; Simpson & Erickson, 1983). In Irvine's 1985 study of white teachers' treatment of their black and white students, she and her research team observed several white teachers in their integrated classrooms. The researchers documented verbal feedback given by teachers, placing each comment in a category ranging from "positive" to "negative."

Irvine found that "[b]lack students received more negative feedback than did white students…" (p. 342) Irvine also found a greater degree of "positive-negative" feedback given to black students by white teachers. The term "positive-negative" defined statements that contained both sentiments, for instance, when a teacher would praise a student for following directions and would also mention that it was unusual for the student to do so. Irvine interprets the "positive-negative" feedback as being especially problematic in the sense that such statements could become very confusing for students trying to understand their teachers' behavior toward them.

Overall, Irvine's findings reveal that the white teachers in her study tended to direct more negative and ambiguous feedback toward black students than they did toward white students. As members of the dominant culture, these teachers could behave in such a manner with few, if any, consequences. Although they are over twenty years old, Irvine's findings stand up in light of the more recent observations made by Castagno (2008). The teachers Irvine and her team observed showed a

distinct negative bias when it came to their interactions with black students. Irvine's findings are critical, particularly in light of the earlier work of Simpson and Erickson, who wrote in 1983 that, "Teachers are in an influential position with respect to students and can communicate significant messages concerning expectations, evaluations, and performance. Their verbal and nonverbal behaviors are part of the interaction pattern that can affect students and their behaviors (p. 183)."

Simpson and Erickson (1983), like Irvine, looked at the behavior of teachers toward students according to race and gender. They found that "white teachers gave more nonverbal criticism to black males" (p. 192). Their finding that white teachers responded to black male children in a more negative manner led the researchers to indicate possible differences in perception on the part of teachers as well as variances in students' "internalized standards operating concerning what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior." (p. 192) These differences may have influenced the white teachers' tendency to direct more verbal and nonverbal criticism toward black and white male students and more nonverbal criticism in particular to black males.

Researchers have observed white teachers directing more negative attention toward their black students, and they have also demonstrated less favorable internal expectations on the part of white teachers concerning the potential of their African American students. In their 1981 study, Beady and Hansell looked at the correlation between the race of teachers and their beliefs about the potential achievement of their African American students. Their study found that "black teachers and white

teachers who taught in black elementary schools had different expectations for the future success of their students in college" (p. 199). Although the opinions of black and white teachers did not differ when they evaluated their students' "elementary achievement, elementary effort, or in their expectations for the future success of their students in high school" (p. 200), "…[B]lack teachers had significantly higher expectations for the future success of their students in college than white teachers" (p. 202).

When looked at in the context of the continued belief in meritocracy that Castagno (2008) describes, these findings carry significant weight. Beady and Hansell (1981) suggest that lower expectations on the part of white teachers for their black students' success may affect teacher behavior in ways that have yet to be tested. In *White Teacher*, as Paley (1979) describes her difficult early experiences with a West Indian student named Clare, she writes,

> I was determined to avoid the feeling that I must understand and judge everything Clare did. But when you lack faith in a child's ability, you show it in subtle ways. You don't introduce them to certain activities, or if you do, you stop at the first sign of trouble. You avoid giving them time and attention in certain kinds of discussions. (pp. 66-67)

Indeed, the behaviors of dominant outsider teachers hold considerable potential impact on the experience of their students. Researchers over the last 30 years have discovered that outsider teachers from the dominant culture can tend toward negative impressions of their students of color. They may also tend to give their students of color greater amounts of negative feedback. Even among the

"successful" white teachers in the Marx (2008) study, there was considerable stereotyping as to the nature of students' families' beliefs about education and value system, for example. Most studies have looked at integrated classrooms and have consisted of comparative observations of teachers' interactions with students of different races. As Simpson and Erickson (1983) suggest, the distribution of race in each classroom may have also influenced the study's findings.

In comparison with the short-term professional border crossing chosen by some white teachers in marginalized communities, the border crossing that takes place among African American teachers working in white suburbs has been documented as a more encompassing experience. The African American teachers are entering a world in which they may be less welcome. In his 2007 study, Kelly includes documentation of the experience of a black male teacher in a white suburban school district. The teacher describes his experience entering the community in terms of learning in which neighborhoods he would be more likely to be accepted as a homeowner. The teacher's account shows that his black colleague was a critical presence in his adaptation to life in the community. It is worth noting that the account of this teacher's experience contains information about his life outside of school. Challenges such as those this teacher faced in order to do his job do not tend to appear in the context of white teachers' outsider experiences.

Kelly's (2007) research, as well as that of Mabokela and Madsen (2003), addresses the situation of outsider African American teachers in white suburban schools. Their work describes the experiences of individual teachers, the majority of

whose students are white, working among overwhelmingly white faculties. The
experience of being a marginalized outsider is thus doubled for these teachers.

> There was a particular faculty member that I was close to—a close
> colleague—[who] told me that I didn't seem Black…. She said that of all the
> Black people she knows, I was the least Black person. I kind of gave her a
> look. I told her, "I respect you, but you just told me that I'm not Black?" She
> said, "No, it's just that you're not like all in your face Black, Black, Black,
> like other people I know. Other people I know," she said, "are hard core
> Black and you are just not hard core." (p. 251)

This excerpt of a conversation from Kelly's (2007) study on African
American teachers in suburban white schools demonstrates some of the contextual
influences that can affect an outsider teacher's experience. Here, a teacher describes
an interaction with a colleague, in which he finds himself cast as a "raceless" person.
The experience of being an audience for white colleagues' introductions to
relationships with African Americans should figure into the examination of such
teachers' interactions with students. This also has implications for white teachers
who teach students of color; however, as Castagno (2008) emphasizes, white
teachers can make the choice to ignore race in their classrooms.

Kelly's (2007) work demonstrates the fact that when marginalized outsider
teachers work within schools that reflect the dominant culture—in this case white,
middle class, and American—they often accommodate the norms of that culture and
they face constant reminders of their outsider status. Kelly also found that that

marginalized outsider teachers must see beyond just their classrooms when it comes to entering the community:

> Although their physical bodies are being used to integrate their schools, they use their position as a way to present countering images and experiences of the Black male to the larger school community—which they evaluate as a positive and essential aspect of their teaching. Instead of stressing the importance of being role models for Black students, my participants talk about being model citizens for White students, colleagues, and parents. (p. 249)

Mabokela and Madsen (2003) divided their study of African American teachers in white schools into the following categories: boundary heightening (which contained the subcategories: pedagogical mismatch and management differences, negative stereotypes, and insider-outsider role) and role entrapment (which consisted of stereotyped role induction). Boundary heightening was defined as "the heightened awareness of differences that exist between majority and minority group members in a given work environment," and it described the experience that many of their research participants had, in which white teachers routinely expected them to serve as "resident experts" on the African American students in the school (p. 99).

The teachers in this study expressed concern about their perceived role in their schools, where their communication with the school community seemed to take on a level of importance similar to that within their classrooms. Among the responses of participants to their situation as outsiders, several outcomes surfaced in the Mabokela and Madsen (2003) study. Some of the participants felt uncomfortable

with the expectation that they would take on leadership roles when it came to African American-specific issues.

Male participants in particular noted that their role representing "multicultural issues" prevented them from sharing insight on other pedagogical concerns. Female participants expressed concern that all African Americans were seen as a homogenous entity, and that white colleagues failed to recognize the diversity among them. Another critical conclusion of Kelly's—one which links to Castagno's conclusions about whites' ability to ignore the issue of race—centered on the notion that his study's participants felt that their presence in their schools created the sense among white teachers that they were "absolved… from being culturally responsive to African American students." (p. 104)

Mabokela and Madsen's (2003) work also brings to light the complex experiences of African American outsider teachers. The many ways these teachers describe their "outsider-insider" status brings attention to the intricacy of their overall experiences as teachers, and should inform future qualitative research on outsider teachers. The researchers also learned of the overarching expectations upon which their participants' employment was contingent. Mabokela and Madsen found that teachers of color were expected assimilate into the culture of their schools. Because the majority of the teachers in the schools claimed that recruitment of minority teachers was a priority, those minority teachers were expected to assimilate completely where the norms of the "dominant school culture" were concerned (p. 107).

Themes.

Findings among the studies reviewed here fall into two categories: Those that pertain to white teachers teaching students of color and those that pertain to teachers of color in white schools. Studies involving white teachers tended to reveal negative attitudes toward their students of color, avoidant behaviors in response to the topic of race, and lowered expectations. Even among those deemed "successful" white teachers of students of color, attitudes about their students' home lives varied among participants from positive to negative.

Among teachers of color in white schools, researchers documented a sense of being held responsible for students of color as well as for representation of "multicultural" topics outside the dominant school culture. Teachers described an expectation that they blend into the dominant culture of the school and serve as disciplinarians rather than as experts in content or pedagogy. In many cases, the teachers felt as if their presence reflected tokenism, and that they frequently encountered racial stereotyping from colleagues.

The researchers in some of these studies upheld a distance from their participants. Some conducted observational studies that involved minimal interaction or none at all (Castagno, 2004; Irvine, 1985; Marx; 2004). In these cases, the researchers oriented themselves outside of the phenomena they studied, freeing themselves from interaction with their participants and the potential discomfort that might arise from sharing their portrayal with participants and receiving participant feedback.

Particularly in the case of white teachers teaching students of color, researchers took the role of observers who entered a scene and reported on their findings, without necessarily allowing the teachers opportunities to reflect on these observations, grapple with implications, and even experience transformation as a result of their participation in the study. The researchers, similarly, chose not to account for their own positionality in the research, and if they were transformed by the work, this was not shared in their analysis. In the studies on white teachers, researchers seemed to draw negative conclusions about teacher behaviors with ease.

The Teel and Obidah (2001) study represented an example in which a researcher engaged with a participant on behaviors the researcher deemed negative. This occurred in spite of evidence of extreme discomfort and conflict between the two. The result, however, demonstrated significant transformation on the part of the participant and provides detailed examples of reflective practice that can translate into a teacher's work in the classroom. Studies in which the researcher enters a school, makes negative observations of the practices occurring there, and reports out can illuminate behaviors and spark self-reflection among teachers that read them, but teachers may be left wondering what they can do to improve their relationships with students.

The studies on teachers of color in predominately white schools demonstrate a greater degree of researcher involvement and interaction with participants (Kelly, 2007; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003). The studies give attention to the details of a participant's experience and place a higher value on participant testimony. These studies emphasize interviewing over observation. Thus, a greater balance of

participant testimony and researcher analysis existed than in some of the other studies.

The studies reviewed in this section look at either race or class exclusively of other identity characteristics. Gender remains unacknowledged, as do other characteristics. Lareau (2003) considers her participants' race as well as class, and Ladson-Billings (1994) acknowledges one participant's physical disability, however none of the researchers explicitly discuss the intersection of these characteristics and the influence of this intersection on teacher identity or relationship with students.

Gender identity and sexual orientation.

Several lengthy works on LGBT educators have emerged in recent decades, including *One Teacher in 10: Gay and Lesbian Teachers Tell their Stories,* edited by Kevin Jennings (1994), a text that includes narratives authored by gay and lesbian teachers and administrators in K-12 settings. In the foreword to the text, Jennings— with a nod toward the intersectionality of oppressive forces faced by many marginalized individuals—laments the fact that most of the contributors of color backed out of the project as publications deadlines approached. He writes,

> …my inability to bring greater cultural diversity to the collection was a tremendous disappointment. Over and over, lesbian teachers of color expressed their tremendous anxiety over contributing to the book. In the process, they educated me on how homophobia, racism, and sexism can intersect in an individual's life in truly powerful ways. (p. 13)

Jennings (1994) describes the complexities of "the closet," particularly that in which many gay teachers find themselves, and acknowledges his belief that the

gay community has yet to completely embrace the many, multifaceted identities in its midst. Highlighting, however, the significance of such a book existing at all, Jennings (1994) also notes the importance of countering the myth that gay educators will prey on children given any opportunity to do so. The text relies on teacher-authored narratives that detail many kinds of experiences, from memories from the teachers' own childhood classrooms to challenges faced in their professional lives. Many of the narratives hinge on questions and realizations about identity, particularly when it comes to the reconciliation of the personal and the professional and the negotiation of the boundary between the two. In one account, in which a school principal describes mentoring a student who is afraid to share her mother's lesbian identity, she describes the following realization:

> I was struck by two things. One, I had never related my lack of public openness about my sexual orientation to my authenticity as a teacher and a role model. I had mistakenly thought that part of my success was due to how well I kept those two issues separate. And two, that by not being fully, publicly identified as a lesbian, I was maintaining my comfort at the expense of the young—the very group I had spent my adult life working for and with. My fear, my privatization helped keep the fear, misinformation, prejudice, and homophobia alive among these adolescents, whether they were straight or gay. I was not out enough. (p. 55)

"A friend of mine recently asked why I chose to become a teacher of children with visual disabilities. To my own surprise, I quipped without hesitation: 'Because no blind person ever called me a faggot'" (p. 58). Warren Blumenfeld (Jennings,

1994) describes his college experience in the late sixties, which involved teach-ins and protests against racism on campus—a striking difference from the experiences described by Katherine Teel in her study, *Because of the Kids*, in which she describes a highly sheltered life (Obidah & Teel, 2001).

Teel's stories include a similarly timed college experience—late sixties, California—however, she indicates a lack of connection to the civil rights movement, and no involvement in the student activism that took hold around the nation at that time. Blumenfeld's identity may or may not have informed his awareness of the injustices faced by other groups, but Teel seems somewhat removed from this. In spite of the fact that she mentions opting out of a career in government when offhandedly told that no woman would ever attain such a position, she does not seem to connect her own experience with sexism to the racism her students live with each day.

Blumenfeld, meanwhile, develops empathy with people of color and those with disabilities throughout his time at college, where he experiences painful discrimination as a gay man. Both individuals end up working in the service of marginalized people, but while Blumenfeld's consciousness develops in his youth, Teel admittedly spends much of her career in a state of disconnectedness.

In spite of Jennings' lament for the lack of representation of teachers of color among the contributors to the book, many of the pieces touch upon critical intersections of identity. One teacher describes her realization that she was so open about her Jewish identity in a non-Jewish school because she was so careful about keeping her lesbian identity under wraps.

An African American male teacher struggles constantly with the complex situation of living between two marginalized communities, a situation that causes pain especially when one group will not acknowledge the existence of another. Many of the teachers describe difficulties facing discrimination not only from the mainstream, white, heterosexist culture they inhabit, but also from other disenfranchised groups. A white lesbian teacher narrates her attempt to convince a fundamentalist Christian African American parent that homophobia must receive attention during a planned diversity event, when the parent expresses a clear, religion-based opposition to this.

Themes surface and resurface throughout Jennings' (1994) work that tend to center on teacher-parent and teacher-administrator conflict over a teacher's gay identity, internal teacher conflict when it comes to the common situation of "living a lie"—or keeping one's true identity a secret, teacher struggles with student homophobia, and the prevalence of conflict among oppressed groups. This last theme brings to mind the ease with which the studies reviewed here fall into their separate categories, with little overlap. In few cases do scholars identify the intersectionality of unequal circumstances; most of the groups seem to coexist in the literature in separate universes.

The work, *Unmasking Identities: An Exploration of the Lives of Gay and Lesbian Teachers*, takes a more traditional, scholarly approach than the former, in that the author, Jackson (2007), conducted research using interviews, organization of data, and synthesis and review of findings. The text adds depth to previously rough-hewn categories of experiences of LGBT teachers. Whereas in previous (and

current) studies, researchers tend to group teachers as being "in" or "out of the closet," Jackson highlights the more complex spectrum of identity divulgence that many gay and lesbian teachers negotiate. In the author's words, "This study seeks to bridge the gap between the studies about closeted gay and lesbian teachers and those studies on out teachers by examining the process of coming out at school" (p. 9).

According to Jackson, the study also examines "what it means to be a gay teacher" (p. 13), and "how the gay teacher identity process shaped participants' classroom practices" (p. 14). The text looks at a group of nine white K-12 teachers around New England. They are males and females, whose teaching experience ranges from less than five years to more than twenty. Their ages range from mid-twenties to over fifty. The majority of the teachers have come out in professional life, but two remain closeted. The text moves from one "layer" of the coming out process to the next, filtered through the experiences of the participants. The researcher identifies the layers of coming out as the pre-teaching stage, the closeted teaching stage, and the post-coming out stage (Jackson, 2007). These stops on the "coming out continuum" weave in and out of the teachers' stories—indeed; the stories themselves build the theory.

As in Jennings' 1994 text, the teachers in this piece discuss the influences of factors besides sexual orientation on their experiences, in particular gender and age—stating that for males, some questions about marriage and children may not come across as often as for females, and that others might perceive older participants as less threatening, unwittingly creating a more accepting environment for them.

Jackson (2007) notes the fact that all of her participants are white, and she acknowledges the bias that this may bring to her findings. "Race asserted its presence through its visible absence" (p. 93), she writes, though she also notes that three of her participants mention the complexities being doubly oppressed can bring. Although they state openly that they cannot speak with authority on the issue, they recognize the difficulty such an identity might bring. One participant, Lauren, indicates that being white makes her experience as a lesbian easier.

Endo, Reece-Miller, and Santavicca (2010) conducted a narrative inquiry into the experiences of queer teachers in the Midwest of the United States. They documented the teachers' impressions of keeping "their sexual identity separate from their identity as a teachers for a number of reasons" (p. 1023) including fear of the response of their communities and concern that "the classroom is not the place for such discussions" (p. 1029). Just as in the 1994 and 2007 texts, many teachers mentioned having simulated a heterosexual life at some point in their careers in an attempt to stave off speculation that they might be gay.

In her study of a female-to-male transgender teacher, Linda McCarthy (2003) employed the teacher's voice to such an extent that it reads almost as a personal narrative. This piece explores in depth the many experiences faced by the teacher and when looked at among the other pieces reviewed in this section, makes a compelling argument for the power of a single case (Flyybjerg, 2003). This teacher charts her own continuum, from a place of fear at any sort of attention, through her simultaneously increasing expression of her true gender identity through clothing

and hairstyle, and throughout the continued narrative, she includes insights that create a picture with great depth and authenticity.

Just as with other teachers in this section, she finds that student reactions to and treatment of her—even when they express a painful negativity—can better help her negotiate the reality of her existence than her treatment at the hands of adult colleagues. Overall, the participant finds her students more accepting of her gender expression in a far more sincere manner, and she finds that adults tend to avoid confronting it at best, and in the case of an administrator, completely brushing it under the rug at worst. When several students vandalize the teacher's car, her principal concocts a theory that involves lying to the students to ingratiate the teacher to them, rather than confronting their bigotry head-on and choosing to take a stand.

Themes.

The research in this section looks at the experiences of teachers in the LGBT community who remain closeted, are considering coming out, and who are "out" in their schools. The closeted group represents the largest group profiled. Overall, participants lived with the choice not to reveal their sexual orientation for fear of negative personal and professional outcomes. Just as in the case of teachers of color in white schools, many LGBT-identified teachers reported a responsibility to teach about and advocate for non-homophobic rhetoric and actions in their schools.

Whereas the teachers of color expressed a concern that they were given this responsibility without requesting it, researchers did not report this concern among LGBT-identified teachers. A possible reason for this is that school staff members—

particularly in the case of intentional racial minority hires—may have felt comfortable identifying teachers as people of color, gay and transgendered teachers may have more easily concealed this aspect of their identity, thus preventing others from endowing them with the responsibility of educating for gender- and sexuality-specific diversity. Of course, many schools might not support the teaching of LGBT equality by any faculty members.

Teachers in these studies reported cases in which they connected in particular with students who were in various stages of coming out. They also reported observing LGBT students keeping a distance from them, a phenomenon they rationalized as a way for hesitant students to avoid "guilt by association." Some teachers found acceptance among students whereas others experienced rejection and, in one case, outright persecution. Most of the teachers considered their own coming out process as an important aspect of their professional life, although some more than others expressed a need to share this aspect of their identities.

The studies reviewed in this section hinge on participant testimony. Several reasons may exist for this, the most obvious being that researchers required entry into participant confidence in order to begin their work. Whereas researchers may feel comfortable identifying teachers' racial identity, for better or for worse, identifying teachers according to sexual orientation presents difficulty. The very nature of bias against teachers who belong to the LGBT community prevents many from expressing their identities openly. Researchers must thus earn participant trust in order to conduct qualitative research in collaboration with them.

Perhaps it is because of this earned trust that researchers felt a responsibility to represent participant experience using participants' own words. The words of participants exist throughout the studies—indeed, in most of the studies reviewed here, participant testimony forms the foundation upon which theory is constructed. The studies in this section include the few within this chapter in which intersecting identity categories are addressed at all.

In some cases, the researchers identify themselves as members of the LGBTQQA community. Perhaps it is this identification as part of the group that enabled the researchers to look for greater complexity within the category. Perhaps the researchers' perspective as members of a marginalized group awakened them to the voices that were missing from their studies.

Nationality and ethnicity.

In 2006, a 20-year veteran teacher in the Montgomery County school district in Maryland lost her job. In spite of the fact that she had received multiple nominations for teacher of the year awards, a supervisor described poor performance in the classroom as a cause for her termination. The teacher felt that the real reason had more to do with her accented English ("Teacher's Job on Line due to Korean Accent," 2006). The literature reviewed here, on teachers who cross ethnic and national boundaries to teach, looks at citizens of English-speaking countries who travel abroad to teach English, and non-Americans who come to United States public schools to teach a variety of subjects.

The literature on teachers who cross national and ethnic boundaries exhibits selectivity as to whether race will enter the analysis. When researchers look at

instances of ethnic boundary crossing in the United States, race tends to emerge as a relevant concern. When white teachers cross ethnic boundaries to teach populations of a different racial makeup, nationality may take center stage, as in the study on Australian teachers teaching in Melanesia (Waldrip, Timothy, & Wilson, 2007). In addition to the absence of any discussion of race, the piece also highlights other critical concerns. For example, the researchers include a telling series of questions that illustrate the level of choice that an outsider teacher from a dominant (i.e., white) culture possesses:

> To what extent should Colin [the dominant outsider teacher] identify with the local culture and what should he try to preserve of his own culture? How should Colin become informed about the local culture? Can one become too close to a foreign culture? How does an initial contact shape one's success in a different culture? What would have been the appropriate learning experiences for Colin as he began to work within Kantri? How could Colin be assisted in understanding the students' worldviews? (Waldrip et al., 2007, p. 115)

As a means to address the gap they found in the literature on teachers teaching English abroad, Chen and Cheng (2009) documented the experiences of two black and one white English-speaking South African teachers in an English language-learning program in Taiwanese elementary schools. The teachers participated in a co-teaching program that placed them in classrooms with non-native English speakers. Issue around race and ethnicity quickly emerged in the study as challenges for the teachers.

The researchers found that the two black teachers had not begun learning English until 4th and 5th grade students, clouding the "native speaker" designation somewhat, though this situation is fairly common in South Africa. Teachers recruited to the Taiwanese program are selected on the basis of coming from a country that considers English an official language.

Their accented English, however, caused both the later learners of English as well as the white South African teacher some difficulty when it came to perceived authenticity on the part of their co-teachers, the students, and at some points, even the researchers. Because American accents (and to a lesser extent, English accents) held privileged positions in Taiwan as more "correct" forms of pronunciation, the accents of the South African teachers met with confusion in classrooms. The teachers mentioned feeling as if colleagues and students did not take their expertise seriously, and they felt that they received little support from their co-teachers when confusion around pronunciation arose.

The two black teachers mentioned concerns about misbehavior on the part of students possibly resulting from the students' racist feelings toward them. The researchers seemed to challenge this, stating, "Any accusation of racism is a serious statement" (Chen & Cheng, 2009, p. 48). As in some of the research on teachers with disabilities, this study—though forthright in bringing up race- and ethnicity-based concerns—takes an apolitical stance when addressing the issue of discrimination and aversive racism. Interestingly, the researchers cite a teacher's sense of her students' "disrespect for people of color" (p. 48). This raises questions about the researchers' sense of their own identity as well as those of the Taiwanese

student population under study, along with that of the Taiwanese co-teachers. Was the statement indicative of evidenced disrespect of all people of color, including, perhaps other people descendant from Asia, or did it indicate the existence of colorism the part of the students?

In a 2008 study on two teachers of Asian descent—one Pakistani and one Indian—Subedi looks at the notion of identity, in particular the ways in which the two teachers negotiated their own. Both teachers taught in public schools in the United States with predominantly white student and teacher populations.

Subedi (2008a) examines the ways in which students and colleagues projected identities onto the teachers, as well as ways that the teachers attempted to define themselves. He cites the importance of acknowledging "the intersections of identity," (p. 59) to account for gender, race, nationality, and sexual orientation, and takes primarily the first three into account when analyzing his participants' experiences. This happens occasionally throughout the study, for example when Subedi spotlights a student inquiry into one participant's marital status. Although the intersection of gender and sexual orientation might come into play to enable such questioning, this observation seems to arise incidentally rather than emerging from a concerted, organized thrust of the research.

Overall, Subedi (2008a) finds that his teachers, who display apparent characteristics that mark them as "foreigners," encounter a workplace in which their skills seem to hold less value. Colleagues assume the two participants teach English as a Second Language (ESL) unless told otherwise, and the participants encounter skepticism if they teach other subjects. Colleagues call upon them—just as with

65

African American teachers in white settings—to represent cultural (though not racial) diversity in their schools, and never to provide academic expertise.

When one participant takes a challenging stance to the cultural values of the primarily Christian setting, emphasizing the need to teach about all religions in school, she finds herself further isolated. Both teachers find their intellectual legitimacy questioned, and, argues Subedi, their gender, religious, linguistic, and racial identities compound this. One may wonder about the influence of class in all of this, particularly the manner in which class articulates itself among the dominant group versus the two teachers.

In another study, Subedi (2008b) followed a Filipina and an Indian teacher, both immigrants to the United States, to track the ways in which they negotiated their identities in the context of their work as secondary social studies teachers. Subedi found that the two teachers shared a sense of pride in their national identity, and that they both valued discussions about ethnic and racial differences in their classrooms. Both teachers felt that they had experienced discrimination in their jobs, however, neither had considered race an issue before entering the country to work. They felt that "racialization" of their identities happened upon their arrival in the US.

Subedi (2008b) finds that the teachers' experiences, as well as their perceptions of immigrant students' experiences, inform a teaching perspective that emphasizes classroom communication around race and ethnicity. After a Korean student's experience with overt exclusion on the playground, one teacher plans the study of a text on Japanese American internment camps as a way to address discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. The other teacher includes a classroom

project in which students conduct cross-cultural interviews. This teacher requires the students to exchange their own culturally identifying information with their interview participants, rather than simply asking questions. Subedi links the teachers' own identities and experiences with overt and subtle ethnocentrism, and he links racism to their investment in tackling these issues in their teaching.

In 2003, Flores and Whipple produced dissertations that also addressed the situation of Filipino teachers in the United States, though from fairly different vantage points. Although the researchers shared an interest in teacher socialization, retention, and effectiveness in public schools, the pool of teachers they studied had one critical difference: While both groups of teachers qualified as immigrants, only Whipple's pool of teachers was recruited to teach in the United States.

Whipple (2003) studied the teachers following a recruitment effort by his Los Angeles school district with the intention of determining the effect on student learning, in order to provide evidence related to the practice of foreign teacher recruitment. Meanwhile, Flores (2003) examined the experiences of Filipino teachers who had migrated to Hawaii of their own volition in order to seek employment. As the research shows, basic elements of the two groups' experiences differ significantly based on this distinction.

In her research, Flores (2003) surveyed 143 of the 206 Filipino teachers in the Hawaii public school system on multiple aspects of their professional experiences in the schools. Based on the survey results, she obtained some general information about the pool of teachers. Flores found that roughly two thirds of the Filipino teachers in Hawaii were teaching English as a Second Language courses for

children who were, themselves, immigrants as well. The majority of the remaining one third taught in regular classrooms, and 11% worked in special education classrooms. Whipple (2003) surveyed 57 Filipino teachers whom he had helped to recruit to teach in Los Angeles. All of the teachers interviewed had met California's standard indicating that they were "fully qualified" to teach and were given regular teaching assignments, as they had been recruited to fill a need for regular classroom teachers.

Fundamental differences existed in the pools of teachers in the two studies, as well as the differences in the researchers' motivations for study and methods. The researchers took rather different approaches toward the cross-cultural nature of the Filipino teachers' work. Whipple addresses the choice of the Philippines for teacher recruitment the following way: "…the Philippines had many attributes that make it an ideal nation-state to recruit teachers such as: the history of educational exchanges between the United States and the Philippines, similarities in the two teacher education systems, and the commonality of English as the medium of instruction in both countries" (p. 107).

Although Whipple (2003) defines the United States' influence on the current state of Philippine education as having arisen from an educational "exchange" (p. 42), his retelling of the history acknowledges the colonial context of US-Philippine relations and the continued influence in the Philippines. Whipple concludes, "This lasting influence creates similarities between the two systems that make the Philippines an optimal source of foreign-trained teachers for school districts in the United States." (p. 44)

As far as the issue of language goes, Flores (2003) raises some critical concerns:

>…emphasis in hiring, employment, and evaluation seemed to revolve around the "acceptable accent" (which is hard to specify) and not on the qualifications and teaching effectiveness of immigrant teachers […] the anxiety and inhibitions about their pronunciation may cause them to lose sight of their educational goals as well as their rapport with their students. (p. 136)

Flores (2003) highlights the fact that, although the Filipino teachers technically speak the same language as their students and colleagues, all dialects of English are not viewed as being equal in the United States. "To the participants, their accent set them apart from the rest, subjecting them to ridicule and constituting an assault to their self-esteem" (p. 139). She includes testimonials by several teachers detailing their frustration with the way they have been treated by hiring managers based on their accented English. Whipple (2003) includes no discussion at all about his participants' accents.

The situations of the two pools of Filipino teachers in the two settings are varied to the degree that one researcher's shared language was another's severe obstacle to hiring and instruction. Whipple also found, however, that "Four of the interviewed site administrators either felt that they [Filipino teachers] lacked knowledge in the background, values, and interest of the California students" (p. 88). Whipple does not directly discuss the ethnic and racial composition of the student body in his school district. Urban, majority-minority school districts, however, have

tended to be the main recruiters of Filipino teachers in the last decade (Jacobs, 2006).

Flores (2003) makes a case for immigrant teachers as having a unique ability to connect with minority students. She describes the phenomenon in which immigrant teachers have come to serve as advocates for "problem" children in schools, and she explains that in many cases, culturally influenced behaviors enable close relationships to emerge between the immigrant teachers and such students (p. 62). However, she writes, "…this advocacy role is not being recognized as a prominent aspect of the immigrant teachers' identity and service" (p. 62).

Themes.

The participants in these studies had varying reasons for their placement in non-native countries. In some cases, the teachers had entered as recruits and, in others, the teachers had emigrated independently and had found work in local schools. Few themes extend across these studies, possibly due to the fact that the contexts showed significant variation. A measure of conflict existed within each study, and often the conflict centered on expectations and perceptions of teachers. Similar to the teachers of color, the teachers who were immigrants found that their academic skills were doubted. They, too, felt that they were viewed as representatives of "multicultural" interests.

Some teachers reported encountering assumptions that they were teachers of English as a Second Language. Several encountered prejudice based upon their accented English, and they described a sense of becoming *raced* upon entering the US—of realizing non-white identities.

The studies in this section tend not to privilege the voices of participants, except in the case of Flores (2003). In large part, the studies focus on the category of ethnicity, allowing race into the picture only incidentally. The researchers in the majority of the studies in the section draw conclusions independent of their participants, *taking participant testimony into account* rather than allowing it to guide the analysis.

The studies also refrain from outright examination of factors such as gender, religion, class, or ability status. Participants are portrayed based upon one shade of their identity, and this has the effect of limiting the depth of the research.

Ability.

In perhaps the most definitive lengthy text so far on the subject, *Enhancing Diversity: Educators with Disabilities* (1998), edited by Anderson et al., researchers examine the multifaceted experiences of individuals with various disabilities who have sought work as teachers, taught in K-12 classrooms and college-level settings, and participated in teacher education programs, as well as many who have tried. The text consists of thematic chapters that highlight various issues and interweave expository prose with anecdotal data taken from interviews conducted by many different researchers. The sections examine individuals' positive and negative experiences in teacher education programs, with cooperating teachers during student teaching experiences, and in various phases of employment—applying for teaching jobs, working in the classroom, developing accommodations for their own use, and choosing to leave the profession.

The researchers argue for greater diversity in the teaching profession in general, and specifically that students should have more opportunities to be taught by teachers who look like or belong to similar groups as them. The researchers argue for an overhaul in teacher preparation—that the systems currently geared toward a white majority of teachers must begin to broaden their perspectives to accommodate a more diverse group of future educators. Anecdotes throughout the book support this assertion, telling the stories of students with disabilities overtly or subtly discouraged from becoming teachers.

Several themes emerged in the studies profiled (Anderson et al., 1998). In the cases of teachers with less apparent disabilities, they faced the choice—similar to LGBT teachers—of whether to disclose their status and deal with the consequences. One teacher describes suffering anxiety about his performance, trying to decide whether to tell administrators about his learning disability, lest that become the "reason" for any perceived failures.

After describing his difficulty moving physically in the classroom and the ways that students assist him with routine tasks, one participant states, "The students I have worked with are more receptive to my disability than adults are" (Anderson et al., 1998, p. 139). One professor describes the way that the accommodations she has developed for her own use wind up as helpful aides to her students also (Anderson et al., 1998, p. 140). This is similar to the immigrant teachers in Subedi's study (2008b), who included dialogues and other work around difference in their classrooms. That work came as a result of the discrimination the teachers had

experienced, but translated into curricular elements that brought critical topics into the classroom.

Anderson et al. (1998) take on many additional external challenges faced by teachers with disabilities. Their work includes stories about overt discouragement from pursuing work as classroom teachers, including many cases in which professors made attempts to block education students from even participating in student teaching activities. Teachers describe rejection from academic programs directly resulting from their disabled status.

Anderson et al. (1998) position their work in a place of advocacy when it comes to portraying the narratives of the participants, whose words appear throughout. The tone takes on a decidedly apolitical perspective, though, similar to Chen and Cheng's 2009 study of English teachers in Taiwanese classrooms. The authors choose to focus on individual stories, in the case, for example, of a teacher with low vision who is refused additional lighting in her classroom by her principal. Additionally, the researchers make reference to a "disability culture" (p. 34) and a debate about whether one exists, although they do not acknowledge that many subcultures might exist within the disabled community or that the culture(s) might possess the quality of mutability inherent to all cultures.

In the second edition of *Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (2009) spotlights a teacher who has "severe disabilities" (p. 163). Ladson-Billings implies that the disabilities are physical in nature, though she does not specify exactly what they entail. The teacher works among students who also possess extreme physical issues, thus potentially giving the teacher insider status among her group. Few documents

exist that look at the experiences if teachers with disabilities in mainstream schools, and it may also be worth noting that principal in the Ladson-Billings text mentions having "pulled lots of strings" (p. 163) in order to bring the teacher on staff.

In a 2000 study of four student teachers with disabilities, Duquette looks at the influences of life histories on students' work and motivation to become teachers. Just as researchers found when studying other marginalized groups, for example LGBT teachers, Duquette discovered that the participants in her study had had negative experiences in their own primary and secondary schooling. In some cases, these experiences influenced the participants' decisions to choose the teaching profession. The researcher also found that the behaviors of the participants' families had a direct influence on participants' academic performance: those with family support tended to achieve academic advancement more easily and in a timelier manner.

Duquette (2000) also found that her participants had accepted their disabilities and knew how to adapt to their environment and provide their own accommodations in order to teach effectively. The participants demonstrated "persistence, determination, goal orientation, and flexibility" (p. 226), and finally, they did not adopt the negative teaching practices that they had experienced as children.

Just as in the Anderson et al. (1998) text, Duquette expresses the conclusion that "people with disabilities should not be discouraged from applying to faculties of education" (p. 227). As found by other researchers looking at educators from marginalized groups (e.g., LGBT populations, immigrant teachers, teachers of color)

Duquette posits that the perspectives of teachers with disabilities can increase awareness among colleagues, and "enrich the learning of children" (p. 227).

Themes.

The research in this section portrayed a situation in which teachers with disabilities encounter multiple obstacles on their way into the classroom. From outright discrimination on college campuses and in teacher education programs to administrators who will not accommodate simple requests for retrofitting classrooms to make them accessible, the research portrays struggle. Internal struggles surface as well, when student teachers describe the challenges that they faced as children attending mainstream schools.

The researchers tend to keep their participants at arms' length, documenting testimonials and developing their own analyses. A tone of tragedy at times seeps into coverage of the experiences of teachers with disabilities, and this may represent a negative view of the capabilities of such teachers.

Absent from all of the research in this section is any mention of the social constructs that create situations in which college students with disabilities find themselves discouraged from becoming teachers. Additional identity characteristics such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and religion receive no attention in this body of research, limiting the portrayal of the participants.

Methodological and Content Themes.

Throughout the studies in this literature review, trends emerge based upon the positionality of researchers as members of the group under study or outsiders among that group. Greater empathy and respect for participant voice emerge when

the researcher self-identifies as a member of the participant group. In studies where the researcher is not a member of the group, there tends to exist a higher degree of autonomous interpretation of participant data. In these cases, the studies seem not to reflect a collaborative interaction between the researchers and the participants. Rather, they reflect a pattern in which researchers enter the field, conduct observations to mine for data, and develop conclusions and generalizations in isolation.

Across nearly all of the studies, researchers focus on one identity characteristic among their participants to the virtual exclusion of the others. Researchers select participants based upon perceived or self-reported belonging to a certain group. Failing to take multiple identifiers into account exempts researchers from having to report on power dynamics and identity as fluid states—researchers locate teachers along an oppressed/oppressor continuum of sorts and crystallize an image of each teacher. That image, as two-dimensional as a snapshot, represents a researcher's perspective at a single moment in time.

Another important theme across many of the studies is the conflict and struggles encountered by participants in their communities, schools, and classrooms. While the conflicts described are real, something seems to be missing. Images of subordination define many of the studies of outsider teachers. The categorization of teacher experience is similar to the categorization of teacher identity in that it is singular. The participants are viewed from one angle. The studies lack complexity in this way, and they leave no room for transformation or growth on the part of the participants or the researchers.

Intersectionality.

Intersectionality offers the possibility of a new approach for studying the experience of outsider teachers. Intersectionality theory examines a more complete picture of individuals and the multiple aspects of identity that define them. Feminist scholars have taken up the theory of intersectionality in scholarly work. Benefits include the acknowledgement of a possibility of existence that is more complex and inclusive than the one bell hooks (1981) described, in which feminists were white women and black civil rights activists were all men. Intersectionality moves to address the needs of the many who find themselves lost among multiple categorizations.

Intersectionality challenges a research paradigm that parses out identity characteristics as if they could exist independently of one another. Resisting the neatness of empirical categories, intersectionality seeks to embrace an individual's performance of her race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability status as they interact in reality. Brah & Phoenix (2004) stress the importance of the holistic stance embodied in the concept:

> We regard the concept of 'intersectionality' as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands. (p. 76)

One of the noteworthy aspects of intersectionality theory at this point is that no agreed-upon methodology exists among its adherents (Yuval-Davis, 2006; McCall, 2005). An approach to intersectionality that would quantify the systems of "multiple oppression" (Yuval-Davis, 2006), and even chart categories along axes of domination (Hancock, 2007) has been called for, though critics acknowledge the problematic nature of this. As Hancock argues,

> Most intersectionality scholars share the logic that multiple marginalizations of race, class, gender, or sexual orientation at the individual and institutional levels create social and political stratification, requiring policy solutions that are attuned to the interactions of these categories. Intersectionality theory claims that these policy problems are more than the sum of mutually exclusive parts; they create an interlocking prison from which there is little escape. (p. 65)

At this point, intersectionality has taken root in some areas, namely feminist studies, gender studies, and critical race theory to an extent. Because little structure surrounds it, and scholars have used it more as a basis for theory construction and analysis than as a foundation on which to construct a methodology, intersectionality remains in the academy. Writes McCall (2005):

> In fact, feminists are perhaps alone in the academy in the extent to which they have embraced intersectionality—the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations—as itself a central category of analysis. (p. 1771)

Although its applications are not yet widely known, intersectionality theory shows promise as a paradigmatic frame for research in education. This is particularly true for teachers who categorize themselves as outsiders based upon multiple characteristics.

Discussion

The studies reviewed here examine the experiences of various groups of teachers who might be considered—or might consider themselves—outsiders. They tend not to use the term, "outsider," occasionally opting for "boundary crosser," and most often describing participant identities outright, in terms of the characteristics under study. The studies constitute a solid foundation of research on the groups of teachers whose experiences they examine. Research in the area of teachers who are racially different from their students has taken various qualitative approaches. Studies have involved extensive interviewing, observation, and in some cases, a more action- or participatory-oriented approach.

Studies looking at the experiences of teachers who are members of the LGBT community have used interview to produce lengthy works that emphasize narrative in their portrayal of teacher experiences. They have also demonstrated reflectiveness on the part of researchers who include themselves in studies. Studies on teachers who are immigrants have tended to rely on observational data and some interview data. These studies have less often emphasized a narrative arc and have tended to a greater extent, to seek generalizable findings. In the case of studies involving teachers with disabilities, the existing research provides a springboard for much-needed future work in this area.

Three primary concerns emerge: The first has to do with a lack of attention to intersectionality, with little accountability for complex participant identities beyond the basic categories framed by the research questions themselves, which tend to imagine participant identity within isolated categories. The second concern deals with the lack of emphasis on the presence, identity, and motivation of the researcher. Sultana (2007) describes issues surrounding researcher positionality, citing trends that have challenged previous research approaches, which failed to include researcher positionality as a primary element:

Many feminist methodologies emphasize non-hierarchical interactions, understanding, and mutual learning, where close attention is paid to how the research questions and methods of data collection may be embedded in unequal power relations between the researcher and research participants (Bondi, 2003; Jones et al., 1997; Moss, 2002;). Being attentive to the politics of knowledge production and processes of research has become important to feminist geographers, by being analytical and reflexive about their fieldwork and research process, challenging pre-given categories and narratives, and being attentive to power, knowledge and context (England, 1994; Hurd, 1998; Katz, 1994; Moss, 2002). (Sultana, 2007, pp. 375-376)

Sultana (2007) describes concerns about power and positionality that have been less evident in some research reviewed here. The notion of "unequal power relations" is not expressly identified in Subedi's (2008) research on immigrant teachers, nor does it appear in the text of Anderson et al. (1998) on teachers with

disabilities. As much of the research lacks a participatory element, "mutual learning" does not emerge as a priority.

Finally, certain questions about participant involvement in the process remain unaddressed in the methodology sections of the studies. Were participants allowed to review transcripts and sections of the manuscript? Why did researchers tend to include—in many cases—short excerpts of participant testimony, with far more textual space devoted to the researcher's interpretation? This is not to say that the interpretation of the researcher is not valid. Without significant attention to the researcher's motivation, however, the conclusions may come across less clearly.

Among studies on the experiences of teachers with disabilities, few emphasize a narrative approach, and this is cause for concern. Who better to tell the stories of teachers with disabilities than the teachers themselves? What better method for advocating for such teachers than the inclusion of stories that detail both their successes and their struggles? The same can be said of teachers who are immigrants. In both cases, we find studies framed from the perspectives of researchers whose presence is not felt in the work. The reader often does not get a sense of the interaction between researchers and participants, and this limits the degree to which participant voices take center stage.

Studies on the experiences of outsider teachers must begin to take intersectionality into account. Collins (class lecture, November 12, 2009) describes "saturated sites," for example the family, as spaces in which intersectionality plays out. Multifaceted and sometimes marginalized identities perform within and in response to the constraints of societal forces. What better example of a saturated site

than the classroom? In classrooms, the push and pull of societal values, power dynamics, and systemic movements, the written and unwritten stories of culture and subculture, and the exertion of identity all find their forum. We can arguably watch our society unfold in the classroom, with the consequences of its priorities readily apparent. Within the saturated site of the classroom, the complex identities of outsider teachers meet their contextual space.

Intersectionality literature contends that no single methodology has been determined as the appropriate one for research attempting to represent the theory. McCall (2005) cites the appeal of a methodology that takes into account complexity—that the researcher may counter the "identity parsing" which occurs in so much of the literature, including that reviewed here. Ultimately, argues Davis, "…theorists need to take both gender and race on board and show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences" (2008, p. 68). I would argue that multiple categories must enter into the frame in order to represent reality. I have strived for this in my research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

I spoke my story so that others might feel liberated to speak theirs without feeling guilty that some suffered more and therefore their story was not worth telling, their feelings unjustified.
--Carolyn Ellis (260, 2009)

Process Narrative

Episode 25 of *I Love Lucy*, "Lucy is Envious," first aired on March 29, 1954. The theme of the episode—that people want what they do not have—occupies much of the action and dialogue, but an underlying storyline alludes to popular fascination with and fear of an invasion by space aliens. This subplot takes root in a scene atop the Empire State Building. Lucy and her friend Ethel, in an ill-conceived moneymaking scheme, dress up as Martians to participate in a publicity stunt. Entering the rooftop scene, the two appear to emerge from above, clad in studded leotards and tights, web-like wings, and fitted helmets. Creeping up to a group of tourists from Kansas, they approach the unsuspecting victims with bizarre movements and speak a made-up language of shrieks, snickers, and jumbled nonsense words.

The entrapment comes easily, the tourists riveted to the gambit unfolding before them. The aliens have arrived. The outsiders have invaded. Certain death looms imminent, and fear settles in.

Psychologist Wilfred Bion (2004) studied the responses of soldiers exposed to stress in the years following World War II. Through this work, he identified what he thought was a universal a human phenomenon, what he called the "fight or flight" response to life-threatening situations (p. 63).

In the fearful poses of the tourists, we can see a third response, common though not incorporated into Bion's observations. The tourists neither flee nor fight. They freeze, and the scene continues to unfold before them.

The following day, the newspapers report the invasion. Desi and Fred find out, and Lucy and Ethel make things right. It is a typical episode, following well-worn sitcom story lines, but I would not have known that the first time I saw it, in 1981 on a wood-encased television the size of a commercial oven, while I lay on the yellow shag wall-to-wall carpet of my grandmother's apartment on East 10th street in Brooklyn, New York.

I would have been around four years old, making my way through a dish of hard butterscotch candies, enjoying the festive theme song of the show while my Grandma Lilly fried potatoes in the small kitchen that faced the breezeway separating her building from the next one over. Twelve years later, I would sit in that same kitchen, elbows perched on a vinyl tablecloth, dangling a mug of coffee and waiting for my uncle to arrive the morning after my grandmother died on a cot in her bedroom. He would, bringing with him warm rolls from the bakery up the street.

But in 1981, I was still four, and I was watching *I Love Lucy*. A few hundred miles away, Justin Bond may have also been watching that same episode that

morning. A performer for nearly fifteen years under the stage name Kiki DuRane,

Bond became part of the Kiki and Herb duo. I went to their show at a cowgirl-

themed bar in the West Village in 1996 during the summer following my sophomore

year in college. They were a small, lounge-style act, new to New York City. I

continued to see Justin Bond and Kiki's names over the years as the act spread and

gained more recognition.

Most recently, however, I heard Bond on the radio, talking about Episode 25

of *I Love Lucy* (2011). I had packed up my computer and left the library, frustrated

at my slow progress. My unfinished work weighed on me, and I felt that my writing

about this study lacked perspective—that I could not stand back far enough to see an

emerging picture, and that I had lost direction on my way toward this goal. I was

driving home. The radio voices distracted me.

Bond spoke of his youth spent in Hagerstown, Maryland, a small town where

he, a transgendered 7th grade boy struggled to fit in, seeking refuge in stories of

Lucille Ball's life and watching the show on television. Describing episode 25, Bond

says

> They see the bourgeois sightseers and dance around them and look at them
>
> and inspect their clothing and the hats. […] They become the freaks, they
>
> become the aliens, and Lucy and Ethel are, for that moment, in charge. I was
>
> tickled. I thought it was a great example of friendship and of how you can
>
> pull one over on simple-minded people.

But the next words I hear seem spoken just to me. Bond says, "It portrayed queerness, as far as I'm concerned. It portrayed outsiderness, otherness. And so it gave people, I think, a blueprint on how to, if they were paying attention and they cared, how to deal with otherness in a respectful, loving, rational way."

"Outsiderness." The improvised term I have been "adding to dictionary" in Microsoft Word for the last year. The word that I see nowhere, but which I nonetheless return to, again and again, to describe a feeling. My participants have felt it to varying degrees. I have felt it. Those who have not felt it might learn from the experience, though I remain convinced that we all feel it from time to time.

I thought back to my own experiences watching Lucy's antics, as a kid. I was Jewish and a non-native born American. I felt "normal," though. I didn't identify myself as an "other" or "outsider." To others, though, I might have been. To still others, because I am white and don't have an accent, I would appear one of the mainstream.

As I continue to examine my identity and those of others, though, I realize that identity and otherness are contextual and personal and mutable. I picture each of my research participants as kids, each watching *I Love Lucy* in a living room somewhere in the United States, each young and growing an individual identity at the same time as the world was already labeling them.

When I got home from the library, I wrote a letter to my research

participants:

Dear Jamie, Lisa, Maria, Winnie, and Kyong,

With your permission, I have documented our talks over these past few months. I was surprised to find that your stories overlapped, and that they overlapped with my own. I had gone into this study prepared to defend your differences—ready to reject the notion that we were responsible for creating any generalizable "data" to share with the scholarly community.

My goal was, and still is, to write down pieces of the life stories that you decided to share with me, to respect your interpretations of your own experience, and to carefully outline portions of your subtle and complex identities so that any reader can learn from your experience. This venture has challenged me in several ways:

I have learned to be honest about myself. I have gradually opened up and included my own experience alongside yours.

I have begun to stop trying to anticipate what others might want to see written here. At a certain point during the analysis stage, I began feeling paralyzed. I could not determine the best way to organize, make sense of, and share your stories. I had experienced these conversations with you, and I had something to say about them, but I had to say it in a way that was just out of my reach—a mode that would prove that your words were accurate, true, and worthwhile. This stalled my progress, until I heard Justin Bond talking about Lucille Ball and realized that his story is my story, and my story is his story. Similarly, your stories became my own to tell once I realized that my story is also yours.

Knowledge is not only to be evaluated by members of the academy—individuals, including me, are the experts on their own experiences. Coupled with the sluggish pace brought on by self-doubt and the fear that I might be doing this whole thing incorrectly, I worried that my story about myself had no place here. This may have stemmed from the joy I felt while writing the autoethnographies—that such ease and pleasure must forfeit any legitimacy that would make the work truly academic.

Ultimately, your faith that we really were engaging with important topics—that you felt your stories were important enough to share—kept me going. Thank you all for your work, generosity, and trust.

Sincerely,

Sara Makris
Baltimore, MD
August 21, 2011

<div align="center">***</div>

Participants

Five participants collaborated with me for this study: Jamie, Lisa, Maria, Winnie, and Kyong.[1] I met Jamie, Lisa, Maria, and Winnie through colleagues in the graduate program. Kyong had been a student of mine a year before the study. The group did not form based on responses to a classified advertisement or a flier posted on a university campus. This group evolved from conversations I had with graduate students who had become friends—conversations that led to the birth and development of my idea.

Jamie identifies himself as a homosexual African American man from a low-income background. Lisa is a white woman with blindness. Maria is a lesbian African American woman with a masculine gender identity. Winnie describes herself as a black woman from a low-income background. Kyong is a middle class, Korean American man born to parents who emigrated from Korea.

A review of the selection of participants might bring questions as to why two of the five identify as gay, and why four identify as people of color. One might wonder why I did not attempt to fill additional "outsider categories," through the involvement of a Latino or Muslim participant, for example. An inventory of this sort—though it may feel unavoidable given human impulses to categorize—runs counter to the goals of the research.

I did not attempt through my participant selection to fill representative identity-based quotas. Instead, I took an organic approach to recruitment. I followed up on suggestions about individuals who might be interested in participating—

---

[1] I have given the participants pseudonyms.

people for whom the descriptor "outsider teacher" rang true or at least stirred something within that directly connected to their identities. Had I taken the approach of trying to fill categories, I would have been exerting dominance over my participants—through the act of labeling them—in a way that would have counteracted the collaborative climate I sought.

The participants in this study took a risk in sharing personal stories and trusting me to document the stories in a way that neither exaggerated nor diminished them. My goal as a researcher involved actively honoring and valuing the essential contribution made by the participants—not seeing them as representatives of a demographic group.

This research does not seek to create generalizations. It does not attempt to cover a certain range of groups, for to do that would contradict the purpose and values of the inquiry. The research conducted here has the goal of placing participants within a shared space with the researcher, in which participants have power over outcomes—not only as they perform within the researcher's predetermined parameters but as they define the parameters alongside the researcher. To select participants based solely upon my understanding of the categories into which they fall would recreate a model of research on the "other" that we see throughout much of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Such an approach would put me, the researcher, in an unearned position of dominance.

The five participants for this study were selected based upon several criteria: They had to express a connection to the idea that they might be considered outsiders among the population they teach. They also had to be willing to reflect upon and

share their experiences for the purposes of the research. In all cases except one, friends of mine familiar with the terms of the study recommended most of the participant. Participants received an electronic document describing my definition of "outsider teacher," in order for them to determine whether they felt the term applied to them. I informed participants that I would be asking them to speak and write openly about their experiences, and to interact with the terms of the study—the label of "outsider" and any other terms and ideas that they wished to promote or challenge. Because each of us represents a number of overlapping groups, I concerned myself with that fact. The fact of the complexity of each of our identities seemed especially relevant to the study, to gaps in the existing literature, and therefore, to those who might eventually read the participants' words. The emphasis in this study, thus, rests less on the "whom" than with the "how" of it.

In the existing outsider teacher literature, few studies represent collaboration between researcher and participants. Among the studies that take a more collaborative approach, some of the most powerful writing emerges. The strength found in many studies on teachers in the LGBT population lies in their close focus on the participants. Detailed portraits and narratives necessitated a qualitative approach, and the results demonstrate researchers' respectful and thorough attention to this group of outsider teachers. Such an approach should extend to other groups as well. In this study, I use a similarly focused approach to the stories my participants tell, thus allowing them the opportunity to control the flow of information and to function as the primary sources of their own stories.

I had opportunities to meet participants who lived nearby. My interviews with Lisa and Jamie, both of whom live several states away, took place over the phone. The use of the telephone brought unexpected elements to the study. I had never met Lisa in person before beginning the interviews (she was the only participant I did not meet in person at some point), and I found that, over the course of our conversations, I had to "fine-tune" my listening skills. Lisa's speaking cadence includes thoughtful pauses, and I learned to relax into these pauses, as it were, so as not to interrupt her thinking. Because I could not rely on visual cues to determine whether she was finished speaking, I learned to be patient and trust the silence. As we became more familiar, I found that being patient held rewards. Lisa's pauses often indicated that she was thinking aloud, and the ideas that came after them often took interesting turns and brought greater elaboration and insight. Jamie and I met in person on several occasions, so I was more familiar with his speaking style when we began the long-distance interview process. In both cases, I felt a level of trust and intimacy—as if we had let go the handshake trappings of ordinary conversation in favor of the essentials. Greetings and small talk quickly faded as we moved to the topics at hand.

With participants I met face-to-face, I could access nonverbal conversational footholds, and in a sense, this may have allowed for more laziness. Because I was able to interpret facial expressions and participate using my own nonverbal cues, for example nodding, and countless facial expressions I am certain I made unconsciously, I relied less on words alone. I leave the study feeling that an intimacy

and vulnerability may come with the use of telephone interviews: one must listen carefully, so as not to miss a whispered word.

Narrative Inquiry

The research methodology I used in this study springs from narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed the narrative inquiry process that aligns most closely with the work I have done here. Their narrative inquiry has a meta-analytical quality, in which the researcher must continually reflect on both the subject and process of the research itself. Their descriptions of narrative inquiry bring to mind charcoal drawings heavily worked and reworked, in which no mark completely fades when erased, leaving in the final product a record of motion and transformation. The narrative inquiry methodology developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) accounted for the structure and attitude that I brought to the notion of research. This methodology focuses on stories people tell about themselves and their experiences. The stories, as told by participants and researchers, anchor the research. Reflection upon the process itself is ongoing throughout the data collection process. The methodology also demystifies the research process, in that it calls for transparency on the part of the researcher. Researchers conducting narrative inquiry are encouraged to document their motivation, positionality, and continual presence in the research. Ellis (2004) writes about "a shift in the 1970s from an emphasis on participant observation to the 'observation of participation'—where researchers observe the interaction they have with participants—and to an emphasis on the process of writing" (p. 50). Her description demonstrates the sort of paradigmatic

change that occurred in the research community over decades, and which set the stage for the narrative inquiry used in this study.

Narrative inquiry responds to the interest in documenting experience in a manner that evokes the presence of real people rather than research subjects. The methodology represents a focus on co-construction of knowledge, and it allows researchers to privilege participant voices while simultaneously acknowledging their own intrusion into participant lives. The fact that research is taking place becomes a story in and of itself, and certainly a part of the researcher's own story as the inquiry continues. Describing narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write:

> It is equally correct to say "inquiry into narrative" as it is "narrative inquiry." By this we mean that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon "story" and the inquiry "narrative." Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p. 2)

An account of the data gathering process becomes a part of the data that the researcher documents in field notes and journal entries. Analysis takes place throughout: indeed, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of interpretive analysis portrays a chain of events in which the researcher reads and rereads transcripts and other field texts, considers the elements of her own story that she

93

brings to the interpretation, and lays out her story alongside the stories she is uncovering and formulating simultaneously. In addition to its adherence to this process, the narrative inquiry upon which this study is constructed supports a scaffolding of additional elements as well.

Rather than looking only at the reconstruction of the investigation in a narrative form, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize the iterative nature of narrative inquiry. This approach to research involves the re-assessment of research questions at multiple points along the way, the involvement of the researcher as part of the process, and what they term the "'back and forthing' of writing research texts" (p. 138), describing the movement of the researcher between attention to participants, to her presence in the work, and to consideration of the audience.

The form that the final product takes, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), can vary depending on the preference of the researcher in light of the phenomenon under study, the desired uses for the manuscript or its parts, and the researcher's image of how the parts may function together to form a whole. Because, as they describe it, the narrative inquiry research process is "discursive, fragmented, filled with halting moments" (p. 153), a final product may take any number of forms.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the metaphor of soup to describe narrative inquiry, noting that the writing can contain varied amounts of ingredients depending on the focus of the study and the researcher's perspective. The authors first assert that description, argument, and narrative must all be present to form a true narrative inquiry. Later in the text, they come to the conclusion that their prescriptive list of elements creates parameters that are too constrictive for the methodology. As

the text develops, the authors keep the earlier, more prescriptive view although it contradicts the later one. In doing this, they demonstrate the metamorphic, layered nature of the narrative inquiry they describe.

Continuing with the soup metaphor, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledge that narrative inquiries are necessarily poured into containers of various size and proportion, as in the case of a department's dissertation requirements, for example. They indicate the importance of a researcher identifying and creating the appropriate "container" to accommodate all parts of the study; and they describe a narrative process that requires reading and analysis by others outside the research process who may identify themes and ideas that were previously invisible to the researcher. This study has used both of these elements: an ongoing personal narrative along with sharing of the text with readers who could offer new analyses and perspectives.

The study also employs transcripts, field notes, and participant writing to examine and reexamine the unfolding stories about the participants and our conversations. For this reason, my profiles of participants do not come from a faux-omniscient vantage point—they are rendered in the voice of a researcher conducting research. My presence is clear in my accounts of the interviews and an ongoing internal dialogue accompanies the outward ones.

As I navigated conversations about the study with participants and colleagues, and in my own writing, I felt the "uncertain plateaus" Connelly and Clandinin describe. During the transition from "field text to research text," I have searched for space in which to step back and look at the study from a more distant

vantage point, so as to see ever more of it. In my efforts to make participant voices and stories the centerpiece of the study, I build the analysis around their narratives, with significant use of their words in the final product. Readers should gain a sense of immediacy and substance when they come into contact with the research. By shifting the balance toward participant testimony, I wish to share with the reader the elements of this work that I find so compelling.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write, "Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (p. 121). They describe a search for "silences" in the field and a positioning of narrative inquiry as a methodology "within the silences" (p. 123). The research includes life stories illustrated through narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that personal narrative is necessarily subsumed within the narrative inquiry process—that is, the researcher's own story is an inextricable part of the research she conducts, as well as her presentation of findings. The writing style seeks structure in the form of a narrative arc connecting experience to experience, participants to researcher, and study to meaning. The study looks at six individuals and is structured to honor the values of a narrative.

Through this process, I wish to represent the stories and insights of the participants, model change and reflection on my part, and encourage readers to experience these stories as I do, learning alongside me. Muncey (2010) has written of her sense of research as a risk and of the importance of pushing limits to their extremes in order to pave the way for discovery. She writes, "I think a great deal of

96

research is like a commuter's journey: a predictable shuffle between expected

destinations, with safety and comfort the desired outcome but with no hint of

adventure" (p. 63).

Ultimately, narrative inquiry became central to this work, as a data-gathering

tool, a contextualizing tool, and a tool for analysis. The first step of data analysis

involved developing detailed portraits of the participants. Through deep reading and

review of the transcripts and field notes, I wrote the stories of my participants, our

conversations, and my emerging perspective on both. The portraits of participants

became a critical step in data analysis. Once I had created the portraits, I revised

them several times, revisiting the interview transcripts and looking for parallels and

contrasts among them.

The revision process, along with the revisiting of transcripts, participant

writing, and my notes, gave way to the emergence of themes. I initially attempted to

code data based on in-vivo codes, or terms used by participants. This process gave

rise to the first draft of the portraits, however, once I began the revision process, I

allowed the stories to evolve, and themes began to emerge in a more meaningful

way. Arguably, narrative is one of the most effective modes of communication—

certainly one of the most fundamental. Says Nash (2004), the scholar of personal

narrative:

> You are a scholar to the extent that you can tell a good, instructive story. You
>
> are a scholar if you can capture the narrative quality of your human
>
> experience in language that inspires others. You are a scholar if you can
>
> present your story in such a way that […] it rings true to human life. You are

a scholar if you can help your readers to reexamine their own truth stories in light of the truths that you are struggling to discern in your own complicated life story. (p. 46)

Study Structure

Data collection took place in three stages involving participants. The method used in each stage aligns with one of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) definitions of field texts for use by narrative inquirers: the primary data-gathering methods were interview and journal writing. I first conducted an interview aimed at developing a context for the participants' experiences and current school setting. The questions included general queries on the participants' paths to teaching, the schools in which they have worked, the demographics of the student populations and colleagues among whom they work, and their current position in terms of subject(s) and grade level that they teach. Finally, I asked participants to offer a definition of themselves as outsiders and discussed my own identity as an outsider teacher.

Once the initial interviews were complete, I released a series of five journal prompts to the participants, which they completed over a four- to six-week period. The journal prompts were designed to allow for deeper reflection on questions of each participant's identity and the impact of this on their teaching environment, as well as the effect of the teaching environment on participants' identities.

The culminating interviews focused primarily on questions about outsider identity factors: participants' beliefs about their identities' effects on their work and relationships with students and colleagues and challenges participants have faced in their schools. The final questions also engaged the participants in terms of the

reciprocal relationship between their identities and their work in the classroom. I asked participants to reflect on the ways that they believed their identities have influenced their work, and I inquired as to the ways in which teaching had influenced their own sense of self. The goal here was to examine the complexity of self-definition as experienced by each participant and to consider the relevance of the teaching occupation in the scheme of identity.

I generated personal narratives in preparation for, during, and following the interviews. The writing has focused on my own development of what I consider an outsider identity, the manner in which my outsider status first occurred to me as a young girl, and the manner in which it manifested during my teaching career. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommend that narrative inquiry include such work on the part of the researcher for several reasons. Narrative researchers, they posit, should clearly explain their involvement in the research—never pretending to exist in an "objective" space outside the research. This allows for a better picture to emerge of the researcher's relationships with participants, which contributes to clarity in the resulting narrative.

The study is based on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry, however, I employed additional aspects that I list here, with brief descriptions of each. The descriptions include explanatory language about the methods used, as well as evaluation of interview questions that seemed especially generative.

Types of questions asked.

The interview and journal questions, in the section below, came from thought about how to request candid testimony without prying, how to engender trust and a

respectful atmosphere. The most useful question of all asked teachers to describe their actions in the classroom. A more detailed description of this comes in the next section. The important aspect of this, for general purposes, is that questions about actions may come across as more empowering to participants. These kinds of questions ("How do you…" "Describe the ways in which you…") may encourage responses that can be especially helpful to those who read participant testimony in published studies.

Types of information gathered.

In developing data gathering tools, I used two modes of communication—spoken and written testimony—to gain insight into participant experiences. This allowed for on the spot, spontaneous talk that took unexpected turns and led to unanticipated questions on my part. It also allowed for quiet time to reflect and to generate thoughtful, more detailed accounts of experiences.

I encouraged participants to choose the journal prompts as they saw fit but to feel free to write about other relevant topics instead. Though they tended to stay with the prompts, I noticed that each participant took opportunities in the journals to stray into personal territory. The twists and turns of these introspections laid the groundwork for the closing interviews. I tailored each participant's closing interview to their journal writing, making sure to address the main topics with all but picking up on loose ends and following up on stories and tidbits that I found in their words.

Sharing of literature.

The sharing of literature among participants began with my first interview. Although I did not plan outright to include such an element, I believe that I had long

thought about it without knowing where it might fit in a description of methodology. The literature sharing began during my first interview, which was with Lisa. She brought up a class she was taking, and I spontaneously asked whether she could recommend any books I should read in connection with my collaboration with her.

As a sighted person, I knew that I lacked knowledge concerning life experienced with a disability. Though I knew one book would not change this completely, I did not want to make Lisa the sole arbiter of "disability knowledge" in the study. She quickly recommended *Moving Violations,* a memoir by Hockenberry (2004). This became one of the texts I read as I interacted with Lisa and developed her portrait.

Jamie and I had both been conducting research having to do with race, and we found that we shared the perspective that insufficient literature existed concerning the experience of teachers of color in white schools. As we began trading the names of authors back and forth, we realized that we had read most of the same articles in a certain pool of literature. I sent one article to Jamie that he hadn't heard about, and he shared with me some writing he had done concerning psychological perspectives on insider/outsider experiences.

When Winnie confessed to taking offense at the term, "outsider", I emailed an article by Sherry Marx (2004). Because I had not anticipated including this exchange of literature in the study, I cannot say exactly what motivated me to share the article—it may have been out of an impulse to show something that had informed my perspective. Winnie found that she connected with the point of view of

the article, and as I describe below, she generated further reflection on outsiderness that both extended beyond the intended reach of the study and enhanced it greatly.

When interviewing Kyong, I mentioned the Marx (2004) article and eventually sent it when he expressed an interest in it. When I asked him to share a reading he thought I might find pertinent to his experience, he mentioned *The Students are Watching*, Sizer and Sizer's (1999) semi-fictionalized text dealing with teacher and student perceptions of the public school experience and the lack of authentic learning. My subsequent reading of the text brought a great deal of depth to my later analysis of Kyong's interview transcript, particularly in terms of his interest in the importance of accessing his own adolescent experiences to bring legitimacy to his work in the classroom.

With Maria, I shared McCarthy's (2003) text describing the experiences of a transgendered teacher. I had asked whether Maria had any texts she thought I should read, prompted by a similar impulse to the one I felt with Lisa. I did not want to make Maria the representative for teachers with non-conforming gender identities. Maria mentioned that she had looked for research in this area and had not found anything. I was glad to be able to share the McCarthy (2003) article, as well as some of the titles of books on LGBT teachers from the literature review. We discussed the study when we talked after that, and it formed a point of reference, particularly in terms of its handling of teacher-student relationships.

Transformative/"uncomfortable"/co-constructed aspect.

Particularly with Winnie and Lisa, I found a transformative aspect to the study. Both described a feeling of personal transformation as a result of participating

102

in the study. Each had a sense that the work had changed her, and that it would inform her thinking and teaching going forward. I gave all participants the opportunities to read and review my profiles of them. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) prescribe a general approach to gathering participant feedback—one in which participants are not encouraged to attend to the manuscript on the sentence level. They suggest that narrative researchers ask participants to describe whether they "got it right" in their attempt at portrayal. This, along with Ellis' (2004) decree that we write as though our participants will one day read the narratives we generate, solidified my commitment to transparency.

When Lisa asked that I remove parts of some verbatim quotations in her profile, I felt uncomfortable asking her whether she wanted to explain why. This was a representation of her, after all, and I had promised participants the right to edit my portrayal of them if they chose to. I felt that I had an obligation to ask for an explanation of some kind, and when Lisa chose not to provide one, I had to respect that as well. The discomfort on my part signaled to me that a thorough, honest investigation was taking place, however, and that I was adhering to the ethical obligations I had committed to at the outset. She had selected specific words that she wanted removed, and this certainly did not fit with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) suggestion that participants leave the writing to researchers. I thought of her concern that the term "outsider" implied a lack of direct involvement, and I imagined the distinct unfairness of situating a research participant outside her own portrayal in a study. Lisa had given her words to the study. The work might be ours—at least I might hope that it was—but the words were still hers.

Winnie took the article we read together and shared it with her colleagues on the faculty. They discussed the implications of being outsiders among their students. One of Winnie's colleagues found the article especially pertinent to her situation and was moved to tears by it. The act of sharing and discussing the article with other teachers also changed Winnie's self-concept. Though she had begun the study with a sense of herself as more insider than outsider, she realized that she did, in fact, consider herself an outsider. I was grateful that Winnie had felt so interested and comfortable in the study that she would engage in critical discourse outside of it and bring her findings back to our ongoing discussion. I am grateful, too, that our shared work went beyond the study itself and brought Winnie and her colleagues closer together through critical analysis of their identities in the classroom.

Finally, through my sharing of stories about my own experience, I worked up to a story I had never thought I would put to paper. This sharing brought up feelings of shame and a forced recognition of my own role and innate power as a white person. This uncomfortable sharing precipitated feelings of change and growth.

Interview and Journal Questions

In order to allow for more substantial and thoughtful responses based upon reflection, I sent interview questions to participants several days prior to the interviews. Journal assignments and entries were sent and received electronically. The first group of questions helped to gather background information on the participants' professional histories as teachers, as well as information on the demographics in their current teaching assignment.

Opening interview.

1. How did you get into the teaching profession? Can you share what it was that made you want to become a teacher?

This question aims to explore participants' professional histories and to encourage them to discuss the formation of their identities as teachers.

2. How long have you been teaching? Have you taught at one school throughout this time? If you have taught in multiple schools, briefly describe them.

This question continues to focus on the participants' careers in order to create a detailed picture of the settings in which they have taught, whether there have been multiple settings, and how they compare.

3. How did you prepare to become a teacher (e.g., traditional four-year degree, alternative certification program)? How do you think this influences your work, if at all?

This item attempted to further describe participants' perspectives as educators by having them articulate their path or entry into the profession. I was curious about how these decisions influenced the participants' overall perspectives on their identities as teachers, as well.

4. What brought you to the specific school where you teach now? What grade level(s) and subject(s) do you teach?

With this question, I hoped to give context to the situation of each participant, as due to the very nature of the study, each participant's school setting had its own specifics to be described and addressed in the course of the research.

5. Describe your school in terms of its location, size, and public/private status.

This item aimed to add detail and clarity to the image of each participant's setting, so that I might provide as accurate a description as possible.

6. Describe the population of students that you teach. Who are they in terms of race, class, gender, ethnicity, income? How would you describe their orientation toward school and learning?

This item was important in terms of establishing a comparison between the participants and their students—a comparison that was at the heart of this research. I was interested in the ways that the participants discussed their students' identities and how they compared these to their own.

7. Describe your colleagues and administration. Who are they in terms of race, class, gender, ethnicity, income? How would you describe their attitudes toward teaching?

Because the study also took collegial relationships into account, I wished to have participants discuss the makeup of the individuals who staff their schools— those whom they see every day—in order to better understand their experience of work in their school settings.

8. Do you have friends or close colleagues at your current school? If so, describe them. Why do you think your closeness developed?

This item presented an opportunity for participants to describe any personal or professional ties that they had developed in their schools, among their colleagues. The discussion shed light on the participants' sense of their own experience, as well as giving them an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which their relationships (or

lack thereof) at work may have influenced their sense of self and/or pedagogical approach.

9. You agreed to participate in this study based on a sense that the term "outsider" applied to you. Discuss the way you feel this term applies to your identity in your school, classroom, and/or community.

At the point that this question was asked, I had worked to develop a level of ease with my interviewees to enable the trust necessary to discuss their identities openly.

Journal assignments.

Over the six weeks following the initial interviews, participants were asked to generate five journal entries along the themes described below. The journal entries were intended to further participants' thinking about their identities as teachers in their schools. The prompts listed below engendered reflection that enhanced participants' final interview contributions. There were no precise requirements in terms of length or topic beyond what is described here. I disseminated all journal prompts among the participants at the start of the writing period. Participants completed the journals according to their availability of free time to devote to the task.

1. Do you consider yourself an outsider anywhere besides your classroom or school? If so, describe an aspect of your experience with this.
2. Describe a noteworthy, difficult, positive, or challenging situation you have encountered in the classroom or anywhere at school—an experience that you feel

contributes to a picture of your overall experience. How did your "outsiderness" play a part? What happened?

3. Describe your relationship with (or awareness of) a student who might be considered an outsider in some way that is similar to you. If you have not come across such a student, describe whether or how you might interact with such a student should one appear in your classroom.

[This prompt came from McCarthy's (2003) study of a transgender teacher. In it, the male-identified female participant describes his relationships with many different students she teaches. Several, whom he also identifies as transgender, keep their distance from him, presumably, he believes, not to fall victim to "guilt by association." He describes feeling a connection with these students, although their interactions are minimal—that his mere presence gives those students a sense of legitimacy in the heteronormative public school setting. Sanlo (1999) and Jennings (1994) also describe the manner in which gay and lesbian teachers served as confidants to students in the process of coming out, though the teachers may not have been out themselves. The researchers believe that these students sensed a connection with the teachers. In one case, a teacher offers her home to a student who has just been forced out of her parents' home upon revealing her identity as a lesbian. The act ultimately costs the teacher her job. Because of the many degrees of connection that outsider teachers may develop with students who have similar identities to theirs—from caring confidant to safe harbor in an emergency situation—I feel that such a prompt is important to include among these journal entries.]

4. In what ways do you overcome boundaries to communicate with your students? What strategies help you to connect with them?

5. Write about anything here: It's your space to contribute to the study as you wish. Some ideas include the following: a) Are there any settings in which you feel like an insider? Please describe and talk about your experience with insider status. b) Describe the ways your students might characterize you based on your experiences together in the classroom. c) How might your colleagues or administrators describe your teaching work? Describe this, either by assuming one of their voices or paraphrasing.

During the period in which participants generated their journal entries, I reflected on my own responses to the initial interviewing experience.

Closing interview.

Following the weeks of participant journal writing, I conducted follow-up interviews. These interviews focused in particular on the participants' identities and their thoughts about how their identities influence their work in the classroom. I used participants' journals as a springboard for these final conversations, making a point in each case of referring to the writing as part of my initial questions. As with the questions for the first interview, I provided electronic copies of the closing questions in order for the participants to begin considering them before we spoke.

Before beginning each participant's closing interview, I carefully reviewed the submitted journal entries. In many cases, participants had touched upon some of the issues I had planned to discuss. Participant testimony in the journal entries also served to open other avenues for discussion, and I was careful to follow up on ideas,

new ways of looking at participant experiences, and any important issues or challenges I came across.

1. Does anyone or anything in particular at your school remind you of your "outsider" status? How does that feel, or how does it affect you? How do you or might you react to it?

2. Describe a significant challenge you have faced as an "outsider teacher." ["Challenge" in this case referred to a definite incident or to an overarching, general situation.]

3. What personal strengths have you used—or discovered—in the course of your teaching career?
   [This item asked participants to narrate the manner in which their work in the classroom has helped them to channel their own strengths and talents, whether in direct or indirect connection with their identity or simply as they have developed their individual teaching styles.]

4. In what other ways has your identity influenced your work in the classroom, and/or in the school as a whole?
   [For this item, participants had the opportunity to address my presumption that outsider teachers bring a critical understanding of communication and identity issues to their work as teachers.]

5. How has your identity influenced your relationships with your students and/or colleagues?
   [For their responses to this question, participants explored the manner in which their identities had allowed for or inhibited their relationships in their schools.

Research demonstrates many different outcomes in this area, depending on

whether the outsiderness falls in the category of ethnicity (Subedi, 2008), class

(Lareau, 2003), race (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Paley,

1979), sexual orientation (Jennings, 1994; Sanlo, 1999), or ability status

(Anderson et al., 1998).]

6. If you could share the knowledge gained from being an outsider teacher with

    other teachers—perhaps those who are outsiders to a lesser extent, or those who

    consider themselves insiders but seek advice—what would you tell them?

7. How has being a teacher influenced your sense of self?

    [In this question, participants were encouraged to examine the ways in which

    being a teacher has affected their sense of responsibility, standing in the

    community, commitment to social justice, or any other facet of identity or belief

    system.]

Generative questions.

The structure of the opening interview took a "broad to narrow" approach, in

that I began by asking general questions, and I did not hone in on participant identity

until later in the interview. The questions all developed out of careful thought as to

the goals of the study and conveying respect for the participants. Certain questions

proved especially generative, though, and I will describe them here.

From the opening interview.

Do you have friends or close colleagues at your current school? If so,

describe them. Why do you think your closeness developed?

This question gave participants an opportunity to show the ways in which they functioned in their schools. In some cases, they described friendships with colleagues who shared some identity characteristic in common. In others, their friendships evolved from proximity. They developed relationships with the teachers who taught next door, or in the same subject area. Two cases demonstrated otherwise. Winnie described her entire faculty as a group of friends based on a high level of camaraderie. Jamie made it clear that he did not consider any faculty members at his school friends. By asking about something so specific, I wound up with a better sense of participants' overall feelings about their schools.

From the journal assignment.

Do you consider yourself an outsider anywhere besides your classroom or school? If so, describe an aspect of your experience with this.

This question brought perspective to the study. Participants took the opportunity to share experiences of painful rejection—in Maria's case—and to share the extent of their sense of "outsiderness," as in Jamie's description of his personal sense of rejection in a country where gay marriage is illegal in most jurisdictions.

Describe a noteworthy, difficult, positive, or challenging situation you have encountered in the classroom or anywhere at school—an experience that you feel contributes to a picture of your overall experience. How did your "outsiderness" play a part? What happened?

This journal prompt added quite a bit of depth to participant stories. The participants took their responses toward many different directions, with Lisa describing the rare occasions in which she must request logistical help to accomplish

tasks obstructed by her blindness. Maria shared a story of heated conflict that arose from perceptions about her identity and sexuality. Jamie took the opportunity to describe many of the unconsciously racist behaviors he encounters daily on the parts of his white students, for whom he is an anomaly.

From the closing interview.

In what ways do you overcome boundaries to communicate with your students? What strategies help you to connect with them?

This question led to deeper conversation around one of the three research questions that guided the study. All of the participants took the opportunity to describe in detail the ways in which their identities and outlooks influence their teaching. It led eventually, to many of the findings that will be especially useful to classroom teachers.

Participant responses evolved into statements of teaching philosophy, and each gave a great deal of description of the ways that their identities and worldviews enhance their teaching. This may have been the most generative question across the board. In part, it may be due to the fact that it asks participants to describe action rather than focus on perception. This created a space for them to contribute many ideas and to co-construct the findings and practical aspects of the study. By leading them in a concrete direction, the question may have prompted some of the most meaningful philosophical sharing on the part of the participants.

As the second round of information gathering—the journals—came to a close, I found myself wondering where the other participants stood in terms of their

reactions to the "outsider teacher" terminology. I introduced questions about this in the final round of interviews.

Intersectional Methodology

The methodology outlined in this chapter represents a transactional flow of information. It includes an initial emphasis on trust, interview questions that build upon knowledge from broad topics to a narrow focus, and reflective writing by both the researcher and the participants. The methodology also provides opportunities for participants and researcher to exchange literature, both research-oriented and creative, as a means to deepen their search for emerging themes in their ongoing self-examination and dialogue.

The emerging methodology requires that the researcher—who, at times, develops the role of a documentarian—invite participant involvement in the final product to the extent that the participant wishes. This involves mandatory participant viewing of descriptive text based upon interview and written data. Finally, the methodology encourages participants, alongside the researcher, to engage in theoretical questions, to define and redefine the terms and concepts under study, and to allow for self-transformation through the research process.

Through the structuring of this study, as well as the data gathering and analysis processes, I found that I could draw upon Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry work to a great extent. Nash (2004) and Ellis (2004) influenced the ethical standards of the study. In order to fully accomplish the goals I set forth in the study, however, I found that I had to bring additional elements to the research. The aspects I have described above—types of questions asked and information gathered,

sharing of literature, and the transformative aspect—do not appear together in any other methodologies I have seen.

Feminism represents both a theoretical framework and a methodology. As described by Harding (1987), the ethical commitments of the methodology as well as its structure are adopted from the theory. The methodology came about as feminists wishing to conduct scholarly research found that traditionally empirical approaches did not accommodate their points of view.

Feminist methodology allows participants the opportunity to possess expert knowledge of their own experiences—it places them at the center of the inquiry, giving the researcher a close-up view of the process. This paradigm challenges dualistic concepts of research embodied in traditional, Cartesian approaches, placing researchers in a humbler position with respect to their participants.

According to Hesse-Biber (2007), feminist methodologies possess characteristics that define them in contrast to traditional, positivistic approaches. The positionality of the researcher holds great significance for feminist scholars, and researchers are thus strongly encouraged to begin with the self and to interrogate their motivations for conducting research (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Hesse-Biber (2007) asks "Can a single, white, middle-class male researcher interview a black, working class mother? Can a middle-class, white female interview a woman from the Third World who is living in poverty? Can a straight, white, middle-class male, interview a gay, working-class male?" These questions outline the importance of positionality in research, as well as a rejection of earlier attempts to omit the presence of the researcher from the research.

Although the importance of these questions lies in their interrogation of the power structures endorsed by the scholarly community, they also generate potentially damaging images of who conducts research and how individuals are categorized. Kurtz (2002) describes intersectionality by gathering together the work of Zinn and Dill (1996), Lorde (1984), Collins (1990), Crenshaw (1989), and others. The descriptive statements Kurtz develops include the following:

> This is a nonadditive conception of identities that sees systems of domination as interdefining one another. […] Identities or locations are not only sites of oppression but also sites of resistance, and places where people go about the business of making life. […] Intersectionality rejects gender, class, or race primacy. […] All individuals simultaneously occupy positions as oppressed and oppressor. (pp. 36, 38, 39)

Within the illustration of intersectionality theory, individuals are entities that exist outside of the "single-identity politics," in which "automatic, unitary, identit[ies]" represent people (Kurtz, 2002, p. 37). The tenets of feminist research function as a counterpoint to positivistic approaches to research, and they require that researchers place themselves within the paradigmatic frame alongside their participants. I propose, however, that a new methodology may necessarily emerge.

This methodology would take the reflective, iterative aspects of narrative inquiry that ask the researcher to consider and reconsider the implications of notes, transcripts, and personal narrative in the search for meaning. The methodology would share commitments developed by feminist researchers, in which participant

testimony takes a central role and researchers must consider the implications of their presence.

The methodology would include steps that I have taken in this study: It would invite participants to define their own identities. Rather than categorizing them in a reductive manner, as much of the literature does, the methodology would ask that participants negotiate the terms of their own categorization, in their own words, and that researchers take on the risky work of faithful portrayal of these words. The methodology would ask researchers to turn over their work, fearlessly, to their participants, in a true attempt at equity, so that participants might remain whole and retain dignity in the process of sharing their stories.

Kurtz (2007) quotes Stuart Hall, who wrote, "'Identity is a narrative of the self; it's the story we tell about the self in order to know who we are' (1991, p. 16)" (2007, p. 28). Perhaps through empowering research participants to narrate *their* multifaceted selves, a methodology can create space for participants to truly inhabit the research that would be nothing without them.

Chapter 4: Windows

If in your lived experience you felt some type of a struggle, or you've experienced a type of injustice where you've been wronged, it just opens up your perspective to the possibility that other people might be going through some difficult things.

–Kyong

I include a fourth personal narrative here. It tells a story of an early experience I had as an outsider teacher. In the piece, I exist as a "dominant outsider," in the sense that I am a white woman teaching in a black school. I am an outsider based on race, therefore, but also in terms of nationality. As I become a member of the community of my school, I begin to acquire knowledge of certain norms in US society.

I have often counseled new teachers by telling them, "If you don't know who you are already, you will find out very quickly once you enter the classroom." For years I expressed this sentiment, knowing that there was truth to it, but wondering what that truth was exactly, even as I said the words. In the midst of this study, however, I realized that the advice I gave held up in my experience and that of the other participants. When a teacher enters the classroom—especially an outsider teacher—forces beyond her control define her immediately.

Teacher Narrative

"I hate white people," says Jackie. She looks shocked when I laugh. In my first assignment as a teacher in a Baltimore City middle school, she sits at a desk and I stand a few feet away. As new teachers sometimes do, I have just become

118

overwhelmed when the "low achieving," special needs, bottom-tracked English class got loud and would not attend to my words. So I have turned out the overhead lights and I have told everyone to put their heads down on their desks.

My admonition rings out to my 33 students. All of their heads rest, down. Some have flung a cocked arm across their eyes; one or two suck their thumbs. My face flushes with a hot twinge. I know I'm wrong. I have accessed a universal mechanism of shame; I have entered the stream of mean voices speaking in their direction. It feels too easy. I think about Jackie's words and about the first white person I met at this middle school: the vice principal. In 1999, she has no computer in her office: only stacks and stacks of yellow legal pads covered with ballpoint-scrawled script. Though everyone I meet notes that she is far more organized than she seems, I note that in my interview for the position, I do not utter one word. She asks no questions. The phrase "warm bodies" stays in my head during these first months. Administrators do not visit my classroom. Is this because my students stay in their seats? Is it because I know how to turn off the lights?

Why not hate white people? The middle-aged white math teacher across the hall screams at you every morning. The elderly white vice principal hired me without hearing my voice. And here I stand, showing you that I will not try to teach you today.

My first years of teaching contain constant reminders of my unearned power as a white, middle class, college-educated adult. Getting the job so easily, having students take on the dull grammar exercises I assign just because I assigned them, having white colleagues discuss students with code phrases like, "the parents are not

really involved," as if I—a twenty-two year old woman with no experience raising children—can understand what parenting entails. Years later, I realize that "not really involved" and "don't care" tend to mean "are black and poor" among white teachers talking together about their students' families.

I did not grow up in the same world as these teachers. This is not to say that I did not grow up around classism and ignorance, but the country I know best—at least at this point in my life—does not possess the same recent history of racial stratification, segregation, and thinly disguised bigotry. Class inequity exists in Greece, and I have seen a growing underclass of Eastern European and Filipino immigrants who clean houses and work as day laborers.

Sometimes I hear Greeks making racist or xenophobic comments—showing a sort of pride at the newfound ability to look down on another group. But in this school, among white teachers and 1100 students—all but a handful of whom are black—with its dirty, broken bathrooms, a library that last saw new books in the 1950s, and the smell of vomit powder in the stairwells, I am seeing a reality of a different quality.

Racism so old, like the worn edges of once-sharp steps, like a visit from a distant relative who won't leave, has settled like dust on this very building. Everyone seems to accept the circumstances. And I hear no one calling the situation by its real name.

In that first semester, my homeroom class and I attend an assembly. We file down to an auditorium with a vast balcony, heavy curtain, and sea of worn wooden seats doubtlessly designed with grand aspirations. The stage sits empty, except for a

phone booth-shaped object draped in a sheet. Students take their seats by grade

level: sixth graders in yellow shirts, seventh graders in powder blue shirts, and

eighth graders in white shirts. Someone tells the students that this won't start until

they get quiet. My class takes a row, and I sit down at the aisle. The room quiets.

A middle aged white man jumps out from behind the curtain, as music starts

to blare. He is holding a microphone and smiling. "Hey kids!" Students' eyes lock

on him as he strides around the stage. His first question, belted into the microphone:

"Do you like money?" The students whoop and holler in reply. He scampers around

the stage, telling them of a great opportunity he has for them to earn lots and lots of

money, adding quietly, "for your school." Music pumps out of the sound system and

some students jump up and dance at their seats.

His eyes flash under the lights as he describes all the great opportunities he

has for them, how easy it will be, and how those who make the most money will be

eligible to earn prizes like bikes and electronics. The students yell and shout in

excitement. The man's sidekick, a middle aged white woman (his wife?) rolls a

bicycle out in front of the stage, grinning toward the audience. She places an

electronic keyboard on the ledge above it, and next to that, a boom box. Who are

these people? How is it that they are allowed to take up the precious "instructional

time" we are admonished never to waste?

The woman stands protectively near the merchandise as the man yells into

the microphone, "Now I have a question for you." Students lean forward in their

seats. "Just a little question…" The music quiets and his voice grows soft. He gazes

into the audience, eyes narrowed. "I'm just wondering one thing…" Looking

around… "Which one of you likes money the most?" The students explode with excitement, jumping up, clapping, and raising hands. Administrators make no move to quiet them. The man climbs onto the stage and plucks at the edge of the sheet. He pulls at it slightly. The students go wild. The woman's face is frozen in a smile, and I wonder how many times she has gone through this routine. I wonder who these people are outside of this context.

The man yanks the sheet off in one motion and casts it aside. Underneath we see a tall capsule with a big glass chamber. "This is the money booth!" he announces, flipping a switch on the side, which causes bills to fly about the interior like leaves. The kids know what's coming. "Pick me! Pick me!" I hear them yell, straining to get noticed by this stranger whose job involves going to poor, black schools to taunt children with cash. "Now listen here," he says in a softer voice. "I can't pick just anybody to go into the money booth for two whole minutes to grab all the money they can. It has to be someone who really, really likes money; someone who really wants to get out there and start selling candy to raise the most money out of everyone. That's the person I want to see." He looks out at us.

Students on their feet jump around, hands raised high. As I look across the audience, I notice many kids slumped back down in their seats, looking bored. A couple of my students look at me. One girl reads a novel. Finally, the man picks a student and leads her down the aisle to the stage. Just as she is climbing into the money booth and the man is flipping the switch, I feel a tap on my shoulder. It is 10:35 am: lunch time for my homeroom class. Because of the large number of students enrolled at this school, lunch shifts start early. We stand and head out into

the fluorescent light of the main hallway. As we turn toward the stairwell, I hear the voice of one of my colleagues behind me, "Well, it's not as if they were doing anything useful sitting in class…"

I think to myself, just for a moment, "I hate white people."

This narrative highlights a transitional period during which I began to realize my identity as a racial, ethnic, religious, and class outsider teacher in a Baltimore middle school. As one of my earliest memories of understanding my outsider status among my students, the story extends outsider experiences from childhood and adolescence to my experiences as an outsider teacher. It situates me within the participant group as a teacher who is also an outsider.

The story also represents a set of experiences that not only prompted the study; they generated many ideas used in the development of the data-gathering tools. Research questions and writing prompts came from conclusions within existing literature; they were also supported by my experience in classrooms, schools, and life, as an outsider.

In interviewing my participants, I attempted to gather data in order to tell the complex stories of their experiences as professionals, as outsiders, but mostly as individuals with many facets to their identities. The act of compiling, condensing, and selecting appropriate parts of their stories to include proved quite a challenge. How was I to best tell these five stories? I feared that I would over-distill, oversimplify, and lose the grainy interesting bits that would ultimately paint realistic portraits of them. In determining how to characterize their experiences as outsider

teachers and how that informs their work, I wanted to avoid confining them to a series of reductive identifiers.

At its most basic, the process of interviewing is a series of questions and answers. In practice, though, it evolves into a changing and organic process, taking many forms between the initial introduction and the finished written narrative. Kvale (1995) speaks of precision in interviewing, urging targeted excavation of information. Ellis (2004) grapples with the responsibility of an honest representation of participants. Creswell (2003) writes of the intricate process of reconstructing memory to turn conversation into narrative.

Despite my having studied the academic interpretation of interviewing, until I began the interview process myself, I did not know to expect the joy at witnessing another human's personal testimony or the nervous laughter at the outset, relaxing and becoming deeper and easier over the course of shared experience. In listening to the tapes and transcribing, I observed the subtle and gradual learning of another's speech patterns and watched how it developed a more fine-tuned approach to listening. With long-distance interviewees, there is the navigation of lengthy pauses on the phone line and learning to wait silently, to allow for time to think and consider.

Talking and listening are things most of us do casually. Interviewing generates a heightened experience of these everyday activities. The interview involves learning to gracefully accept the sometimes-awkward conversation—to

make space for it to grow and flourish, to step out of the way of another's thinking out loud.

After considering the way that my participants had contributed so dramatically to my learning, and how the interviews had served as transformative experiences, I began the process of poring over participant writing and interview transcripts. I was looking to see whether I could find answers to the questions that defined this study:

1. How do self-identified "outsider teachers" discuss the influence of this identity on their professional practice and interactions with students?

2. What characterizes the experience of "outsider teachers?"

3. How can this knowledge inform pedagogy?

This chapter lays out findings regarding questions one and two. In chapter five, I will discuss question three, implications for pedagogy.

The five teachers who agreed to take part in this study: Jamie, Lisa, Maria, Winnie, and Kyong each brought a varying set of personal characteristics to this conversation. Each taught in a school community different from the others in terms of location, setting, and student demographics. The participants differed from their students, and often colleagues and communities, in terms of race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and ability status. Prior to the interviews, the participants had identified certain characteristics that made them different. During

the interviews we uncovered yet other characteristics that connected them to their students, colleagues, and communities.

Jamie

I'm the only black teacher in the school, and while that doesn't come up often—like it doesn't come up it conversation, it's not something we talk about or I talk about—kids will notice it.

Jamie teaches English at a public high school in an affluent, primarily Jewish, suburban area in New England. Although the school's website boasts a highly diverse community, the area's population is over 90% white. Income levels are above the United States average, and most children reside in a household with two married parents. Over 1100 students attend.

Jamie is an African American man in his mid-30s, an English teacher with a PhD in education. He is gay and grew up in a low-income household. All of these factors—like his long dreadlocks—set him apart from the community in which he teaches. Jamie has taught for six years.

In *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, King (1963) wrote, "Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds." One of Jamie's idols, King writes also of the view of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference as "outsiders" coming to disrupt and agitate for civil disobedience within communities. These "outside agitators" changed U.S. society, and they began the struggle to work out societal puzzles that have yet to be solved to the satisfaction of all.

When Jamie was in the sixth grade, his teacher told him that his writing was better than that of most of her high school students. She suggested that they collaborate on a children's book that he would author. Although Jamie never did, the characterization of being strong in English stayed with him. He knew that he wanted some sort of career in the field. After majoring in English in college, he gained admittance to a prestigious graduate program in education, something he "never thought" he would accomplish. The relative importance of the subject itself—"in high school, you had to take four years of it"—emphasized for him the importance of the skill set associated with it.

"It's an important thing for people to be able to speak right, and communicate clearly and effectively." Jamie surmised that if he could help others to accomplish these things, he could "improve their lives in some way." This was the logic that led him to teaching. His first teaching assignment took him to an urban high school in the South for three years. During his PhD program, he supervised and mentored student teachers. Secondary education in particular appealed to Jamie because he "didn't want to be the person responsible for teaching them the building blocks, but I kind of wanted to polish them."

Jamie finds that many of the students in his current school are primarily motivated by grades and their impact on grade point averages. He feels, and has the sense that his colleagues also feel that "they miss the point of education as we teachers want it. We want them, of course, to love learning, to learn with a love of learning, and it seems like the kids in this setting are really just concerned with performance."

His approach with the students in his current school is quite different than his approach toward his students in the urban district. Motivated by a strong sense of societal inequality, Jamie felt he had to prepare his urban, low-income students of color by motivating them to face the rigors of an unfair world. He describes his earlier teacher-self as being "…just in their face telling them, 'This is what the world thinks about you and this is the stereotype, and what are you going to do to break that?'" He has adapted those earlier methods to his current placement—one in which his students tend to focus more on keeping their GPAs high than combating societal bigotry. He says, "I did try to come with the same social justice kind of equal representation theme, but it seemed like it was far removed from those kids. Not all of them, but it's far removed from their experience."

Students in this affluent school describe staying up until 2 am to complete homework assignments. Parents feel comfortable questioning teachers about their pedagogical decisions. When I asked Jamie what he thought was the reason for this ease in questioning teachers, he replied, "The kids didn't get to where they were alone. I think that children are very much molded and shaped at home and I think that the parents in the community are very interested in their kids doing well academically and they're very, very interested in their children going off to excellent colleges."

In his first school, Jamie felt that the "external pressures that superseded school" prevented students and their parents from focusing too much on grades. He describes, also in that community, a "vast respect and admiration for teachers as role models." This brought about great pride in the work he did there.

To bridge the gap between his experience and that of his students in his current placement, Jamie uses literature. He describes the process this way:

> What I try to do is make as many connections between their lives and what's going on in the subjects we study and the books we study and help them to realize that the reason that literature is so important, the reason that reading is so important, is because it helps you empathize, helps you sympathize, helps you connect with people on such a deeper level than you would be able to in your own experience. It kind of extends your experience. But that's a concept that is very tough, I find, for them to grasp. So I think I spend a lot of my time working on sympathy, empathy, perspective, point of view, which is very difficult to get across to them.

During his first year of teaching, Jamie had a transgendered student in his class. Initially, even he mistook the boy for a female student—and this caused much nervousness when he considered how classmates might react. Feeling anxious and unprepared for the responsibility of making this student feel welcome in the classroom, Jamie also wondered how to manage the behavior of the other students. The experience defined his teaching style for the years to come. Jamie developed a proactive approach with every class he teaches. At the start of each school year, he emphasizes the importance of creating space in his classroom for all voices to be heard—for students to respect one another and to keep this in mind whenever they share opinions. Rather than waiting for difficult situations to arise and deciding at that point how to react, Jamie has built this message into his pedagogy:

From that day I made sure to let students know that words with a history of hate like 'nigger' and 'faggot' would not be tolerated. I stressed the importance of respecting our differences and accepting each other as individuals. I made sure to call on that student as much as other students if not more so, because I know how important inclusion is to the outsider. At the same time, I avoided addressing him as a spokesperson for gays or transgenders—a mistake other outsiders and I often notice being made by the mainstream culture in an effort to include our perspectives.

His approach seems to be working. "Everybody loves Jamie," says a mutual friend, after describing a dinner at which Jamie once quickly charmed a law school dean into a handshake admission. He currently has no plans to attend law school, but when I met him, I saw the charm. Someone who speaks easily and looks for common ground and connections with others, Jamie welcomed me to such an extent that we hugged goodbye after our first meeting. His wide smile and mischievous sense of humor belie a powerful intellect.

Before our first conversation, I thought about how Jamie had completed a lengthy research project of his own. I had read part of his qualitative study, in which he wove interview language with analytic language in an intricate style that mystified me. His writing was clear yet dependent upon a series of small details in which individual stories connected at the most appropriate points. I wondered whether he would "see the wheels turning" as I delivered my questions, possibly considering them too simple and obvious. I worried that my premise would seem basic, that the outsider teacher concept might seem like an over-simplification, or

worse, that he would object to my consideration of myself as part of that group. That he would think my relative privilege exempted me, and that this would alienate him.

As we began to speak, I forgot to wonder and worry about these things. Jamie's enthusiasm and focus blocked out any doubts I might have had about the validity of the conversation or my part in it. When he speaks, Jamie's voice tends to linger in a low register, and he lets out a throaty chuckle from time to time, punctuating one clause or another. The calm pacing of his speech keeps a listener's attention. He speaks in sentences.

Of his colleagues, Jamie says that he has "a very collegial and congenial working relationship with them, but I wouldn't say that they were my friends." He describes relationships that are highly satisfying professionally, but which do not extend beyond school walls. Teachers in his school supported him when he arrived, a fairly new teacher in a somewhat foreign environment. Similarly, the administration, he says, has been "supportive towards me in allowing me to be who I want to be in the classroom and then allowing me to have the materials I need to be successful."

Jamie received more professional support at his current school than he did at his original school, in part, he says, because the pressures of student achievement on standardized tests kept all teachers especially focused on their own classrooms out of fear of poor evaluations or loss of their jobs. "I kind of felt like I was just thrown in the rat race and everyone else was in the rat race too and so no one could get off their wheel long enough to help me."

Jamie has noticed that his colleagues tend to call upon him to counsel male students of color when they exhibit negative behaviors. He comments that his white colleagues seem to assume a connection will naturally exist between two black males. Jamie says that this is not necessarily offensive in and of itself, but that "other aspects of my experience have made [such an obvious connection] not a reality for me." His sexuality and the personal history of introversion he exhibited until adulthood complicate things. Jamie describes a "less social" childhood and adolescence in which he developed a sense of separation from others who shared his race but not his sexual orientation. An examination of the residual feelings from his youth caused Jamie to reflect on the situation at hand.

> …now that I'm older and I'm in this position, it's worth it for me to think about how kids [of color] will look at me and how other teachers in the building look at me and what they think I can do. And I generally tell them that I can do whatever they think I can do. But then (laughs) I think about it and I'm like "should I have said that I can really get this result [with a student of color]?" Because I don't know if it's necessarily true (laughs).

As Jamie reflects more deeply on his conflicted feelings about being selected by white teachers to approach male students of color, he reconsiders even further. "I think it's understandable, because I think that we do need strong male role models for kids and there aren't as many of them. And there's definitely not as many strong male role models of color. So, I think you do bear a certain responsibility when that is you."

Jamie finds that students of color attending his school sometimes seek him out. Students of color confide in him when teachers have confused their identities, calling them by each other's names in class, or when they have felt as if they were "called on to be the representative of their race or ethnicity" by white teachers. He realizes that his presence is especially important to the students during times like these, as he is the one faculty member who can truly relate to such an experience. This is in stark contrast to certain experiences he has had with white students.

Jamie's white students remark often that he resembles "various long-haired sports figures or entertainment icons" because he is African American and wears his hair in dreadlocks. He knows that his youth and his friendly demeanor compensate for the many differences between him and his students, but he encounters frequent stereotyping behavior from students.

> One interesting challenge I face working in a suburban environment is that students will often refer to me in terms they have seen applied to young blacks in the mainstream media. Young men especially will respond to me, saying "Yo," or asking "What up?" or by trying to give me an intricate handshake or to "dap me up." Because I am the only black teacher in my school, whenever this happens, I think to myself, "This would not be happening with any other teacher."

With patience, Jamie challenges these stereotypes. His calm, sunny attitude keeps things light, as does a graceful and forgiving approach. He takes advantage of

what he considers "teachable moments," explaining to his students why such behaviors do not constitute appropriate interaction with teachers. He concedes,

> A lot of these types of behaviors aren't intended to be racist or disrespectful, but they are often the product of ignorance. One thing I can say for certain is that if a kid does not know any black people, he or she will probably form an interpretation of blacks from the mainstream media, and that interpretation will only capture a very limited view of black culture and customs.

Jamie finds that his students' perceptions and opinions converge in a surprising area: when it comes to racism in the U.S. He describes an assigned curriculum that acknowledges racism and inequality as themes in the literature that must be addressed. He says, "I find a lot of these kids—and I don't just mean white kids, because I noticed this actually with kids of color, too—they think that issues of racism and segregation and inequity and inequality amongst people, that these are past issues. That they don't really affect the world anymore." He describes studying works like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. "…we're reading this stuff and they're like 'You know, but that was then. That would never happen today.'"

At moments like these, Jamie faces the challenge of combating false consciousness, even among those of his students who are bused in daily in order to attend a better school than those in the areas where they live.

> I think being an educator and being a black man, I guess I could even bring in being homosexual too, and just in all the ways that you are other, you

realize how [inequality] still does work in society today and you want to get that message across to the kids. You know, "I can't let you get out of this class and go to college and go out into the world and say that there's no such thing as privilege and everybody's equal now. That would just be irresponsible.

Jamie finds that his colleagues have noticed a similar trend in their classrooms in terms of student perceptions of contemporary racism, but he has the sense that he may tend to focus on it more than they do. He contends that this may be a function of their privilege. "I have never talked to any teachers [here] who have been a product of poverty or a low socio-economic standing." His outsiderness may fuel a sense of urgency in his efforts to challenge his students' thinking about social issues.

In contrast to his feeling of separation from his school community, his title, Doctor, helps to even the score and command a measure of respect. "My students are the only people who call me that," he says. Although this is the case, Jamie has a sense that his possession of a PhD garners the admiration of his colleagues as well. Jamie concedes that being male has also contributed to greater acceptance, respect, and insider status among members of the school community than he might have enjoyed otherwise. "Schools definitely value male teachers and they probably do what they can to retain them because there's such an overwhelmingly female presence in a school setting."

Jamie's youth draws his students in as well. He shares their interest in popular culture and trends, and he tries to incorporate references to those into his teaching when possible. As he reflects on the factors that counter his outsiderness with insider privileges, he brings up his Christianity. His student population's largely Jewish identity has, on one hand, been a differentiating element. He has had to become an "overnight expert" on customs, particularly those that inhibit his ability to assign homework before certain holidays. On the other hand, he acknowledges that a degree of privilege comes with his membership in the most dominant religion in the country.

Describing his previous teaching experience in the South, Jamie says, "I've come to rely on complicitness [sic] with Christianity and on using biblical terms and assuming the kids would know what I was talking about, and being successful up until now." Jamie encountered confusion among many of his students when he brought the practice of referencing the New Testament to his current setting. "And now I'm at a place where the kids are like 'Is that a new custom? Because we don't know anything about that."

Jamie considers himself an insider by virtue of his role as a "regular educator," that is, a teacher who is not assigned to work primarily with students designated as being in need of special education. He describes his responsibilities in the classroom as being far less demanding when compared with the work of special education teachers, who must advocate for their students more frequently. Of adhering to legal accommodations, he writes,

As a relatively new teacher with four years of classroom teaching experience, I struggle with not making these considerations an after-thought. Prior to recent advances in teaching, teachers generally taught to the kids who "got it" at the expense of others. My training tells me otherwise, but it does not undo all my years of experience as a student and my tendency to emulate the teaching styles of my various teachers and professors throughout my long educational career. I find that the more I cater to multiple learning styles and learning differences, the more comprehensive I feel my lessons are. This causes me to take a step back and think about who I'm teaching and how I'm teaching—but this has been a process I have had the luxury to think about less than my special education colleagues. Getting to know these teachers has made me acutely aware of my insider status as a regular education teacher.

Jamie has an abiding love for his content area. "Reading is how we get smart and get into other people's experiences," he tells his students, giving a sense of the social justice orientation that guides his pedagogy. Jamie's teaching philosophy seems guided by two themes that surface again and again as he discusses his work: First, we can learn about others and ourselves through the study of literature, and second, inequity is a fact in the world, and reading and discussion can help us to better understand this in order to address it in our lives. Jamie also emphasizes the importance of self-discovery among adolescents in the high school classroom, as well as students' need to form personal connections to the content the curriculum asks them to engage.

Jamie nonetheless finds himself set apart from his students, faculty, and school community by race, class, education, and sexual orientation. His students seem to be the most willing to acknowledge this: "…when I first started there was a girl who was a senior who walked up to me who had been in that school setting for her entire public education career, and she told me that I was the only black teacher that she had ever seen throughout that entire time." This statement sounded an internal alarm in Jamie. It set the stage for the next three years, which he would spend balancing a fun, youthful classroom persona with a commitment to engaging his students in serious social discourse—using shared texts to inspire discussion among his sheltered, college acceptance-driven students.

"I know that, as an outsider, you feel left out unless you are explicitly included," says Jamie, describing the way it feels to be gay in a largely homophobic society—one where he still cannot legally marry his partner in most regions, thereby missing out on the financial and social benefits accorded to heterosexual married couples. He discusses his feelings about what it means to be a gay teacher:

> In this case, I feel that most people react in one of two ways: either to deny their "otherness" and sync up with the mainstream (possibly with self-denial or homophobia) or become militant and oppositional to the mainstream. I grapple with how to present that part of myself to my students, and generally I do not [share it]. I attempt to remain neutral, but I often wonder if that neutrality hinders my gay students in finding a voice for their status as an "other" and coming into full acceptance of themselves.

Jamie feels that his experience as an outsider informs his teaching. Not only does he strive to create a "safe space" for discussion in his classroom; his study of literature with his students is underscored by a focus on embracing the perspectives of others—even those whose experiences are hard to imagine for their differences from one's own.

Jamie recalls spending most of his free time indoors "with the adults" throughout much of his youth. He always loved reading and had always wanted to teach. He considers himself an observer of people, and traces this tendency back to a childhood surrounded by adult conversation, listening in for some tidbit he was not supposed to hear.

Jamie feels that his observational nature has served him well as a researcher. Taking his observant, attentive personality to his classroom, Jamie does his best to engage students and to make the most of a context in which he stands out dramatically. He finds purpose in connecting his students to literature, helping them to define themselves through writing, and challenging them to reframe their perspectives on the world, just as they have taught him to do.

In his description of the *I Love Lucy* episode, Justin Bond describes the grace that Lucille Ball brought to her contrived Martian invasion. Lucy's Martian gave creative license to outsiders trying to find their place in a world where they do not always fit seamlessly. Combining an unusual blend of traits reflected in both Ball's comical character and grace when facing adversity, as well as social justice commitments inspired by King, Jamie brings to his teaching lightness, an analytic

perspective, and his own commitment to creating an inclusive classroom. He does this even in alien territory.

Jamie's outsider identity distinguishes him to a great extent—as an African American male with a low-income background in an affluent white setting, he stands out among his colleagues and students. Jamie's colleagues and students' behaviors toward him demonstrate their sense of him as an outsider. Outsiderness is imposed on Jamie, and his experience informs his pedagogy.

Lisa

The reality is that my blindness is only one characteristic comprising my identity. It does make me different in terms of sight ability, but it doesn't define how I feel. When I go to work, I think of myself as a teacher, a thoughtful person, a professional. I don't think about blindness.

Lisa teaches language arts to 9th graders at a public middle school of about 1200 students in a suburb outside a large Midwestern city. One of the more affluent suburbs in its area, its population is over 94% white. Most children are raised in a household by two parents and family incomes run well over twice the national average.

Lisa, also a Midwesterner, is a white woman in her early thirties. Her gender identification tends toward traditionally female dress and behavior. She has been teaching middle school English for 12 years. The primary factor that sets her apart from her students is her blindness.

Two stories had to unfold before Lisa's teacher narrative could become a possibility. The first story is that of Louis Braille. Born in a French village, the teenaged Braille injured himself with an awl he was using to puncture a piece of leather. The awl struck one eye, causing instantaneous blindness, and an ensuing infection soon spread to the other. Completely blind, Braille began to adapt to his changed life. His parents sent him to Paris where he entered a school for the blind and there, encountered access to a handful of books for the visually impaired. These were printed using a rudimentary, tactile type that existed at the time.

Puncturing a piece of hide with the same awl that had brought about his blindness, Braille devised a simpler, easily replicable writing system. His system enabled reading using one finger instead of both hands. More compact, it could generate books that would fit in one's pocket, in contrast to the large tomes he had found at school. Individuals could also write by embossing a page with Braille characters. Still widely used, Braille enables Lisa to write. She can take personal notes, make lists, and create worksheets whose contents she can read aloud or otherwise share with students.

The second story is the story of Ray Kurzweil. A lifelong inventor, Kurzweil possesses internationally recognized talent in the field of abstract pattern recognition. Kurzweil saw the potential of this computer application to enable machines to recognize multiple typeface fonts.

A chance plane flight sitting next to a blind gentleman convinced Ray that the most exciting application of this new technology would be to create a

machine that could read printed and typed documents out loud, thereby

overcoming the reading handicap of blind and visually impaired individuals.

("A Biography of Ray Kurzweil," 2008)

Kurzweil began work on his first "reading machine" in 1974, and his

company made it available to the public in 1976. Over the following decades,

Kurzweil's company has continued the development of readers, developing the

Kurzweil 1000, computer software that turns electronic and scanned text into speech.

This means that, in Lisa's classroom, she can read emails and any newspaper,

website, or book that she can access. She can assess student work, whether submitted

electronically or in hard copy that is then scanned into PDF form. The text-to-speech

technology gives Lisa full access to transactions involving the written word in all its

forms.

The technologies and tools created by Kurzweil and Braille are indispensable

to Lisa's daily tasks, particularly in that they address the logistical concerns

associated with being a teacher at work in a mainstream public classroom. Having

accommodated the need for written communication and organization, Lisa can focus

on bigger questions.

For Lisa, portraying herself as a part of her Midwestern public high school—

part of the faculty, part of a district-wide curriculum development team, and part of a

community—proved a worthier endeavor in our work together than simply analyzing

the ways in which her ability status makes her different from her colleagues and

students.

The word "outsider" implies that you're not inside. It almost seems to me to be more of a physical separation somehow, to say that you're an outsider. It just makes me think of someone standing on the sidelines and watching everything happen rather than making things happen. So I think that's why I don't like the term.

Lisa describes a faculty and administration in which collaboration and collegiality define most interactions. She seems to appreciate her colleagues, though she describes herself as a "pretty strong introvert," preferring more intimate socializing to gatherings involving large groups.

The people Lisa connects with best at her school include the other English teachers she works with most often and colleagues who are also members of her teaching team. Lisa's introverted personality may contrast on the surface with her chosen profession, but she describes an ability to form connections with students who have the most difficulty adapting to the school environment.

I probably connect best with students that struggle with something. That are either really anxious kiddos so they're dealing with anxiety, or maybe socially they don't fit in very well. That's where the strongest connections are. […] I think having dealt with something that makes me different from most people, I guess there's more of a natural comfort there with students who might be dealing with something that's similar.

Lisa cites her most vulnerable moments as those in which she must ask for help in order to do her job. Because she is an independent person "and maybe

sometimes to a fault," this is rare. On certain occasions, "where literally I cannot do anything else," for example when she must find a student in a crowded cafeteria or auditorium, she asks a sighted coworker for assistance. She admits to requesting a handout for a meeting in advance, as well, so that she could "Braille it" in order to arrive prepared. Lisa considers her independence an "asset," though, "because I take care of what I need to," she says. "I'm not waiting for anybody else to make adaptations or to figure things out. I'm the one that's taking care of it."

Lisa cites her curriculum development work with colleagues from across the district as one of the few consistent sources of conflict she encounters in her work. She describes the situation this way:

> When I think about what I bring to the committee, part of my identity as a teacher is a very strong belief that kids need to be able to connect to what they're reading and what they're writing and that it has to be really useful to them.

She finds that many other language arts teachers in the area favor a more traditional approach to teaching in their subject area. Her views of effective and interesting teaching, based on a model of self-directed learning and student-centered lessons, sometimes meet with less than positive reactions. Her pedagogical commitments seem to stem from the inspiration she found in certain classrooms of her adolescence. Just as with the teachers she can recall who awakened her thinking about learning, she says, "philosophically, one of the things I bring […] is just a very

strong belief in that the content has to be meaningful for kids and they have to be able to connect with it."

There is urgency in her tone when she speaks of the necessity of imbuing lessons with meaning that extends beyond the classroom. The importance of making meaning through her teaching may have evolved from both her love of English and her need to put her own education to the test in order to achieve her goals. Here, Lisa describes the perspective that her identity has given her.

I think that when you navigate the world with a difference, with the characteristics that would make you different from the majority of people, you do have a type of insight that I don't know that others do. By others, I mean the majority. So you as an *other* would have more of an insight than the majority of people who aren't others. But I think that if you have a difference and you see how people with differences can be treated and you see how expectations change, I think you have a different type of understanding.

At the beginning of each school year, after introducing herself to students, Lisa shares a list of queries for students to answer, entitled "Loaded Questions." The prompts include: *What is one talent you have that you wish others recognized more? Describe a time you judged someone before you knew them. What is one challenge you have had to overcome in your life? Describe the one person you would do anything for.* Through their answers, the students tell their own stories about rejecting face-value interpretations of people. They offer an opportunity for a teacher

to know her students beyond simply observing their ability to behave according to public school norms.

Just as Lisa challenges her students with this survey at the beginning of very year, she entered this study armed with challenging and informed questions. Her response upon being invited was to question everything: my motives, my use of terminology, and the purpose of the study. She interrogated the use of the term "outsider" as well as my intentions. Convinced that she would not take part, I felt surprised when, ultimately, she agreed to.

Lisa speaks with clarity and eloquence. I began to get used to the long pauses over our phone connection, to allow her time to think without rushing to fill the silence with my own commentary, though even when I did rush to speak, I had the sense that she waited for me to finish and then continued with an explanation of her thoughtful response to my question. Sometimes, Lisa lingers on a single word, repeating it as if summoning a thought that lay just beneath the surface.

Lisa has always wanted to teach. She credits her own teachers, especially those who "really made a difference in how I thought about the world around me," as primary influences. The teachers who inspired her most gave "the feeling of really learning something, something that would extend beyond the classroom." Describing her goals as a teacher, she says,

> I really wanted to be able to be that type of catalyst in thinking for other
> people. I [wanted] to be the type of person who could present a perspective
> or angle that students might not think of on their own. […] I think about

awakening other perspectives, taking the way that we look at things, and using that power to see people differently. [...] I absolutely fell in love with language and how it presents to us so many windows and mirrors [on society], and I wanted to help other people experience those windows and mirrors.

I had assumed, based on the sparse literature dealing with the experiences of teachers with disabilities, that building credibility—getting hired alone—as an educator in a mainstream public school must have presented a challenge for Lisa. I assumed that Lisa's story would be edged in difficulty, defined by struggle, and cloaked in brave sadness. None of this turned out to be the case.

Although she opted in, Lisa made it clear from the start that the term "outsider" bothered her. She encouraged my study about difference to allow for changes to the educational landscape and challenges to the pedagogical status quo brought about by the inclusion of teachers with blindness in mainstream classrooms.

In our first interview, Lisa recommended that I read *Moving Violations*, journalist John Hockenberry's (1995) memoir about adjusting to and living his life as a paraplegic, following an injury in a car accident. My reading of this piece formed a backdrop to my conversations with Lisa, illustrating some aspects of what living with a disability can feel like. In the memoir, Hockenberry tells the story of encountering a favorite professor in the restroom at the University of Oregon. The philosophy professor exclaims, in the moment, that he had never thought of Hockenberry having to use a bathroom, commenting, "'Isn't that interesting?'" (p.

119). This story comes after Hockenberry tells of a break-in at his apartment. Considering the professor's comment in the wake of this recent event, Hockenberry writes,

> If [the professor] didn't think of me as a biological creature, what did he think, that I went to the hardware store instead of the bathroom? What did anybody think? What did they learn from staring? As much as I hated being robbed while I sat helpless in the next room, at least the burglar had been paying attention to the right details. (p. 119)

Hockenberry surmises that the burglar must have studied his movements and habits for several days, because the break-in occurred with precision. The burglar had known exactly where the most valuable items in the apartment were, and had even known to remove the ramp outside the front door, leaving Hockenberry stranded, unable to exit in his wheelchair. Hockenberry describes a feeling of perverse appreciation that the burglar had taken him seriously enough as a human being to learn how to gain the upper hand and get away without being caught. He looks at this in comparison with the professor, who seems to see him as a curiosity—an odd creature whose existence momentarily piques his interest—and certainly not as a serious student, in spite of Hockenberry's extensive efforts to prove his capabilities as a university student.

The complex feelings expressed by Hockenberry suggest something to me about Lisa's tone and entire approach to her participation in the study. She consistently steers the conversation in the direction of pedagogy, perhaps lest I focus

too hard on her blindness and allow that to become the only story. She writes, "I've come to like the term 'outsider' less and less. Its implications don't accurately reflect my experiences. The term 'other' might be closer, though I struggle with that as well."

In his memoir, Hockenberry also shares an occasional feeling of going through life "like a footnote." He gives the impression that his existence is extraneous in the eyes of many paternalistic able-bodied people he encounters—that his survival itself is surprising, and that anything else he might accomplish in addition to simply being is a pleasant surprise. People frequently ask if—or assume that—he has considered suicide, an idea he finds preposterous.

Hockenberry encounters shockingly low expectations, such as this one, during his participation in a training program for people with disabilities entering the workforce: After expressing a well-articulated statement of interest in attending college and having a career in communications, he is promptly handed a bowl containing a jumble of nuts and bolts. He is instructed to carefully sort through it to separate the nuts from the bolts. He wonders what occupation this will prepare him for, and he feels dejected at having his ambitions ignored because of his wheelchair.

The feelings portrayed by Hockenberry parallel Lisa's objection to the "outsider" designation. In terms of feeling "like a footnote," Lisa's objection centers on an interpretation of the term as a connotation of powerlessness. She seems proud to discuss her work on a hiring committee for new teachers in her department, as well as her service in district-wide curriculum planning. These positions indicate

status in the teaching profession. Not only has Lisa received acceptance as a successful mainstream classroom teacher; she has also achieved special designation to collaborate in decision making beyond her own classroom. Such assignments are a way that public school teachers can begin to feel a degree of autonomy. Lisa's description of the "outsider" designation as an isolating one parallels the notion of isolation—and sometimes infantilization—faced by a classroom teacher.

To many teachers, service beyond the classroom can show that they have earned the trust of their leadership. One's teaching has been deemed exemplary to the point that other teachers might benefit from it. "When I think about my role in my classroom and the school," Lisa says, "I mean I work hard, and I've worked to really leave my fingerprints on things that I do and leave impressions and memories."

Just as Hockenberry opens up his story to all readers, taking time to educate the ignorant, Lisa turns her annual introduction to each new group of language arts students into an opportunity to educate, to initiate, and to include.

Discussing blindness with my students is my way of sharing a characteristic of myself that makes me different from them, yet I do move from the topic of blindness to other things about me. I begin by showing a PowerPoint about myself with pictures of my family, hobbies, and interests. They can see some of my favorite books and movies, that I enjoy cooking, exercising, shopping, and then they see a picture of me helping a little girl learn how to use a cane.

I talk about being legally blind, which means that I do have some vision but it's not reliable. I explain that I probably see about 5% of what they do and tell them about having glaucoma develop from cataracts at birth. I explain that blindness is a characteristic, not a tragedy, and that I've learned alternative techniques to navigate in a visual world. I talk about Braille, and I proceed to read through the seating chart in Braille. I show them my Braille watch and talk about using speech on a computer. I give them a chance to ask questions, which some classes take and others hold back.

Lisa describes a desire to teach that began at an early age. She credits this to the teachers she had who stoked her excitement about literature and its ability to unveil truths and help us to connect to a larger world. She speaks of the "windows and mirrors" generated by great literature, which enhance our vision of life and force us to look more closely at ourselves.

Just as many teachers do, Lisa maintains a distinct boundary between her lives in and out of school. Aside from her initial offerings to students at the start of the school year, Lisa keeps her personal life closely guarded. One day, after a student had googled all of his teachers, he announced to her that he had been following her Twitter feed and could quote several recent posts. "And I just freaked out. And I know that something like that, maybe some people it wouldn't bother and they would just be like, 'So what? It's not a big deal.' But in my mind it really is. It really is a clear separation."

She describes a feeling of release that she experiences when in the company of other people with blindness—a feeling she speculates may occur among members of other groups whose members share a common ethnicity or race. Perhaps Lisa thrives on these two defined worlds: one in which she can be completely herself and marshal the energy she will need to function in the other at her own a high standard of professionalism. When I ask her to describe her preference for the term "other" instead of "outsider," she tries to explain.

> The reason that I'm comfortable with it is because my blindness, it does make me different from the majority of people in the building. And so when we're talking about the characteristics of the different types of, to use your word, "outsider" identities that people can have, whether it's gender or race or accent or whatever, I mean that is a characteristic that somehow makes someone different, and so because of that characteristic, they do bring another perspective. And maybe that's how I can sort of like the word a little bit better, because I'm kind of thinking of it in terms of I have an "other" perspective that I'm bringing, I have an "other"… you know, "other" techniques that I'm bringing to the situation.

On negotiating her identity as a teacher who can be considered an "other," Lisa says, "[You must engage in] working harder to reach what it is you want. This means figuring out the system and then figuring out how to succeed either within or despite the system."

As a female whose ethnic background is similar to that of many of her students, Lisa can gain a foothold in the classroom. She can connect with them based on a similar ethnic background, thus, and also as one who enjoys pursuits that many students might readily identify with—cooking, shopping, and exercising. These characteristics may help Lisa to normalize herself in the eyes of her students.

One of her main professional dilemmas involves the teaching of students in the special education program at her school. Such students take her English classes, and she describes her thoughts about teaching them.

> I struggle tremendously with how to make the modifications for them without lowering the expectations. And I know that part of what influences that is my work with other blind people, I've seen time and time again. And it goes back to the way that people have low expectations for people who are blind. And so my natural reaction against this is to create really high expectations and to help people reach those. […] If someone really has a disability in writing, … I don't want to have lower expectations of them [sic]. I don't want to have them do fewer assignments, because they are going to have to navigate their own lives. So they need to figure out how they can do the things they need to do in any given situation. And I feel like if I as the teacher let them out of something, that I'm really doing them a disservice.

As I have read and reread Lisa's words, and tried to gain a better sense of her work, I have been struck by the ways in which my own classroom teaching has often relied so heavily on physical, spatial, and even non-verbal elements. I have often

used eye contact to connect with a student across the room, employed facial expressions I hoped were communicating important messages: "Remember what we talked about? You're supposed to be reading now." I have considered the layout of the room as a conduit of physical and spatial signals to students, telling them, "stand here," "sit there," "now, focus your attention this way." Lisa's narration of her experiences tells me that there exist subtler forms of communication I have not yet begun to consider.

Many would easily impose the "outsider" label on Lisa based upon her blindness—I certainly did. Lisa's response to this has been to refuse the term itself—to insist on insider-level participation. Lisa's difference, her otherness, informs her pedagogy to a great extent. Just as with other participants, Lisa's experiences allow her to empathize with students and to develop pedagogical practices to better connect with them.

Maria

> *I think outsider is a good term. I feel like an outsider, because I can't really be myself. And maybe it's because I'm uncomfortable within myself, I don't know. But I just can't be myself. That I do know.*

Maria teaches middle school social studies at a public elementary-middle school in a major city on the east coast. The population of the school is 98% African American. About 400 students are enrolled in the school, the majority of whom are eligible for free lunch.

Although Maria spent some of her childhood in this neighborhood, she moved away and returned to teach there one year ago. Maria is African American and comes from a low-income background. She finds herself set apart from her community by her homosexuality and her "masculine" gender identity, an identity that is defined, in my eyes, by her baggy clothing and athletic build. Maria has been teaching for four years.

Her inspiration to teach began with a high school teacher. This teacher had completed a successful career as a lawyer and a law professor, and had become a teacher after retirement. Maria describes her as a "role model, as somebody who can go along and have this career, and yet still can give back at the same time." The notion of giving back followed Maria through college, resurfacing during her senior year. Although she had been planning to attend law school, she thought again and again of teaching, and she decided that it was what she wanted to do. Her first teaching job was at the same Catholic high school she attended, in which teachers were required to adhere to a "morality standard" to "uphold the Catholic faith." She soon left the school and pursued a master's degree before taking her current position.

If I had to define how I'm an outsider, it's because I like girls, and you know, that's something I have had to be discreet about ever since my first teaching job at the Catholic school. And it's not just the fact that I like girls.

Back at the top of the Empire State Building, in the face of the impending attack by a disguised Lucy and Ethel, their "plant," posing as another stuttering tourist, utters one of the few lines of dialogue in the scene: "…are you from Mars?"

A similar query faced Justin Bond when meeting a friend's four year-old daughter for the first time. Clad in the clothing, jewelry, and makeup of a woman, he said hello. The child asked her mother, "Is that a lady or a man?" Bond replied, "Oh, it doesn't matter" ("Justin Time," 2009). Such questions can come as innocent queries, as the one asked by a child. A different tone, though, can remind one of her uncomfortable outsider status. Maria describes her own formative experiences of outsiderness:

> I consider myself to be an outsider within my own family. Because of my sexual orientation, I have been ostracized by my relatives, primarily my mother, aunts, uncles, and older cousins. When much speculation about my sexual orientation began in my late teens I would often come under attack and scrutiny. When I was between 16 and 17, an aunt kept questioning me over and over about who or what I was. I remember and still to this day can feel the anger boil from within me from her line of questioning. I kept thinking and said to her at one point, "Why does it matter?" and "Why are you, at your age, concerned with what a 16 year-old is or isn't doing?" I had an uncle who would comfort me and tell me he didn't see me any differently but I would think to myself, "If I'm no different, why do you have to tell me that?"

> My mother above all reminds me constantly of how much I am not wanted. She tells me that I'm perverse, sinful, a disgrace, and that I will one day bust hell wide open. Out of three girls, I am the only one who is gay.

One fall evening after school, Maria had stayed behind to catch up on some grading. She ran into a student's uncle in the main office—someone she had spoken with many times—and in passing, let him know that the student was in danger of failing. She and her colleague left the office, and a student caught up with them shortly. On hearing that his niece was failing her class, the uncle had called the student's mother and had passed on the information, calling Maria "that dyke." Maria writes of the following moments:

> I was so shocked and offended at what I had heard and I immediately [found and] confronted the uncle about what he had said. I made it clear to him that I didn't care necessarily what he thought of me but that he needed to keep his "assumptions" about me out of the ear shot of a child. Before I knew it, me and that uncle [were] shouting outside of the school at one another. He kept insisting that I was a "dyke" because of the clothes I wore and how I carried myself. I will admit, I had some words for him that were a lot more damaging than what he said to me, but throughout the entire ordeal, I just felt so hurt.

Maria describes how she "walked away from that experience feeling a variety of emotions." She tells of deliberately trying to keep her dress feminine in order to avoid scrutiny. Following the incident with the uncle, she writes, "I felt like I didn't play my role well, and that if he could sense I was gay then surely others could as well." She feared that her attire might cause others to think she looked too much "like a man," and she began to isolate herself from other adults in the building, feeling that she "wasn't adequate enough." In the wake of the incident,

administrators asked Maria to write up her version of the events. They ordered the uncle to stay away from the school during the school day. There was no additional follow-up. Maria says, "I honestly just don't think they knew how to go about approaching the situation. You know, actually […] I didn't really know how to go about approaching the situation."

As she recovered from the incident, Maria made sure that her father and a few cousins "had a presence" around the school building for several weeks after. The confrontation itself was an ugly culmination of the types of smaller interactions that Maria faces regularly: interrogations from colleagues about her romantic life—colleagues who are assuming she is straight, her own habit of second-guessing her behaviors, wondering whether she is sending a "signal" about who she really is through some careless gesture or omission. She rejects the burden of having to decide whether to "come out," and she wishes to "avoid being the go-to person for answers about what it means to be gay." One of her biggest fears came to pass when a student—one who had expressed homophobia toward a classmate—openly referred to Maria as being gay. That student—an 8th grade girl—has since come out herself.

At the beginning of her first year there, Maria had just completed a master's degree in education and entered the school with a sense of optimism. In addition to the personal attacks she faced, though, this was a tough school to work for. There was widespread discord among faculty members, whom she describes as sharply divided along racial lines. Among what once was a primarily African American teaching staff, white teachers "who are young, inexperienced, and Teach for

America" are replacing veterans whom, many feel are "being pushed out." Maria describes black faculty members who see this shift as an expression of racism rather than pedagogical interest. She sympathizes with this sentiment, at the same time expressing empathy for the difficulties faced by white teachers at her school.

> This is their first year at the school and they've never dealt with such a toxic community. [T]hey've never dealt with kids of a different color and with behavioral issues. […] They're trying to combat their own stereotypes and then to have so much animosity by some of the other staff… I feel like it's kind of a raw deal, especially if you don't have a background to what [this city] is about, you're stepping into a lion's den. I feel bad for them. I honestly do.

Maria connected with the African American teachers at first, but found that their low morale was difficult to deal with. "It brings down the work that they do inside the class." Because many of the teachers felt targeted by an administration that seemed determined to hire from outside the community, Maria sensed that they had given up. And she found that students and their families began to pick up on the mood. She watched African American parents confront white teachers, accusing them of not knowing the community or the children well enough to teach in the school.

Because the administration was experiencing its own internal division and infighting, much of the discord went unaddressed. In this chaotic environment,

Maria describes taking on any job within the building she felt needed doing. In her free periods, she takes to the hallways. She describes her role this way:

> I am the unofficial administrator at the school. I shake kids down. (laughter) I do. I am a security guard. I guard the doors. Any discipline concern or any issue that's happening, I go in and remove students, talk to parents. […] I'm the one that has to keep order and discipline with kids. So when a child is being physically aggressive, when there's a fight or something, being the one to go in and remove them from the classroom, remove them from a fight, remove them from another student who they're trying to choke out.

The environment at her troubled school would try even the most experienced of teachers—in fact, as she observed, it has. Overall, her impression of the school's administration is negative. In spite of her efforts to keep order beyond her own classroom walls, and to pitch in and offer suggestions to the principal and vice principal, the feeling of being targeted has haunted her. Overtly targeted by the uncle of one student, she has also felt the subtle judgment of some faculty members among whom she has concealed her identity. She feels that administrators have second-guessed her and overlooked her contributions. Maria found herself crying in her car almost every day of the fall semester.

When I first met Maria several years ago, I was leading a cross-cultural simulation with a co-instructor in my graduate program. The instructor and I corralled thirty master's students into two classrooms and gave them a series of complex instructions on how to adapt to two made-up "cultures" into which we

divided the group. This is an exercise that attempts to give insight into the experience of being part of a simulated majority as well as having temporary minority status. For every group of students who feel their eyes have been opened by this exercise, however, there are several for whom it is a pale representation of their actual existence.

That day, Maria was assigned to my group, and as the students in the group practiced their new culture—one that included close physical proximity with much talk, laughter, and physical contact—I noticed that her behavior was different from that of the other students. She skirted the margins of the larger pack, observing, hanging back, circling the main event and studying it.

Maria usually has a solemn demeanor, and I felt intimidated by her at first. Her large, dark eyes gaze intently, and she tends to pause before speaking. Although I had been especially interested in working with her on my research, the first few times we met, I found myself getting nervous. Faced with her seriousness and focus, I feared that I might make some flawed assumption or conversational misstep that would cause her to withdraw from the study or worse still, confront and question me. Our first interview began with that same seriousness, until I asked her to remind me of her subject area, which I thought was English. "I teach Social Studies," came the swift reply. "Don't disrespect me like that." At which, we both laughed and my tension left me.

Maria is an observer. As I talked to her more often, I found that the serious demeanor was no put-on; it was the outermost layer of a deeply sincere person. It

was also an accessory to sharp understanding, empathy, and a deadpan sense of humor, characteristics that students can appreciate.

> I try as best as possible to make students aware of who I am and where I come from. I tell students about my upbringing, about my mother's alcohol and crack addiction and the absence of my father. I inform students of how I was once homeless at the age of 16, forced to take care of myself and become savvy on the streets. I also let students know that many of my mannerisms and dress comes from being on the streets so much. I think in doing this I have been able to reach students who would at first glance assume that I'm some prissy, uppity chick who doesn't understand their world or the obstacles they face.

The school, in one of the lowest-income urban districts in the United States, is a match for her tough and reserved exterior. Describing her school, she says:

> My school is very urban, very street, very poor, very depressed. A lot of emotional instability. A lot of violence, especially in the neighborhood. We are the lowest school in the metro area. We're like the shame; the shame of the city. I believe it's 97% African American. It's a school with high needs. We're in a crack-infested area. If you want your drugs, if you want a whore, you just go across the street to the quarters and get it. If you want a gun, you want to see some type of violence, you want to see some type of death, just go across the street. And our school looks out onto that neighborhood.

Although Maria spent part of her childhood in that neighborhood, when she returned to it a year ago to teach, she felt a need to re-assimilate. She had far more insider awareness of the area than some other faculty members; she also possessed skills that would enable her understand the context behind community issues confronting her students. She cites careful listening, learning the history behind individuals and happenings, and remaining cautious about accepting things at face value as important life skills for that environment.

"I'm not a perfect teacher," says Maria. "I'm not the best teacher. But I feel like I have great rapport with students. I've never had discipline or behavior problems." She describes the investment she has made in earning the respect and trust of her students.

> I just think it's my relatability [sic], I want to say, with students, and the fact that they understand where I'm coming from and I understand where they're coming from. And it takes a while in order to build or establish that, inviting them inside my world just a little bit. I mean, I try to obviously make sure there's a clear boundary between adult and child and my privacy and what I choose to share.

But she shares information that she knows will make an impact with her students. "I let them know right off the bat, 'Hey, my mother's a crack [addict]. You know, my mother's an alcoholic. These are the things that I've had to overcome.'" Maria is careful not to make assumptions about others, but she does not feel that she receives the same treatment at the hands of colleagues.

I've had relationships with females that were significant, but it's also

just everything as far as being androgynous and not being feminine or my

voice being deeper or me being more athletic or more masculine. And just

always having to throw people off so that I don't become a topic of their

discussion.

In McCarthy's (2003) study on one transgendered teacher's experience in a

mainstream public high school, she notes that the teacher developed close

relationships with her students, even as she struggled with revealing fundamental

parts of herself to the school community. The teacher describes a situation in which

her female students feel comfortable approaching her to ask for advice, and—

perhaps because of her nontraditional gender identification—male students approach

her just as easily. She believes that this happens because the male students see her as

occupying a neutral space, gender-wise. So that when they are asking for romantic

advice, they are not exactly asking their female teacher, but someone outside the

confines of binary gender identification, someone perhaps, whose opinions will not

be motivated by convention, and someone who will understand the need for

confidence.

Maria, too, has developed close relationships with many students. Students

tend to seek her out.

They come to me even when I don't want them to. (laughs) They come to

me, they sit down and they talk and they tell me about things that are

happening, what's going on, what they're going to be doing, things that are

troubling them if they need help with something. And sometimes they just come to sit, just to get away from a lot of things.

Maria conceals her sexuality in the workplace, opting out of the difficult and potentially dangerous consequences of being "out." This struggle has made her especially attuned to the ways in which adults try to instill gender-specific behaviors in children.

I've seen a 35-year-old volunteer tell a first-grade student not to cry. He's telling the first grader, "Don't cry. Girls cry. Be a boy; be a man." You know, "Don't baby him; this is how you make them soft," or "He's going to grow up to be this or he's going to grow up to be that." And I just think it's not your place to tell this child that they can't act in a certain manner. He's in the first grade. At what age do you think he should start "manning up?" And, to him, you're never too young to be a man. He would say that if you baby the child, he's going to get used to that, but I say the world is so hard as it is. What can't he have somebody he can go to and cry as a first grader?

Maria considers it her role to undo some of the damage to students caused by reinforced messages about gender-appropriate behavior and the value judgments placed on conformity to societal standards. She regularly challenges students when she finds them judging and mistreating on another based upon rigid adherence to these societal norms. This is an area where many teachers may fear to tread, either because they fear the consequences they might face or because they do not know what to say. Maria describes a typical interaction in her classroom.

When I hear students say "Oh, that's gay," I just ask them, "Why is that gay?" "Because he's singing a Beyoncé song." "Is singing a Beyoncé song gay?" "Yeah, that's gay." "But do you know Beyoncé songs?" "Yeah." "What song do you know? Yeah, how does it go?" And they start singing it. "And does that make you gay that you're singing a Beyoncé song?" "No." And so it's simple things like that that I try to do with students.

This relatively common classroom exchange between students demonstrates deeply held beliefs about appropriate actions for members of each gender group. It illustrates the common conflation of sexual orientation with gender identity and the societal equation of homosexuality with transgression or incorrectness. "That's gay," functions as a catchall derogatory phrase for many adolescents, and few teachers consider taking on its implications, let alone opening a dialogue with young people to unpack its deeper layers of meaning. Maria sees the value of teachers interrupting verbal transactions like this one, if only to demonstrate the importance of choosing one's words and considering their implications.

Maria sees her responsibility as a teacher extending beyond reaction to situational issues among students. She sees herself as a representative of the outside world for her students—a conduit of possibilities and new perspectives.

In some ways I feel like they never get a person to expose them to anything other than what they have heard or the myths surrounding what it means to be gay and they're always going to walk around with limited thinking.

In her experience of life as an outsider, Maria has suffered the consequences of misinformation at the hands of her own family and community. Ignorant ideas about her identity have manifested themselves in painful confrontations and humiliations. These experiences have enriched Maria's sense of the responsibility of what it means to be a teacher in the service of her students. Having lived at the mercy of others' assumptions, she knows the feeling of being prejudged. Having experienced the angry end of callowness, she knows its destructive power. Maria describes the way these lessons articulate themselves in her thoughts about teaching.

> It is important to not make assumptions and to really take the time to go find out about students. Or taking the time to just listen to what students are saying and try to understand a little bit more about what's going on before automatically jumping down a student's throat about something or before automatically speaking on something. I'm finding that a lot of teachers speak up on issues that they know nothing about. I just want to be able to speak up on things that I'm knowledgeable about and take the time to listen before I make any assumptions.

Maria's experiences also translate into empathy for her students. "Because I recognize that my sexuality is something that's not looked upon in a positive light in my community, I make sure that I take extra steps to try to stop [it] when I see students being picked or harassed on for certain things." She speaks of stepping in when she hears faculty members using derogatory language that students might overhear. She describes the discomfort she sees among certain colleagues when topics like homosexuality come up.

Fortunately, in the second semester of the school year Maria connected with several colleagues who self-identify as lesbian. They speak in gender-neutral "code" about dates and significant others when they find themselves among straight coworkers, but they are colleagues with whom Maria can share aspects of her personal life, without fear of judgment or other consequences. The difficult environment of the fall has been softened somewhat by the presence of allies. Adversity has also brought patience and generosity of spirit.

> My students recognize that I'm genuine in my intent and that's allowed me to form connections with them that I didn't think were possible. Students trust me enough to come and talk to me about anything and everything that's going on in their world, and they know that I'll never betray their trust. In many ways, I believe that my sexuality contributes to how well I'm able to form relationships with my students. I know how it feels to be judged, to not have someone to speak to and be honest with. When I sit down with a student, I see myself and I give to that student what I would have wanted someone else to give to me.

Maria's outsider identity extended throughout her school and beyond. She found her outsiderness imposed on her from an early age, by relatives. Her sexual orientation and gender identity, in particular, differentiated her. Well into adulthood, Maria found her outsider status imposed on her by others. Eventually, she embraced it, both as a point of pride and as a label laden with painful memories. Maria felt that her outsiderness allowed her to better understand the struggles faced by her students, and that it helped to make her teaching more effective.

Winnie

> *I'm not going to understand how it is to be Hispanic, and I don't understand*
>
> *how it is to be white. I just understand how it is to be African American. I*
>
> *mean, we can have certain things that we relate to with each other, but there*
>
> *are some things that we'll never be able to relate to. I just believe that.*

Winnie teaches English at a Catholic high school in a large suburb of an East coast city. The student body consists of a near-split between low-income African American and Latino children. About 250 students attend, and almost all qualify for free lunch.

Like her students, Winnie comes from a low-income, urban background. She shares a racial identity with her African American students, and working class roots with them all. She does not share her Latino students' culture or language. She is also the oldest faculty member by several decades among a young, mostly white teaching staff. Winnie's petite frame and stylish dress project the appearance of someone much younger, as do her energetic manner and friendly, optimistic tone. Before I pressed the red "record" button at our first interview, I mentioned apologetically that I would try to keep my comments to a minimum, so as not to take up too much "talk time." Smiling, she responded, "Just be you."

Being a teacher did not come easily for Winnie. It was not the ability that she lacked, "It's just in me, if that makes sense to you," she says. Nor was it a lack of

desire. "From early childhood, I wanted to be a teacher," was one of the first things Winnie told me about herself. She tells the story this way:

> It was just something that I always wanted to do. I always wanted to be a teacher, but growing up in a poor neighborhood and not having the funds to go to college after high school, you had to work. I went that path of working and having a family. […] I went to undergrad at 46 years old to pursue an English literature major, and then decided to go to grad school because if you want to teach I think you need to go to grad school, too.

Winnie left a job in finance—as one of the first African Americans to manage the large budget at her agency—much to the chagrin of her colleagues. She started a small daycare center at home, and began teaching children from her neighborhood. After earning her early childhood license, she made the decision to go to school. Winnie took weekend and evening courses—a full course load—while working full time and raising her children. "I never thought I would get an undergrad let alone a grad degree," she says.

But she felt that she should not be teaching without a master's, so she pursued this next goal as well. Describing the early days of her master's program, she mentions attending her first class and hearing "about 15 words that I hadn't heard of in my life, so I wrote them down." Her professor told the group that only a small part of the population has a master's degree, and she imagined herself as a part of that percentage. Winnie completed her master's and has been teaching for seven

years. She describes a process of "letting go" that has helped her to develop into the teacher she is now.

> You have to let go, and I think that because I started teaching late, I don't have all that old-school stuff. […] I don't mind letting the child teach my class, and I don't mind learning. […] I don't mind saying that I don't know everything.

Winnie strives to connect with other people. She looks for common ground. For one year, she taught in a white, rural area of her state. Winnie's students returned to school that fall, having just completed *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (one of her favorites), as part of their summer reading assignment. She was the only black teacher in the school, and her students were visibly nervous when the time came to discuss the text.

Winnie confronted the reticent students about their lack of involvement. Finally they admitted to a fear of using the N-word in her presence while discussing the text. Laughing, Winnie describes telling them how, as a child, she too was forbidden from using the word, but that its presence in this literary masterpiece held important meaning that should not be ignored. "I told them, 'Just don't call me one,'" she recounts, laughing. "'Don't call that—don't say it—unless we're talking about literature, and we're good.'"

"Look at Huckleberry Finn," she told her students. "He was abused. He just had all these issues and concerns. It was he and this black man saving each other." Alluding to the editions of the text published recently in which the N-word was

edited out, Winnie describes the importance of its presence. "I think that we're going to be having that conversation for the next century, but hopefully we can have it in a good, civil way." She says, "No, we've got to keep that word in there."

Winnie taught her students about the NAACPs funeral for the N-word, and she emphasized with them that the silence around it might be giving the word itself more power than it deserved. "We are in a new age, a new generation, a new generation of thinkers, and we just have to stop giving power to so much stuff and bring some good energy in there." This is how Winnie talks—full of excitement and all-encompassing enthusiasm for her work.

Winnie tells this story of reaching out to a group of rural white students—as possibly the only African American teacher they would have—and her eyes dance. "It was fun just being the only African American at that school teaching *Huckleberry Finn*." I get the sense that her fearless-seeming optimism is her own source of mischievous pleasure. She dares to connect with people against any odds she might face.

As the school year continued, parents began requesting that the administration move their children into Winnie's class. Tension ensued among other members of the English department, and Winnie felt guilty when her assigned mentor began losing students to her. Winnie's student-centered approach to teaching English had won favor among local families whose children had become excited about her class. She describes meeting this challenging situation with a constructive spirit—taking the time to share her feelings with the mentor teacher and ultimately

also sharing her instructional style. As her mentor began to adopt some of the teaching practices Winnie used, that teacher's students became more engaged, too.

In her current school, Winnie navigates insider and outsider roles every day. She interacts with much younger, white colleagues from more privileged backgrounds, while teaching students from similar economic circumstances with a variety of racial and ethnic identities. She speaks of maintaining a balance, in which she counsels students of color who come to her when they have problems interacting with their white teachers. She strives to build a collegial atmosphere, and finds herself giving advice to both her students and their teachers on how they can improve relationships by working together.

Winnie also walks the line between the roles of teacher and facilitator in her classroom. She rejects the notion that teachers must function as the keepers of knowledge, instead emphasizing the empowerment of students to seek information to teach themselves and one another. Winnie speaks of the "bad and sad baggage" that many students bring to school, in the form of difficult home lives and struggles with poverty.

> When you teach English, you really get to the heart of students because they share so much with you in their writing. By accident, you just learn so much about them that you can [use to] help other teachers, "Hey you know, this kid is having some problems, and you're strong in that area so you might want to talk to him if you can. But don't let him know I said anything." You know, that kind of thing. Just kind of helping other teachers with students.

Winnie also considers herself an outsider at her school along religious lines. She is a Baptist among Catholics. I had assumed that a Christian would feel at home in this setting, but Winnie made it clear to me that her practice of Christianity is quite different from that which is promoted in her school. Although she does not feel a strong connection with the ceremonies and traditions practiced there, she appreciates the opportunity for prayer and enjoys sharing this with her students.

Winnie admitted that she had objected to the term "outsider," at the start of the study, saying that she found it almost offensive, "like the N-word." I asked her why she took part in spite of her concerns, and she said the concept had intrigued her nonetheless. She had also trusted that I must be onto something, because one of my professors had introduced us. This professor had conducted a previous research project in which Winnie had participated, and the experience had been a positive one. I felt nervous about Winnie's dislike of the term and disconnection with it, selfishly wondering whether Winnie might not "fit in" to the study if she did not consider herself a part of the group—not unlike the very research guided by categories that I was trying to critique.

As I examined my feelings, I realized that what really bothered me was the fear that I might be compared to the professor, a more experienced researcher than I, and that I might come up short. Worse yet, I worried that if Winnie did not enjoy the experience of participating in my research or continued to feel offended by my terminology, it might negatively affect her previous relationship with one of my mentors, and that I might be shown to be a less than adequate researcher. I held onto these feelings and considered them. I remembered, finally, that the narrative inquiry

process can be a complex one, and I thought that perhaps Winnie's dissent was a gift to me. I looked more carefully at the situation and felt grateful that she had shared her feelings with such candor, that she had trusted me enough to disclose so many personal experiences.

This was beginning to feel more and more like a complex situation Ellis (2004) describes, in which she struggles to present honest accounts and grapples with her participants', students', and family's responses to them. It was beginning to feel like the kind of research I had thought I would be too scared to really engage in.

When Winnie mentioned that a large portion of her students were Latino, thus of a very different background from hers, I shared the study entitled "Effective white teachers of Latino/a students" by Marx (2008).

The more I learned about Winnie's background and her relationships with students, the more I realized that the struggles she had experienced enabled her to connect with them in a way similar to the teachers profiled by Marx, who found that outsider teachers cited as favorites among their Latino students had all experienced adversity in their own lives. These adverse experiences had helped the teachers from the study to empathize with their students and earn their trust. This happened in spite of both their outsider status in the students' community and students' negative associations with previous outsider teachers.

To connect with her students, Winnie draws on her experiences, growing up "poor" and feeling uncomfortable at school. She recalls crying every day at school and feeling thankful that her teachers were willing to comfort her, but knowing that

she wanted to be at home. Although she was a good student, Winnie did not like being at school, and she thinks of this still and tries to create the comfortable atmosphere for her students that her teachers created for her.

She describes the practice of being patient with students who come to class late, knowing that sometimes a lack of bus fare or family responsibilities may be to blame. Knowing how easy it is for her students to feel excluded, she carefully approaches them, letting them know that they were missed and that she can help them to catch up on missed work.

Winnie identifies in particular with other outsiders among her students. She writes about an African American boy with autism who had difficulty with social interactions and at first was not accepted by his peers. Making a point of including this student as an active, vocal member of the class and helping him to find his niche, Winnie remarks that this student gradually, over the course of the school year, began to come out of his shell, participate more in classroom activities, and develop more connections with his classmates.

Winnie describes a bond she cultivated with another student through his journaling in class. The student, a Latino boy, had been suffering with anxiety attacks all year. His mother had been diagnosed with cancer and he was frightened at the thought of losing her and being left alone. Winnie noticed a disconnect between the boy's claims of being "fine" and his body language, which "spoke differently." One day, the boy volunteered to share his journal entry with the class.

He opened our class discussion and shared his experiences with his mom as she struggles through the pain and aggravation of her weekly treatments. […] Not only did this particular student open up to me, but his writing ability improved tremendously. Writing was a challenge for him and writing about his mom helped him to develop the academic confidence he would need for his first year of high school.

Quite unexpectedly to me, Winnie circulated the Marx study among her white colleagues. Over several weeks between our interviews, she discussed the study with the other teachers and found that her colleagues could relate to it. Winnie found that this catalyzed many helpful exchanges of ideas. She describes the conversations that ensued:

A lot of our teachers are white and they're teaching mostly Hispanic and African American students. They'd never even thought about that term either. [As they read the article], a lot of them were saying, "Yeah, I definitely feel this. Oh, I definitely feel like an outsider." I had told them, "I'm not an outsider," but then after really going through this article I thought, "Man, I *am* an outsider." And they were feeling the same way but it sort of validated a lot of their thoughts, a lot of their fears.

As she confronted her discomfort with the term, "outsider," Winnie began to reconsider her identity in relation to her students. Although she shared their socioeconomic background, she realized that she could no longer take for granted

the seamless insider status she had been assuming that she held. She described her thought process:

> This is making me reflect more on when I'm inside that classroom or outside of the classroom. What am I doing? What are the students doing? What are they allowing me to do? This gives me something else to think about, something else to focus on in my teaching and in my interaction with my students and with teachers and administrators and everything that surrounds teaching.

Early in the study, when I introduced the idea of being an outsider teacher and had asked Winnie to describe her relationships with students, she had categorized them by saying, "You know, when I see kids I just see the kids, I don't see the fact that 'Wow, there are a lot of Hispanic kids here, you know, or African American kids.'"

As we spoke about her history as a teacher and her perspective on the Marx (2008) study, she began to reevaluate her identity in the classroom. Winnie had regarded herself as an insider among the students in a way that she felt her white colleagues could not. Her perspective was changing. Her identity kept her from being an insider with every one of her students, but perhaps the very skills she had cultivated as an outsider enabled her to better connect with them all.

> I hadn't really thought about outsider status until you introduced me to that idea. A lot of my students speak Spanish during the transition between classes, and I don't know Spanish, so I wonder what they are talking about.

And just from their tone and body language, it doesn't seem to be anything I should be concerned about, but I do feel like that outsider, and maybe that's where I belong, you know? I *am* an outsider and it's not a bad thing being an outsider. Because the word is now making me think, *How do I get inside?*

Winnie emphasizes the importance of recognizing one's outsider status and developing the skills needed to overcome it. Her teaching philosophy puts the onus on educators to learn about their students in order to earn their trust and appropriately tailor instruction to their needs. She speaks about this as one who is aware of the exclusion faced by many of society's outsiders when interacting with institutions like schools.

I think sometimes teachers come into the classroom and they just want to open the textbook first and give the lesson. But kids aren't going to trust you until you prove that you can be trusted. And so it's just getting to know them and opening up and letting them know who you are first, not only as a teacher. Most people are intimidated by teachers—especially the population that we teach. Students and their families are intimidated by teachers. I get to know my audience as best as I can so that I don't feel like I'm up there threatening anybody. And I don't like to feel important anyway, you know? I like to make other people feel like they are more important than I am.

Winnie feels close to her students. She describes a desire to "give her power away," to them, and to use her commonalities to reach them. "I don't like to make students feel less than who they are. They come from an environment that says they

are less than. I think I am aware of that because I came from that environment, but I think that other people who did not come from that environment, it's extra stuff that we all have to do to make she that we are being respectful of the students." When students come to her to confide about their anger at white teachers in the school, she listens and then reminds them that these teachers "care for you just as I care for you." Winnie expresses admiration for her colleagues because "they could go and teach anywhere, and they choose to come to that school where we have gang violence all around the community."

Winnie invites teachers to come to her classroom, where she mingles with students, sitting among them, encouraging them to teach one another, sharing her power, and the teachers take note of her closeness with students. They comment on the way she will approach a tough-looking kid and quietly get him to tuck his uniform shirt into his pants. She encourages the younger teachers to loosen up and give students more space while encouraging students to meet their other teachers halfway.

Winnie also feels the responsibility to tackle issues of sexism and homophobia that she sees within her students' cultures. She recognizes the weight of her presence as an educated woman of color in a position of authority with her students. She acknowledges the pressures beyond socioeconomic status that many of them face. "I have students who are still in gangs and students who are trying to get out of gangs. I can read those faces, I can read those attitudes, and I can read that body language and their reactions to me. And so I've got to all at once have this

persona that says 'I know you,' so that they can sit back and relax and not feel threatened."

Winnie believes that students come to her looking for sympathy but that they really want the honest advice she gives them instead. She admonishes one student to stop complaining about all the work another teacher has assigned. "'You know, you really need that,'" she says. " 'I wish I'd had that, and when I was in school, no one taught me, and I had to learn that stuff at an old age, and you all know how old I am.'"

Knowing that many of them have experienced a feeling of disenfranchisement when interacting with teachers and other authority figures, Winnie approaches her students first, she says, "as a human being." She describes her work with them as "pulling people into the fold," a strength that she feels stems from her experience as an outsider. Ultimately, Winnie is propelled by a deep desire to motivate her students. She describes feeling a special connection to her current students, but talking to her for any length of time gives a definite sense that Winnie has felt a deep connection to every student she has taught.

An outsider among her middle class white colleagues, Winnie's identity, combined with her positive rapport with students, earned her the respect of her colleagues, who frequently sought her advice concerning pedagogy. She believed that her commonalities with her students made her a stronger teacher, giving her insight into their experiences. When Winnie began to consider the differences between her African American identity and that of her Latino students, she began to

define herself as an outsider among her students as well. Winnie's realization of the factors of her identity that set her apart from her students reaffirmed her commitment to self-improvement as a practitioner in an effort to enhance her communication in the classroom.

Kyong

> *Having teachers in the building who [racially] reflect the children gives them a pretty tangible example of what they can amount to. I definitely see the value in it, but at the same time, I don't know if it's feasible to be striving for that.*

Kyong is in his mid-20s, and he teaches at an arts magnet middle school in a suburb of an east coast city. The student body consists of primarily Latino, African American, and white students. About one half of the students receive free or reduced price lunch.

Kyong is Asian American, unlike the majority of students and staff at the school, and his middle-class upbringing differentiates him from many of his students of working-class, low-income backgrounds. He has taught for three years, one of which was spent teaching English in South Korea, his family's country of origin. Kyong comes from a family of educators: both of his parents are college professors and his sister is a public school teacher. After college, he began to pursue a career in law, realizing two years in that he "didn't want to be a lawyer." It was then that he felt "it was time to realize that was the profession I wanted to try."

As a child in the US with parents who were immigrants, Kyong spent time helping his parents with their English "language and communication, especially in written form." Kyong found that he was engaged in his parents' careers and he describes the experience, saying, "It's kind of interesting because it's almost like I was learning when I was helping my parents."

When he made the choice to become a teacher, Kyong spent one year at a school in Inchun, South Korea. At this school, he taught conversational English to middle school boys. Kyong then returned to the US to earn his master's degree in education and pursue a teaching career. At his current school, Kyong describes a student body in which "females vastly outnumber males," and male students struggle with behavior issues. Kyong feels that the extent of behavior problems among these students is a function of "low morale" and it takes significant time away from their academic work.

When he compares the experience of those students with his own, he feels that the environment in which he grew up was one in which education was promoted to a far greater extent. Although Kyong felt that he was an outsider at his mostly-white schools, he was motivated to achieve success in his studies. He does not recall a specific moment at which this set of values was communicated to him—only that it defined his upbringing.

In his seminal text, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School,* Sizer (2004) paints a vivid picture of the work of teachers.

Children, being inexperienced, neither know how to learn very efficiently nor are aware of how to reflect on their own knowing. Most children assume that knowledge just happens to them, that it is handed to them by some parentlike seer as if it were a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Rarely are they asked *how* they learned something and how their way may be special. Thus, the teacher gets little help from his or her own students: they are not apt at self-diagnosis nor much given to intellectual self-consciousness. […] As a result, the thoughtful teacher has to guess what is needed, for a class and for each individual in it, guess as to pace and style, pressure and patience. (p. 3)

Sizer writes of an "understanding" that exists between teachers and students, bordered by external constraints that keep them from engaging in authentic exercises of teaching and learning. This may come from the excessive demands placed on teachers that prevent them from doing their best work, or the lack of relevance in the old model of schooling for young people in today's world. Whatever the case, Sizer portrays an environment in which students and teachers go through the motions of classroom activity, skating through their days, and avoiding meaningful pedagogical activity. The influence of this observation seems to connect with Kyong's work.

Kyong recently completed an action research project for his graduate program, and it was sparked by the memory that came from being an outsider at a younger age. Kyong had noticed that certain students in his classes demanded "more attention" than the others—that these extroverted students exhibited behaviors that enabled teachers to get a better sense of their personal issues as well as their academic ability. This left students with more reserved personalities on the margins

of classroom activity, at a distance from their teachers. Their lack of participation in classroom discussions also kept Kyong from getting a clear understanding of their opinions, comprehension, and skill development.

These "outsider students" reminded Kyong of himself at their age—an Asian American boy attending primarily white schools with white teachers, he had tended to keep to himself in the classroom, allowing teachers to turn their attention to the students whose personalities expanded to fill the space.

Two summers ago, Kyong was my student in a graduate course. I contacted him to participate in my study, and we planned our first interview. I recalled an email he sent to me during the course, when I had commented on his thoughtful writing. His reverential tone stood out among the casual correspondence I received from most of my graduate students. I learned later that this detached and respectful tone grew from his experience with teachers in high school—I, too, had always kept a marked distance from my teachers. Would I have dared to disagree with them if ever invited to?

Just before I hung up the phone on my last interview with Kyong, he thanked me for my class—the diversity class I had taught during the first summer of his master's program two summers earlier. I thanked him for the recognition, but I added, "You made it what it was."

Kyong's contribution had added to an already highly constructive and creative environment in one of the courses students rated among the best I have taught. Kyong distinguished himself among the other students in the group. His

affable, though reserved exterior stayed with him during class discussions and casual interactions. On several occasions, the perceptive, sharp individual dwelling under the calm surface was revealed.

One day, the student next to him tossed out a bigoted comment about bad Asian drivers. In the carefully worded, politically correct environment of the diversity class, the comment produced a collective gasp from the other students. The student's face flushed as he turned to Kyong. "I'm so sorry," he said, suddenly realizing his gaffe. Kyong nodded at him, saying nothing. The student seemed to squirm for a moment, waiting, and finally, Kyong replied, "It's okay." There was well-timed humor in the length of time Kyong had forced his classmate to wait—the moment seemed to make just enough room for the absurdity of the student's comment to sink in, along with his superficial attempt to make amends with the one Asian person in the room.

The next surprise came when Kyong's turn came to give a final presentation to the group during one of the last course meetings. I had encouraged students to use the presentation as an opportunity to rehearse some teaching techniques while they had the benefit of a room full of willing participants. Kyong took charge of the group immediately. Once he began his introduction, the degree to which he had been thoughtfully observing his classmates became evident. Built into his commentary were direct messages to his classmates. Upon sharing a somewhat liberal idea, Kyong requested that one of the more conservative students in the group wait before sharing a response—knowing that student's tendency to dominate class discussions.

The comment caught us all offhand, and the group—including the student he was speaking to—erupted with laughter. In his first moments leading the class, Kyong had quickly unraveled an underlying tension that had been building all month. The entire presentation kept with this spirited tone, with Kyong calmly and confidently leading the group, comfortable in the role of teacher. The class was riveted.

Throughout his presentation, Kyong was able to redirect the dominant personalities who had tended to monopolize discussions while providing multiple opportunities for the quieter students to share. His leadership gave us a glimpse of the group we were familiar with functioning in a very different way.

In the middle school where he teaches, Kyong's relative youth has helped him to feel connected to his students—perhaps more so than some of his older colleagues. Although some Asian American students attend the school, it is Kyong's age that has become an "insider" characteristic in his ability to establish rapport with young people. He acknowledges that his gender might have also given him a degree of influence within the context of a school that a female teacher might lack.

I think I see a lot of who I used to be in the very small contingent of Asian American and Asian students at our school, males in particular. But I think that as a minority, there are expectations that you connect to minority males as a whole. And the demographics at our school are very much dominated by Hispanic and African American students. So I guess it's interesting because I don't really have a really strong connection to the Asian American students,

and I definitely find myself reaching out more to the Hispanic and African American students.

Saying, "you have to look back in order to proceed with working with any children," Kyong describes the need for teachers to find within themselves the commonalities they all share with their students: they were once that age and they experienced the angst of adolescence just as their students do. The circumstances of their lives may differ, but that stage of life unites us all.

Kyong had just read *The Students are Watching* (1999) for another graduate course, and he mentions his appreciation of the way in which the text places the reader into the mind of an adolescent struggling in a mainstream U.S. public high school. We talk about the way that our memories of our own childhoods have influenced our teaching. Kyong points out the fact that adolescence is difficult for most people, and that this experience gives nearly all teachers a way to overcome outsiderness and connect with their students.

> Especially in secondary education, there is that factor of adolescence. We've all been through it and not many of us take pleasure in revisiting it. For many of us, it was awful—a period where we don't understand everything, and every small issue or problem is magnified tremendously because of our limited perspective. To understand kids, we have to remember what it was like to be a kid and to feel their anxieties. And I think no matter how much generations change, there is definitely a level of fundamental behaviors and

sentiments that children feel and that they go through in social settings like school. And some of those things I don't feel will ever change.

Kyong emphasizes the importance of teachers accessing the commonalities that they share with students, regardless of age—the outsider characteristic that defines all teachers. He points out the importance of not only recalling our own adolescence as a means to empathize with our students, but also looking at the experience with a critical eye. He tries to construct new avenues for communication rather than bemoaning the lack of a clear path. Kyong describes his experiences as a student:

> As a middle and high school student, I really didn't interact with teachers all that much. I have a pretty irrational fear of authority and I really didn't talk to teachers outside of what was necessary as far as participation in class.

Although Kyong describes a situation in which he finds himself interacting mainly with the students who demand his attention—"the loud ones and the ones who always get in trouble"—his action research project was designed specifically for the outsiders in the group. He explains, "one thing I noticed is that a lot of the kids in my classes who weren't very outspoken could very articulately express their thoughts in writing." Kyong created a system of dialectical journals, or as he calls them, "an asynchronous system of sharing with each other" in which students held ongoing conversations in written form.

The system of dialectical journals in his English class allowed quieter students to hold written conversations with their classmates. He was able to monitor

these journals to gain information about the progress and development of these more reserved students—his acquaintance with the outsider experience allowing those students a creative means to express themselves, take on academic challenges, and connect with their classmates and teacher. Kyong agrees that this idea comes from the student he once was—an Asian American outsider among a largely white student population.

Now that this once-retiring and shy student has taken his place at the front of the class, he has had to adapt to situations he finds completely alien. Although he shares the designation of "person of color" with his black and Latino students, their socioeconomic classes divide them. Growing up, Kyong had a family whose means enabled them to move to a different area in order for him to attend higher-quality public schools. He recalls never doubting that he would attend college. Faced with students whose childhoods are defined by existential struggle in a way that he has not experienced, Kyong has learned to keep an open mind. He has had to learn to keep an open mind as he comes to understand the difficult reality faced by many of his students.

> I think one of the most essential strengths that has taken me through the year is cultural sensitivity and just being able to adapt and be aware of where students might be coming from. Even though it's new to me personally, I think I have a pretty strong awareness that things here are different. And while it's internally a little shocking, externally, I take it in stride because I understand that our students, and their circumstances at home are nothing like what I may have experienced.

Kyong discusses his insider/outsider status as someone whose race and ethnicity sets him apart from the majority of the school population, including teachers, students, and administration, but whose relative youth connects him with his students. He may not fit in ethnically, but his students seem able to relate to him enough to trust him. About the term "outsider," Kyong says:

> I don't take issue with it because I think it reflects a reality. I think it definitely says something about who we are. It's not meant to be divisive, I think. It just really conveys the sense that we are different from who our students are. I almost feel like that sense of reality's necessary, especially if you're trying to gain an understanding of who you are and how you approach your practice and who your students are. Because if you don't understand that dynamic, that's where the biggest struggle might surface.

Kyong intimates that outsiders in the teaching force are unavoidable to some extent. He mentions that all teachers are significantly older than their students and "you bring a different perspective and you grew up in a different age." Ultimately, he states, "…to make progress, you can't have a model type of teacher who reflects everything that is in the student body." Kyong disputes the notion that schools should avoid bringing in outsider teachers. In a conclusion similar to that reached by Ladson-Billings (2009), that the pool of teachers of color, even if every college student of color became an educator, would be insufficient to accommodate all of the existing students of color, Kyong dismisses that possibility as irrelevant.

It may not be worthwhile to have all of our nation's schools really focusing

on bringing in adults who literally reflect what the students can become. […]

As an Asian minority male, growing up, I had all Caucasian male, female

teachers. So in a sense, they were all outsiders to my educational experience.

They were outsiders to me because I couldn't see myself as them. They were

so different in many regards.

Kyong successfully finished high school, continued to college, and excelled

in his graduate program. As an outsider, he developed the skills he would need to

move past being different to become a highly educated professional. Kyong's role as

a teacher has influenced his sense of self. In addition to his other personal

characteristics, he sees his profession as a part of his identity.

Being placed in a role where you're responsible for the education of young

people certainly changes your perspective on your larger role in society. I've

gained a sense that almost everything I do outside my school building is still

a part of my profession. I don't want to say it's changed the decisions I've

made, but I'm very cognizant of who I am as a role model in addition to

being an educator.

I see my students at the mall, and I feel that I should reflect the same

person that I reflect in the classroom. And if not, there's an inconsistency

there that makes me less genuine, and I feel like being genuine and authentic

is one of the most important qualities for students to see in teachers. I think

being an educator is a very all-encompassing, very holistic type of profession

that consumes your everyday existence. So I guess you don't leave your

work at the school and in essence, it's not really work, you know; it's just

more of your life.

Kyong's testimony speaks of a teacher as a change agent, someone who can

generate classroom interactions that are defined by authenticity rather than necessity.

Kyong experienced outsiderness as a male teacher of color in a school with

primarily white female teachers and a racially mixed student body. He found himself

grouped with the other male teachers of color, regardless of racial and ethnic

differences within that group. His social class made him an outsider among the

students with whom he spent most of his time. Overall, outsiderness was an

experience Kyong felt familiar with, and one that he saw as an enhancement to his

teaching. Kyong's memories of outsiderness informed his pedagogy to a great

extent, allowing him to empathize with students and tailor his assignments to their

specific needs.

Outsider Teachers

When bell hooks (2003) was invited to speak at a Southwestern University

commencement, she understood that her audience would consist of a group of

individuals who, for the most part, possessed a worldview quite different from hers.

At the conservative, predominately white institution, her radical feminist, antiracist

views might not receive a warm welcome. In spite of her anxiety, she allowed the

university president to convince her that this would be a worthwhile engagement.

Hooks was not surprised when her speech met with booing from the audience and

the university president received widespread local criticism for his selection of her as a speaker.

Reflecting on the experience, hooks notes that the audience—outside of any racist views it members may have held—had "probably never listened to a black female give a lecture about any subject, let alone a Leftist dissident feminist black intellectual" (p. 195). I recalled this observation when listening to Jamie's story of being his student's first African American teacher and Winnie's story of teaching *Huckleberry Finn*. Were any of these white students among audience members behaving like the group at Southwest that day—those who had likely never seen a black person in the role of speaker, expert, or esteemed guest—I cannot help but wonder how they might have reacted.

In her continued reflection, hooks describes her belief in "the power of prophetic imagination," the idea that "what we cannot imagine we cannot bring into being" (p. 195). In the face of hooks' experience and her analysis of it, an argument exists for the potential of a student to benefit greatly from having teachers who consider themselves outsiders.

A Return to the Research Questions

This study was conceived as a means to address three research questions.

1. How do self-identified "outsider teachers" discuss the influence of this identity on their professional practice and interactions with students?

2. What characterizes the experience of "outsider teachers?"

3. How can this knowledge inform pedagogy?

If students could benefit from being taught by outsider teachers, it would be helpful to know what, ultimately, makes a teacher an outsider. This was a central question to the process that guided this study, and some answers have emerged from participants. I began the study thinking about outsider teachers and individuals who possessed a set of characteristics that "set them apart" from the students they taught and in some cases, the communities in which their schools were located. In order to take part in the study, individuals had identified such characteristics in themselves and had expressed a willingness to reflect on them.

In every case, the external characteristics existed, but another trend began to emerge: these teachers all seemed to possess an orientation toward student-centered, social justice-motivated teaching. Jamie imbued his lessons with social justice discourse and saw it as his mission to educate students on societal inequity. Lisa found herself in conflict with district curriculum planners when she insisted that the Language Arts curriculum be structured to make content relevant and meaningful to students.

Maria took it upon herself to restlessly challenge gender stereotyping and homophobia among students, teachers, and community members in her school. She felt moved to challenge assumptions and offer new perspectives. Winnie sought to share power in the classroom with her students, and she described a need to build relationships with colleagues defined by ongoing critical dialogue about pedagogy.

All of these teachers thought in terms of a larger structure: they looked outside of their classroom to take in the impact of their actions on the school, their students' future lives, and their communities. Across every participant's testimony, the experience of being an outsider or "other" was valued as an important aspect that informed classroom practice. Jamie, Lisa, Maria, Winnie, and Kyong all describe a sense that their outsider or "other" identities gave them insight into the feeling of being excluded. This enabled them to identify with students who had experienced outsider struggles as well.

Jamie and Lisa in particular, expressed a belief that their identities gave them insight that extended beyond just students with characteristics similar to theirs; they felt that, as outsiders or others, they could relate to outsiders with different kinds of identity characteristics. It was the experience of being an outsider or other that was important in their case.

In Maria, Winnie, and Kyong's opinions, their outsider characteristics have helped them to connect with students who are outsiders in ways similar to them. Whether describing students facing similar financial or familial struggles to those they faced, or those whose personalities kept them on the margins, the three all used their identities as a way to connect with students. They all demonstrated an important second step, though. In each of the three teachers' experience, they extended the connection with their students in a way that encouraged growth and development.

Maria leveraged her shared background with students as a way to connect with them and gain a measure of trust. She then used her influence with students to question and challenge homophobic and sexist views she heard in her classroom. Winnie connected with students who had grown up with little money, just as she had.

Once she had bonded with them based on this shared experience, Winnie pushed them to take on leadership roles in the classroom, and she challenged them to find the good in white teachers they distrusted and to appreciate what those teachers had to offer. Kyong's dialectic journal process not only gave a voice to the quiet students in the room; it put them in ongoing dialogues with the more boisterous ones, creating conversations that otherwise would not have existed.

Justin Bond talks about Lucy and Ethel's Martian scene as a "blueprint" for coping with otherness in a "respectful, loving, rational way." Each of the participants in this study has taken an experience of outsiderness or otherness and, out of it, has cultivated a teaching philosophy. These philosophies are defined by the respect and caring that Bond speaks of.

Jamie has established a classroom dialogue defined by safety and inclusiveness, and he has patiently corrected white students' stereotypical views of him while also serving as a confidant to students of color attending his mostly-white school. Lisa has given her attention to students dealing with mood-related issues, as well as her urgent awareness to special education students whose educational paths have been defined, she feels, by low expectations. Maria has made herself available

to students as a trusted adult who will hear their problems and concerns, and she has taken on an active role in supporting the work of administrators in an understaffed school marginalized by its own location.

Winnie gently but firmly pushes her students, and patiently helps her younger, white outsider teacher colleagues to develop their skills and try new practices in classrooms where they teach students of color from low-income backgrounds. Kyong sees the importance of his presence as a young male teacher of color in a racially mixed school. He involves himself with his Latino and African American male students, some of whom receive negative attention for their behavior at the school. He sees his job as that of a role model, who must live with integrity beyond the classroom.

Though many parallels surfaced between participant experiences, certain differences became evident as well. Each had a distinct reaction to and interpretation of the "outsider" designation, especially as it pertained to identity characteristics. Jamie shared with Kyong an acceptance of the traits that made them outsiders. Their articulation of their outsider characteristics and the implications of these came across as particularly matter-of-fact.

Kyong seemed to accept his outsiderness, and he expressed a sense that as a male teacher of color, he had a responsibility to serve as a role model to other male teachers of color. He showed less of an overt commitment to teaching about social justice than Jamie. Jamie's self-identification as an outsider came easily. He listed the many characteristics he thought differentiated him from his school community,

and his primary show of emotion regarding this came in his writing about the feeling of exclusion inherent in not being allowed to legally marry.

Lisa ultimately rejected the term "outsider" with the explanation that it felt too exclusionary to her—that it implied a lack of involvement. She accepted the characterization of "other" but placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of others looking past her blindness and getting to know her on a deeper level. Winnie described a disassociation with the term followed by an acceptance of it. She described feeling "okay" with the outsider designation while also seeing it as a challenge to work on becoming more of an insider among her students.

Maria expressed the greatest degree of emotional distress compared to other participants when it came to her discussion of her outsider identity. She accepted the term completely, feeling that it defined her experience quite well, and that outsiderness had been a fact of her life for many years, including among members of her family. (Incidentally, Jamie, Kyong, and Maria all mentioned experiencing feelings of outsiderness as children or adolescents.) Because of the personal attacks she had recently faced, the feelings associated with the outsider identity seemed especially raw in her case.

The Transformative Aspect

Lisa and Winnie both expressed a sense that their participation had broadened their thinking and had given them a reason to examine and discover something new about themselves. Lisa mentioned this during our second interview, placing it in the context of changes in her thinking about her teaching as a result of

the thinking she was doing about the study. She also grappled with self-definition throughout, as has been well documented in her profile. Winnie underwent a significant shift in self-perception through her participation. Considering herself an insider, in spite of her agreement to participate, she reexamined this belief following our conversations and her reading of the Marx (2003) article.

I found the study to be a transformative experience for me. In addition to the redefinition of "outsider teacher" that I considered as a result of participant testimony, the study has changed my thinking about research. My mental image has moved from one of a series of steps marking a linear path toward an end, to another: of a circular, sometimes circuitous, constantly changing, process. I did not expect the level of discomfort I would feel, nor the joy. The process pushed me to share experiences I found embarrassing and had long held onto. It also exposed me to the gift of bearing witness to another person's story. I anticipated none of these outcomes, but I am deeply grateful for them.

Chapter 5: Mirrors

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.

–James Baldwin

In Chapter 1, I described an outsider teacher archetype—one I could see in certain films and books of the twentieth century. The characters of Thackeray and Conroy, portrayed in *To Sir, with Love* and *The Water is Wide*, embody aspects of the archetype. Both characters come from far away to teach their students. The distances they travel are not only physical; they travel metaphorical distances, too, across spaces bounded by race, class, education, and ethnicity.

These outsider teachers are alone amongst their students, within the communities in which they teach. They bring a slight sense of superiority to their task, an innate belief that they are more refined, worldly, and intelligent than their students. This belief is treated as fact in the mind of each character. Even when both stories see their protagonists transformed through their contact with students, the status of these outsider teachers remains.

I made the argument that the works serve two purposes germane to this research. The first purpose is to portray the isolation inherent to the outsider experience. Like Lucy and Ethel playing Martians, Justin Bond, me in my middle school classroom, Jamie, Lisa, Winnie, Maria, and Kyong, Thackeray and Conroy must overcome obvious differences to become consonant within their surroundings.

The second purpose was to demonstrate the existence of educational inequity in a manner palatable to a mass media audience.

Though simplistically portrayed at times, educational inequity plays a necessary role in both narratives. The problematic area with both stories, and much research as well, comes with the oversimplification of identity and outsiderness.

Intersectionality scholars and qualitative researchers alike have expressed an interest in complexity in the representation of individual experience. Just as in *To Sir, with Love*—which places a black teacher among a nearly all-white student body in the late 1960s with nary a mention of race—existing research often focuses narrowly on one identity characteristic, ignoring all others.

This study has aimed to bring a more complete picture of individuals in the interest of exploring the experience of outsider teachers, determining what makes them outsiders, and discussing implications for pedagogy. It represents an effort to bring intersectionality theory into the discipline of education, where they may help to shed light on the complicated performances of identity that take place in classrooms every day.

My participants taught me something that I hope to illustrate in the narrative below: I must be honest about who I am, even when it feels scary, because we all don't have that choice, and if we are all in this study—and the world—together, then that is my job. To look into the mirrors that Lisa speaks of and acknowledge the truth about what I see, even the parts I might prefer to ignore.

Closing Narrative

On the evening of Monday, August 26, 1991, an elderly Jewish woman leapt to her death from her apartment window on President Street in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. The weather that summer night was unusually mild. Although the *Jewish Times* cited stifling heat as a contributing factor to the riots four days earlier (1991), the reality was that temperatures had not crawled higher than 75 degrees that week.

The riots had broken out after a car from a prominent rabbi's motorcade had struck and killed a young West Indian boy playing outside his home with his cousin. Although the boy's death was ruled accidental, the environment in this neighborhood crackled with tensions among the groups. Members of the community retaliated by stabbing to death a young Australian Hasidic student. At this point, the riots had bubbled over with race-motivated attacks on citizens, destruction to local shops, and a dramatic retreat by the New York City police after an assault of bottles, rocks, and Molotov cocktails. Several days into the riots, this old woman—who had survived the Holocaust—heard the cries of "Heil Hitler" from the street below and stepped off of her window ledge.

Just shy of a year later, my mother and I arrived in Brooklyn to care for my grandmother. I was 16. We stayed blocks from Crown Heights, far away by New York standards, but near enough that I heard about the lingering animosity and tension from family members and cab drivers, and at the corner newsstand. I was told which streets I should walk and which ones I was better off avoiding. At this

point, I was only just beginning to piece together the significance of the events of the year before, and my place in the scheme of things. I was just starting to understand that my identity had meaning here—a Jewish girl visiting her grandmother in an area tinged by ethnic hatred.

We stayed for some weeks in my grandmother's apartment, running the air conditioner in her dark bedroom to keep her cool; fanning ourselves with magazines in the living room and kitchen. My grandmother died on the morning of July 3rd, 1992, of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. "What Jackie O. had," we would mention in the years to come.

Caring little about the riots of a year earlier, I lived my own small-scale tragedy: traveling back and forth to the cancer ward, securing hospice care, and selecting a simple wooden coffin for the hasty burial mandated by Jewish law.

Two years later, for college, I returned to a similar New York: a place where Blacks and Jews had briefly declared open season on one another, and the city had seemed to sanction this. I told no one I was Jewish. Something of the feeling from my grandmother's neighborhood lingered: the sense that I had something to hide.

At dinner one night in the college cafeteria, I saw the familiar sight of matzo ball soup. Large pale matzo balls glistened in a wide, low-lipped pan, laying in a few inches of steamy broth. This was something I had last seen in a Jewish deli in Brooklyn, where my uncle and I had each ordered a cup of the hot chicken soup heaped over a single massive matzo ball. It was an exciting novelty—nothing I would ever see in Greece. Something my mother and I might talk about wistfully.

Seeing this rare delicacy in my school cafeteria, I instinctively went for a bowl. At my side, a new friend of mine, Maya, exclaimed with disgust, "What the hell is that?"

I said nothing and shuffled my tray along. It *was* a strange looking soup. While other soups may have more vibrant colors, more succulent morsels floating in the broth, what had first been greeted as a tasty reminder of my past now looked strange and ugly, a pasty ball of dough in a pool of colorless, boring broth. I felt embarrassed and ashamed, and not only of the soup. Suha's words from that 11th grade afternoon came back to me: "Jews are disgusting."

Eleven years later, my now-old friend Maya, an African American girl, and I sat at my dining room table. I had moved to Baltimore and had bought a house in a working-class white area of this highly segregated city. Maya had grown up in Maryland, and had returned to live there, too.

As I signed the loan application, I was aware that this neighborhood was white and others in the city were not. As a public school teacher, I had taken advantage of a federally funded incentive program to purchase a house in the city. The search took me on a three-month tour of the city's least desirable properties, and I ultimately settled on the home where my husband and I would spend the next six years. The house we chose was the first one we saw that did not have a mold problem and was almost move-in ready, provided we were able to purchase all the major appliances and were willing to live with a few pending repairs.

At the same time that I was learning about the joys and horrors of home ownership, I had a great deal to learn about the history of real estate segregation in the United States. I had a lot to learn about the ease that came with my choice to live in any neighborhood I chose—about the backs and shoulders that I climbed over to claim my privileges.

After that night, I did some research. This area had come with a strictly segregationist policy when first established—designed as home for white workers in the steel mills. The steel mills had gone, but the workers and their offspring stayed. As recently as the early 1980s, residents of my new neighborhood had burned a cross on the yard of an African-American family who had attempted to settle there, and in doing so had crossed a border. When the city of Baltimore had proposed housing vouchers in the 1990s to allow African American residents to integrate the surrounding suburbs, white residents of this area had raised their voices in loud protest, not realizing that their neighborhoods were outside the areas under consideration, in addition to being too economically depressed to qualify.

That night at dinner with old friends at my new house, Maya was saying to an out-of-town guest we had both gone to college with, "I could never live in *this* neighborhood, you know…." My cheeks flushed, as I burned with shame and anger. "I mean, this house, it's an oasis, but the rest of this area… I don't think so." My heart pounded. The open betrayal stung. My ignorance had been exposed.

What I pondered at that moment was that I had been allowed to not know. Not only had I not been aware of the neighborhood's history when I moved in, but I

had had the choice of any neighborhood. I had toured a racially divided city, knowing that I could choose whichever house I thought was the best deal. Regardless of whether I consciously recognized or acknowledged it, my race and identity were guiding my decision-making and had a large influence in my life. I also realized that I was now unwittingly associated with the larger context of the neighborhood, its history of racism and prejudice. I wondered what other privileges I'd taken for granted.

At the table with my college friends that night, the conversation had shifted course, and Maya was now talking about her mother. "My mom has so much respect for the Jewish people. She just thinks that they have struggled and suffered a lot."

Our out-of-town guest looked at me. "Sara is Jewish," she said. Maya looked surprised. "I had no idea."

<div align="center">***</div>

Concealing parts of myself not only proved painful; it prevented me from engaging in honest relationships. It was a doomed effort, too. Obfuscation could not stop the hidden parts of my identity from existing. I still knew what I was, perhaps even more sharply for my efforts to hide.

Just as I had tried in myself, much of the research that looks at outsider teachers omits one or more identifying participant characteristics. Once I began to think in terms of multifaceted, interacting identity characteristics, the portrayal of individuals through a limiting characterization of their identities seemed to be lacking a degree of substance. Is it truly possible for an individual to live only her

gender and not her race at any one time? Different facets take precedence, depending on the situation, but one can never simply stop being all of the things that one *is*.

I often felt, growing up, that a more edited version of myself provided a cleaner canvas to present to the outside world—that I could be Greek in some settings, Jewish in others, and cross-cultural in a very select few. This self-editing generated a great deal of emotional strain and prevented me from feeling whole, even among many of my friends.

This study examines the ways in which outsider teachers identify themselves, are identified by their environments, and experience and discuss their work in the classroom. It evolved from my experience as a teacher with identity characteristics that set me apart from my students: race, ethnic background, and social class. As a white teacher in a predominantly black school, I felt an obligated awareness of my race. I had to find my place in a racially charged school, where the majority-minority student population remained subject to the whims of the ruling class.

As someone growing up outside of the United States, I had often felt that I was a "student" of this country. Being in a classroom, where cultural cues are often the currency of education, I was sometimes at a loss. Having had to observe and listen for cultural cues when I arrived in the US helped me to develop the skills I needed to make connections with the students whose backgrounds were often worlds away from mine. Unlike other teachers who came from abroad to teach in the US, though, I am a native English speaker. I had a comfortable grasp of the language,

and this helped with students' acceptance of me where an obvious accent might have stalled communication.

The schools where I taught in Baltimore were categorically in economically depressed areas—areas far different from those in which I had grown up. Never having wanted for basic necessities, I could not pretend to comprehend the lives of my students, many of whom lived in violent neighborhoods, experienced hunger, and were growing up in a city with poverty so widespread that little existed for them to compare it to.

While many significant factors set me apart from my students, the few qualities that made me an insider gave me valuable footholds in my classroom. I was in my early 20s, which brought a visible connection with my students that I took for granted in those first years of teaching. Similarly, because I was not that far removed from my own adolescence, I could often guess at which lessons might either engage or alternately fail to engage them, anticipating their reactions to certain stimuli.

When I went to my classroom to teach, I brought all of these factors—those that set me apart and those that created cohesiveness. Most of my identifiers came with me whether I wanted them or not, and I faced the daily challenge of overcoming differences and leveraging commonalities in order to reach my students and gain their trust.

"Outsider Teacher:" Revisiting the Term

Throughout this study, just as in many classrooms where outsider teachers dwell, the plot continued to thicken. Participants and I engaged with the term

"outsider teacher," with varying degrees of conversation and debate, as I have outlined and described here. Because the term—warts and all—was central to this inquiry, I revisit it in this final chapter. The term remains a problematic one, though one I continue to find compelling. I cannot ignore my privileged position in all of this, in particular my option of taking on the term to describe myself, rather than having had it assigned to me. Perhaps more important to this inquiry than the term itself were the conversations it inspired. The open questioning and interaction with the term "outsider" represent values that I now consider critical to transformative research—research that empowers participants and encourages critical thought and engagement.

In addition to the use of the term "outsider" to describe the participants and myself, I now use it to describe my own presence within the group as a participant. I functioned as an "outsider participant" in this study. Because I had the power to tell their stories as well as my own, I made ongoing choices about what I would share and hide. Although I can claim that my membership in the group adds a share of legitimacy to my research, I also take on a share of power as the only member who reports out.

Throughout the process of the study, I have engaged with self-definition. The "outsider" term was one that some participants and I gravitated toward more warmly than others, but one that compelled all of us to talk. I still feel a part of the group of participants in this study. As the dialogues and relationships deepened, some of us felt transformed by the process. I was likely the one who benefitted most from the opportunity for transformation. The research allowed for growth through honesty,

and I engaged in honest dialogue with both participants and myself. By traveling with them to uncomfortable places, at times, and by sharing painful parts of my own story, I explored the definition of outsiderness for myself. Outsiderness remains, for me, a definitive aspect of my own life, and of life in general.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is built upon my story. Within the study, I include the stories of research participants. Such a structure sets inherent limits. For example, the personal narratives are composed in the first person, whereas the portraits of participants are written in the third person. This has the effect of giving my story immediacy that the participant stories necessarily lack. My story appears throughout the manuscript, whereas the stories of participants are sequestered within a single chapter.

Participants responded to questions conceived by me, thus limiting the possibilities for their responses. Even though I presented multiple opportunities for the sharing of information other than that for which I had expressly asked, the scope was limited to the parameters drawn by the study, our timeline, and the nature of our acquaintanceship. I had my entire life upon which to draw—they were forced to summon only the portions of their lives they considered relevant to the questions at hand.

Although Lisa ultimately selected a different term based on her objection to "outsider," the other participants accepted and even embraced the term. I cannot know to what degree I influenced this outcome, but my introduction of the term

certainly constitutes a limitation of the study. In general, the study was limited because of the parameters I set and my influence over the participants.

My presence as a university researcher may be interpreted as a limiting factor, with its inherent power. The higher education quotient of the participant pool—with everyone possessing advanced degrees—may have mitigated this somewhat. The fact that my participants had themselves conducted research may have mitigated some of my power and influence in the study. Because, having "walked in my shoes" as qualitative researchers, the participants had engaged previously in the ambiguous act of constructing knowledge with participants of their own, they came to this task with a significant degree of empowerment. This may have allowed us to move more quickly into deeper discussion, and it may have decreased the level of intimidation when it came to challenging me.

I included member checking as an integral part of the methodology in this study. This involved sharing completed portraits with participants in order to accommodate their feedback. I included this step as a means to ensure that participants felt they were being accurately portrayed. I also wanted to limit my level of interpretation of participant stories. Knowing that participants would read my writing forced me to stay close to their words. This method may have been a limitation as well—inciting me to write portraits that painted participants in too positive a light. My focus on participant testimony—keeping participant words at the heart of the storytelling—helped to address this. By keeping close to participant words, and clearly identifying my own interpretations, I attempted to address the potential for overly positive description.

Building on the Literature

Throughout the scholarly writing in this area, studies have examined the factors that set one group or another of teachers apart from their student population. The studies highlight important issues, but they tend to lack sufficient complexity when examining participant identity and its implications in a particular school setting.

Most of the literature reviewed in this study looks at portions of people through a focus on individual characteristics that give them membership in a certain group, for the purposes of defining research parameters. There are, for example, queer teachers (Jennings, 1994; McCarthy, 2003; Sanlo, 1999), disabled teachers (Anderson et al., 1998;), foreign teachers (Flora, 2003; Subedi, 2008), and racially different teachers (Kelly, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003).

Race and class.

In the literature that focuses on teachers who are outsiders in terms of race and class, researchers used observation and interview. They overwhelmingly wrote about their participants in isolation, after contact with their participants had ended. Researchers kept participants at a distance, and they tended to avoid lengthy interaction outside of the bounded observations and interviews. Researchers in most of the studies on race and class chose not to account for their own positionality.

Researchers also, as mentioned earlier in this study, tended to focus solely on race in studies—very few studies looking at race accounted for any other identity characteristics. Studies of white teachers tended to present findings showing a lack

of willingness to engage in conversations on race with students as well as demonstration of negative attitudes toward students of color. Lareau (2003) was one researcher who examined influences of both race and class. Irvine (1985) looked at race and gender. Obidah and Teel (2001) were the only researchers who demonstrated evidence of a transformative experience on the parts of the researcher and the participant.

Teachers of color found that their colleagues tended to express racial stereotypes, and that they were often singled out to attend to "multicultural topics" as well as students of color. Jamie describes the expectation that he "work with" the African American students in the school when they had problems with discipline. Mabokela and Madsen (2003) found a similar occurrence among the African American teachers they studied that taught in white schools.

Gender and sexual orientation.

Researcher positionality figured more prominently in the literature on teachers who were outsiders based on gender identity and sexual orientation. In several studies, researchers shared their positionality as members of the communities they were studying. One study in this category (Jennings, 1994) acknowledged the importance of race as a characteristic that could intersect with sexual orientation in an outsider teacher.

Interviews form the foundation of this body of research, perhaps out of necessity, as many teachers in the LGBT community might not wish to call attention

to themselves as subjects of such a study. Findings tended to spring primarily from participant testimony.

Among participants, many teachers expressed a sense of obligation to educate students about homophobia. This finding emerged among LGBT participants in this study as well. Jamie and Maria shared their commitments to encouraging open-mindedness among their students. Jennings (1994) acknowledges this complexity when he discusses the withdrawal of lesbian teachers of color from participation in his work. He acknowledges the difficulty faced by members of multiple groups, in which one group rejects the existence of another. This is one of the sole mentions of this reality that I found in the education literature. Both Jamie and Maria note the homophobia they encounter at times from members of their race, and they discuss the conflict that this creates for them.

Nationality and ethnicity.

The studies that focused on nationality and ethnicity cited participant testimony to a minimal extent, though nearly all used interview. Researchers did not address positionality, and they came to conclusions independent of participants. Researchers focused on ethnicity alone, to the exclusion of other identity characteristics.

Race only enters the frame when participants mention it, noting in one case that they had been unaware that they belonged to a racial category until they came to the US. In this group of studies, participants described assumptions among US colleagues that they must be foreign language teachers. The studies intend, though,

215

only to focus on the category of nationality, and researchers tend primarily to paraphrase participant testimony when it is used.

In this study, the findings demonstrated—to some extent—a "racing" of a teacher who was an outsider based on ethnicity. Kyong reported being grouped with other teachers of color in his school, and having gained the sense of obligation toward the students of color.

Ability.

The studies that looked at teachers with disabilities focused little on active classroom teachers—they reported primarily on students in colleges of education, preparing for careers as teachers. It may be the case that a smaller pool of teachers with disabilities existed in comparison with the number of preservice teachers. In general, the limited amount of studies on teachers with disabilities is a reminder to curb attempts at generalization from the findings.

Overall, the descriptions of the teachers in this section of research relied only somewhat on participant testimony. Researchers tended to summarize and paraphrase participant words, and their conclusions revolved around one main idea: teachers with disabilities face significant obstacles both on the road to and within the classroom. This finding was contradicted in this study. Lisa described an environment in which she is able to function without impediment as an English teacher.

Blumenfeld (1994), writing in the Jennings text, acknowledges the empathy for the struggles faced by people of color and those with disabilities afforded to him through his experiences discrimination as a gay man. This idea is echoed in Jamie's

discussion of the difficulties experienced by special education teachers, as well as in Lisa's thoughts on the low expectations placed upon students diagnosed with learning disabilities.

Research in which researchers identified themselves as members of the participant group was more likely to include significant participant testimony in the form of direct quotes. When researchers did not identity themselves as members of the group studied, participant testimony figured less in the findings and analysis, with far less inclusion of direct quotes.

Research has tended not to look *across* identity characteristics, as this study has done. Typically, one identity characteristic focuses a study, and others may be mentioned, often only tangentially, as in Subedi's study on teacher ethnicity, where the ethnicity of participants remained the focus of the study and race is mentioned to describe an aspect of the teachers' experience assimilating to life in the US (Subedi, 2008a). Similarly, studies reviewed here that have looked at multiple participants have sought participants with similar identity characteristics (Flores, 2003; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Whipple, 2003). Among studies with heterogeneous groups of participants, researchers have looked at one aspect of participant identities, for example race (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Obidah & Teel, 2001) or ethnicity (Valenzuela, 1999).

The studies also tend to express participant experience in terms of powerlessness. Particularly in the cases of marginalized outsider teachers, the analyses focus primarily on external events. The studies paint a picture of subordination on the part of outsider teachers, showing a simplified version of their

existence and exempting participants and researchers from the possibility of transformation through the experience of engaging in the inquiry.

By bringing participants into the study wholesale and inviting them to share their experiences fully, I hoped to create a forum in which they could make meaning of their experiences and share with other teachers. Listed below are themes that emerged across all of the narratives, framed as references for other classroom teachers.

Conclusions for Teachers

Each of the participants takes cues from his or her identity characteristics and transforms them into effective tools for connecting with students.

Proactive inclusiveness.

bell hooks (2003) describes the experience of encountering unexpected homophobia in her classroom:

> When I taught a seminar on the work of African-American novelist and essayist James Baldwin I just assumed that students signing up for the class would be aware that he was homosexual and want to know more about the ways this experience informed his work. Teaching at a state school, in a classroom that was predominately non-white, initially I was not prepared to cope with a class where some students were shocked to learn that Baldwin was gay and expressed openly homophobic remarks. These students also assumed that they could say anything since gayness was "out there" and not "in here" with us. (135)

hooks describes her subsequent attempt to teach the students in a way that encouraged them to think of others as potentially being present in the room with them. She notes the importance of not ignoring the students' words, rather of taking on the hateful viewpoints and pushing against them. The work hooks speaks of, the loving insistence on a welcoming, open space, is echoed in the words of participants in this research.

The teachers profiled in this study all show evidence of proactive inclusiveness in their classrooms. The "initiation of relationships" described by Valenzuela (1999), denotes the effort on the part of teachers to get to know their students better in order to teach them more effectively. Ladson-Billings (2009) cites caring, and learning about student cultures and communities as the keys to good teaching.

The proactive inclusiveness I have identified among the teachers profiled here emerges from the "outsider" or "other" experience. This perspective not only informs the teaching of a group of students who are different from the teacher—it informs teaching as an endeavor that aims to reach students different from the teacher, their communities, each other. This approach does not look at the students in a class as a single entity—a monolithic culture to be demystified and accessed by a willing outsider—it looks to teach *all* of the students in a single classroom. The significance of this approach contrasts somewhat with efforts at culturally responsive teaching. It does not contradict those efforts but enhances them. Culturally responsive teaching promotes the notion that teachers should prepare for students whose race, ethnicity, and culture are different from their own. Proactive

inclusiveness looks at students as potentially more complex individuals—individuals who may belong to a racial group but whose sexual orientation, for example, may cause them to face rejection among members of their community. Proactive inclusiveness, as practiced by the teachers in this study, anticipates many identities and the possibility that group membership is neither uniform nor unconditional.

Proactive inclusiveness combines the observational strategies, in which a teacher listens carefully and learns as much as possible about her students, with the inherent knowledge that, within every group, certain individuals are outsiders. The behaviors inherent in proactive inclusion seek to combat the situation Paley (1979) describes, in which teachers limit their expectations of certain students and fail to take risks with those students on the basis of difference. Proactive inclusiveness describes a pattern of seeking out marginalized students and making room for them while challenging the rest of the students to increase their awareness and interrogate their taken-for-granted beliefs.

Jamie creates a "safe space" for students by explaining that words with "a history of hate" are inappropriate in his classroom. He also seeks the opinions of outsider students while refraining from asking that they represent the interests of others like them. Because of his own experience as an outsider, Jamie believes that students who are outsiders long to be included, and so he consistently invites all students to share their thoughts.

Lisa uses her experience as an "other" to similarly inform her teaching. Early in the school year, she creates opportunities for students to share unusual aspects of

themselves with her, emphasizing the importance of a classroom that is open to all students and multiple perspectives. She reaches out to students with anxiety and those who have social difficulties, knowing that these issues can leave young people excluded in a school community. She anticipates that socially awkward and anxious students will enter her classroom, and she makes herself explicitly available to them.

Maria draws upon her experiences as an outsider to inform her practice. She emphasizes earning her students' trust by making herself available as a confidant and refraining from making assumptions about students. Maria also brings integrity to her interactions with students, not avoiding controversial topics, but rather approaching them with an air of responsibility, seeing her role as one who can open students' minds and encourage them to reflect on ignorant beliefs and practices that they may be accepting at face value.

Winnie allows multiple outsider experiences to influence her work in the classroom. She tries to remain approachable and to respect students, thus earning their trust. She also fosters a sense of community in the classroom, where everyone has a role to play and everyone is a valued member of the group.

Kyong sees himself in his students. He recalls his own days as an outsider student, and he uses his experiences to develop inclusive approaches to learning. His awareness of the outsider experience has enabled him to conceive of opportunities to include different types of learners in the ongoing conversation of a classroom. He seeks ways to include the most reluctant contributors, knowing that quiet students are often overlooked because their behavior presents less of a challenge to teachers.

By following the words of bell hooks and of the teachers who participated in this study, teachers can adopt proactive inclusiveness as standard classroom practice.

Leveraging insider characteristics.

Describing a practice in feminist research, Hesse-Bieber (2007) writes about leveraging identity to gain access to research sites for interviewing:

> Some researchers have found ways to overcome the impact of difference in the interview process. One way this can be done is to "match" the interviewer's more important status characteristics (race, age, gender, or sexual preference) so that they use their *insider status* to gain access to an interview. This might also help the researcher obtain cooperation and rapport that would help him or her to better understand his or her respondents. (139-140)[2]

The teachers in this study showed an awareness not only of the characteristics that set them apart from their students but also of those that joined them. Perhaps as a function of negotiating their outsider identities, they had all cultivated a clear inventory of personal qualities: those that presented potential obstacles, those that brought them closer to students, and in some cases, those that elevated their status.

This phenomenon appears only within the literature concerned with teachers who are ethnic or national outsiders. In Flores (2003) and Subedi (2008b), teachers discuss developing connections with students of similar backgrounds. The finding is

---

[2] Although I regard Hesse-Bieber's use of the term "sexual preference" in the above quotation as antiquated and ill-informed, I believe the overarching sentiment is worth noting. The notion of using insider characteristics parallels an important finding of my study.

different in that the Flores (2003) and Subedi (2008b) research does not show teachers leveraging insider characteristics in order to overcome or "balance" outsider characteristics. In this study, teachers used insider characteristics to gain trust and acceptance among students with whom they were also de facto outsiders based on race, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation. This study represents the first example I have seen in the education literature of such a phenomenon.

Jamie faces a high number of outsider characteristics separating him not only from his students, but also from the entire school community in which he teaches. In order to navigate his way through the characteristics that set him apart from students—race, class, and sexual orientation—Jamie relies on his youth and shared interest in popular culture to provide sufficient common ground with his students to enable communication and shared understanding. He acknowledges the power that comes with being a male teacher. He also leverages the weight of having a PhD, to shift students toward a more respectful stance, and away from overly familiar interactions defined by their stereotypes of African-American maleness.

Lisa's blindness is the obvious characteristic that sets her apart from her students. As she introduces herself to students for the first time, she accesses more mainstream aspects of herself—a traditionally female gender identity and interests in "normal" hobbies that her students can relate to. This sharing helps her students to relate to her in order to "get past" the obvious disability and connect with her in a more complete way.

Maria is separated from her students and many members of her school community by her sexual orientation and non-traditional gender identity. Although she does not share her sexuality with her students, she has encountered difficult confrontations at her school resulting from assumptions based on her outward appearance. Maria develops trust and closeness with her students by accessing the elements of herself that her students can relate to: a shared race, struggles in her youth, and a similar socioeconomic background.

Winnie's race separates her from all of her colleagues and some of her students. Her age is also a divisive factor. By drawing on a shared working-class background, Winnie can anticipate many potential student concerns and prepare for them. She also bonds with her students as a teacher of color whom they can trust.

Like Jamie, Kyong leverages his youth in order to connect with students of different races and ethnicities. Spending a large part of his time with Latino and African American students, Kyong cannot rely on his race to create an instant connection—he uses the aspects of his identity that link him to the students in order to allow trusting relationships to develop.

When teachers teach students among whom they can be considered outsiders based on at least one identity characteristic, these teachers may choose to take stock of the many qualities that define them. By considering all aspects of themselves: age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, teachers access a characteristic that will help them to form connections. This can help to develop the trust that must exist in order for learning to take place.

Accessing memory.

Kyong speaks of encouraging teachers—even those whose identities are not marginalized—to access experiences of struggle in their own lives. Just as in the cases that Marx (2003) identifies, Kyong suggests that all teachers can connect with the struggles faced by adolescents. The factor of age that makes all teachers outsiders among their students comes with the benefit of experience. Because all teachers had to experience childhood and adolescence in order to become adults, they have all experienced the difficulties inherent in these periods of growth and uncertainty.

The teachers who participated in this study may have had more experiences with adversity than others, but they all discussed ways in which they used these experiences to develop empathy, observational skills, and deeper connections with students. Among the literature reviewed here, only the Marx (2003) study documents such an approach among outsider teachers. Marx (2003) found that one of her successful white teachers of Latino students had struggled with drug addiction. This teacher felt that the difficult experience enabled her to empathize with and relate to her students' struggles in a way that perhaps other whites might not have been able to.

Teachers may find that they can enhance their practice by calling to mind their own personal struggles—with adolescence and otherwise. Memory of the feelings of isolation that come with life's challenges, and knowledge that the

experience of such challenges connects us all, can help teachers to overcome differences and connect with students.

Conclusions for Schools

School districts, students, and communities can benefit from the presence of outsider teachers. The outsider teachers I describe here are outsiders according to the original definition in the study, as well as the "outsider thinkers" I have added to the many characteristics of the participants here. As is discussed in the bell hooks commencement story, students must learn to listen to many voices. They must see different types of individuals, with different backgrounds, perspectives, and identities at the front of their classrooms.

The students in Jamie's class have now had the opportunity—for many, their first—to listen to an authoritative voice coming from a person of color. Lisa's students have been taught by a person with a disability that has exempted many hopeful education students from even participating in student teaching experiences. Just as in the post-Brown busing movement, this exposure is one step.

It would be incorrect to argue that this is sufficient in and of itself, but the notion of integrating public school faculties holds promise. This is not to be confused with the current movement championed by programs like Teach for America to bring white teachers into urban schools for short-term service. While my aim here is not to lambast that program in particular, I wish to build a larger vision of cultural exchange, one that goes beyond the familiar story of Conroy and Thackeray.

Implications for Scholarship

This study addresses a significant gap in the educational research: It takes multiple identity characteristics into account to allow for a more authentic view of a teacher's experience. It examines the ways in which teachers navigate both their outsider and insider characteristics in order to connect with their students. Finally, it allows these stories to be told from the perspective of the teachers, placing them at the center of their own experiences.

Implications for future scholarship include a greater emphasis on intersectionality theory in studies in the field of education. Scholars may apply this theory to many areas in the field: the study of classroom dynamics, collaborative relationships among teachers, lived experiences of administrators, and the development of education policy. Intersectionality allows for the possibility of examining these areas in a way that accommodates more of their complex, sticky reality. Intersectionality also creates more possibilities for collaboration among oft-fragmented groups: LGBT education researchers, comparative education researchers, critical race education researchers, and researchers who look at disability within the context of education.

Support for narrative inquiry.

Nash (2004) emphasizes the need for narrative as "instructive" (p. 46) tool. He states that, although many scholars reduce narrative inquiry to mere "journalism" (p. 49), they forget that a story is just as much about the writer as it is about what is written. Per Nash, narrative represents as realistic a picture of our experience in the

world as any scholarly work considered more empirical by traditional, academic standards, if not more so. "Our personal stories contain within them the germs of many intellectual and experiential truths. At the least, they become the means for conveying our wisdom. At the most, they can change lives" (p. 42).

This study represents one application of narrative research—that, per Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Creswell (2007), and Ellis (2004), this form of inquiry situates the researcher within her work. Narrative inquiry assists in the movement away from an approach to social science that would keep the researcher invisible. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) might argue that this approach was fundamentally problematic to begin with.

Rather than behaving as if the researcher did not exist, narrative inquiry promotes the idea of research as an exchange between the researcher and the participant, thus implicating the researcher as part of the conversation and any resulting conclusions. Narrative inquiry anchors this study, giving participants and researcher the space for stories, reflection, contradiction, growth, and transformation. Ideally, those who read it find in themselves some connection to the stories contained here or learn something from the experience of another that they could not have learned otherwise.

Future research on outsider teachers could benefit from the use of narrative inquiry, particularly because this methodology demands that the researcher make her presence and motives obvious to participants and readers. The stories of outsider teachers contain important lessons for the education community: teachers,

228

researchers, education students, and college of education faculties. In order for this wide group to learn most from the outsider teacher experience, the stories of that experience must be told in a compelling and thoughtful manner. The narrative methodology can be used to effectively convey stories from classrooms to a large and varied audience.

Representing the whole person: Intersectionality.

McCall (2008) suggests that the goals of intersectionality theory are best served by research that allows for complexity in its methodology. Intersectionality as a theory resists reductionist approaches, and I made methodological choices throughout the study to honor this. Narrative inquiry represents a quest for a less contrived representation of reality, and intersectionality makes the call for a less contrived representation of people. I incorporated participants' words as the foundational element of the research, gathering their testimony through interviews, responses to shared pieces of literature, and writing. Through these avenues, I hoped to develop a perspective on each participant that would allow me to create representations that they would find accurate and substantive.

Intersectionality motivated the choices that resulted in the transformative aspect of the research process. This emerged from the data gathering, writing, reading of shared literature, and member checking process, as well as the significant testimony that came from an empowering line of questioning. I engaged with participants around uncomfortable questions and sought their feedback throughout the data gathering and analysis processes.

The act of engaging with participants to challenge the fundamental terms of the study—the question of what being an outsider means and whether the term was a suitable one to use—brought a transactional movement to the act of posing and responding to interview questions. This allowed for shared exploration and co-construction of knowledge.

Intersectionality informed the aspect of the study that placed participants in the position of self-definition. Rather than my assigning labels to them or attempting to fill "quotas" of representation, I placed the onus of self-identifying on participants. This moved the study out of the familiar territory of race/class/LGBT/ability/ethnicity categorization—albeit a comforting terrain for many of us—and took it into a space that we created around us as we asked and answered questions, struggled, read, and wrote.

Educational research has yet to fully embrace the perspective of intersectionality theory, although the theory represents the future of scholarship in many areas of social science research (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In the first years during which scholars began to explore the possibilities of intersectionality, Grillo (1995) wrote:

> Each of us in the world sits at the intersection of many categories. […] At any one moment in time and in space, some of these categories are central to [our] being and [our] ability to act in the world. Others matter not at all. Some categories, such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, are important most of the time. Others are rarely important. When something or

someone highlights one of her categories and brings it to the fore, she may be

a dominant person, an oppressor of others. Other times, even most of the

time, she may be oppressed herself. (p. 17)

Research on teachers and schools has yet to take on such a complex reality;

nevertheless, the classroom is a site where society's many truths and realities play

out daily. Ongoing exchange of information occurs throughout its small space. The

classroom is just the place to observe the intersections that make up individual

identities and the larger identity of a society.

This study was conceived as a means to take into account multiple categories

that come "to the fore" in an outsider teacher's classroom. It seeks to fill the gap left

among previous studies that have treated identity characteristics as isolated

entities—as if it were possible to only look at someone's eye without seeing the rest

of the face. It is my hope that the study has demonstrated the possibility inherent in

engagement with a whole person rather than only the parts deemed worthy of a

closer look.

References

Achinstein, B., & Aguirre, J. (2008). Cultural match or culturally suspect: How new teachers of color negotiate sociocultural challenges in the classroom. *Teachers College Record, 110*, 1505-1540.

Allard, A. (2006). 'A bit of a chameleon act': A case study of one teacher's understandings of diversity. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *29*(3), 319-340.

"American Icons: I Love Lucy." *Studio 360.* Public Radio International. WNYC, New York. 5 August, 2011. Radio.

Anderson, R. J., Keller, & C. E., Karp, J. M. (1998). *Enhancing diversity: Educators with disabilities.* Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Anyon, J. (2008). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Beady, C. H. Jr., & Hansell, S. (1981). Teacher race and expectations for student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, *18*(2), 191-206.

Bell, S. (2002). Teachers' perceptions of intergroup conflict in urban schools. *Peabody Journal of Education, 77*(1), 59-81.

Berta-Ávila, M. I. (2004). Critical Xicana / Xicano educators: Is it enough to be a person of color? *The High School Journal, 87*(4), 66-79.

Bion, W. R. (2004). *Experiences in groups and other papers.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Brah, A. & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I a woman: Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies. 5*(3), 75-86.

Castagno, A. (2008). "I don't want to hear that!": Legitimating whiteness through silence in schools. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *39*(3), 314-333.

Chen, C. W., & Cheng, Y. (2009) A case study on foreign English teachers' challenges in Taiwanese elementary schools. *System*, *38*(1), 41-49.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1990). Research on teaching and teacher research: The issues that divide. *Educational Researcher, 19*(2), 2-11.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher. 19*(5), 2-14.

Conroy, P. (1972, 2000). *The water is wide.* New York, NY: Dial Press Trade Paperbacks.

Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241-1299.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory. 9*(1), 67-85.

Delpit, L. (1995, 2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Dill, B. T. (1987) The dialectics of black womanhood. In Harding, S. G. (Ed.) *Feminism and methodology: Social science issues.* (pp. 97-108) Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press.

Duquette, C. (2000) Examining Autobiographical influences on student teachers with disabilities. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 6*(2), 215-228.

Eakin, P. J. (2008). *Living autobiographically: How we create identity in narrative.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ellis, C. (2009). *Revision: Autoethnographic reflections on life and work.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I.* Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Endo, H., Reece-Miller, P. C., & Santavicca, N. (2010). Surviving in the trenches: A narrative inquiry into queer teachers' experiences and identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26,* 1023-1030.

Espinosa, L. M. (2005). Curriculum and assessment considerations for young

    children from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse

    backgrounds. *Psychology in the schools*. *42*, DOI: 10.1002/pits.20115.

Flores, M. R. V. (2003). The road to socialization: A descriptive study of the

    Filipino immigrant teachers' search for their place in the Hawai'i Department

    of Education. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawai'i, United States --

    Hawaii. Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text Database.

Forbes, G. H. (1986). In search of the 'pure heathen': Missionary women in

    nineteenth century India. *Economic & Political Weekly. 21*(17), WS2-WS8.

Fox, C. (2002). Birthing the lesbian teacher within: Towards an understanding of

    identity and self-actualization. *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and*

    Literature, 56(2), 79-88.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case study research. *Qualitative*

    Inquiry, 12(2). 219-245.

Grillo, T. (1995). Anti-essentialism and intersectionality: Tools to dismantle the

    master's house. *Berkeley Women's Law Journal. 10.* 16-30.

Hampton, B., Peng, L., & Ann, J. (2008). Pre-service teachers' perceptions of urban

    schools. *Urban Review*, *40*(1), 268-295.

Hancock, A. (2007). When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining

    intersectionality as a research paradigm. *Perspectives on Politics. 5*(1). 63-

    80.

Harding, H. (2005). "City girl": A portrait of a successful white urban teacher. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(1), 52-80.

Harding, S. G. (1989). Is there a feminist method? In Tuana, N., (Ed.) *Feminism & science.* (pp. 17-32) Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press.

Harding, S. G. (1987) *Feminism & methodology.* Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2002). The practice of feminist in-depth interviewing. In Hesse-Bieber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (pp. 111-148). *Feminist research: A primer.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hockenberry, J. (1995). *Moving violations: War zones, wheelchairs, and declarations of independence.* New York, NY: Hyperion.

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Howard, G. (2006). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hunter, M. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociology Compass*, *1*(1), 237-254.

Irvine, J. J. (1985). Teacher communication patterns as related to the race and sex of the student. *Journal of Educational Research*, *78*(6), 338-345.

Jackson, J. M. (2007). *Unmasked identities: An exploration of the lives of gay and lesbian teachers*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Jacob, B. A. The challenges of staffing urban schools with effective teachers. *The Future of Children*, 2007, *17*(1), 129-153.

Jennings, K. (Ed.). (1994). *One teacher in 10: Gay and lesbian educators tell their stories.* Boston, MA: GMP Publishers.

Jones, J. (1992). *Soldiers of light and love: Northern teachers and Georgia blacks, 1865-1873.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Jupp, J. C., & Slattery, G. P. (2010) Committed White male teachers and identifications: Toward Creative identifications and a "second wave" of White identity studies. *Curriculum Inquiry, 40*(3), 454-474.

Kearney, J. E., (2008). Factors affecting satisfaction and retention of African American and European American teachers in an urban school district. *Education and Urban Society*, *40*, 613-627.

Kelly, H. (2007). Racial tokenism in the school workplace: An exploratory study of black teachers in overwhelmingly white schools. *Educational Studies*, *41*(3), 230-254.

Kissen, R. M. (1996) *The last closet: The real lives of lesbian and gay teachers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Kleinfeld, J., McDiarmid, G. W., Grubis, S., & Parrett, W. (1983). Doing research on effective cross-cultural teaching: The teacher tale. *Peabody Journal of Education, 61*(1), 86-108.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2004). Uncertain beginnings: Learning to teach paradoxically. *Theory into Practice, 43*(2), 111-115.

Kurtz, S. (2002). *Workplace justice: Organizing multi-identity movements.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* New York, NY: Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994, 2009). *Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life.* Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Mabokela, R. O., & Madsen, J. (2003). Crossing boundaries: African American teachers in suburban schools. *Comparative Education Review*, *47*(1), 90-111.

Marx, S. (2008) Popular white teachers of Latino/a kids: The strengths of personal experiences and the limitations of whiteness. *Urban Education, 43*(1), 29-67.

Mayo Jr., J. B. (2008). Gay teachers' negotiated interactions with their students and (straight) colleagues. *The High School Journal*, 1-10.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 30*(3), 1771-1800.

McCarthy, L. (2003). Wearing my identity: A transgender teacher in the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 36*, 170-183.

McIntyre, A. (1997). Constructing an image of a white teacher. *Teachers College Record, 98*(4), 653-681.

Merri, M., & Monties-Cabot, R. (2005). The instruments for a blind teacher of English: The challenge of the board. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 20*(4), 409-422.

Michie, G. (2007). Seeing, hearing, and talking race: Lessons for White teachers from four teachers of color. *Multicultural Perspectives, 9*(1), 3-9.

Muncey, T. (2010). *Creating autoethnographies.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nash, R. J. (2004). *Liberating scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Nathanson, J. (2009). Bisexual pedagogy: Bringing bisexuality into the classroom. *Journal of Bisexuality, 9*, 71-86.

Obidah, J., & Teel, K. M. (2001). *Because of the kids: Facing racial and cultural differences in schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Oppenheimer, J. & Arnaz, D. (Producers). (March 29, 1954). Lucy is envious. [*I love Lucy*]. Hollywood, CA: Desilu Productions.

Paley, V. G. (1979). *White teacher.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Palmer, P. (1998, 2007). *The courage to teach*: *Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Saffold, F., & Longwell-Grice, H. (2008). White women preparing to teach in urban schools: Looking for similarity and finding difference. *Urban Review*, *40* (1), 186-209.

Salkind, N.J. (2002). Narrative research. In D. C. Miller& N. J. Salkind, (Eds.) *Handbook of research design and social measurement*. (pp. 143-196) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sanlo, R. L. (1999). *Unheard voices: The effects of silence on lesbian and gay educators.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Simpson, A. W., & Erickson, M. T. (1983). Teachers' verbal and nonverbal communication patterns as a function of teacher race, student gender, and student race. *American Educational Research Journal*, *20*(2), 183-198.

Sizer, T. R. (2004). *Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Sizer, T. R. & Faust Sizer, N. (1999). *The students are watching: Schools and the moral contract.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Subedi, B. (2008a). Contesting racialization: Asian immigrant teachers' critiques and claims of teacher authenticity. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 11*(1). 57-70.

Subedi, B. (2008b). Fostering critical dialogue across cultural differences: A study of

immigrant teachers' interventions in diverse schools. *Theory and Research in*

Social Education, 36(4), 413-440.

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating

fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International E-*

Journal for Critical Geographies, *6* (3), 374-385.

Sumara, D. J. (2007). Small differences matter: Interrupting certainty about identity

in teacher education. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education, 4*(4),

39-58.

Teacher's job on line due to Korean accent. (2006, July 27). *The Washington Times.*

Retrieved from http://www.washingtontimes.com

Times topics: Arne Duncan. (2010, May 4). *The New York Times.* Retrieved from

http://www.nytimes.com

Turner, J. D. (2007). Beyond cultural awareness: Prospective teachers' visions of

culturally responsive literacy teaching. *Action in Teacher Education, 29*(3),

12-24.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of*

caring. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

Veltri, B. T. (2008). Teaching or service? The site-based realities of Teach for

America teachers in poor, urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*,

40(5), 511-542.

Voss, B. (2009). Justin time. Retrieved from

      http://www.advocate.com/Arts_and_Entertainment/Music/Justin_Time/.

Waldrip, B. G., Timothy, J. T., & Wilson, W. (2007). Pedagogic principles in

      negotiating cultural conflict: A Melanesian example. *International Journal of*

      Science Education, *29*(1), 101-122.

Whipple, R. T. (2003). The impact of teachers recruited from the Philippines on

      student learning in urban California classrooms. Ed.D. dissertation,

      University of Southern California, United States -- California. Retrieved

      from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text Database.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of*

      Women's Studies. 13(3), (193-209).

Yuval-Davis, N. (2007). Intersectionality, citizenship and contemporary politics of

      belonging. *Scratching the surface: Democracy, traditions, gender.* Lahore,

      Pakistan: Heinrich Boll Foundation.

Zinn, M. B., Dill, B. T. (1996) Theorizing difference from multiracial feminism.

      Feminist studies. 22(2), 321-331.