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AUTHENTICITY AND LESBIAN HEALTH EDUCATORS

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Abstract

This qualitative study used narrative inquiry to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education setting. The study was grounded in *a* lesbian standpoint pedagogical viewpoint, which provided a lens with which to view the nine participants' experiences. Of particular interest was how the educators in light of the grand narrative of heteronormativity and heterosexism negotiated their identities as teachers and lesbians in the classroom setting. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, which were co-constructed by the researcher and the participants as well as field notes and journal entries completed by the researcher. The nine participants provided a sense of their careers, an understanding of the context in which they work, the visibility of their sexual orientation on campus and thoughts on how they journey towards authenticity. The stories were powerful and provided a window into their perceptions and experiences of teaching towards authenticity.

The findings of this study were grouped into four primary areas. First, the health educators' overall role on campus was intertwined with the visibility of sexual orientation in the classroom and on campus. Second, assessing the geographical and campus political context surfaced in how the educators were able to maneuver on campus and in the classroom in terms of their sexual orientation. Third, coming out in the classroom was determined by contextual factors. Fourth, moving towards authenticity then for lesbian health educators became a contextual phenomenon. The findings have implications for adult education theory and health education.

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Acknowledgements

At the end of this journey, I must take the time to reflect on the richness of my life and give thanks to those who have given me the love and support to finish this degree. In the last six and a half years I have changed careers, married the woman of my dreams, gave birth to the children of my dreams, and endured the loss of my father; all the while working to complete my degree in Adult Education. Needless to say, many people had a hand in my success and completion of this program.

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Lastly, one of the reasons I chose to study lesbian health educators was because I was interested in talking with women in my field that could give me perspective on teaching in the margins. I am grateful for the opportunity to converse with ten women who walk through life calling themselves health educators and lesbians.

CHAPTER 1

> Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that *survival is not an academic skill*. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish (Lorde, 2007, p. 112).

As Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning (LGBTQ) individuals navigate through society, they are faced with what at times feels like a cruel truth of making the decision to be honest with themselves and others about sexual orientation. In a context of comfort and safety they may feel they can reveal sexual orientation yet in the context of unfamiliarity and the question of safety they are faced with presenting the truth without knowing the consequences or making the decision to hide and ultimately neglect sexual orientation, in essence ones true identity. The decision to come out or not is a consistent force in the lives of LGBTQ individuals in society and carries over to the lives of teachers in the classroom (Whitman, Cormier, & Boyd, 2000). Some educators describe this consistent force as a state of contestation (Kreber, 2010). The classroom is an environment that can seem so unfamiliar and uneasy when faced with questions of sexual orientation.

For example, I remember a situation in my classroom. It was the last day of class for one of my three-week intense health courses. The agenda for this particular class was full; a quiz, a review of health lesson plans, and finally the Student Rating of Teacher

Effectiveness (SRTE), which is the end of the semester teacher and course evaluation. I always provide extra time in the beginning of class for questions or concerns and on this particular day, one of the students raised her hand and said, "Mrs. Timmins, could you answer a question about this definition?" The title "Mrs." continues to startle me because I do not consider myself a Mrs., although I do wear an engagement ring and commitment ring on my left ring finger. I thought about my response and decided to let the student know that I do not use the title "Mrs." As I did this, the rest of the class quieted down and became interested in our conversation. They started to comment on my ring, suggesting that I was married (which I am). Another added, "You decided to keep your maiden name. Didn't you?" My response was, "Yes, but how did you know that?" She answered by saying that when I was telling a story about my childhood last week I called myself little Becky Timmins. During this entire conversation with the students, I was having a separate conversation in my head debating whether I should come out to this group or evade the question. The first reminder popped in my head that I had to give the students the SRTE's in two hours: I can't come out because it may affect my ratings. The second reminder was a conversation with a colleague about this particular class and the difficulty they seemed to have when discussing sexual orientation within the social issues course they took one semester ago: I was not sure that they would understand. The third reminder was that I had never come out in any one of my classes before: why should I now? This conversation seemed like an hour but I knew that realistically it was only about two minutes. I decided to sidestep the issue by answering the student's primary question about the definition and finally moving onto the quiz.

I am a lesbian health educator teaching general health education courses at the undergraduate level to traditional and adult students in south central Pennsylvania. The above situation continues to play out in many different ways as I walk through life as a teacher and as an individual. What may seem to be a simple question or statement by a student becomes an enormous mountain for me to climb. As I reflect on many of these situations I feel that my authenticity as an educator is called into question. The variables involved in this continuous struggle in the classroom build from the hegemonic, heterosexist beliefs of society and infiltrate into the identity of the teacher (Grace & Hill, 2004), which creates an uncomfortable issue of authenticity in the classroom for the LGBTQ teacher. In order to understand how the lesbian health educator may navigate the variables in the heteronormative classroom an introduction to the climate, sexual orientation in adult and health education, and authenticity is warranted.

Climate for the LGBTQ Population

Due to the recognition of the LGBTQ population in the media and politics it may appear that there is a transitioning landscape for the LGBTQ community. This recognition is creating a strong base for a shift in equal rights and recognition of the LGBTQ population. However, society continues to be predominantly heterosexist in view (Herek, 2004). LGBTQ individuals are continually made visible by the popular media with the infusion of gay characters throughout much television programming such as The L Word and Modern Family. Unfortunately the portrayals in the media and the real lives of LGBTQ individuals do not always parallel. Realistically, the political front seems to be a much better portrayal of the day-to-day trials and tribulations of LGBTQ individuals.

The issues of equality and recognition for the LGBTQ population were infused into the 2008 presidential debates. Discussions by President Barack Obama provide hope and a possibility of positive change in the lives of LGBTQ people. There are many bills currently in congress that would begin to protect the LGBTQ population. For example, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) would prevent employers from discriminating against LGBTQ employees. Despite these efforts, currently in 31 states LGBTQ individuals can be fired for their sexual orientation (Human Rights Campaign, 2007). The Defense Against Marriage Act (DOMA) may be the most discussed in the media and "defines marriage between a man and a woman for all purposes of federal laws and it provides that states need not recognize a marriage from another state if it is between persons of the same sex" (Human Rights Campaign, 2011). Each individual state is combating DOMA by trying to legalize same-sex marriage at the state level. This does not have an impact on federal laws yet it continues to create a base for change to come.

The hope for change (equal rights and less discrimination) is as strong as it has ever been. However, the inability for congress to pass bills provides a clear understanding within society about the lack of support for LGBTQ individuals from key bodies such as the federal government (Human Rights Campaign, 2011). This in turn allows the continued debate for the equal rights of all individuals and perpetuates the continued hierarchy of heterosexism in society. The lack of support for the LGBTQ population continues to embed discrimination into society and continues to reproduce heterosexist tendencies. Discrimination found in society at large flows into academia (Cress, 2008; Gulley, 2009; Hill, 1995).

Climate for the LGBTQ Educator

Like the larger society, institutions of higher education also discriminate against the LGBTQ community (Rankin, 2003). Depending upon the type of institution (private versus public) and the inclusion of sexual orientation in the mission statement and/or bylaws of the institution, the employed LGBTQ educator may need to navigate a positive, negative and/or silent environment in the classroom and throughout the institution. "Queer sexualities continue to incite wide public panic, anger, and resistance especially in the school context… educators do not often feel the need to address homophobia and heterosexism in schools" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 8). In addition, homophobic harassment and negative treatment continues to be avid amongst LGBTQ educators in the higher education setting (Irwin, 2003). LGBTQ educators continue to feel student bias towards heterosexual educators (Ewing, Stukas & Sheehan, 2003).

Due to the homophobia and bias of society, LGBTQ educators often find themselves in a difficult dilemma in the classroom setting when navigating their identities with students (Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006). Expressing difference as a teacher is known to some as a necessity in the classroom (Baptiste, 2000) and can enhance the learning experience. However, being the teacher that is expressing that difference is often a difficult situation. Students look for teachers who "stand for something and have something useful and important to offer, but they also want to be able to trust and rely on them" (Brookfield, 2006, p. 5). Being open and honest can create this trusting relationship in the classroom. However, being out about one's sexual orientation also comes with a risk that students may not be open minded enough to appreciate. Therefore, if an LGBTQ educator decides to be truthful about their sexual orientation, it may disrupt

the trust and ability for the student to move beyond the teacher's sexual orientation. The risk involved for the LGBTQ educator is embedded in the underlying heterosexist assumptions of the students that may create an uncomfortable working environment for the LGBTQ educator, produce negative responses on teacher ratings by students ultimately affecting the career of the educator. Some refer to coming out and the classroom environment as risky and dangerous for LGBTQ teachers (Grace & Benson, 2000). Due to the topics discussed in health education (i.e. sexuality), one would believe that the health classroom would be a natural setting to include and create positive situations surrounding the sexual orientation of the educator (Temple & Lyde, 1999).

Sexual Orientation and Health Education

Health education is the study of current knowledge concerning attitudes and practices that promote and maintain the present and future health of the individuals and the community (Hales, 2009). The role of the health educator who teaches general health classes in the higher education is to provide an overall view of issues surrounding the health and well being of the general university or college population and the world at large. The semester involves discussions of current health topics and issues. Although many issues are discussed throughout the semester, most teachers do not take into consideration the diversity of the student population (Temple & Lyde, 1999). It has been suggested that, "health education is typically grounded in Western, patriarchal, abled, middle-class, heterosexist assumptions" (Eyre, 1997, p. 273).

Incorporating sexual orientation into the health education curriculum has been one of the most controversial issues in the kindergarten through secondary school systems (K – 12). In addition, the health education field has been slow to provide resources and

research concerning LGBTQ health issues in the schools due to the "controversial nature of the policy-making process surrounding sexuality education, and particularly programs involving sexual orientation" (Rienzo, Button, Sheu, & Li, 2006, p. 93). This conflict and the lack of education and research regarding sexual orientation continues the trend of heterosexist assumptions and homonegativity into higher education.

Sexual orientation falls within the context of the health education curriculum but it is under the sexuality education curriculum not in the health education curriculum. Therefore pre-service teachers receive information about sexual orientation via specific classes such as a human sexuality course, a cultural competency course, or a methods course. On average health education teachers are not prepared for nor want to discuss sexual orientation issues in their classes with students (Temple & Lyde, 1999). The controversial nature and lack of research and policy may not allow for the health educator to explore their own positionality in the health education learning environment. Therefore, how does the LGBTQ educator come to understand and learn the coming out process in the health education classroom?

The question of coming out in the classroom is typically answered with a question, "What does sexual orientation have to do with teaching?" This is a question that comes from the privilege of being a heterosexual educator (Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006). Heterosexual health educators have the privilege of discussing their family and significant others without a thought of discrimination in their minds. Most heterosexual health educators come out during the course of a semester without even knowing it: heteronormativity. The use of the terms husband, wife, and even children in the classroom provide a connotation in the student's mind of heterosexuality. The fact

remains that a heterosexual educator does not have to contend with discriminatory minority status therefore can infuse stories of their family or personal life without questioning. However it is this very notion of family and partner that becomes a conflict in the mind of the LGBTQ educator. Should the LGBTQ educator come out by using the appropriate term/pronoun to describe their significant other or should the LGBTQ educator ignore their story and be ambiguous. This decision to come out versus not is a continuous thread in the lives of LGBTQ educators in the classroom.

In conclusion, the health education classroom may seem to be a natural environment for the educator to discuss sexual orientation (Temple & Lyde, 1999). The compilation of a heterosexist worldview, the lack of inclusiveness in the health education preparatory phase, and the lack of research and policy creates a conflicting environment for the LGBTQ educator. The topic of human sexuality arises in the classroom but the question lies in how the LGBTQ educator answers and deals with the issues of the classroom, and the issues of navigating an open and honest experience for the students and themselves. In light of these issues the LGBTQ educator that teaches health may feel conflicted when confronted with the question: do you feel authentic in the classroom when teaching health?

Authenticity

"Be yourself." This is the advice that my parents and my mentors continue to tell me as I go into challenging situations like teaching difficult subjects or speaking in front of groups. For the most part, this advice has carried me through those difficult situations. However, there is always true internal conflict with "being myself" when those that I am interacting with inquire about my personal life (my partner) or my teaching involves

stories about my life. More often than not my experiences and stories that I use to teach have to do with my partner and my life experiences. I am continually faced with the question of coming out by using the pronoun "she" or the title "my partner" in my stories or in my introduction to the students. Being myself does depend on the context and student learning. Being myself always involves the question of authenticity.

Authenticity is difficult to define and very contradictory by nature. Much of the research related to authenticity encompasses adjectives to describe it and individual processes that educators go through in order to journey towards it. Authentic educators have been described as being open, honest, and genuine, providing full disclosure, and responsiveness in the classroom (Brookfield, 2006). Authenticity is a process that develops over time involving experience, self-exploration, and reflection (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). It goes beyond the techniques and book knowledge learned in the teacher education process and is viewed as the expression of one's genuine self in the community and society (Cranton, 2001).

The dimensions of self, others, relationships with learners, context, and critical reflection have been identified as main contributors to the authenticity of teachers (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). These dimensions are a continual process for the teacher and involve a fluid movement from moment to moment and context to context, an open mind to reflect upon situations in the classroom or society and an understanding of how those situations can be integrated (or not) into self and life, a process know as individuation (Jung, 1990).

"Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (Palmer, 1998, p. 10). Constructing self, being

aware of and respecting others views and beliefs, making sure that the environment is a safe place, and taking into consideration the learning of students are continuous and delicate challenges for the LGBTQ educator. The identity and integrity of the LGBTQ teacher at times relies on the tides of society and the open mindedness of students in the classroom.

There has been a scant amount of research on authenticity and even less exploring authenticity and sexual orientation. Authenticity articles address culture, class, gender, age, generation, background, profession and race but overlook sexual orientation. In contrast, authenticity is incorporated throughout the LGBTQ literature when discussing the decision to come out and specifically uses the word "authentic" (Khayatt, 1997; Russ, Simonds, Hunt, 2002; Wright, 1993). The higher education health classroom is the perfect platform to discuss sexual orientation. However, there is a lack of knowledge surrounding the lesbian health educator and her authenticity as she navigates education and her identity in higher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how lesbian health educators navigate the process of authenticity in a heteronormative, higher education classroom.

Problem Statement

The increased voices and visibility of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) populations have brought sexual orientation to the forefront in academia. The increased visibility places a greater emphasis on the LGBTQ teacher to be authentic in the classroom. Authenticity is an elusive and fluid concept and is described as "knowing and understanding the collective and carefully, critically determine how we are different from and the same as the collective" (Cranton &

Carusetta, 2004, p. 4). Authenticity is a process that develops over time involving experience, self-exploration, and reflection and includes dimensions of self, others, relationships, context and critical reflection. The fluid notion of authenticity may be best understood as a process in which teachers are "moving towards a greater authenticity" (Tisdell, 2003, p. 191).

Authenticity in adult education has been discussed through the lens of power (Baptiste, 2000; Brookfield, 2006), gender (English, 2006), relationships with students (Frego, 2006), institutional constraints (Hunt, 2006), spirituality (Tisdell, 2003) and through cultural dimensions (Lin, 2006). Within the scope of the authenticity research in adult education the LGBTQ population is mentioned via one first person account (Kreber, 2010). In order to begin the inclusion of the LGBTQ population, the barriers of the heteronormative society need to be challenged; one of the ways to increase visibility and challenge heterosexism is by exploring authenticity in the classroom. Due to the distinct and diverse characteristics of the LGBTQ population, this study only focuses on lesbians in health education. Embedded within the question of authenticity and lesbian health educators are the issues of integrity, identity, voice, and positionality. Lesbian educators walk a fine line in classroom situations as they continue to make decisions regarding authenticity in the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom.

Research Questions

The guiding questions for this research study are:

1. What does authenticity in the classroom mean to the lesbian health educator?

2. How does the lesbian health educator balance identity and integrity within the classroom experience in order to be authentic?
3. How does the lesbian health educator teach about sexual orientation in the classroom and what are the implications for her authenticity as an educator?
4. Where does the lesbian health educator place her sexual orientation in the hierarchy of identity while in the classroom? When does she find it appropriate to foreground this identity?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is derived from *a* lesbian standpoint and embedded in feminist pedagogy. Therefore, the theoretical framework for this study is called "*A* lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy" theoretical framework. Feminism has been defined in ways that "calls attention to the diversity of women's social and political reality, it centralizes the experiences of all women… to examine systems of domination and our role in their maintenance and perpetuation" (hooks, 2000, p. 27). Feminist theory is grounded in this study by a brief historical view of the different forms of feminism: psychological feminist influences, structural feminist influences, and poststructural/postmodern feminist influences (Tisdell, 1995; 2001). Lesbian feminism and standpoint feminism are both located within the structural feminist influences and are discussed at length in Chapter Two. In review, lesbian activism and the "lesbian controversy" evolved in the 1970's and 1980's and included controversy for lesbians due to the feminism's lack of acceptance of support and inclusion into the feminist movement. Lesbians wanting to advocate for change then needed to choose to be a part of the feminist movement or the radical lesbian groups. The discrimination sparked

debates regarding compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) and identity politics (Fuss, 1989). The notion of identity as fluid and changing is of importance during this time period as discussions revolved around destabilizing what is known as one's core identity (Butler, 1990).

Standpoint feminism also evolved in the 1970's and 1980's as a critical feminist theory, which discusses the production of knowledge and practices of power (Harding, 2004). Standpoint feminism takes into consideration multiple structures and also suggests that women's experiences at the margins provide valid insights into the complex realities of the world (Collins, 1989; Hartsock, 1983). The margin is discussed as a site of movement, a site of change imposed by a sense of being engaged. Standpoint theory suggests that all knowledge claims are socially situated, in cultural context, and within a specific time (Harding, 2004). To work towards knowledge then is a process, a process of struggle for marginalized groups (Jaggar, 2004). Standpoint theory is useful for this study because the women make visible a lesbian perspective brought forth via their own stories in the classroom.

Feminist theory as applied to teaching and learning is generally known as feminist pedagogy and takes into consideration the impact of society in education (Crabtee, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). Feminist pedagogy is described as an approach to teaching, "a standpoint that must be reflexive and dynamic" (Tisdell, 2005, p. 261). Central themes within feminist pedagogy include personal experience, voice and/or silence, an ethic of caring and safety in the classroom, authority and power of the instructor and student, identity as shifting, positionality, how to deal with differences based on power relations, and how knowledge is constructed (Crabtee, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Tisdell, 2005).

Feminist pedagogy is grounded in this study with a brief overview of the three models of influence: psychological models, structural models, and poststructural models (Tisdell, 1995, 1998, 2000). Engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) and queer pedagogy are also reviewed as they both inform this study as well. Engaged pedagogy is considered "the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994, p. 13) and encourages teachers and students to critical discussions, which in turn provides critical reflection and the possibilities for change. Rather than keeping issues of society under the radar, the students and teachers are asked to create a learning community that addresses personal issues in a political and social context. Queer pedagogy is considered to be the implementation of teaching techniques in the classroom with the purpose of "moving what is assumed by many to be on the periphery to the center" (Winans, 2006, p. 110). The purpose of these activities is to begin to expose students to the hidden positions in order to begin conversation to explore dominant ideologies.

A lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy is an appropriate lens for this study due to it being a starting point (standpoint) from the perspective of lesbian health educators as they journey towards authenticity in light of the heteronormative higher education setting. The grounding of standpoint in combination with feminist pedagogy provides a window into how positionality, knowledge construction, voice, and authority affect the teacher and the student (Tisdell, 1998).

Methodology

Authenticity and identity are constructs that one journeys toward. The goal of this research is to bring forth the experiences of lesbian health educators as they journey towards authenticity in the higher education setting. Qualitative research allows

participants to discuss this journey through rich descriptions about how authenticity is constructed in the classroom as it relates to lesbian identity. In addition, the qualitative paradigm allows for multiple interpretations of realities allowing for each individual story to be heard.

Narrative inquiry was the specific type of research implemented in this study. Narrative inquiry allows the "experience" of authenticity to be told through story. Due to the nature of authenticity and identity it is imperative that the participants were free to discuss their own paths. The process of telling stories about authenticity in the classroom is viewed through past experiences, expressed by the use of voice, enabled or constrained by the social, told within a context and developed by both the researcher and the researched (Chase, 2005). Stories of experiences have the potential to illuminate the grand narrative of heterosexism as it relates to the LGBTQ population and may reveal how authenticity is felt in the classroom for lesbian health educators.

Purposeful sampling was the criterion used for participant recruitment. Specifically, snowball sampling and an internet listserv was used to recruit nine self identified lesbian health educators. Semi-structured interviews and my field notes were the means of data collection. Each provides an opportunity for participants to use their voice to bring about how they journey towards authenticity. Semi-structured interviews provide a space for conversational, reflective journeys to occur (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Another piece of data includes my personal field notes. Field notes should be descriptive and provide my "feelings, reactions, and reflections about the personal meaning and significance" of what transpired (Patton, 2002, p. 303). Field notes enabled me to recall the emotions and context that a recorded session may not provide. It is the combination

of semi-structured interviews and field notes that brought forth the data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher.

Significance of the Study

This study of lesbian health educators is significant on many levels. In a broader sense, heterosexuality has been the dominant sexual orientation throughout time. This has created a hierarchy of societal beliefs about the LGBTQ population due to the dominant culture of heterosexuality. The societal beliefs range from acceptance by some and deep routed disdain from others. The homophobic and homonegative environment continues throughout the 21st century in the world at large. Therefore, research in this area continues to be important in order to demystify and break down the discrimination that surrounds the understanding of the LGBTQ population. LGBTQ research "offers ways to become more broadly informed about the nature of sexuality, heterosexuality, gender, gender normativity, and the consequences of invisible privilege, oppression, and stigmatized and marginalized identities of all kinds (Silverchanz, 2009, p. 4).

Health education is a microcosm of what the world sees in the broader sense. The heteronormative dominant ideas are reproduced throughout the health education curriculum. The health educator's role is to provide information regarding many relevant topics in the classroom including sexuality education yet is intimately tied to societal values and rules as well. Sexuality education is the most controversial topic for kindergarten through the twelfth grade and is often not taught or ignored by teachers in this realm (Price, Dake, Kirchofer, & Telljohann, 2003). On this same note, most health education preparation programs in higher education fail to address the diverse needs of the growing US population (Luquis, Perez, & Young, 2006). Therefore, this research

study will bring emphasis to the lesbian health education teacher's authenticity and positionality into the literature.

The significance to adult education is twofold. The 1990's proved to be the decade that gay and lesbian literature became a part of the adult education landscape. (e.g. Hill, 1994, Tisdell & Taylor, 1995). Although the literature began in the 1990's, adult education continues to "mimic the dominant culture in its commitment to the hetero-normative status quo" (Grace, 2001, p.267). Today there continues to be an increase in the conceptual pieces written about the LGBTQ population; however, there is a lack of empirical studies completed especially by and about lesbians. This study adds to the empirical research in adult education as it relates to sexual orientation especially lesbians.

Secondly, authenticity of the teacher is an understudied yet important aspect of adult learning for the teacher and the students. The classroom is a site for learning for both student and teacher. This learning involves the evolution of the teacher as they strive to balance their own individual authenticity with student learning in the classroom. The research regarding teacher authenticity in adult education includes many social positions but fails to locate how the sexual orientation of the teacher may or may not affect teacher authenticity. Therefore, this study addresses how the lesbian adult educator navigates authenticity in the classroom and the implication it has for practice.

Personally, this study is directly related to my journey as I continue on my path to honor myself and my teaching in the health education classroom. The word "authenticity" and "lesbian teacher" continues to be a source of strength and conflict within me as a person and a teacher. A source of strength because I strive to journey

towards authenticity on any given day in my classroom yet a source of conflict due to the unknown and discriminatory environment that LGBTQ people must live at any given time during the day. Teaching in central Pennsylvania with challenging national debates and the deeply embedded homonegativity presents challenges in the classroom. Therefore, this study arises out of my journey towards authenticity as a health education teacher in this ever-changing world. My passion to be true to myself, to be a social activist in the world, and to continue my passion to teach students about health and well being is the driving force behind my personal interest in this research.

Definition of Terms

Authenticity –The definition of authenticity used for the purposes of this study is "knowing and understanding the collective and carefully, critically determining how we are different from and the same as the collective" (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 4).

Cultural Competency – "The ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures, and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences in planning, implementing, and evaluating health education and promotion programs and interventions" (Gold and Minor, 2002.).

Health Educator – The health educator promotes wellness and healthy lifestyles by covering a wide range of topics. This process often involves assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Teixeira, 2007).

Heteronormativity - Hegemonic social rules that embed heterosexuality into the minds of society placing it as the norm. The belief that heterosexuality constitutes or serves as the norm, rule, or standard and is often invisible to those that ascribe to it (Cipriani, 2009).

Homonegativity – Is considered to be different than homophobia because it includes the dimension of negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against nonheterosexuals instead of just fear (Hudson & Rickets, 1980).

Homophobia – The fear of being labeled "homosexual" and the irrational fear, dislike or hatred of gay males and lesbians (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1988).

Heterosexism - The repressive social system of mandatory or compulsory heterosexuality, often understood without being expressed (Hill, 1995).

Positionality – The ways in which people are categorized in a Western hierarchical society (Brown, Cervero, Johnson-Bailey, 2000).

Sexual prejudice – The negative attitudes based on sexual orientation (Herek, 2004).

Sexual stigma – The shared knowledge of society's negative regard for any nonheterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community (Herek, 2004).

Identity – The way in which humans frame the self to distinguish themselves from others (Kyahatt, 2002).

Coming Out – Becoming aware of one's sexual orientation and beginning to disclose it to others (Bochenek & Brown, 2001).

Integrity – The wholeness that is found within an evolving nexus as "its vectors form and re-form the pattern" of life. It requires that a person discern what is integral to selfhood and that they journey towards becoming whole, a wholeness that is not perfection but a sense of becoming more real by acknowledging those aspects of who one is (Palmer, 1998).

Assumptions

1. This study assumes homonegativity and heterosexism exist in the adult classroom environment.
2. Individual perceptions of identity impact the lesbian teacher's ability to navigate authenticity in the classroom.
3. The health education curriculum does not prepare lesbian teachers to navigate their sexual orientation in the classroom.
4. Lesbian teachers use life experiences and stories to provide examples of wellness topics in the health education classroom; thereby, bringing the personal into the classroom.

Limitations

1. Due to the specificity of lesbian participants, this study is limited in its potential to aid in the research of gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning populations.
2. The participant selection of lesbian health educators may be difficult due to the lack of availability of open lesbian health educators to participate in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intent of a literature review is to review, synthesize, and thematically describe conceptual and empirical works related to the purpose of this study (Hart, 2003). The purpose of my study is to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom. This chapter introduces the theoretical framework which is embedded in feminist pedagogy and derived from *a* lesbian standpoint. Therefore, the theoretical framework for this study is called "*a* lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy" theoretical framework. The foundational areas of this review include the literature regarding authenticity, lesbian identity, and sexual orientation in adult and health education. Empirical studies and first person accounts conclude this chapter as they highlight the LGBTQ teacher's experiences.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is considered to be *a* lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy. All forms of feminist pedagogy are grounded in various versions of feminist theory. Therefore, this section begins with a brief overview of the history of feminist theory highlighting standpoint and lesbian feminism. A discussion of feminist pedagogy including engaged and queer pedagogy follows. Sexual orientation is threaded throughout this review. In addition, notions of authenticity are referenced in this section; however, the concept of authenticity is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Feminist Theory: An Overview

Feminism is broadly defined as the "notion that females and males are inherently equal but recognizes that structural and cultural forces damage, disadvantage, and disempower females in ways that leave them unequal to males" (Gilmore, 2009, p. 381). Feminism has also been defined in a way that "calls attention to the diversity of women's social and political reality, it centralizes the experiences of all women… to examine systems of domination and our role in their maintenance and perpetuation " (hooks, 2000, p. 27). Feminist thinkers have different ways of both describing gender discrimination and prescribing strategies for its elimination (Nilges, 1998). These differences have evolved over the years into many forms of feminism including liberal, radical, psycholanalytic, Marxist, socialist, care-focused, black feminist thought, muluticultural/global/colonial, ecofeminist and postmodern/third wave (Flannery & Hayes, 2001; hooks, 2000; Tisdell, 1993, 1998; Tong, 2009). It has been suggested that the narrative of feminist theory moves from a preoccupation with unity and sameness (1960's), through identity and diversity (1970's and 1980's), and on to difference and fragmentation (1990's through today) (Hemmings, 2005).

In order to ground feminist theory for this study, there is a need to take a brief historical view of the development of the different forms of feminism. While it is difficult to categorize feminist thought into neat schools (Tong, 2009), for the sake of this study the different forms of feminism are discussed as three influences of feminist theory: psychological feminist influences, structural feminist influences, and poststructural/postmodern feminist influences (Tisdell, 1995; 2001). A brief discussion of how each level of feminism deals with sexual orientation is included.

Psychological feminist influences. The psychological feminist influences tend to focus on women as individual and include liberal feminism and psycholanalytical feminism. Liberal feminism seeks to provide equal opportunity for women within the existing society, placing emphasis on the individual rights of women (Tisdell, 2005). Psychoanalytic feminists believe that the way women act is deeply rooted in women's psyche and rely on critiquing the works of Sigmund Frued or Jacques Lacan in order to understand women's sexual psyche (Tong, 2009). For both, the focus is not on the structures of society but on how women function within the existing system (Hayes & Flannery, 2000).

Due to the lack of emphasis on structures of society, a critique of the psychological feminist influences includes the idea that there is only interest in white, middle-class, heterosexual women (Tong, 2009). There is a void in discussions of sexuality and there is a lack of inclusion of lesbians within this particular feminist movement. The exclusion of lesbians specifically was brought to the forefront during the 1960's when most feminist organizations expressed homophobic remarks towards lesbians. For example, the leader of the National Organization for Women (NOW), Betty Friedan, suggested that "incorporating lesbianism in the feminist agenda would undermine the credibility of the women's movement overall" (http://sitemaker.umich.edu, 2010). It was this exclusion of lesbians and outward homophobia that allowed for organizations of lesbians to band together and begin an organized movement. This organized movement which occurred during the women's liberation movement of the 1960's and 1970's was a time when lesbian feminism became popular. Lesbian feminism is categorized as a structural feminist influence.

Structural feminist influences. The structural feminist theories include feminisms such as radical, Marxist, and socialist (Tisdell, 1995, 2001). Also embedded within the structural theories is standpoint feminism. These perspectives focus on the structures of society that affect women. In short, radical feminism is generally concerned with patriarchy, Marxist feminism is concerned with patriarchy and capitalism, and socialist feminism is concerned with the intersections of multiple structures including gender, race, and sexual orientation (Tong, 2009). Standpoint feminism is concerned with women's location in relation to the dominant culture (Collins, 1989). The discussions of sexuality in general are woven through each of these structural theories providing divergent thoughts on sexuality, gender, reproduction, female subordination and male domination in relation to sexuality, the discussion of heterosexual patriarchy and the 'lesbian controversy' (Tong, 2009). With these discussions also came the popularity of lesbian feminism (Hawley, 2009). The research study at hand is framed as '*a'* lesbian standpoint and so it is imperative that lesbian feminism and standpoint feminism are discussed in detail. Therefore, an overview of lesbian feminism and the aspects of standpoint feminism follow.

Lesbian feminism. Lesbian feminism is grounded in the concept of lesbian and assumes that lesbians differ from both heterosexual women and gay men (Zimmerman, 2007). Lesbians began to organize in the mid 1950's with a group called the Daughters of Bilitis which was formed in response to male-dominated gay organizations (Gallo, 2011). Lesbian activism and the 'lesbian controversy' evolved in 1970's and 1980's as radical lesbian groups provided opposition to feminism's discrimination towards lesbians. As discussed previously, the psychological influences focus on the white, middle class,

heterosexual woman producing the separation of some lesbians from the large feminist groups of the time. Lesbians during this time needed to make decisions regarding where to align themselves, with the feminist movement or with the gay (male) liberation movement (Tate, 2005). The issue for lesbians was that the feminist construction of lesbian placed gender first and sexuality second (Zimmerman, 2007) suggesting that the identity of 'woman' is more important than that of 'lesbian' while the gay liberation movement was dominated by gay males (Freeman, 2011).

This controversy of the acceptance of lesbians within the feminist movement spurred speeches and texts about lesbianism providing critiques of heterosexuality within feminism. A pivotal example of text came from a group made up of women who were a part of the gay liberation and the women's liberation, The Radicalesbians (Gillmore & Collinson, 2004). They were responsible for writing the *Woman Identified Woman* (1970), a political text protesting NOW's refusal to include lesbians in their organization. This text was presented during the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York City on May 1, 1970 (Hawley, 2009). The text begins with:

> What is a lesbian?... She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being that her society – perhaps then, but certainly later – cares to allow her. These feelings bring her to painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with herself… the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for cultural

> revolution. Together we must find, reinforce, and validate our authentic selves (Duke University, 2011).

With this speech, the Radicalesbians asked all women, lesbian or not, to deepen their commitments, sexual and otherwise, to other women (Gillmore & Collinson, 2004). This speech describes the struggle of living the life of a lesbian as society puts them at odds with themselves and the world around them. These words also provide a platform for the writings of Rich (1980) as she writes about compulsory heterosexuality.

Rich (1980) provides a critique of compulsory heterosexuality that encouraged "heterosexual feminists to examine heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women" (Rich, 1980, p. 11). Rich goes on to critique feminism by suggesting that most women are innately heterosexual with the following words:

> The assumption that 'most women are innately heterosexual' stands as a theoretical and political stumbling block for feminism. It remains a tenable assumption partly because lesbian existence has been written out of history or catalogued under disease, partly because it has been treated as exceptional rather than intrinsic… the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system called capitalism or the caste system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces. (p. 26)

There are two elements that Rich added to the critique of patriarchy (Eaklor, 2008). First, was the analysis of the ways heterosexuality serves patriarchy suggesting that lesbians are forced into heterosexual relationships. This highlights the limits placed on their economic and social choices further making heterosexual marriage necessary.

Second, the "lesbian continuum" challenges the either/or model of homosexuality suggesting lesbian possibilities of bisexuality.

Rich and the Radicalesbians provide a challenging and provocative way of calling out heterosexually identified feminists to explore new paths. It is with these texts that lesbian feminism went from grass roots organizations to becoming a part of Women's Studies programs in academia (Freeman, 2011). These programs focused on identities, images, definitions, canons and histories of lesbians (Zimmerman, 2007). The focus on identity as category brought forth a certain degree of essentialism for both feminism in terms of gender (Fuss, 1989) and lesbianism in terms of sexual orientation. A female essence or a lesbian essence assumes a fixed category of a person. This fixed female essence produced criticism that suggested feminism only included white middle-class heterosexual women (Gilmore, 2004) and that lesbian feminism only included white, middle class women (Gilmore & Collinson, 2004). This became a stumbling block for feminism and lesbian feminism moving through the 1970' and 1980's. One possible solution to the fixed category of woman or lesbian was brought forth as identity politics.

Identity politics can be described as the tendency to base one's political sense on a sense of personal identity such as lesbian, black, or female (Fuss, 1989). "Feminist identity politics began as a rebellion against the identity assigned to 'woman' by patriarchal institutions" (Hekmen, 2000, p. 296). *Gender Trouble* (1990) is considered to be a cornerstone with which identity politics began within feminist theory (Hekmen, 2000). Butler's purpose of *Gender Trouble* was to destabilize the thought of a core identity by proposing many arguments against sex, gender, and sexuality. One such argument concludes that there is "no abiding substance called man or woman, but, rather

these identities are produced through the compulsory ordering of attributes into coherent gender sequences" (Butler, 1990, p. 24). Butler also argues for 'positions of resistance' which include the thought that "a lesbian that opposes heterosexuality absolutely may be more in its power than a straight woman" (Butler, 1993, p. 116-117).

One criticism with identity politics originates within political activism. The idea of not having a fixed category of woman or lesbian puts political movement into jeopardy by taking away the category for which they could identify (McNay, 2010). This category is viewed as pivotal for political change and is thought to disarm the feminist and/or lesbian movement (Fuss, 1989). To counteract this disarmament, Hekmen (2000) proposes a 'middle ground or ungrounded ground' in order to define gender identity within the political realm.

Identity is thus an 'ungrounded ground' or a socially constructed core (Hekmen, 2000). This identity is based upon the ironic criticisms of identity politics in that they "illustrate how identities change and are reconstructed under different social conditions" (p. 294). This argument falls within the political framework and suggests that "any attempt to impose an identity that excludes certain categories of individuals" should not be a part of political participation. Identities are referred to as a 'slippery slope' as any definition will ultimately create a fixed category. Therefore identity is taken out of politics and replaced with a 'politics of identification' (p. 303). Politics of identification would mean that political actors would identify with particular causes and mobilize to accomplish particular political goals rather than focus on the identity of a particular person.

The discussion of identity politics in opposition to essentialism continues to be of issue today for both feminism and lesbian feminism. As poststructuralism and postmodern perspectives evolved in the 90's so did the new lesbian or queer viewpoint which focuses on performativity, genealogies, deconstruction and representation (Zimmerman, 2007). Queer theory is discussed after standpoint feminism as a poststructural and postmodern influence.

Standpoint feminism. This study is framed as a lesbian standpoint; therefore it is imperative that there be a discussion of standpoint theories and standpoint feminism. Standpoint theories evolved in the 1970's and 1980's as a critical feminist theory to discuss the production of knowledge and practices of power (Harding, 2004). Standpoint feminism takes into consideration multiple structures and also suggests that women's experiences at the margins provide valid insights into the complex realities of the world (Collins, 1989; Hartsock, 1983). Standpoint theory is dynamic and has been described as one of the most controversial theories of feminist research (Harding, 2004, 2009; Wylie, 2004). Despite the many controversies of standpoint theorists, there are two underlying aspects that all standpoint theorists agree upon (Wylie, 2004): (1) Standpoint theory must not presuppose an essentialist definition of the social categories, and (2) Standpoint theorists cannot claim that those who occupy particular standpoints (subdominant, oppressed, marginal standpoints) automatically know more, or know better, by virtue of their social, political location. These two aspects provide the basis for further discussion of standpoint as it relates to the margins and as it relates to situated knowledge.

Standpoint feminism discusses women's experiences at the margins. Marginality is multifaceted as it is "more than a site of deprivation… it is also a site of radical

possibility, a space of resistance" (hooks, 2004, p. 156). While the margin, in this case, can be imposed by oppressive structures, it can also be chosen as a site of resistance in order to create radical openness (hooks, 2004). The margin is discussed as a site of movement, a site of change imposed by a sense of being engaged. A standpoint engages those in the margins and can be found in "practical activity itself" (Hartsock, 1989, p. 285).

Standpoint theory suggests that all knowledge claims are socially situated, in a cultural context, and within a specific time (Harding, 2004). If knowledge is situated and based in individual experience these different experiences are thought to create different perceptions of ourselves and our environment. Therefore a standpoint does not provide one answer to the issues of women but begins a conversation from the perspective of different races, sexual orientations, and gender (to name a few). A standpoint has been discussed as an 'achievement' (Hartsock, 2004), and therefore is a process not necessarily an ascribed perspective or viewpoint (Harding, 2004).

To work towards knowledge then is a process, one that has been described as a collective process of struggle for women (Jaggar, 2004). Objectivity has been a point of criticism within standpoint involving the kinds of knowledge derived from research (Haraway, 2004). Most standpoint theorists address the notion of objective knowledge by coming from a strong social constructivist paradigm. In addressing the claim of objectivity, standpoint theorists argue for "starting off thought" from the lives of marginalized people thus women's lives are the grounding point for the research on the margins which if grounded from the dominant culture would be a very different viewpoint (Harding, 2004). Harding (2004) provides a discussion based in comparing

object knowledge from standpoint decrying notions of universal claims, ethnocentrism, and relativism. In breaking down these notions it is important to understand the characteristics regarding "agents of knowledge" (p. 132) or those that "know" in order to provide a grounding for knowledge: (1) This subject of knowledge is culturally or historically invisible, (2) The subject of scientific knowledge is different than objects due to the properties of time and space, (3) Knowledge then is produced by individuals and groups of individuals not by culturally specific societies or subgroups in a society such as a certain class or gender, and (4) The agents of knowledge for standpoint theory are multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory. In referring to these four characteristics knowledge cannot be assumed to be the Truth as suggested by universal claims, ethnocetrism, or relativism as culture, time, space, society are fluid notions and the agents as multiple, heterogeneous and contradictory only suggest motion and movement in the margins.

In order to use *'a'* lesbian standpoint for the theoretical viewpoint of this study I implement many aspects from standpoint that are useful to create a viewpoint specific to the experiences of lesbians in the health education classroom. This study is framed as "*a* lesbian standpoint" because the women make visible a lesbian perspective brought forth via their own story (real relations of humans) in the classroom and academia (natural world) (Hartsock, 1989). The stories begin to suggest the details and deeper levels going beyond the surface of the dominant heterosexual center to reveal the reality of lesbians in health education as they see it from the margins and how they relate to the dominant culture. The study represents a place to begin or a 'starting off' in which life on the margins moving towards the center can begin.

Poststructural, postmodern, postcolonial influences. The third level of feminist theory includes poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial feminisms all of which are different but have some strands of connection. These strands of connection are described by Tisdell (2005): (1) they draw on the structural feminist theories, (2) they focus on the connections between individuals and social structures, (3) they deal with multiple structures at the same time through the notion of positionality, and (4) they recognize the fluid nature of identity. Postmodern perspectives originate from the work of Butler, Derrida, Cixous, and Foucault (Tong, 2009). The relationship of feminism and postmoderism has been described as "an uneasy one" (Tong, 2009) due to postmodernisms rejection of an absolute word and the rejection of any aims to provide a single explanation for the oppression of women. In essence, postmodernists use language and theories that are difficult to understand and thus becomes less relevant to the majority of women (Tong, 2009).

Key philosophical concepts of poststructural theory include language, discourse, rationality, representation, power relations, resistance, freedom, knowledge, truth, deconstruction of categories, agency and identities as constantly shifting (Britzman, 2000; Foucault, 1980; St. Pierre, 2000). Poststructural theories are described as critiques and methods that are used to question and examine the structures that society has put into place (St. Pierre, 2000). Emphasis is placed on what and how the structures were put into place and why certain practices are made dominant and others are discounted (Britzman, 2000). In essence, poststructural theories make individuals think differently about topics that have become so inherent to their existence by trying to make apparent how social structures have informed the unconscious constructs of identity. Examples of these

deeply ingrained constructs for lesbians may be the inability to come out or the internal homophobia resulting from the constant entrenchment of LGBTQ individuals in heterosexist beliefs.

In particular to adult education, poststructuralism includes the notions of identity as fluid and constantly changing, the idea of heterosexist hegemony which is the permeation of a set of values into every sphere of social life (Hill, 1995), and positionality as it intersects with the social context of the classroom bringing different cultures, races, classes, sexual orientations lends itself more to the study at hand. These notions and how they relate to the classroom are discussed further in the next section.

In lieu of the developments in feminist theory, LGBT studies, and poststructuralism in the 1970's and 1980's, queer theory emerged in the 1990's to provide a way of thinking about politics and sexuality (Turner, 2004) and could be categorized in this section of theory as well. Queer theory posits the refusal to be positioned as solitary and intact (Hill, 2004) and comes from the combination of social constructivism and poststructuralism that deconstructs the idea of unified, autonomous self (Gamson, 2000). Queer theory contends that identities are always shifting and never complete (Talburt & Steinberg, 2000). Thus there is a focus on the social construction of sexual categories and identities questioning the binaries of categories (homosexual/heterosexual) and identities (lesbian/gay). Therefore queer questions sexual categorization and focuses on its deconstruction (Gamson, 2000). In place of lesbian or gay, queer theorist posit a fluid notion of queer, which may specify lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered and intersexed individuals, or may signify any and all marginality" (Zimmerman, 2007, p. 45).

One of the criticisms of queer theory or post-identity politics is that the critique of identity is overstated thereby resulting in a "theoretical anti-subjectivism that erroneously construes agency in abstract discursive terms rather than as a capacity of embodied subjects" (McNay, 2010, p. 512). This overemphasizing of the idea of identities questions the assumption or negates that lesbianism (or any other identity) can be the basis for defining any particular agency political movements. In addition, there is a fear that the specificity of lesbian and gay lives will be "lost in the shuffle of otherness" (p. 185) as anyone can take up the notion of queer as long as they are in opposition of a certain cause (Rabinowitz, 2002).

Feminist Pedagogy: An Overview

Feminist theory as applied to teaching and learning is generally known as feminist pedagogy. Components of pedagogy consist of curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices and also take into consideration the impact of society in education (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). In addition to curriculum, instruction, and evaluation, societal hierarchies and the ideological and political dimensions of education are also a part of teaching and must be included in the discussion of pedagogy (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). Feminist pedagogy has been described as an approach to teaching, "a standpoint that must be reflexive, and dynamic" (Tisdell, 2005, p. 261). It has been defined as "a movement against hegemonic educational practices that tacitly accept or more forcefully reproduce an oppressive gendered, classed, racialized, and androcentric social order" (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009, p. 1).

The versions of feminist pedagogy evolved from different sources including the consciousness raising practices of the women's movement, the progressive tradition in

American education created by John Dewey, and the more general forms of liberation provided by Paulo Friere (Maher & Tetreault, 2001). Central themes within feminist pedagogy include personal experience, voice and/or silence, an ethic of caring and safety in classroom environments, authority or power of the instructor/student, identity as shifting, positionality, how to deal with differences based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, physical and mental ability, or sexual orientation, and how knowledge is constructed (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Tisdell, 2005). In addition, an important observation of feminist pedagogy is that the personal is political (Rabinowitz, 2002, p. 181). These themes and this observation are threaded through the following discussion of feminist pedagogy as well as addressed via research and first person accounts in the conclusion of the theoretical viewpoint.

The brief history provided earlier of feminist theory provides a backdrop for three feminist pedagogical models in which the central themes of feminist pedagogy are embedded (Tisdell, 1995, 1998, 2000). The three models include psychological models, structural models, and poststructural models. The following provides a brief description of each model followed by a detailed discussion of engaged pedagogy and queer pedagogy as it relates to this study.

Psychological models. The psychological models focus on the needs of women as individuals (Tisdell, 2000). A landmark study by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), *Women's Ways of Knowing,* provides a baseline for how women know and learn. Belenky et al. focused specifically on how to create environments where women can come to voice, see themselves as constructors of knowledge in an atmosphere of psychological safety that emphasizes connection and relationship, and appreciate their

learning experiences as women (Tisdell, 1998). The experiences of women and female identity provide a view of women as the nurturer being empathetic, sensitive, and emotional (Maher, 1987). Thus the central themes from feminist pedagogy reflected in the psychological model are voice, a safe environment for women to learn, and the ethic of caring.

The critiques of this model parallel the critiques of the psychological influences in feminist theory in that there is only interest in white, middle-class, heterosexual women (Tong, 2009). Critiques of the psychological models include the lack of emphasis on women of color, working-class women, and lesbian or bisexual women and the stereotyping of women as relational and nurturing further marginalizing women (Tisdell, 2000; Tong, 2009).

Structural models. The second is derived from the structural feminist influence and emphasizes how structural systems of power, privilege, and oppressions shape teaching and learning (Tisdell, 2000). The structural models are linked strongly to Paulo Freire's knowledge of the oppressed as his focus was on social change (Maher, 1987). This oppression is connected to feminist pedagogy through the silences, manipulations, and passivities of women in the classroom. Tisdell and Taylor (2000) view the structural model as being similar to the psychological model in regards to the focus on relational and affective perspectives of learning. However, this perspective is based on a "sociological view of the world that examines how culture and power relations based on the social structures of gender, race, class, and sexuality shape learning" (p. 9). This acknowledges the connection of gender, sexuality, and femininity with other sociocultural aspects, economic and political histories, hierarchies and discourses (Luke,

1996). In structural models there is space for those who have been marginalized to come to voice and construct new knowledge (Tisdell, 2000). In addition, Maher and Tetrault (2001), hooks (1994), and Tisdell (1993, 1998) are examples of feminists that mention the role of gender as it intersects with sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is discussed at length later in this chapter.

Poststructural feminist pedagogies. Feminist poststructuralism is informed by feminism and poststructuralism (Foucault, 1980). Poststructuralism is categorized under the "post" labels such as postfoundationalism and postcolonialism (St. Pierre, 2000) and is often linked to and used together with postmodernism (Tisdell, 1998). Poststructuralism and postmodernism both include descriptors such as fragmented, incoherent, open-endedness, lack of specificity and limitless (Alcoff, 1997; Elias & Meriam, 2005) because it focuses on the deconstruction of language. An extreme postmodern lens which is termed "ludic" postmodernism focuses on deconstruction (not re-construction) suggesting an endless variety of difference with no social structures or subjects, no reference points and no foundations (Alcoff, 1997). Whereas "resistance postmodernism" tends to focus more on resistance to the marginalized groups in an effort to be mindful of putting one category as primary (Lather, 1991as cited in Tisdell). Feminists are often critical of this standpoint due to the deconstruction of woman as a category (Collins, 1990, 1998, 2000) without considering how women re-construct identities in light of consciousness raising about the effects of how social structures inform one's identity.

Tisdell (1998) provides four elements of feminist poststructural thought as they relate to feminist teaching or feminist pedagogy in adult education. The first element is

that feminist poststructuralism builds on and critiques the structural feminist theories. Secondly, the notion of truth is problematized. The concept of small truths is built on the idea that scientific knowledge is socially situated (St. Pierre, 2000). Thirdly, it emphasizes the notion of a constantly shifting identity. Constantly shifting identity is linked to positionality (a person's race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation) within society (Tisdell, 2001). Each person possesses a multitude of identities. As individuals interact with society different identities tend to take precedence over others due to the context of the situation. Lastly, poststructuralist feminist pedagogy deconstructs binaries such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. Deconstruction in this sense is positive in that it is about rebuilding (St. Pierre, 2000). It is asking the difficult questions of how structures in society have been constructed and what forces are holding those structures together so that new concepts and new patterns are created (St. Pierre, 2000).

As a result of the three models of pedagogy one could conclude that classrooms are a diverse setting that combines students and teachers of different cultures, backgrounds and identities which affect the content of learning, the process of learning, and the cognition of learning (Brookfield, 2005). Power relations and positionalities create a hierarchy of identities that shape the learning experiences in the classroom. Sexual orientation is one of the positions that exist in the classroom (invisible to some and very visible to others). In light of the psychological, structural and poststructural pedagogical models, engaged pedagogy and queer pedagogy are two ways of teaching that have the potential to bring to the forefront notions of sexual orientation in the classroom.

Engaged pedagogy. Bell hooks (1994) argues that education is "the practice of freedom" (p. 13). This practice involves the ability to go beneath the surface to see the intersection of class, gender, race, and sexual orientation in order to provide the opportunity for open classrooms experiences. There is a hidden agenda of dominance that flows beneath the surface in most classrooms (hegemony). In order to transcend this hidden agenda teachers and students must consciously bring their whole selves to the learning experience. This holistic progressive approach is a way of teaching described by hooks (1994) as engaged pedagogy.

Engaged pedagogy draws from a constructivist, critical, and feminist pedagogical viewpoint and calls attention to the well-being of teacher and student, individual and group (hooks, 1994). "Teachers must be actively committed to their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Self-actualization is a process in which teachers come to a better understanding of themselves and their philosophies for teaching. This process of self-actualization promotes well-being and allows educators to grow as well as the students. Therefore the focus of the classroom is on both the learning of the instructor as well as the learning of the students. The ability for the teacher to bring their selves to the classroom is the connection of pedagogy and working towards authenticity. Understanding the self is a continual process as is the notion of journeying towards authenticity.

Self-actualization allows educators to be aware of themselves as educators and share personal stories that in turn link them to the academic information in the course. Personal stories are used in the classroom to provide consciousness raising and challenge the power structures (Tisdell, 2000). This particular study provides space for the

participants to tell their own stories about how they foreground (or not) their visible and invisible identities. Rather than continually keeping issues of society and culture under the radar educators can create a learning community by discussing the differences. This learning community will begin to act responsibly together to address personal issues in a political and social context.

The culmination of "praxis" in education is critical for this perspective for it is the action and reflection upon the world that will change it. For example, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) studied two courses (taught by the authors themselves) as they determined the ways in which power relations played out in the classroom. One of the exercises entailed the students ranking each other in terms of their perceived social classification in society. The students were hesitant to do so; however all agreed to be active participants in the exercise. Throughout the exercise the rankings changed as more information about the students was discussed. A white woman revealed that she was lesbian and her ranking dropped considerably. This woman's positionality of white was part of the dominant culture placing her higher in ranking. Her position of woman placed her lower in rankings: however her position as lesbian lowered her rank significantly. This is an exercise that is uncomfortable for students to complete. The tension in the classroom sometimes produces "some degree of pain" yet it is in this pain and tension that we learn. Many became aware of discrimination and were challenged by their embedded belief systems.

Three points can be made from this example. First, sexual orientation is an invisible part of a person's positionality. Due to hegemony, it is naturally assumed that all students and teachers are heterosexual. As we walk into the classroom our sexual

orientation is not visible. Secondly, these presumptions (some biased or negative and others innocently stated without intention to harm) often silences the LGBTQ population due to the continual barrage of heterosexist statements. And lastly, in order for groups that are oppressed to be understood, they themselves must be able to speak freely.

Friere (1970) states "It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors" (p. 42). Friere is discussing the oppressor-oppressed contradiction in which he suggests that those who are in the dominant class do not have the capacity to see discrimination unless taught by someone who is oppressed. Lorde (1984) also indicates this by suggesting that the oppressed group must take the responsibility of raising the consciousness of those in the dominant group. As LGBTQ people begin to come out in the classroom setting, they must deal with the possible negative responses of those who discriminate and begin to educate others about these oppressive experiences. Hooks (1994) states that "we are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions and society so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom" (p. 34). Engaged pedagogy teaches students and teachers to analyze ways in which inequality is maintained and prepares each for social actions. This allows for students and teachers to be engaged in critical thinking which may in turn impact society.

On the other hand, critical thinking in classrooms today has been a struggle to implement due to the political climate in relation to conservative pockets of society (Stake, Sevelius, & Hanly, 2008). There is a resistance to feminist pedagogy involving critical thought particularly in terms of getting students to think outside of their own experiences (White, Wright-Soika, & Russell, 2007).

Engaged pedagogy is one way that teachers can queer the educational experiences for students especially in terms of consciousness raising. Engaged pedagogy focuses on the student and teacher bringing themselves to each class, discussing their differences, and providing critical thinking opportunities which bring the marginal issues of society (sexual orientation) to the forefront. Ways to do this in the classroom can be considered queer pedagogy.

Queer pedagogy. Implementing techniques in the classroom provide a connection of the theoretical to the practical. Queer pedagogy entails "moving what is assumed by many to be on the periphery to the center" (Winans, 2006, p. 110). In essence, these techniques involve consciousness raising, critical thinking, and destabilizing societal norms brought about by an ongoing, radical questioning involving the notions of heteronormativity. The purpose of these activities is to begin to expose students to the hidden positions in order to begin conversation to break down the dominant ideologies and explore the shifting, dynamic relations of students, teachers and society. Techniques often associated with feminist pedagogy include how to set the stage for a feminist pedagogical teaching using discourse to diversify the classroom, team teaching, and panels.

The discourse of diversity can be prompted by the inclusion of articles by and about LGBTQ people. Gedro (2005, 2009) refers to this as queering the curriculum. Including articles and books has the ability to create an open environment which allows space for discussions of marginalized groups (Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006). Books such as "Discussion as a Way of Teaching" by Brookfield and Preskill (1999) discuss creating a democratic classroom by including aspects such as mindfulness,

mutuality, deliberation, appreciation, and autonomy. Providing information on the syllabus to describe feminist pedagogical thought intended for the class gives the students an introduction for assignments that may warrant students to take on a feminist or queer-theoretical position (Seymour, 2007).

Deconstructing the language in the classroom can also provide diversity. Yescavage and Alexander (1997) reveal the constructedness and social implication of all sexual orientations by pointing out heterosexual statements or words used in the classroom setting. The pedagogical approach brings the mindset of private to public knowledge to light. Marking involves making students aware when a heterosexual innuendo is used in class such as girlfriend, boyfriend, husband or wife. Marking breaks down the hegemony of heterosexism by challenging the status quo and acknowledging the amount of times the "private" lives of heterosexuals are discussed in public. This technique may also provide a feeling of belonging for the LGBTQ students as the invisibility of sexual orientation is brought to the forefront. In addition to language, assignments such as letter writing (White, Wright-Soika, & Russell, 2007), and journal writing (Gardener, Dean, & McKaig, 1989) also allow the students to explore and decenter thoughts on marginalized populations.

Structuring the course in order to include two or more teachers also provides more than one teacher's voice in the classroom. Team teaching has been introduced in the feminist classroom with the intent of generating a less hierarchical structure of authority in the classroom by listening to more than one voice (Colwill & Boyd, 2008). Team teaching provides a sense of collaboration that encourages not only inclusiveness but redistribution of power and is recommended by Liddle and Stowe (2002). Combining the

efforts of a LGBTQ teacher and heterosexual teacher provides authentic knowledge as well. It provides an expert in the field and a visible example of an LGBTQ person. Liddle & Stowe provided a challenge to the classroom and heightened understanding of LGBTQ issues.

Other classroom activities include panels and role playing which provide an avenue for debunking the myths of LGBTQ life. Yep (2002) and Little & Marx (2002) both create space in the classroom with panel discussions and role play sessions. In both cases, the students became more empathetic and ultimately created attitudinal changes within the students. The exercise brought queer discourse into the classroom environment and created change. Taylor (2002) provides a brief summary of classroom interventions:

> Attitudinal changes from bigotry to compassion are sought through such devices as exposing students to positive representations of marginalized groups, providing access to the voices of silenced populations, facilitating role-playing experiences that let students of dominant culture simulate marginalized people's oppressive experiences, and providing students with corrective information about the oppressive experiences of the members of such groups. The goal of such lessons is for students to project themselves into the difficult social situations of others unlike themselves, recognize their common humanity, and move in the process from disrespect to solidarity (pp. 223).

Implementing feminist pedagogical ideas into the classroom can be met with challenges and difficulties. Crabtree and Sapp (2003) provide some barriers to feminist practice in the contemporary university classroom. These challenges and dilemmas

include: (1) the conservative opposition both inside and outside the academy, (2) the fear of teaching outside institutional norms felt among many faculty, and (3) the reservations among feminists that feminist pedagogy can empower professionally marginalized faculty and student from exploited populations (p. 133). In addition, many feminists feel that they are doing feminist work in a hostile environment as even the word feminist can draw hostility (Miller, 2007). Miller suggests this hostility is rooted in the 'historical inaccurate idea that the feminist movement happened during a finite time' (p. 3). Feminism thus must be understood as an ongoing, fluctuating interaction not something that was brought up in the 70's and taken care of. There are beliefs that gender inequality is not an issue today and that sexism does not exist (Copp & Kleinman, 2008). Therefore the challenge is to continue feminist teaching and techniques in a society that did not live through the women's liberation time period of the 70's (Miller, 2007). Some provide education beginning with a statement in the syllabus about what feminist pedagogical thought consists of and how it will be used in the classroom (Seymour, 2007). Others suggest that using terminology that students can identify with will allow them to embrace feminism. For example, the term "sociological mindfulness" is used to describe feminism (Copp & Kleinman, 2008). Sociological mindfulness includes the perceptions that people are interdependent, that there is an examination of and the basis for people's beliefs, behaviors, and interactions, it recognizes the socially constructed nature of patterns of inequality and acts in ways that reduce social harm.

In conclusion, "teachers who subscribe to a feminist pedagogical approach develop teaching strategies that resist reinscribing dominant cultural notions about gender, race, sexuality, and class and deliberately problematize essentialist terms and

constructs that have historically marginalized individuals and groups that have functioned to oppress a full range of human experience" (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, p. 5, 2009). It is with the influences of feminist pedagogical thought that provides a basis for the current theoretical lens of '*a*' lesbian standpoint pedagogy. The following section provides an overview for the location of '*a*' lesbian standpoint pedagogy in relation to lesbian health educators. References to research and first person accounts are included.

"A" Lesbian Standpoint Feminist Pedagogy

"*A*" lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study due to it being a starting point (standpoint) from the perspective of lesbian health educators as they journey towards authenticity in their classroom experiences. The grounding of standpoint in combination with feminist pedagogy provides a window into the lives of lesbian health educators and their experiences with identity and authenticity in the classroom. The following aspects are key characteristics that are specific for this study as it focuses on lesbian health educators in the classroom: (1) voice, (2) a fluid sense of identity, and (3) positionality.

Voice. Voice is threaded throughout the literature in both feminist theories and feminist pedagogy. Feminist theorists discuss women's voice and acts of silence as a powerful means of expression. The notions of voice and/or silence is directly linked to the decision for teachers to be verbal and come out in the classroom (Maher & Tetrault, 2001; hooks, 1994; Tisdell, 1993, 1998) or to make the conscious decision to be silent due to either the political discrimination or an unsafe environment.

Voice and silence can be found in the literature as coming out or disclosure for the LGBTQ population. Coming out is becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or

gender identity and beginning to disclose it to others (Bochenek & Brown, 2001, p. xiii). It is a fluid process influenced by personal subjectivities and actions, interactions with others, and sociohistorical connections (D'Augelli, 1991). A person's ability to continuously negotiate their identity is mediated by varying circulations of power relating to age, family background, economic position, and race (Rasmussen, 2004). Coming out relies on the voice of the lesbian educator, the discourse with the students, and the use of language. Silence or choosing not to come out due to hegemonic forces of heterosexist thought is another source of voice or lack there of that reproduces the status quo. Silence can be understood in many ways within the feminist classroom. Silence can be construed as disempowerment or timidity. However, silence can be taken in many ways including a sign of arrogance or a means of protection (Rabinowitz, 2002).

There are a number of writings within the feminist pedagogy literature on teaching about sexuality or challenging heterosexism in the classroom (for example Brueggemann & Moddelmog, 2002; Pryor, 2006; Rabinowitz, 2002) but there is relatively little about the impact on the practice of feminist pedagogy of lesbian or gay teachers being open with students about their sexuality (Welch, 2007).

The literature foregrounding sexual identity by coming out has been debated particularly in women's studies and queer theory courses. Sholock (2007) discusses that using the first-person "I" in autoethnographic research writing is a professional risk and carries with it the connotation that the author is queer and may be advancing their own agenda. In addition, there are authors that mention their own sexual orientation and how it may affect the classroom experience (Brueggemann & Moddelmog, 2002; Pryor, 2006; Rabinowitz, 2002; Seymour, 2007). Seymour (2007) chooses not to foreground her

sexual orientation in the classroom although she feels as though she is often read as bisexual or lesbian because she "frequently brings queerness into the classroom" (p. 198). Pryor (2006) never formally came out to her students as lesbian but her "queerness loomed large in the lecture room" (p. 67) as she noted that her language, her dress, her gestures, her voice, and the ease with which she taught about LGBTQ may out her. Brueggemann and Moddelmog (2002) suggest that coming out is imperative stating that "such namings are important, because they help articulate and complicate sexual and disability identities that are (apparently) invisible, discredited, fragile, and fluid" (p. 317). Coming out is a decision based on a continuum, consciously embedded or not into the classroom experience by teachers. Coming out and silence is the use of voice for lesbian educators.

Identity as fluid. Typically feminist theorists reject the notion of essentialist identity (Sanchez-Casal & Macdonald, 2002). The subject then is considered a construction of a multitude of identities created due to the interactions with society and societal codes (St. Pierre, 2000). Society's codes are then place in the context of time and location creating a context for learning and teaching. Society's codes for a lesbian could include the heterosexist environment and the silent rules they live by. For example, knowing when it is safe to come out and when it is not safe to come out. It is the combination of relations with societal views that creates the complexity and multiplicity of women's identity. This complexity and multiplicity is consistent with a constantly shifting identity and therefore a deeper understanding of lesbian identity is continually debated (Baumeister, 2000; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; Esterberg, 1997; Peplau & Garnets, 2000). A fluid lesbian identity plays itself out in the classroom experience

through a continual interplay between the social context and the individual experience. This identity process continues the debate of the unified self versus a fragmented self. Lesbian identity as shifting and fragmented or essential is discussed at length in one of the foundational areas of this literature review as it has been of contention within feminist theory. There is also a need to address it in regards to authenticity as well.

Positionality. The third theme is power relations and positionality. Power relations are a group of theoretical orientations having similar agendas (Merriam, Cafferella, & Baumgartner, 2007) and include race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation to name a few. Foucault (1980) introduces the term power relations suggesting that we are born into these relations of power and the only way to live with them is to begin to understand them (as sited from St. Pierre, 2000). One that identifies with a sexual orientation different than the dominant culture must then ask critical questions in order to understand and break free from the powers that may discriminate. These questions may include: How does heterosexism function in the world? Where can it be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its linguistic, social, and material effects on the LGBTQ population? How does it continue to exist?

Building upon power relations is positionality. Positionality is defined as "the knower's specific position in any context, a position always defined by gender, race, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (Maher & Tretrault, 2001, p. 22). Positionality therefore deals directly with the structures of society questioned by feminism and feminist pedagogy. The classrooms are a diverse setting that combines students and teachers of different cultures, backgrounds and identities which affect the content of learning, the process of learning, and the cognition of learning (Brookfield,

2005). The position of teacher and student creates a hierarchy of identities that shapes the learning experience in the classroom.

The studies and literature that have been completed provide insight into positions that have traditionally been excluded from the academic research. These positions normally include the intersection of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, and disability. Hart (2005) discusses class and gender while Mojab (2005) discusses class and race. There are articles and studies highlighting the intersections of race and gender (Brown, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Daly, 2005; Gillman, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). The position of men in the feminist classroom is also discussed (Breeze, 2007; Edwards, 2008) as well as those teachers who are heterosexual teaching queer theory (Rabinowitz, 2002). Articles in relation to lesbian positions in the classroom are included as well (Brueggemann & Moddelmog, 2002; Pryor, 2006; Rabinowitz, 2002; Seymour, 2007).

Summary

Voice as understood through speech or silence, the centrality of lesbian identity as fluid and constantly changing, power relations and positionality as it intersects with the social aspects of the classroom are three important notions for this study in relation to lesbian health educators and authenticity. These three notions are building blocks for this research and embed *a* lesbian standpoint pedagogical lens throughout the study. The following section a discussion of authenticity. Authenticity continues to build upon the notions of the understanding and constructing the "self". The journey of authenticity informs the theoretical viewpoint of this study as it provides a sense of who one is in the world.

Authenticity

Authenticity is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon" (Kreber et. al., 2007, p. 40). The dimension of authenticity that is the focal point in the literature and is central to this study is the concept and creation of who we are as individuals living, interacting and becoming in the larger world. Authenticity includes at its center the concept self, asking the question, "Who am I" (Guignon, 2004; Taylor, 1991). In reviewing the literature on the development of an authentic "self", one could suggest a parallel with feminism in relation to the importance of how the self is described and defined in relation to the development of the identification of woman or lesbian. Therefore, to be consistent with the theoretical viewpoint, a brief overview of authenticity from a historical perspective using the concept "self" is provided. A review of visibility of sexual orientation in relation to authenticity follows which includes the discussion of the notions of the closet and coming out. The discussion then turns to the journey of authenticity for teachers by providing information on self, others, and context inherent in working towards authenticity in the classroom. Each construct is introduced followed by a discussion of the LGBTQ educator may navigate each in the classroom.

Authenticity: A Historical Review

In order to get a better understanding of the concept authenticity it is necessary to begin with a historical overview of how this concept evolved over time. Guignon (2004) traces the development of authenticity beginning in the Eighteenth Century through to the role of authenticity in society today in his book, *On Being Authentic: Being in Action.* Guignon provides a detailed look at how premodern and modern philosophers viewed authenticity through notions of the 'self' as a "contained, bounded individual, a center of

experience and will, with no essential or defining relations to anything or anyone outside oneself" (p. 108). The self becomes a subject and is defined as an inner space or field of consciousness having the capabilities of determining its own course of action. It is capable of self-reflection and of self-consciousness, it is distinct from everything outside of itself and has the main goal to achieve self-fulfillment or self-actualization (Guignon, 2004). This earlier notion of self parallels the fixed category of the self or the fixed identity woman or lesbian as described previously in feminist theory.

In contrast, the postmodern perspective of "self" involves the de-centering of the subject and parallels the literature in postmodern feminist theory regarding the fluid and multidimensional self. The postmodern view of self in regards to the authenticity literature suggests that "the 'self' is always culturally and linguistically conditioned" (Guignon, 2004, p. 118). Therefore, if we are culturally and linguistically conditioned we must then turn to how the social interacts and develops the notion of "self". Guignon makes the connection of self and social via a discussion of the dialogical self as described by a Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin. The dialogical self "calls attention to the way that much of our ordinary experience and thought takes the form of a dialogue… the dialogical nature of experience then suggests that we experience the world through a 'We' before we experience it through an "I" (p. 120-121). Taylor (1991) also describes humans as "fundamentally dialogical characters" in that "we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression" (p. 33). Language in Taylor's view is inclusive of all modes of expression including verbal and nonverbal.

The constant quest for understanding of self is socially constructed and changes with time. Taylor goes on to suggest that reflection by the individual is important to authenticity as "defining myself means finding what is significant in my difference from others" (p. 35-36). Taylor then describes this reflection as the "horizons of significance" (p. 37). The term "horizon" brings emphasis to those things that "take on importance against a background of intelligibility" (p. 37). In my understanding, this would translate to the individual interpretation of sense of self as it relates to what is important or significant in the larger world (horizon). Interestingly when the personal and social are at odds with one another, which becomes more visible; the sense of self or the sense of self in light of the social? Here in lies the conflict with those on the margins of society. Taylor goes on to say that to define ourselves we cannot suppress or deny "the horizons against which things take on significance for us" (p. 37).

In terms of the horizons of significance, Kreber (2010) paraphrases Taylor by saying, "I alone do not determine what is significant… identities should be constructed also around horizons of significance that transcend my own subjectivity, public deliberation of what is significant, over time, may lead to changes in what is considered a shared background of things that matter to us in a society" (p. 184). This suggests that the forces of society have the potential to shape who we are as individuals, unconsciously and consciously, that the larger horizons of significance can be socially deliberated with the potential to change, and that this happens only when the ideal actually matters to society. These intersections of self, social and what matters in society creates the basis for the current understanding of authenticity.

Guignon (2004) provides the outlook which grounds the purpose for this study in terms of authenticity:

> The project of authenticity as a personal undertaking is made possible by a social world in which certain sorts of democratic ideals have emerged, and it impacts on that social world in concrete ways… when the ideal of authenticity is understood in terms of its actual social embodiment, it is clear that being authentic is not just a matter of concentrating on one's own self, but also involves deliberation about how one's commitments make a contribution to the good of the public world in which one is a participant. So authenticity is a personal undertaking insofar as it entails personal integrity and responsibility for self. But it also has a social dimension insofar as it brings with it a sense of belongingness and indebtedness to the wider social context that makes it possible. (p. 163)

It is with this balance of self and society that those in the margins are put in difficult situations in terms of working towards authenticity. How can those in the margins journey towards authenticity in light of the discrimination they may receive from the majority who may not accept them or might not care? These are the situations that create a difficult journey towards authenticity as LGBTQ individuals must decide when and how to make visible their identity of difference into the mainstream of a heterosexist society. How can the LGBTQ individuals make sexual orientation matter to those that do not care?

In order to begin to unpack this notion of authenticity towards self and society, visibility of sexual orientation must be addressed. The point of contention here is the notion that the LGBTQ identities are invisible until made visible in a society that makes

heterosexuality the norm, the rule, and the standard (Cipriani, 2009). The next section highlights the notion of visibility or invisibility of sexual orientation in terms of the journey towards authenticity.

Visibility of sexual orientation. The visibility of sexual orientation is central to this study. Sexual orientation is a faceless phenomenon, it is an invisible part of one's identity. The journey one travels to make this invisible identity visible could be discussed as journeying towards authenticity, a journey towards becoming part of and belonging to society. This section focuses on the notions of the closet and coming out for the LGBTQ individual in order to explain the visibility of sexual orientation.

The notion of the closet and coming out are intricately intertwined within the LGBTQ community. Due to the heteronormative nature of society, the closet is a metaphor that is used to describe an LGBTQ person's specific behaviors to hide or reveal his or her sexual orientation (Drescher, 2009). Thus a person may be described as being in the closet or out of the closet. The notion of the closet presents a dual relationship of "inside and outside, of invisible and visible, in which the gay or lesbian individual must risk the dangers of a heterosexist individual, family, community, or police in order to be visible as gay (Drabinski, 2009, p. 233).

Sedgwick (1990) discusses the language of the closet as acts of speech that can be heard via verbalization of words or via acts of silence. Sedgwick suggests that there is a "vicinity of the closet" (p.3) meaning that there are different variations and definitions of how one is in, out, and around that which society deems to be the closet. This notion correlates to the running theme in this study of fluidity and dynamic reality of the life and journeying towards learning more about self and how individuals interact and stand in

society. Sedgwick sees 'closetedness' as a "performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence – not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularly by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it" (p. 3). Silence to some could be construed as inauthentic. In addition, coming out could take on a negative form in that others may feel they have the right to "out" the person that revealed their sexual orientation in a given moment. Thus when one does disclose sexual orientation, the closet may take on a different form and has the potential to become a glass closet as others take it upon themselves to out the person that came out to someone else (Toynton, 2006). This suggests the fluid and sometimes volatile notion of the closet as being dynamic.

Coming out of the closet is then acknowledging one's sexual identity to self and others. The developmental models of sexual orientation have shown the coming out process in terms of stages and are discussed in depth in the next foundational section. Coming out of the closet, "although sometimes painful, offers the possibility of greater self-awareness and integration" (Drescher, 2009, p.246) as those that have come out to self and others use phrases like "coming home" or "discovering who I really am" (p. 248).

The following quote demonstrates the feelings of inauthenticity and the feelings involved with silence and discrimination in the LGBTQ population:

> We long only to speak out and to hear the truth, yet time and again, from fear of loss or hope of gain, from dull habit or from cruel deliberation, we speak half-truths, we twist facts, we are silent when others lie, and we lie to ourselves. Whether we are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning, family or

> friends, we sometimes feel forced to pretend to be that which we are not, to present ourselves in ways which are not truthful, and sometimes with outright lies (Adapted from the siddur of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 2007).

Speaking, hearing, fearing, hoping, half truths, silence and lies are notions that bring forth the dilemma that LGBTQ individuals are faced with in terms of living a life in congruence with society. LGBTQ individuals at times do not feel that they can come out of the closet, some choose to stay in the closet. Adrienne Rich (1979) discusses the toll that staying in the closet may take on individuals path towards being authentic in her book *Lies, Secrets, and Silence*.

> To lie habitually, as a way of life, is to lose contact with the unconscious… in speaking of lies, we come inevitably to the subject of truth. There is nothing simple or easy about this idea. There is no 'the truth' – truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity. The pattern of the carpet is a surface. When we look closely, or when we become weavers, we learn of the tiny multiple threads unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet. This is why the effort to speak honestly is so important. (p. 187)

Coming out of the closet is considered a journey of "becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or gender identity and beginning to disclose it to others. A person may be selectively 'out' in some situations or to certain people without generally disclosing his or her sexual orientation or gender identity" (Bochenek & Brown, 2001, p.xiii). Continually coming out is viewed by D'Augelli (1991) as a fluid process influenced by personal subjectivities and actions, interactions with others, and sociohistorical connections. Coming out is then a lifetime, dynamic journey.

Authenticity and Teaching

Trustworthiness, honesty, genuineness, caring, and helpfulness are adjectives that have been used when discussing the authenticity of teaching (Brookfield, 2006; English, 2006; Kreber, Klampfleeitner, McCune, Bayne, & Knottenbelt, 2007). Full disclosure, personhood, and credibility are concepts that are used to describe authenticity in the classroom (Brookfield, 2006). Therefore, authenticity can be described as a multifaceted concept (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004) that is an intriguing and compelling idea (Kreber, 2010). Authenticity is referred to as a process, a journey, and a project of becoming that we strive to achieve (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Guignon, 2004; Kreber, 2010).

Authenticity has also been suggested to be inherently messy and difficult to define (Cranton, 2006). Combining the above adjectives, descriptors and processes, authors have been able to provide a sense for how authenticity might be defined. Authenticity has been defined as a notion of being-one's self and of caring for the sake of others and of being directed towards the ground of the sense/meaning of our life as humans (Heidegger, 1962 as sited in Brooks, 2009). Authenticity is used in the context of spirituality as Tisdell (2003) defines an authentic identity as "one's deepest spirit" or a "core self". Cranton and Carusetta (2004) define authenticity as "knowing and understanding the collective and carefully, critically determine how we are different from and the same as the collective" (p. 4). In order to understand this experience of authenticity in teaching three constructs are discussed within the authenticity literature specifically related to teaching: self, others, and context.

Self. Working towards authenticity in the classroom is a developmental process that involves the articulation of one's values, the congruence between values and actions,

and a passion for teaching (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). The road to self is emotional, fluid, and ever changing and we must keep in mind that, "The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching – and living – becomes." (Palmer, 1996, p. 5). Parker (1996) describes discovering the self as becoming more real and acknowledging the whole person. The discovery of self is consistent with the sexual identity development models which are discussed in the next foundation section.

Sexual identity development of LGBTQ individuals (Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1994; King, 2003; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1979) can be directly linked to the journey towards finding an authentic self. At the core of sexual identity development models is the idea of working towards understanding identity. King proposes that LGBTQ individuals go through continual changes throughout life which value multiple interpretations of sexual orientation or identity. There are four "framing perspectives" which are: LGBTQ exists, coming out to yourself, coming out to others, and valuing and embracing different journeys (King, 2003). The framing perspectives embody a journey towards authentic self or authentic identity.

Authentic identity is defined as "one's deepest spirit" or a "core self" by Tisdell (2003) based on a study of how spirituality informs the work of 31 educators. Authentic identity encompasses the notion of individual and the effect of social on individual identity development. The search for authentic identity seems to be a lifelong continual process in which individuals "move towards" the understanding of core self. Tisdell acknowledges that individuals do not arrive at authenticity (if so this would evoke essentialism) and that claiming absolute authenticity cannot be attained. Therefore, the

understanding of core self is a journey of "ongoing personal identity development" (Tisdell, 2000).

As LGBTQ educators journey toward authenticity some may allow their LGBTQ identity to emerge in the classroom. This combination is emotional for some teachers. Dirkx (2006) discusses the emotional context with which adult education is entrenched. Teachers enter the classroom with their own set of beliefs and often become emotionally intertwined with the learners. As the teacher provides information in class students may challenge that information. When an idea of the teacher is challenged, teachers may become emotionally involved by taking the challenge personally. For example, if an LGBTQ teacher uses LGBTQ literature as an assignment, student(s) may take a discriminatory stance on the literature. The LGBTQ teacher may feel personally challenged and it is difficult not become emotionally involved during an exchange involving your "self".

Although difficult, it is with this exchange of emotions that the heart and soul of teaching can be found (Dirkx, 2006). LGBTQ teachers may avoid situations of emotional challenge in the classroom by not coming out or infusing LGBTQ materials into assignments or they can choose to navigate the emotional rollercoaster of sexual orientation by infusing it into the classroom.

Others. The awareness of others involves an open mind towards all students in the classroom. Each student enters the classroom with a set of beliefs, experiences, learning styles, and needs (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). Being aware of differences creates understanding and interest in students' lives and needs inside and outside of the classroom. This point brings us back to the idea of positionality in the classroom. Each

student and the teacher have positions of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and other socially significant dimensions (Maher & Tetrault, 2001). While the teacher cannot possibly begin to understand all positions, he or she can provide an open environment for acknowledgement and inclusion of all positions. This openness is linked to having an awareness of others determining a social dimension of authentic teaching (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). The social dimension also involves connecting with learners and creating relationships.

Fostering authenticity within relationships with students involves being aware of the relationship between teacher and student. This awareness includes providing care and concern for the students, helping them to learn, and engage in dialogue (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). Teachers concerned with relationships with others are more likely to share aspects of self (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Frego, 2006).

Frego (2006) believes that "no relationship can be positive and productive if the participants are not genuine" (p. 42). If each person in the teacher / student relationship is honest and has good intentions authentic exchanges are believed to occur. A combination of attending to student needs, clear expectations, caring, and empowerment are ways in which Frego attempts to provide an authentic experience for her students.

Brookfield (2006) provides the concepts of congruence, full disclosure, responsiveness, and personhood through the lens of power which promotes an authentic student / teacher relationship. Authenticity is congruence of words and actions of a teacher. Authenticity entails full disclosure of expectations, agendas and assumptions that guide practice. Authenticity involves responsiveness (Grimmet & Neufeld, 1994) that demonstrates the teachers' capability to provide what they believe is in the best

interest of the student. Personhood enables students to view teachers as human beings with lives outside of the classroom. These four concepts have the ability to foster authenticity.

LGBTQ educators are at odds with becoming genuine due to the heterosexist environment in the classroom. The following statement characterizes this issue, "I began to realize that one of the underlying issues here is relational: Who I am and how I feel is not just about me in a vacuum. It is about me in relationship to others, and them in relationship to me. And this relationship can shift by something as simple as using a different pronoun when referring to one's spouse" (Evans, 2002, p. 3).

Brookfield (2006) talks about disclosure only in relation to the teaching process itself. He does not take this a step further to include disclosure of sexual orientation. Jackson (2007) completed a study of k – 12 teachers and one of the participants suggested that they monitored the student's responses to how she taught, trying to read the students and see if they figured out that she was gay. When the teacher stopped reading into every reaction of the students and stopped worrying about herself she was able to focus more on the students and their learning. This allowed her teaching and the students learning to come to a new level - a level we may describe as genuine.

Context. Context is typically thought of in terms of time, place, and the social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Context in teaching is described by Cranton (2006) as including: (1) the structure of knowledge in the discipline (2) the institution with which we work, (3) the communities and groups that we identify ourselves with, and (4) within the broader state or society that provides a worldview. Teachers who strive for authenticity strive to understand the context with which learning takes place. The context

of authenticity is played out in the value systems and power structures of the classroom. Hunt (2006) discusses the institutional context of being authentic and includes structural constraints, policy constraints, and social constraints. Lin (2006) includes factors such as culture, class, gender, age, generation, background, profession and race as shaping context in authenticity. The intersection of the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual context of each person can flow or collide in the classroom experience when discussing context. The extent to which a teacher becomes aware of context provides the authentic sense within the teaching / learning exchange. Understanding context is integral to the authenticity of LGBTQ teachers in the classroom. I use the four levels of context as proposed by Cranton (2001) in order to provide an idea of what context looks like for the LGBTQ educator.

The structure of knowledge in the curriculum can be freeing or stifling for the LGBTQ educator. Jackson (2007) interviewed nine K – 12 LGBTQ teachers and found that teaching about the subject matter was a gateway for coming out. A participant stated that being gay helped her teach her content because she knows all about it and her passion for the students to become aware of and inclusive of LGBTQ issues. In contrast, a teacher who does not want to come out in the classroom may be stifled by teaching about sexual orientation or providing content inclusive of sexual orientation because they do not want to give anything about themselves away.

The community and groups that we identify with enable authenticity via context as well. I am going to embed community and groups with the broader state and society due to the impact that the broader state and society has on the LGBTQ community. The broader state or society with which the LGBTQ teachers work is discussed in the next

section. Higher education is a reproduction of the heterosexist world view (Khayatt, 1992; Clarke, 1998) therefore the college campus has not traditionally been a welcoming environment for people of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) orientation (D'Augelli & Rose, 1990). As an example, Tomlinson and Fassinger (2003) found that students felt that there was a cold campus climate for LGBTQ people while Irwin (2002) found that homophobic harassment and treatment were widespread amongst the lesbian, gay men, and transgender teachers, academics, and educators. Russ, Simonds and Hunt (2002) found that students perceive a gay teacher as significantly less credible than a straight teacher. The research continually provides a base of homonegativity in the higher education environment creating a continual barrier making it difficult for LGBTQ educators to be authentic. In addition to self, others, and context, is the consideration of the visibility of the teachers sexual orientation in the classroom.

Visibility of sexual orientation in the classroom. Coming out in terms of the classroom could be considered "moving towards" one's authentic self as a teacher. The continual assertion of coming out can be empowering yet exhausting in the classroom. Each interaction must be reassessed and a decision has to be made as to whether it is safe to come out. Rasmussen (2004) purports that people's ability to continuously negotiate their identity is necessarily mediated by varying circulations of power relating to age, family background, economic position, and race. This statement of power parallel's Foucault's idea that power is circulating everywhere and is related to how knowledge is constructed (as cited in Brookfield, 2005). Power is also part of the education landscape that shapes the academic climate for gay and lesbian educators.

The reason for coming out in the classroom has been documented by most teachers as directly related to the facilitation of students' learning (Beck, 1983; Bettinger, Timmins, and Tisdell, 2006; Khayatt, 1997). Beck (1983) eloquently states self-disclosing in the following statement: "telling seems important at any given moment when it is most congruent with and most organic to the teaching act" (p. 291). The disclosure of sexual orientation is dependent upon context of teacher's life, the institution in which the teacher is teaching, the learners, and the course content (Bettinger, Timmins, and Tisdell, 2006). Upon consideration of the above concepts one may ask how the lesbian educator works towards fusing a multilayered, authentic identity in the classroom.

Coming out in the classroom provides meaningful exchanges for the teacher and the student. The act of coming out in the classroom rests on the following assumptions: (1) LGBTQ students are gratified and encouraged to see an LGBTQ teacher, (2) the LGBTQ teacher becomes a role model, (3) being out unsettles heterosexism of an institution reducing the hierarchy, (4) not to come out reinforces institutionalized homophobia, and (5) coming out provides dialogue in class decreasing student bias (Jackson, 2007; Russ, Simonds, Hunt, 2002; Wright, 1993). There are a myriad of reasons why a teacher may come out in a given setting with authenticity as a possible underlying force.

The reason to come out and the way in which teachers do come out in the classroom have been problematized in the literature (Rasmussen, 2004). There are no easy or obvious answers as to how people come out in the classroom (Braun and Victoria, 2009). How teachers come out and the definition of "out" in the classroom is arrived at in many ways. Coming out in the classroom has been discussed directly by using a

declarative statement of "I am…" (Silin, 1999). Silin suggests that coming out is a "matter of integrity, of encouraging the authentic voices I hoped my students would assume in their own classes" (p. 96).

Khayatt (1997) explains that declaring in the classroom "I am gay" only categorizes her into a place of socially constituted and acquired meaning in space and time. This defining and categorizing creates a less authentic place for Khayatt:. "I write about my sexuality, I think about it, I constantly assign articles and books on sexuality and education in the classes I teach, and I put my own work in the bibliographies I give students who enroll in my classes (p. 131)." Khayatt is authentically out by her writings and actions not by a declarative statement.

Miller and Lucal (2009) discuss (in)visibility politics in their decisions to come out or keep the students guessing by not coming out. For example, Miller is a "masculine" woman who embodies the heterosexual assumption that she is a lesbian but she does not come out with an "I am" statement because she wants to keep the students "guessing" about her identity. She refers to this as a "confusing" identity (p. 265). This confusing identity suggests that invisibility is a teachable moment as it problematizes heteronormativity by creating an "unmarked" lesbian as their teacher disrupting normative discourse.

Summary

In conclusion, coming out can be directly related to the dimensions of authenticity proposed by Cranton and Carusetta (2004) and Kreber (2010). The explanations of both are very similar: Coming out is viewed as a fluid process influenced by personal subjectivities and actions, interactions with others, and sociohistorical connections

(D'Augelli, 1991) while authenticity is a process that develops over time involving experience, self-exploration, and reflection (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). Kreber (2010) provides the sense of struggle by using coming out as a metaphor for authenticity.

"The most valuable learning that people experience often happens when they are forced to consider perspectives, information and realities they would prefer to avoid" (Brookfield, 2006). The notion of involving self and others in the learning process involves risk. Apps (1996) describes this risk as beginning to touch the core of who you are; for "to be authentic, the educator is bold, dares to take risks, and recognizes that he or she will not always win over the people" (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004, p. 8).

In the end, journeying toward authenticity is meant to "make individuals more whole, more integrated, more fully human, more aware, more content with their personal and professions lives, their actions more clearly liked to purpose, 'empowered', better able to engage in community with others, and so forth" (Kreber et al., 2007). This is the challenge for everyone, including LGBTQ individuals.

Identity of Lesbian and Sexual Orientation

The path to understanding the identity of lesbians has many dimensions. These dimensions include defining what is meant by the word lesbian, the concept of sexual orientation, particularly the essentialist versus social constructivist debate, and lesbian identity development. This section begins to link authenticity with lesbian identity as each can be viewed as a journey in which an individual continues to work towards.

Identity of Lesbian

There continues to be a fluidity of definitions with which lesbian individuals identify (Wilton, 1995). The following quote distinguishes the issues of definition and categorization of lesbian identity.

> "Arriving at a working definition of lesbian is fraught with difficulty and contradiction. There is no consensus about what defines or even characterizes a lesbian. The word is variously understood and positioned within a multiplicity of paradigms; the moral, the mystical/religious, the juridical, the scientific, the medical, the political, and the social… a product of the shifting relationships among individual subjectivity, the body and the social (including kinship networks, subcultural groups, etc.) and of meanings constituted by and in those relationships. Such activities are characterized by activity and rapid change with a result that lesbian is a word in constant flux." (Wilton, 1995, pp. 29-30).

The definition of lesbian is then considered to be in a state of fluidity lending itself to the ideas of feminist poststructuralism.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation at times is simply defined by the gender of one's partner (Rothblum, 2000) or more in depth by describing it as the "complexity of human sexual, affectional, and erotic attractions" (Garnets, 2000, p. 115). Sexual orientation is often discussed as one thread of a person's identity. Other threads of identity include culture, age, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and disability (Garnets, 2000; Tisdell, 2003).

The development of sexual orientation, as an aspect of identity, has been researched extensively. Sexual identity has been researched through biological studies

(DeLamater & Hyde, 1998) and hypothesized through stage models (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979), life span models (D'Augelli, 1994), and most recently via transformative learning (King, 2003 & 2009). One of the most contested debates surrounding sexual orientation particularly by those informed by feminism is the notion of sexual orientation as an essentialist perspective or as socially constructed. This debate ranges from a simple explanation of a fixed, innate sexual orientation to a more complex discussion of sexual orientation as a cultural, societal, political construct which is fluid and constantly changing. Therefore the first part of this section focuses on the underlying debate as to whether the sexual orientation of lesbians is a fixed aspect of identity (an essentialist perspective) or if sexual orientation is a socially constructed portion of identity. I provide the basic tenets of essentialism and social constructivism and then how each deals explicitly or implicitly with sexual identity. Inherent in this debate is the understanding of the development of identity and identity politics: thus there is a brief discussion of both.

Essentialism. The most fundamental definition of essentialism is described as an aspect of a person that is innate and biologically inherited, therefore, constant across time and history. Some essentialist properties include: (1) a belief in underlying true forms or essences, (2) a discontinuity between different forms rather than continuous variation, and (3) the absence of change over time (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Calhoun (1993) would describe this as a naturalistic essentialism: an example being the biological description of having five fingers and five toes. Other definitions include a deeper more complex understanding of essentialism by describing "a belief in true essence – that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or

thing" (Fuss, 1989, p. 2). This would be described as a universal essentialism (Calhoun, 1993). Universal essentialism also creates a constant across time and history: however, the constant is attributed to the presocial, intrinsic nature of terminology and language, not the biological. For example, homosexuals have existed over time and throughout history therefore homosexuality would be considered a social fact thus universally essential. Homosexuality and the development of sexual orientation have been viewed as both naturalistic and universal.

Sexual orientation as naturalistic essentialism. Naturalistic essentialism continues to be one of the underlying assumption of sexual orientation for many different fields of study in Western society today including psychology (Bohan, 1993; Bohan & Russel, 1999; Gergen, 1985), political debates (Calhoun, 1993; Ortiz, 1993) and health education (Irvine, 1995) to name a few. For example, psychology's foundation has been shaped through the essentialist lens, grounded in the presumption of the ability to discover and describe the true lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer (LGBTQ) experience (Bohan & Russell, 1999). Politically, the ability to cite biological causes for sexual orientation would provide a concrete argument to provide equal rights for LGBTQ people (Calhoun, 1993; Ortiz, 1993; Veniegas & Conley, 2000). Health teachers and other health and human professionals still contend that sexual orientation is a deep and natural part of people (Irvine, 1995).

Empirical studies have been completed with the intent of proving that sexual identity exists as a fixed or biologically based entity. The scientific research geared specifically to lesbians involve genetic coding of twins (Bailey & Pillard, 1995; Bailey, Pillard, Neale, & Agyei, 1993; Bailey, Dunne, & Martin, 2000), levels of circulating

hormones in women (Dancey, 1990; Downey, Ehrhanrdt, Schiffman, Dyrenfurth, & Becker, 1987; Griffiths et al., 1974), and genetic markers (Hu et al., 1995).

Bailey, Pillard, Neale, and Agyei (1993) studied sets of female twins searching for a genetic similarity. The sample consisted of 71 sets of identical, female twins, 37 sets of fraternal, female twins, and 35 females with adoptive sisters. This study found a positive link to homosexuality in women finding 48% of the identical twins were both lesbians, 16% of the fraternal twins were both lesbians, and 6% of adoptive sisters were both lesbians. A second study was completed by Bailey, Dunne and Martin (2000) and provides contradictory results. The sample included 668 female identical twins and 376 female fraternal twins. The hypothesis in this case was that there would be a higher rate of homosexuality among identical twins due the identical genetic make-up rather than fraternal twins which have less of the same genetic make-up than identical twins. The findings showed no statistical significance between the two groups. Although the results of the two studies may seem contradictory, the increasing rates of identical and fraternal twin pairs could be considered genetic grounding for sexual orientation. While the higher rate of same sexual orientation of identical twins might indicate a genetic influence, the fact that more than half did not have the same sexual orientation indicates that social factors play a strong influence.

The most influential evidence to determine sexual orientation is by studying genetic markers, otherwise known as sections of DNA. Hu et al. (1995) is the only study to research women's genetic markers. Participants included both gays and lesbians that had a same-sex sibling with a homosexual orientation. The results indicated that there

was no correlation for lesbians and their sisters while gay men and their brothers proved statistically to have the genetic marker (Xq28).

Although the studies show progress towards the finding of a so called "gay gene", the genetic code for homosexuality has been indicated in gay men but not lesbians. Veniagas and Conley (2000) call for additional studies of female homosexuality stating that one study cannot produce solid evidence that it is not a genetic trait. This continues the search for the "truth" of the essentialist viewpoint. This lack of verification resulting from testing the biological development of sexual orientation leads to the idea of sexual orientation as an essence or universality of human beings.

Sexual orientation as universal essentialism. Universal essentialism describes the development of sexual orientation as a pre-social element, existing throughout time and location. The assumption then would be that there have been lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people throughout history. The universal essentialism explanation of sexual orientation is described as the internal drive or essence of that person much the same as gender, race, or ethnicity would be considered as an essence of one's identity. This identity has also been referred to as the "unitary self" and described as "integrated, rational, authentic, and self-conceiving" (Clark & Dirkx, 2000, p. 101). This core essence is viewed by a participant in a study on lesbian identities conducted by Esterberg (1999), who explains:

> I felt there was something fundamentally a part of my essence that I had to hone, in my own psychological health. Socially, I could have been heterosexual. Psychologically, I think I have always been a lesbian… And at this point in my

life, my lesbian identity is absolutely clear. It's as much a part of me as having brown eyes. (p. 3)

Essence is a term that is used often in the essentialist debate but is difficult to define. Fuss (1989) defines essence as an "invariable and fixed property which defines the "whatness" of an individual" (p. xi). Fuss generalizes that lesbian theory has been rooted in the idea that there is a "lesbian essence". This essentialist stance by lesbian theorists is due in part to the "degree to which a particular political group has been culturally oppressed" (p. 98). The double oppression of being woman and lesbian would seem to create a less secure position for women within the understanding of identity than the dominant male population. This double oppression is derived from a heterosexist, patriarchal world and is described by Rich (1980) as compulsory heterosexuality.

Rich (1980) called attention to the lack of recognition of homosexuality by feminist theorists in the early 1980's. Fuss (1989) generalizes that lesbian theory assumes the position of lesbian essence in the late 1980's. Both generalizations are considered to be political constructions of lesbianism. Both generalizations move the individual into the social realm. Both generalizations are based on the idea of identity politics.

Identity politics are described by Fuss (1989) as the "tendency to base one's politics on a sense of personal identity" (p. 97). Identity politics then would promote lesbian or gay activism through the concept of the "lesbian essence". In contrast, lesbian theory of the 21st century has moved from the essentialism towards constructionism. Lesbian identity is now thought to be developed through a multiplicity of discourses (Fuss, 1989).

Sexual Identity Development

Sexual identity development has been discussed through stage models (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979), life span models (D'Augelli, 1994: McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), and transformative learning models (King, 2003 & 2009). All models in their own way define development of sexual orientation through the coming out process. The coming out process is described as "becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or gender identity and beginning to disclose it to others" (Bochenek & Brown, 2001, p. xiii). Coming out is a process that takes place over time depends on context and could take many years.

The stage models (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979) create individual steps in which gays and lesbians work towards the ultimate goal of coming out in society. These models take individuals through a series of stages that ultimately have a beginning and an end. The end is when the individual arrives at a new found homosexual identity forming an autonomous, total self (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). For example, Cass (1979) developed a six staged model including the following different stages: (1) Identity Confusion, (2) Identity Comparison, (3) Identity Tolerance, (4) Identity Acceptance, (5) Identity Pride, and (6) Identity Synthesis.

The life span models allow identity to develop through relationships with others over time and provide more of a social constructivist viewpoint (Edwards & Brooks, 1999). D'Augelli (1994) for example, provides the notion that lesbians and gays develop identity in three ways: (1) the person's feelings and behaviors towards sexual identity, (2) interactions with family and peers, and (3) socio-historical connections relating to legal, political, and social norms.

More recent lesbian identity models have placed emphasis on how the individual identity develops in conjunction with group identity (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). For example, McCarn and Fassinger (1996) propose the lesbian identity formation occurs in four phases as a continuous phenomenon throughout life. The four phases include awareness, exploration, deepening commitment and internalized/sythesis. This model places emphasis on social context and relationships in development. The changing landscape of social context allows for fluidity that expands lesbian identity development from the understanding of only biological explanations of sexual identity to the multiplicity of the interactions of individual and social.

The LGBTQ Transformative Learning Model (LGBTQ TL Model) is a multidimensional model that provides various stages of understanding (King, 2003). This approach allows for continual changes to occur throughout life which value multiple interpretations of sexual orientation or identity. It encompasses four "framing perspectives" which are: LGBTQ exists, coming out to yourself, coming out to others, and valuing and embracing different journeys (King, 2009). The framing perspectives are believed to have fluid and dynamic relationships. The experiences of coming out never cease to exist due to the changing context, climate, risk, and response of each situation. King (2009) summarizes the model by that LGBTQ individuals will "continually, reflectively, and authentically… explore new understandings and constructions" (p. 147).

The characteristics of changing context, climate, risk, response, reflectivity and authenticity describe many facets of the underlying purposes of this study as it relates to the feminist framework. The inclusion of individual and social creates space to explore a

more fluid view of lesbian identity. The stage models and life span models provided a base with which to begin research. The social constructionist perspective enhances identity development theories and the transformative learning model provides the connection of social with context. As research continues there is a call for a deeper understanding of lesbian identity due to the complexity and multiplicity of women's identity (Baumeister, 2000; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; Esterberg, 1997; Peplau & Garnets, 2000).

Fluidity and sexual identity. In the postmodern era, the unitary self ceases to exist due to the multiple ways of learning, the many different truths throughout time, and the complex ways of conceptualizing the self. Clark and Dirkx (2000) suggest that "we are exposed to many more competing belief systems, many more ways of seeing the world and we experience ourselves as fragmented and often under siege" (p. 105). Esterberg (1997) further purports that due to this postmodern era, some women describe their identities as "essentially fluid, changing, over the life course in response to changing contexts and circumstances" (p. 3).

This fluidity has been researched using questionnaires and models. For example, Rust (1992) used a questionnaire to retrieve data from 365 lesbian and bisexual-identified women. The questions consisted of their sexual identity histories, behaviors, and feelings of sexual attractions. The findings included the following statistics: (1) only one third of lesbian-identified respondents stated that they were 100 percent attracted to women, (2) 76 percent responded that homosexual relationships were common, although not universal, (3) 90 percent of respondents had been involved in a heterosexual relationship in the past, and (4) 43 percent had heterosexual relationships since identifying themselves

as lesbians. Diamant, Schuster, McGuigan, and Lever (1999) retrieved data from 6,935 self identified lesbians across the United States: 77 percent of respondents reported that they had one or more male sex partners throughout their lives.

The pluralizing of sexual identity to sexual identities would suggest a poststructural viewpoint, transcending the singular term of sexual identity. For instance, some women are only attracted to women and are only with women, other women may be attracted to women but do not act on this attraction and therefore are in a relationship with a man, yet others are attracted to both women and men. With this in mind, women's sexual identity is considered to be a fluid and ever changing aspect of self. This thought process would place women's sexual identities on a continuum.

Khayatt (2002) strengthens this assumption by adding that identity is relational and that her identity as a lesbian educator is "fluid". Although a woman may be in a relationship with another woman, she may not feel as though her thoughts and desires (although not acted upon) fit into the category of "lesbian". This would again link the lesbian label back to identity politics. Regardless if one is considered a lesbian by a political label, a person's location and learning within the label/category is fluid and changes. Fluidity then is a result of the multiple combinations of competing belief systems, different views of the world, social constructs of homonegativity, and the notion of core self or the lack of core self.

Summary

It is with this intersection of competing belief systems and social constructs of homonegativity that provides the need for the next foundational section dealing with sexual orientation as it is viewed in a broader sense (national and collegiate belief

systems) and how these beliefs systems are played out in the adult and higher education classrooms which in turn have an effect on sense of self in the classroom.

Sexual Orientation in Adult Education and Health Education

In order to provide a holistic viewpoint of sexual orientation, an overview of the national and college climate for LGBTQ individuals is explored. This section is followed by reviews of sexual orientation as it relates to Adult Education and Health Education. Lastly, a section called queer pedagogy discusses the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in the classroom.

National and Collegiate Climate

"In the United States today, lesbians, gay men, bisexual women, and bisexual men are stigmatized. They are subject to explicit and subtle discrimination, marginalized or made virtually invisible by many of society's institutions, and often vilified" (Herek, Chopp, & Strohl, 2007, p. 171). This statement provides the uneasiness and caution surrounding the issue of authenticity for the lesbian health educator and ultimate reason for my research. The need to journey towards authenticity as finding and becoming ones true self is difficult to navigate in the discriminatory world in which LGBTQ individuals live.

Discrimination and marginalization are due to the underlying issues of homophobia. Homophobia was first introduced by Weinburg in 1972 as a phenomenon that included antigay hostility or sexual prejudice (as cited in Herek, 2004). Sexual prejudice is a negative attitude based on sexual orientation and produces heterosexism and sexual stigma (Herek, 2004). Heterosexism is a cultural ideology that reinforces and perpetuates negative attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals. Sexual stigma is a shared

knowledge of society's negative regard for any nonheterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community. For LGBTQ individuals "stigma awareness is chronic" (Herek, 2004, p. 171). Stigma awareness is also termed "felt stigma". Felt stigma is the ongoing appraisals of social situations for possible enactments of discrimination or mistreatment. Examples would be when LGBTQ individuals are unsure of the acceptance of their sexual orientation in a work environment and choose not come out. Coming out for them could result in loss of job or respect.

The awareness of felt stigma is a continual force in the lives of LGBTQ individuals. A recent survey of sexual minority adults in the United States (Herek, 2009) assessed the prevalence of felt stigma in a national probability sample of sexual minority individuals. Overall, the study reported that 20% of respondents reported having experienced a person or property crime based on their sexual orientation. Half of the respondents experienced verbal harassment, and more than 1 in 10 reported having experienced employment or housing discrimination. More importantly over half of the respondents experienced some degree of "felt stigma" related to their sexual orientation making them subject to stressors that heterosexuals do not experience (Herek, 2009). It is the culmination of heterosexiam, sexual prejudice, sexual stigma, and felt stigma that make it difficult to navigate identity as a sexual minority individual in society. How do these national statistics found in society play out on the college campus?

Campus climate assessments for LGBTQ individuals began in the late 1980's and early 1990's (Gulley, 2009). Efforts to assess climate for LGBTQ students, faculty, and administration began with the documentation of harassment on campus due to sexual orientation and has evolved into individual universities completing in house climate

assessments. These assessments have determined that "the campus community has not been an empowering place for GLBT people and that anti-GLBT intolerance and harassment has been prevalent" (Rankin, 2003, p. 3). For example, Rankin (2003) completed a campus climate assessment that involved twenty institutions. A survey was used to have participants provide information regarding their experience and perceptions as a member of the GLBT community on a college campus. Results revealed three themes include the oppression of experiences of the LGBT population, perceptions of anti-GLBT oppression on campus, and institutional actions including administrative policies and academic initiatives regarding GLBT issues and concerns. Examples of data are: 1. More than a third of GLBT undergraduate students experienced harassment, 2. 43% rated the overall campus climate as homophobic, and 3. 41% stated that their institution did not address issues related to sexual orientation/gender identity (Rankin, 2003).

In addition to campus climate assessments, there has been much research completed in regards to LGBTQ students on campus (eg. Cress, 2008; Holley, Larson, Adelman, & Trevino, 2007; and Lambert, Ventura, Hall, & Cluse-Tolar, 2006). Cress (2008) found that gay/lesbian students are the most likely to observe and experience prejudice and discrimination within and outside of the classroom. Holley et. al. (2007) found that students reported significantly higher levels of negative attitudes toward and discomfort with LGB individuals. Lambert et.al. (2006) found that junior and senior students had more positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians than did freshmen and sophomores.

The climate assessments and empirical studies do provide an overall viewpoint that the college campus is traditionally an unwelcome and difficult environment for students. One critique of this data is that studies are typically targeting the student population, calling for the need for research in the areas of faculty, staff, and administrators (Gulley, 2009). A second critique is that these studies look at the LGBTQ community as a whole when there are distinct groups of individuals within the label LGBTQ. Therefore, there is a need to look at each group individually. My study will provide information only in regards to lesbian, faculty members.

Sexual Orientation and Adult Education

In light of the narrative nature of this study, it seems fitting to begin this section with a personal story which provides my experiences and a representation of sexual orientation in adult education. The 2005 Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) was my first official adult education event. The conference provided many insights into the world of adult education as I had the chance to attend the third annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgenderered, Queer and Allies (LGBTQ) Pre-Conference. The feeling of belonging, safety and collaboration was incredible.

One of my assignments during the conference was to conduct an interview. Due to my interest in the LGBTQ population, I chose to interview Bob Hill, Associate Professor at the University of Georgia who has written extensively about LGBTQ aspects of adult education. The interview was stimulating and provided much needed direction and positive insight into possible research. At the end of the interview we walked back to the main lobby of the conference where we found a display curtain hiding and isolating an LBGTQ art project that we completed earlier in the conference. In a matter of

seconds, my first impression of this open, safe, and understanding environment of adult education was shattered as I was brought back to the reality of our heterosexist world. Some adult education members did not understand that just tearing the curtain down would not correct the situation but that it would again hide or erase a symbolic representation of how sexual orientation continues to be marginalized.

Grace and Hill (2004) suggests that "a visible and vocal LBGTQ presence is challenging, even threatening, to some AERC participants because queer life… intervenes in the culture-language-power nexus to disrupt dominant power" (p. 171). Changing societal belief systems takes time. Changing the culture and language of an established hegemonic force as heterosexism is difficult even in a field that is progressive. Adult education is changing and challenging yet this still takes time.

The sociocultural context in adult education in regards to sexual orientation is focused on the ability to provide space and understanding, to challenge the heterosexist assumptions of society, to queer the social, and to provide discourse to begin to challenge the status quo (Grace & Hill, 2004). There has been a gradual inclusion of GLBTQ literature within adult education beginning in the mid 90's with an article published in the Adult Education Quarterly by Robert Hill (1995). Three landmark events are highlighted by Hill (2003) and provide the cornerstone for inclusion of sexual orientation into the adult education discourse. The first was the formation of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Allies Caucus (LGBTQ&AC) in 1993 during the 34th AERC. The second was the first LGBTQ&AC Pre-Conference held in 2003 at the 44th AERC. The third and continual force for the inclusion of LGBTQ in adult education was the first LGBTQ-themed paper in 1994 at AERC written by Robert J. Hill. The number of

presentations, papers, and focus for the LGBTQ population in adult education shows the importance of the work that is being completed in this area. Another important consideration in adult education in terms of challenging the status quo and dominant culture is the use of the term queer and the infusion of queer theory (Hill, 2009).

Queer theory in adult education. The term queer represents the "spectral community that incorporates a diversity of sex, sexual, and gender differences (Grace & Hill, 2004). Grace (2001) also defines queerness as ways of being, believing, desiring, becoming, belonging and acting in life and learning spaces. Queer theory tends to focus on the relation between heteronormativity and lesbian or queer agency (Miriam, 2007) seeking to disrupt the discrete, fixed locations of identity by understanding sexuality and its meaning (Talburt, 2000), it can be used as a lens to disrupt and disturb (to queer) educational research implications of sexual identities (Ruffolo, 2005). Queer theory, as a political practice, dismantles the power inequities that are linked to conventional, fixed, uniform definitions or expressions of gender, sex and sexuality (Breen, 2000).

In addition to queer theory, the literature on sexual orientation in adult education discusses the use of counternarratives. Counternarratives are important for this study because of the grounding in standpoint feminism. Voices heard in the study are from lesbian health educators who live in the margins and create counternarratives.

Counternarratives. The notion of counternarrative as authentic knowledge is found in some multicultural education theories (Bergerson, 2003; Brookfield, 2005; Haack, 2000). Counternarratives are life stories from members of marginalized groups which emphasize experiential knowledge as legitimate and appropriate (Bergerson, 2003). These stories are based in a social constructivist paradigm which states that one

must be a member of a particular group (eg. lesbians) in order to possess authentic knowledge of the group. Brookfield (2005) uses Gramsci's term of "organic intellectual" and argues that in order to be an organic intellectual an educator must be a member of the racial or class group concerned. Therefore, within the counternarrative, knowledge continues to be created from a person of a particular race, class, ethnicity, and gender (Tisdell, 1995) and in this case sexual orientation..

The knowledge used as counternarrative pertaining to sexual orientation is described by Hill (1996) as fugitive knowledge. Fugitive knowledge is constructed by LBGTQ people themselves while official knowledge is constructed by outside spectators. Fugitive knowledge is one component of gay discourse and when used in the classroom is considered authentic voice (or counternarrative). From a postmodern/poststructural perspective, it is a "complex contextual, relational, and dispositional knowledge formation" (Grace & Hill, 2004, p. 8). The fugitive perspective can be powerful and authentic when using it as a discourse in the classroom. Disrupting the education curriculum with gay discourse is one pathway for an inclusive curriculum. Coming out in the classroom or being authentic is a form of fugitive knowledge and would be a powerful tool in the classroom for the student or teacher.

Although fugitive knowledge can provide powerful and authentic experiences in the classroom it also provides a contradiction for the teacher if they are LGBTQ and do not feel safe to come out. The contradiction is couched in the idea of needing to coming out to produce fugitive knowledge in a heteronormative, conservative institutions in which we teach. For example, my experience of homosexuality allows me to create counternarrative in the classroom. If the subject of sexual orientation arises in my

classroom I speak passionately about the topic as well as persuasively about the topic but I rarely disclose my sexual orientation. Regardless of coming out or not, I create a counternarrative when speaking about sexual orientation in a classroom setting.

In conclusion, "queer knowledge and interventions inform the practical and political questions that adult educators need to ask as they engage in strategic deconstruction of exclusionary forms of adult education and the construction of inclusionary, transformative pedagogies" (Hill, 2009, p. 35). Adult educators are called to engage in teaching that is inclusive of the queer community in both principle and practice. This engagement translates to adult educators having to "unlearn social lesions and cultural practices that are expressions of a politics of complicity that perpetuates heterosexism and homophobia" (Hill, 2009, p. 37). For becoming aware is the first step to inclusive teaching.

Sexual Orientation and Health Education

Health education is "any combination of planned learning experiences based on sound theories that provide individuals, groups, and communities the opportunity to acquire information and the skills needed to make quality health decisions" (Joint Committee, 2001, p. 99). The primary role of health educators is "to develop, plan, implement, and evaluate appropriate health education/promotion programs for the people that they serve" (Cottrell, Girvan, & McKenzie, 2002, p. 15). Health education covers the continuum from disease prevention to health promotion to the detection of illness to treatment and rehabilitation (Glanz, Rimer, & Lewis, 2002). Health education professionals work in many settings including schools, worksites, voluntary health organizations, medical settings, and communities (Glanz, Rimer, & Lewis, 2002).

The role of the health educator in colleges and universities includes responsibilities such as teaching, community and professional services, and scholarly research (Cottrell, Girvan, & McKenzie, 2002). The role of the general health education teacher in the university classroom is to provide an overall view of issues surrounding the health and well being of the general university or college population and the world at large. One of the changing and challenging issues in health education is the social trends and demographic shifts of the population (Perez & Luquis, 2008). The demographic shifts include population growth, race and ethnicity, foreign-born and immigrant, language, elderly, gender, sexual orientation, and people with disabilities. Specific to my research is the emerging category or culture regarding sexual orientation and lesbians.

The health education field is beginning to recognize LGBTQ health issues. Substance abuse is one of the largest issues common for the LGBTQ communities, followed by depression and mental health issues, and domestic violence (Woodiel & Brindle, 2008). There is also a call for more research concerning each group of the LGBTQ community. For instance, issues surrounding lesbian health begin with homophobia and heterosexism, which provide barriers to education and increased risk factors (Woodiel & Brindle, 2008). Lesbians are less likely to obtain yearly gynecological exams due to issues of coming out or negative experiences from past visits putting them at higher risks for reproductive cancers (Boehmer & Case, 2004). Ultimately, research shows that gay, lesbian, and bisexual people typically do not disclose their sexual orientation to health professionals due to fear of discrimination (Cole, Reece, & Lindeman, 2005), which can create more health issues for this group.

The health education field has been slow to provide resources and research concerning LGBTQ health issues in the schools due to the "controversial nature of the policy-making process surrounding sexuality education, and particularly programs involving sexual orientation" (Rienzo, Button, Sheu, & Li, 2006, p. 93). Sexual orientation falls within the context of the health education curriculum for pre-service teachers but it is under the sexuality education curriculum not in the health education curriculum. Therefore those that are preparing to go into the health field receive information about sexual orientation via sexuality education, a specific human sexuality course, or a cultural competency course. The discussion of self-disclosure and sexual orientation may be threaded within one of the aforementioned courses. However, the research and literature for disclosing sexual orientation in health education in the schools is extremely limited (Woodiel & Brindle, 2008).

The few studies directly related to health education include secondary health teachers (Telljohann, Price, Poureslami, & Easton, 1995), preservice school health educators (Cole, Reece, & Lindeman; Temple & Lyde, 1999), the public school districts and the implemented policy recommendations (Rienzo, Button, & Li, 2006) and a first person account of the illustrations and observations about disclosing sexual orientation (Allen, 1995). Similar results were indicated by each study. One resounding result indicates lower levels of comfort in working with the LGBTQ populations. The results in the studies provided the following recommendations: (1) an increased need for sensitivity education and preparation with preservice health education teachers (Cole, Reece, & Lindeman; Temple & Lyde, 1999), (2) the need to educate existing health educators in the schools about the high risk factors associated with LGBTQ youth and the health

issues and consequences of being LGBTQ in the schools (Telljohann, Price, Poureslami, & Easton, 1995), and (3) the need for schools to implement institutionalized recommended policies or programs concerning the LGBTQ population (Rienzo, Button, & Li, 2006).

On average health education teachers are not prepared for nor want to discuss sexual orientation issues in their classes with students (Temple & Lyde, 1999). There is an assertion that health education preparatory programs need to prepare future health educators who are "capable of affirming the self-concept of each student in each class, regardless of cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, or sexual orientation" (Temple & Lyde, 1999). In response, the health education field is beginning to recognize the lack of diversity in the teacher preparation courses (Luquis, Perez, & Young, 2006) by addressing "cultural competency". "Cultural competency is the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures, and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences…" (Gold & Miner, 2002, p.##). Cultural competency is beginning to address the needs of the LGBTQ population by making health educators cognizant of the differences of cultural groups in regards to health (Perez & Luquis, 2008). In 2006, the American Association for Health Education presented a position statement on cultural competency:

> The American Association for Health Education advocates that health educators must strive to achieve cultural competency by understanding the meaning of culture, its complexity within each group, and its effect on health decisions and practices. The preparation of culturally competent health educators needs to

begin at all institutions offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs in health education.

The health education classroom may seem to be a natural environment for the educator to discuss sexual orientation (Temple & Lyde, 1999). However, a heterosexist worldview, the lack of recognition in the health education preparatory phase, and the inability for schools to address the specific needs of the LGBTQ population creates a conflicting environment for the inclusion of the LGBTQ population. The positionality of the LGBTQ educator is not mentioned in the research. The topic of human sexuality should be taught in the higher education classroom but the question lies in how the LGBTQ educator answers and deals with the issues of the classroom and the issues of navigating an open experience for the students and themselves.

Summary

The climate in the classroom for the LGBTQ individual is difficult at times. This section reviewed the national and collegiate climate and provided an overview of the adult education and health education literature. There is a need to provide an open and safe learning environment for both LGBTQ teachers and students. This type of environment allows a feeling of safety and provides space for authenticity to occur.

Research Relevant to My Study

I begin with seminal works completed in the 90's which focus on lesbians in academia. The second grouping includes different types of teachers including the K-12 teacher, the pre-service teacher and teachers in higher education. A third group consists of adult education studies that focus on other types of positionality in the teaching

experience (race, gender, ethnicity). The last group includes empirical studies that involve authenticity of teachers in the adult education classroom.

Seminal Works

There are two books written that are based on the lives of lesbian teachers: Lesbian Teachers (Khayatt, 1992) and Tilting the Tower (Garber, 1994). The commonality of two books is the lesbian teacher being at the center of each. The books were written in the 90's which was the beginning of visualization for LGBTQ community in education. Each book carries different tones of visibility and acceptance of lesbian teachers.

Khayhatt (1992) published a seminal book based on an ethnographic study of elementary and secondary lesbian teachers. Khayhatt admits that the work for this book was finished in 1987 but she was not ready to publish the book and its context until she felt "relatively safe in speaking out" (p. 5). Relatively safe for Khayhatt was the process of obtaining her doctoral degree, teaching at the university level, the recognition of lesbian and gay rights in the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the fact that many of her students, colleagues and administrators were aware of her sexual orientation. The 80's provided a difficult scenario for recruiting lesbian educators because coming out was unheard of in the school system at that time. There was a "need not to draw attention to her sexuality, not to provoke questions, suspicions, or harassment because of her sexual preference" (p. 6). The purpose of the study was to listen to how lesbian teachers managed their sexual identity within the context of school, the classroom, and the community. The stories of participants began with describing lesbian identity, then flowed into the implications of being out in the classroom, and concluded with the

consequences, dilemmas, differences, and devotion of the teachers. The dance of public knowledge and private knowledge was brought to light as the majority of teachers anticipated a negative reaction if their sexual orientation were to be discovered. Overall, Khayatt found that a lesbian teacher lives life with many dilemmas, the most prominent dilemma is "silence". This silence was summed up in the conclusion of this study in the following words by Khayatt:

> It is the invisibility of her life. It is denials she articulates, the deflections she manages, the defenses she feels compelled to put up… It is the pride she takes in being the best teacher coupled with the shame of having to lie to keep her job. It is the colleagues and students with whom she cannot discuss her life, her good moments, her triumphs, her pain. It is the friends she makes at work but whom she suspects might reject her if they 'knew'… having to describe a way of life, a political perspective, a sexual preference, and not be able to claim it as hers... it is all of this. And more importantly, it is the fundamental inability to identify herself as a lesbian, publicly, generally, continually – not to have to justify her existence, not to have to defend her preference, or to have to explain her life to anyone, and yet to be accepted completely and totally, legitimately and with dignity. (pp. 239-240)

Tilting the Tower was published in 1994 and edited by Linda Garber. As the title suggests, this anthology serves as a needed conversation for lesbian and gay studies (as each was at inception in the late 80's and early 90's) and a way in which teachers can share pedagogies and strategies for professional "survival and success". This is a collection of perspectives written by graduate students to tenured professors, high school

teachers to community college and four-year university professors who are both heterosexual and lesbian. The recognition of positionality is also a strong case in this anthology as well. Chapters include the topics of being change agents in a heterosexist environment, coming out, creating queer pedagogy and being role models for students. This collection suggests that there is opposition to discrimination and something needs to be accomplished. The tone of this book is hopeful as the contributors provide coming out stories as they begin to breakdown the heterosexist environment.

Views from Different Teaching Perspectives

This section includes studies completed in higher education for preservice teachers, primary and secondary gay and lesbian teachers, and autoethnographic studies of individuals teaching experiences in higher education. These studies portray views from different perspectives involving sexual orientation in the classroom.

Pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers have been a source of information and study as antioppressive education continues to evolve (Kumashiro, 2004). Evans (2002) studied four queer pre-service teachers through critical discourse analysis as a methodology. The purpose of the study was to discuss how each teacher has negotiated themselves within the higher education classroom. These negotiations of the self were developed within contexts of the individual (local) and social (global) thus the participants' experiences of family, university, and school portrayed the multiple aspects of the self and shifting identities. The stories shed light on the exhaustive emotional work of belonging in life as a queer individual. Findings indicated that when "queer and teacher meet, borders are reinscribed, bumped up against, and felt. Emotions run high as

selves negotiate in relationship to widely circulating discourses of queerness and teaching" (p. 178).

There are three works specific to health education pre-service teachers (Cole, Reece, & Lindman, 2005; Eyre, 1997; Temple & Lyde, 1999). Eyre (1997) through first person account writes about her experiences in the classrooms as she challenges her prospective health education teachers to think differently. Critical questions about health are asked and attention is made to the silences related to gender, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, and gay and lesbian experience. She provides four "critical episodes" in her teaching. One example includes organizing a panel of gay and lesbian speakers to visit the classroom to discuss sexual orientation to raise the student's awareness of homophobia and heterosexism. For the teacher it was the most moving experience. However, the students asked very few questions and provided negative feedback after the presentation suggesting that the presentation promoted homosexuality and the students could not transfer the knowledge from the presentation to teaching health.

The remaining two studies focus on the perceptions and attitudes of pre-service health teachers. Cole, Reece, and Lindeman (2005) investigated 182 undergraduate and graduate health education/promotion students from nine academic institutions. Homophobia scores were calculated via the Index of Attitudes towards Homosexuals. Results indicated that those with higher homophobia scores were less comfortable working in gay, lesbian, bisexual health. Temple and Lyde (1999) surveyed 102 pre-service school health educators. Results showed that 90% of the teachers expected to teach homosexual students and 70% of them were bothered by the notion while 81% felt

inadequately prepared. While these last two studies do not reflect the LGBTQ educator, they reflect the lack of preparatory work in the health education field.

Primary and secondary teachers. Primary and secondary teachers provide a consistent source for study as well (Jackson, 2006; Khayatt, 1992; Kissen, 1996). As discussed in depth earlier, Khayatt (1992) interviewed eighteen, elementary and secondary teachers who categorized themselves as lesbians with the goal of understanding the silence of the teachers lives.

Jackson (2007) completed a study of nine K – 12 gay and lesbian teachers finding that contextual factors facilitated and inhibited integration of gay and lesbian identities with teacher identities. As the teachers came out in the classroom, they realized that they were better able to articulate and voice the integration of life as teacher and life as a gay person creating one identity instead of multiple identities. The many threads of the teachers' identities (personality, race, age, religion, gender conformity, family status) were discussed and related to the coming out process. All openly gay participants described coming out as making their teaching more authentic and enriching.

Kissen (1996) interviewed 105 gay and lesbian teachers from the primary to the secondary school setting. The purpose of the interviews was to provide space for gay teachers to know they were not alone and to meet some of their gay and lesbian colleagues (via the pages of a book). Kissen also reports on the eagerness of lesbian and gay teacher to tell their stories as she believes that "this eagerness reflects a deep desire for authenticity" (p. 4). The stories include dimensions of identity, coming out (or not), survival and empowerment.

Autobiographical studies. Auto/bio/ethnographic studies (Grace & Benson, 2000; Talburt, 2000; Toynton, 2006; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2005) provide the lived experiences as ways with which sexual orientation has been infused into the classroom. Grace and Benson (2000) use autobiographical queer life narratives to shape teaching in the "intersection of the personal, the political, and the pedagogical" (p. 89). The authors are two queer teachers who work in teacher education. The process of writing the narratives is part of a lifelong process of coming out, of becoming who they are, and belonging to the communities with which they live and work. The process of writing about their own lives is also described as risky business of choosing visibility by communicating aspects of their queer being and acting to others.

Talburt (2000) writes an ethnographic study of three lesbians who are faculty members at a public research institution. The purpose was to shed light on how lesbians make their lives in a society that denies their existence and how institutions of higher education function as sites for the production of knowledge through teaching and research. The stories of the three women provide a sense of voice and context for how they live inside and outside of the institution.

Toynton (2006) and Lengermann and Niebrugge (2005) provide in depth accounts of finding voice and negotiating context. Both discuss being the queer learners and the queer teachers, living through the silence and providing voice to their lives as well as to challenge their students' lives. Toynton (2006) summarizes both eloquently by stating, "Only by challenging and making visible the heteronormativity of the environment can the queer student (or teacher) be allowed to feel that they belong (p. 186)."

Authenticity

There are two works from the authenticity literature that implicitly inform my research (Cranton & Carusett, 2004; Kreber, 2010). Cranton and Carusetta (2004) studied 23 faculty members from three university campuses. Using a grounded theory approach, the researchers used interviews, observations, and focus groups over a three year time span to discern what authentic teaching means and to explore how authenticity is manifested in practice. The researchers propose five dimensions of authenticity as suggested by their findings: self-awareness, awareness of others, relationship with students, awareness of educational context, and critical self-reflection.

The second article is a first person account (Kreber, 2010) in which the author uses coming out as a metaphor for striving for authenticity. The author describes becoming authentic as "an ongoing struggle that involves avoiding complacency (not just challenging oneself), compliance (not challenging others, including norms and expectations), and engaging in contestation and public deliberation (challenging oneself and others, including norms and expectations). In other words, authenticity is fought over by pushing oneself to contest dominant agendas" (Kreber, 2010, p. 194). The purpose of the article is to identify the "context-transcendent" structures that underlie the experience of becoming authentic and to identify the politics and pedagogical implications when recognizing difference.

Summary

Authenticity of the teacher is an understudied yet important aspect of adult learning for the teacher. This learning involves the evolution of the teacher as they strive to balance their own individual authenticity with student learning in the classroom. As

suggested previously, there is a lack of empirical studies completed by and about lesbians and there is a lack of research committed to authenticity and the lesbian educator. The research regarding teacher authenticity in adult education includes many social positions but fails to locate how the sexual orientation of the teacher may or may not affect teacher authenticity. Therefore, this study addresses how the lesbian adult educator navigates authenticity in the classroom and the implication it has for practice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom. This study illustrates the connections of identity and authenticity as it happens in the life of lesbian health educators. The research questions include:

1. What does authenticity in the classroom mean to the lesbian health educator?
2. How does the lesbian health educator balance identity and integrity within the classroom experience in order to be authentic?
3. How does the lesbian health educator teach about sexual orientation in the classroom and what are the implications for the authenticity of the educator?
4. Where does the lesbian health educator place her sexual orientation in the hierarchy of identity while in the classroom? When does she find it appropriate to foreground this identity?

This study involves individual experiences in the classroom with the hopes of understanding more of the aspects of journeying towards authenticity from the lens of lesbian health educators. The qualitative research paradigm is used to provide an avenue for these experiences to be told.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative research paradigm is a "distinct field of inquiry that encompasses both micro- and macro-analyses drawing on historical, comparative, structural, observational, and interactional ways of knowing" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, p. 1). Qualitative research crosses several disciplines, fields, and subject matters consisting of

multiple epistemological positions, theoretical frameworks, and research methods (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Qualitative research provides rich "descriptions of social processes" (p. 5) as researchers try to capture the individual's point of view and examine life in the midst of everyday happenings (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). The multiple positions, frameworks, and methods implemented in qualitative research provide "the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (Merriam, 2002, p. 3) allowing for the illustration of social phenomena.

The rich description of the social process is one of the basic underlying assumptions contributing to the study of lesbian health educators. Semi structured interviews provide the opportunity for the participants to tell about their experiences bringing forth the rich descriptions about the journey of authenticity and its connections to lesbian health educators. The theoretical framework of a lesbian standpoint denotes multiple constructions of reality and interpretations of the world (Merriam, 2002) and includes the notion of a fluid identity based on the basis of context, time and place of the experience. These constructions and interpretations are rendered through qualitative research characteristics (Merriam, 2002) and include:

1. The researchers call to bring forth the meaning people construct about their world and their experiences,
2. The researcher and participants are the primary instruments,
3. The process is inductive as the researcher gathers data which will provide insight into authenticity and lesbian health educators
4. The product of qualitative research is richly descriptive

These key characteristics embody the spirit of qualitative research for the LGBTQ population. Qualitative research has the ability to focus on the everyday experiences of life which highlight the LGBTQ goals of "visibility, cultural challenge, and self-determination" (Gamson, 2000, p. 348). Qualitative research allows "access and dissemination of power and truth to the undererepresented groups known as the 'other'" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1). The goal of this study is to unearth the ways in which lesbian health educators discuss their realities of identity and authenticity through social interactions in the classroom in order to understand visibility of lesbians in their particular context and to understand how these stories may challenge the heteronormative, heterosexist society. There are many types of qualitative research however one type of qualitative research that provides a rich description of the individual and her interaction with society is narrative inquiry.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the research methodology used for this study. Narrative inquiry is characterized as "an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (Chase, 2005, 651). Narrative inquiry is described as participants sharing interests, concerns, and passions through their stories (Phillion, 2002). The lesbian health educator provides "biographical particulars" or life lessons throughout the entire semester due to the nature of topics discussed in the health curriculum. The connection of adult educator, health education, and the story is summed up in the following statement, "Adult educators use their stories in their teaching routinely, to illuminate content, to facilitate

learning, and to link learning to the life experience of the learners." (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, p. 9). Relevant to this study is the idea that the stories that unfold are those that the educators view as part of their journey towards authenticity. For it is within the "story shaped self" that working towards authenticity is understood (Guignon, 2004).

As suggested in Chapter Two, the notion of "self" or "identity" is socially constructed, fluid and multidimensional, culturally and linguistically created. Understanding identity is a linguistic process of "understanding and evaluating ourselves from the pool of possible interpretations made accessible in the social context in which we find ourselves" (Guignon, 2004). The thoughts and stories of how each person tells others of their identity is "continuous, ongoing, open-ended activity of living out a story over the course of time" (p. 127). The continuous ongoing activity of living and telling is understood and differentiated by Boje (2001). The differentiations include antenarrative, story, narrative, and grand narrative.

People have a tendency to speak in ways that are "fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted…" (Boje, 2001, p. 1). Boje (2001) coined the term "antenarrative" to define this fragmented speech or that which happens before story and narrative (without a plot and beginning, middle or end). Antenarrative is considered "a bet" or a speculation of what is going to happen. Antenarrative gives importance to the "ambiguity of sensemaking and guessing as to what is happening in the flow of experience" (p. 3). The understanding of antenarrative is pivotal to this research because as previously discussed, coming out and authenticity are both a process of becoming and understanding. The participants are continually deciding how and if they want to come

out in everyday situations. This continual coming out is as if the participants are constantly "betting" on what the story may be.

Building on antenarrative is "story". Story represents a broad range of spoken words and has been defined as "an exchange between two or more persons during which a past or anticipated experience was being referenced, recounted, interpreted, or challenged" (Boje, 1991, pp. 111). Stories have also been tagged with the notions of energy and aliveness (Tyler, 2007). There is an "undecidedness" (Boje, 2008) about story that includes the idea that different versions of one story may be told suggesting that the story has the ability to change from telling to telling.

The term narrative typically involves a sequenced storyline with specific characters often including a plot (Riessman, 2008). Narrative is also used synonymously with story by some (Reissman, 2008; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). However, Boje (2001) problematizes the notion of narrative concluding that narrative is confined by boundaries of a storyline with a beginning, middle and ending. The participants in this study at times provided antenarrative, story, and narrative. It was imperative to understand the grand narrative of sexual orientation as a "cloak" with which we could view the unfolding stories of the participants.

The notion of grand narrative was coined by Lyotard and is considered to be a metanarrative that "subjugates and marginalizes other discourses" (Boje, 2001, p. 35). The understanding of sexual orientation has been a contested subject throughout time thus one could make the assumption that heteronormativity is the grand narrative for sexual orientation. Most lesbians are typically raised in a heterosexual family environment. Therefore, one would expect to hear grand narrative of heterosexism

throughout the interviews. Individuals speak from a place of heterosexist hegemony, which allows for the interview to bring forth grand narratives. Grand narrative in this research study could also be heard in terms of internal homophobia resulting from the heterosexist world from which most of us have been reared.

The experiences brought to spoken words through narrative inquiry provide a space for the "other" to be brought to the forefront as the participants may move past the grand narrative of heterosexism and allow their particular stories to be heard. In a broader sense, stories of gender, sexual orientation, class and so forth are brought forth via narrative inquiry (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The ideas of story, narrative, antenarrative and grand narrative of lesbians in each individual's particular context of health education. However, there are certain aspects that must be discussed about the process, which may have affected the interview.

The narrative process. Narrative inquiry is qualitative research and has the ability to provide rich, descriptive information by extracting experiences through the interview process. The interview involves two individuals discussing life stories as they relate to authenticity and the lesbian health educator. There are many aspects about this human exchange that need to be taken into account. These aspects include the interview itself, the participant (teller) and the researcher (listener).

The interview is considered to be the exchange of ideas and thoughts of researcher and participant. Some suggest that the researcher and the participant are completing the research together that in turn will change them both and create a learning experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The inquiry space occurs within a context. The need to understand that the context for LGBTQ individuals includes the fact that they are "at risk

for experiencing violence, discrimination, and exploitation" (Martin & Meezan, 2009, p. 19) in any environment is paramount. This context also includes place, time, and the social (Reissman, 2008).

Physical space is the environment in which the interview occurs and can have many implications. LGBTQ individuals are constantly aware of the environment and whether it is a safe place to discuss issues of sexual orientation due to discrimination and prejudice (Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 2002). The choice to disclose information is related to the participants' feelings of a safe environment and secure position in life. For example, an interview at one's place of employment may be considered unsafe due to the discriminatory nature of some workplaces. The participant may be reluctant to discuss situations surrounding their sexual orientation due to the fear of getting fired.

On the same note, the interview also takes place in a certain time period. A participant who is a professor on the tenure track may be reluctant to discuss issues of sexual orientation due to the possibility of discrimination and the notion of not being tenured. On the other hand, a tenured professor may feel more comfortable discussing issues regarding sexual orientation due to feelings of security with the position at the university. In addition, an interview conducted at one time with one participant could be conducted a year later and the participant may provide very different stories. Therefore, understanding the interview as a human exchange of information, one must take into account the context of the interview, the specific place in time of the interview, and the co-production of the information brought forth by the interview.

The co-production includes the actual telling of the experiences by the participant and the act of listening by the researcher. The participant understands that she is part of a

research project during which many questions will be asked. There should be a sense of ownership and empowerment of the stories by the participants in order for their words to be authentic (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). The participant may feel more at ease and may readily provide the researcher with information if a good relationship is created. Positionality of the researcher may play into this relationship (Tyler, 2007). In this case, self-disclosure for the researcher (Reinharz & Chase, 2000) may be important due to the sensitive nature of sexual orientation. Since the participants know that I too am in the same position of lesbian health educator, this may have encouraged them to tell more detailed stories. Thus ownership, empowerment, and relationship of the researched and the researcher affect the interview. The final piece is the act of listening by the researcher.

Providing a sense of ownership and empowerment allows the participant to feel at ease. However, the cornerstone of an interview may be the listening that takes place between the participant and the researcher. Powerful listening has been discussed as listening "deeply, fully and without distraction" (Tyler, 2007, p. 9). It is listening without judgment that provides space for the story to be told. The stories provided by the participant depend on how well the researcher can listen to what is being said. Understanding this balance between researcher and participant, the act of telling and the act of listening allows the interview to unfold.

In conclusion, narrative inquiry places significance on the experiences of individuals, specifically of lesbian health educators. Experiences of the individuals are told through story with the understanding that a unique set of attributes parallel each story. Important to this research are the attributes of where one fits into the status quo (or not), how one

may challenge the status quo (or not), the use of voice (or not), and how the social and context comes into play with the individual at that specific time. These are examples of experiences and choices that the participants navigated as they reflected and discussed their experiences. These reflections and discussions provide the foundation of information for authenticity and the lesbian health educator.

Background of the Researcher

Congratulations you have been offered the job of Kinesiology Instructor at Penn State Harrisburg! This statement was the beginning of my journey to learn more about myself within the walls of the classroom. As I prepare for classes I always keep in mind the content of what is being taught and how I will teach it. I continually decide how to approach the discussion of sexual orientation in my general health education classes and if I will come out or not during those discussions or any other discussion for that matter. These decisions boil down to how I allow my own identity to be portrayed in the classroom, which continues to fuel my interest in this particular research.

Currently, I am in my third year as an instructor of kinesiology at Penn State University Harrisburg. Previously my work included corporate wellness and positions in collegiate women's basketball as both a player and a coach. The awareness and acceptance of lesbians in collegiate women's basketball has provided some safe space for players and coaches, however, this environment is deeply rooted in discrimination (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000). The corporate world offered no refuge as I was out to only a few people with whom I worked closely but not out to any of the companies that I provided services. I moved to a career in teaching in a large university at the undergraduate level hoping that this would provide 'academic freedom' which in my

mind was freedom to be an instructor of kinesiology who happens to be a lesbian not the lesbian instructor known for her sexual orientation. Academic freedom is described by the University in this way: "Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subjects… Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in research or other services of his/her own undertaking, and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of other academic duties" (www.psu.edu, 2011). I soon realized that I was working through the auspices of heterosexism surrounding the organization. I continue to learn about my environment and the rules of survival which include when, how and whom to come out. No matter how much a department or diversity committee tries to provide openness and acceptance on campus there seems to be an underlying heterosexist agenda.

Hegemony crosses all boarders when involved with an institution that has been in existence since the late 1800's. I feel it when I speak to colleagues. I feel it when I discuss a possible tenure track position with colleagues knowing that my research revolves around the LGBTQ population. I feel it when I continually correct those around me who assume that I have a husband. There are also glimmers of hope and acceptance as new panels such as "Straight Talks" and a LGBTQ alliance for students has been formed on campus. The environment seems to get a bit softer and more accepting as my time here continues.

My passion is to teach health and wellness. My passion is to teach in an open environment when no one bats an eye when I use the pronoun "she" in reference to my wife. One might suggest that this is my agenda. This agenda is why I did this particular research. My motivation to bring forth the thoughts and feelings of other women in the

same position as myself, to learn how others have endured, and to provide a window for how others navigate the situations of authenticity in the classroom is why I am passionate about this research.

Participant Selection Procedures

In order to understand some of the issues related to the selection and recruitment of sexual minority candidates, ethical practices must first be addressed. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning populations are "at risk for experiencing violence, discrimination, and exploitation in a variety of contexts" (Martin & Meezan, 2009). Due to this context, ethical practices must be in place in regards to research concerning sexual orientation (Hash & Spencer, 2009). Ethical practices include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and implied consent. The IRB is "responsible to review and approve, require modifications in, or withhold approval of research involving human participants" (www.research.psu.edu, 2010).

Confidentiality and Implied Consent

Implied consent accompanies the IRB form and was distributed to each participant before the interviews took place (See Appendix A). Implied consent is a document that provides the participant with particular information regarding the research at hand. This information includes the purpose of collecting the information, who the information is for and how it will be used, what will be asked in the interview, how responses will be handled, the risks and benefits involved, the individual's right to withdraw from the study at any time, and confidentiality (Martin & Meezan, 2009; Patton, 2002). Confidentiality is one of the utmost important issues surrounding LGBTQ research (Martin & Meezan, 2009). In order to avoid individual identification an implied

consent form was used negating the need to provide identifiers protecting the identity of each participant. In addition to implied consent, many precautions were employed in this study to provide confidentiality. These precautions include the replacement of participant names with pseudonyms. The interview tapes and field notes were kept in a secured locked file cabinet. Data files were kept in password-protected files. Abiding by these procedures enabled confidentiality and a basis for an ethically sound study.

Participant Selection

There continues to be a fluidity of definitions with which lesbian individuals identify (Wilton, 1995). Therefore recruitment of sexual minority participants is unique due to the difficulty of a clear definition of lesbian and the understanding that the definition of lesbian is considered to be in a state of fluidity. In order to get a better understanding for the description of lesbian, Eliason and Morgan (1998) used a coding system, which established non-political and political definitions of lesbian. The non-political definitions included descriptions such as a lesbian loves and/or has sex with another woman, lesbianism as true self, one just happens to prefer women, and lesbian identity as being one small part of who I am. The political definitions included descriptions such as a lesbian as women identified and lesbianism as a worldview. The non-political and political descriptors of the term lesbian provide a foundation as to what it may mean to some of the participants for this particular study. For the purposes of this study the participants fell within the following criterion: (1) participants are self-identified lesbians and (2) participants teach general health education courses in higher education. Purposeful sampling was used in this study for participant recruitment.

Purposeful sampling "focuses on selecting information- rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

An internet listserv and snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 237) were used to recruit the participants for this study. The internet has become a supportive place for the LGBTQ population providing an anonymous place of support and information (Hash & Spencer, 2009). An email recruitment letter (See Appendix B) was sent via the HEDIR.org listserv. This is a professional website for health educators, health education students, and people with an interest in health education. HEDIR provides a service entitled the HEDIR List, which is a system in which one can receive emails that are sent from all subscribers. The women that responded to my original recruitment email also forwarded my inquiry to other listservs such as the Coalition of Allies for LGBT Health. I received inquiries from both listservs.

I also used snowball sampling which includes speaking with colleagues in the field that may know of others who are lesbian health educators. I networked with those in the field of health education to provide connections and contact information for some of the participants.

To this end, participants included ten self-identified lesbians who teach general health education courses in higher education to adult students. Interviews were completed with all ten participants but only nine of the participants' stories were used in this research since one of the participants worked outside of higher education. The recruitment process resulted in a cross-national sample of ten women who identified as lesbian in the higher education setting; see Table 1 for the summary of participant

demographics. Table 1 also appears in the beginning of Chapter Five in order to guide the reader throughout that chapter.

Data Collection Procedures and Methods

Qualitative data "capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words" (Patton, 2002, p. 47). Capturing and communicating the experiences of lesbian health educators as they move towards authenticity in the classroom is the centerpiece for this study. Bringing voice to this experience through interviews and field notes brought forth the experiences of authenticity of lesbian health educators in the classroom.

The Interview

Interviews have been discussed as interactive conversations used to create empirical data concerning the social world with which we live (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Good interviews create a conversational, reflective journey to take place between interviewer and interviewee (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Questions were asked with the hope of bringing forth the opportunity for the participant to tell their stories. The reflective action of storytelling has the ability to produce empowering realizations by both interviewee and interviewer (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). These realizations transform interviews from merely an exchange of information into a place of understanding, knowledge and empowerment.

There are different types of interviews ranging from very structured to conversational. Three different types of interview structures include the informal conversational interview, the semi-structured interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview (May, 2001; Patton, 2002). The informal interview

offers the most flexibility as it does not include an interview guide of questions and generally flows with the conversation. The semi-structured interview guide approach provides a list of questions giving direction for the interview. Topics are brought forth by the questions eliciting conversation and storytelling. The standardized open-ended interview is fully structured interview with an exact interview form and the capability for completion of the interview within a certain time period. Many researchers use a combination of approaches as well.

The present study used a combination of semi-structured interviews and conversational interviews. There was an interview guide (See Appendix C), which provided questions for the interviews. This guide began with demographic and career orientated questions and implemented the Critical Incidence Technique (Flannigan, 1954). The use of Flannigan's Critical Incident Technique is not a strict reading of the technique but provide critical incidence questions to provide direction for the participants during the interviews. An example of a critical incident question is when the participants were asked to provide time in the classroom that was memorable in terms of their own sexual orientation. The interview questions were asked at differing times depending on the interviewee and the flow of the conversation. The participants that responded to my email were located across the United States. Due to distance, eight of the interviews were phone interviews while one interview was face to face at an off campus site. All interviews were digitally recorded by two recorders. Interviews provided space for critical reflection of one's experiences in the classroom (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Critical reflection can be an empowering experience allowing for individuals to tell their own story about the happenings in the classroom. This critical reflection piece has been

found to be part of the authenticity process (Cranton & Carrusetta, 2004) and therefore speaks well within this study.

Field Notes

The capturing of thoughts and behaviors as they unfold is significant to the interview process. Taking time to journal about each individual interview honors the experience and enhances credibility and validity (Patton, 2002). Field notes follow in the footsteps of narrative inquiry providing deep, rich descriptions of how each interview unfolded. Field notes provide descriptions, direct quotations, and the researcher's feelings, reactions, and reflections of the experience and the significance of the interview (Patton, 2002). Field notes include aspects of the interview that may not be a part of the recording such as details of the setting and the researcher's relationship with the participant (Poland, 2003).

The use of interviews and my field notes were completed with the understanding that this is a population at risk for discrimination. Due to being a minority population that has the potential for discrimination, as suggested previously the ethical practices pertaining to research about LGBTQ populations should be taken into consideration. In addition, an ethical strategy has been proposed when working with the LGBTQ population (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2003). This strategy encourages an empathetic stance, a sense of the boarders and boundaries associated with each individual, knowing when to ask further or let an answer to a question rest, and a need for greater awareness of the interviewee as well as a greater management of the researcher identity. In this study, the researcher's lesbian identity may have affected the research process as well and is discussed as insider knowledge (LaSala, 2009).

Insider Knowledge

Due to the feminist framework of this study, one must take into account the many subject positions of the researcher and the participants and researcher positionality (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). A white, middle class, lesbian health educator conducted this study. The participants are lesbian health educators with differing backgrounds. Qualitative research that involves a researcher and participants "who are members of the same groups or communities" (LaSala, 2009) have the potential to create insider knowledge as well as insider issues during the research process (Tisdell, 2002). The insider position can be advantageous yet at the same time could inhibit the research. Insider knowledge provides a familiarity and connection due to similar sexual orientations giving the participant a feeling of trust creating an advantage for one with insider knowledge (LaSala, 2001). As a lesbian health educator, the researcher may be more familiar with issues affecting the participant's lives including the experiences of coming out or discrimination. Participants may feel that a lesbian researcher may more accurately portray their lives and believe that the research "is committed to deconstructing societal misperceptions about who they are" (LaSala, 2009).

On the other hand, insider knowledge has the potential to produce limitations (LaSala, 2009). These limitations include the failure to notice unique and informative information about their own group/culture, a tendency to overemphasize insider perspective which could result in biased or limited research, a failure to adequately explore certain respondent perceptions because the researcher takes for granted that they know and understand a familiar circumstance or phenomena, and due to the highly sensitive nature of sexual orientation a researcher may mistakenly project their own

feelings about the participants experiences instead of listening to the experience of the participant. The researcher must continue to be aware of the advantages and possible issues that exist when completing this type of research.

In conclusion, those conducting research with the LGBTQ population should "rely on theory that is free of heterosexist bias, use methodology that takes into account the complexity of gay and lesbian identities and communities, and exercise diligence in protecting against breaches of confidentiality and other potential harms" (Martin & Knox, 2000, p. 57). The current study incorporates interviews through a lesbian standpoint feminist pedogogical lens and took great care in protecting the confidentially of the participants. The same care and concern for collecting the data was carried over into the data analysis.

Data Analysis

"Data analysis is simultaneous with data collection" (Merriam, 2002, p. 14). The researcher is considered to be both the instrument of data collection and data interpretation (Patton, 2002); therefore the researcher collected the data via the interviews and field notes and transcribed each interview. The process of recording and transcribing became an intricate part of the analysis (Reissman, 1993).

The process of collecting and transcribing provided the researcher with an overwhelming viewpoint of the complexity of stories in that they are powerful stand-alone pieces. The stories are "exemplars of the messy process of human sense making" (Boje, 2001). In order to be true to the stories and to give the reader access to the aspects of telling, the entire interview is presented in Chapter Four. In order to honor the stories, they are presented in first person and kept in the sequence of the conversation. The

researchers words were deleted from the stories and parenthetical phrases were added for readability purposes. Chapter Four is presented to provide space for the individual stories to speak for themselves as "narrative researchers listen first to the voices within each narrative" (Chase, 2005, p. 663).

Traditionally qualitative researchers have used themes to discern the findings for study (Chase, 2005). The depth and breadth of the stories became overwhelming thus provided a need to look at the stories individually and collectively to analyze the similarities and differences of the stories. Therefore Chapter Five provides the individual and collective analysis in an attempt to flesh out the research questions and the purpose of this study. It is understood that the decision to discern themes limits attention exclusively to thematic content (Reissman, 2008) yet due to the structure and nature of the dissertation, the researcher felt this must be a part of the findings journey. The thematic analysis of Chapter Five provided key constructs for the discussion of the findings in Chapter Six. Chapter Six could be viewed as a microstoria analysis. Microstoria analysis boldly questions the grand narratives in an effort to reclaim local ways of knowing (Boje, 2001). The grand narrative is then interpreted with local accounts or "microstories" (p. 48) of how people resist domination. In this study, the grand narrative was determined to be heteronormativity and/or heterosexism. The women's stories provided local ways of knowing that disrupts and resists the dominant discourse.

Trustworthiness

"Life does not stand still; it is always getting in the way, always making what may appear static and not changing into a shifting, moving, interacting complexity"

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. ###). The telling of a story and the writing of a story is "invariably situated and strategic, taking place in institutional and cultural contexts with circulating discourses and regulatory practices, always crafted with audience in mind" (Riessman, 2008, p. 183). Life's shifts and complex interactions create elusive, contested, and indeterminate borders which embody narrative inquiry. Due to this multifaceted path of narrative inquiry, narrative inquirers must follow "a methodical path, guided by ethical considerations and theory, to story their findings" (Riessman, 2008, p. 186). Therefore, trustworthiness for narrative inquiry cannot be evaluated using traditional correspondence criteria (Riesmann, 2003). Trustworthiness will be discussed specific to narrative inquiry as suggested by Riessman (2008). Trustworthiness is detailed by Riessman via four facets of validity. These four facets include correspondence, persuasion and presentation, pragmatic use, and political and ethical use.

Correspondence

Correspondence takes into account how the story compares to other situations or stories that have been told about a particular experience (Riessman, 2008). Correspondence may not seem relevant in narrative inquiry because stories are ever changing and situations are perceived differently from one person to the next. However, less emphasis is placed on verifying the facts of a story and more emphasis is placed on understanding the meanings for individuals and groups. Facts are also considered to be truth, which would provide a deviation from the theoretical framework. Therefore, in order to incorporate correspondence into research a clear demonstration of the implementation of methods appropriate for the particular research must be provided.

This can be accomplished by the trail of evidence, which persuades the reader, specifically an audit trail (Patton, 2002).

The audit trail for this particular study includes field notes and a journal and triangulation of data sources (Patton, 2002), which verify the rigor with which the research was completed. Triangulation is the use of multiple methods to gather data adding credibility to the study. Patton (2002) provides four kinds of triangulation, which would contribute to validation of a study. The four kinds are methods triangulation, triangulation of sources, analyst triangulation, and theory/perspective triangulation. Triangulation of sources and analyst triangulation was used for this study. In order to incorporate triangulation of sources I compared my field notes to that of the interview transcripts, checked for the consistency of what is said, and compared the perspective of people from different points of view. Analyst triangulation was used as well. My advisors and my colleagues also read the data in order to counter any bias or judgment that I may have injected into my findings.

Correspondence for this study involves the interpretive work of the researcher. I transcribed the interviews myself and then provide the transcripts to the participants for member checks. Member checks provide the participant with the opportunity to provide feedback from the transcripts to tell me if something did not transcribe correctly or was taken out of context (Patton, 2002). I also compared my field notes to those of the transcripts in order to apply context and reflection for correspondence of each particular interview as well.

Persuasion and Presentation

Persuasion consists of presenting the data in ways that "demonstrate the data are genuine, and analytic interpretations of them are plausible, reasonable, and convincing" (Riessman, 2008). Trustworthiness for narrative inquiry then involves relaying the findings (stories) in such a way that persuades the reader to embody the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam, 2002). One way to provide genuineness is to digitally record each interview so that great accuracy can be obtained through transcription. I used two digital recorders during the single face to face interview as well as the phone interviews. For the face to face interview, one recorder was next to me and the other next to the participant to ensure clear quality sound during each interview. For the phone interview, the first recorder was connected to the landline and the second was situated next to the speakerphone.

Analytic interpretations must be sought after through reflexivity (Patton, 2002). Reflexivity is the researchers ability to look at themselves as part of the research interaction and take into account "the cultural, political, social, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (Patton, 2002, p. 65). Reflexivity was alluded to earlier in this chapter within the discussion of the interview. The interview is an interactive conversation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) created by both the researcher and the participant. The knowledge and careful consideration of the positions of both the researcher and the participant are integral to this study.

Presentation consists of how the research study must be written and to which audience it is being written for. For example, a dissertation is written to follow the rules

of academia providing a theoretical framework, methodology, and analysis, which flow and make sense within the study at hand. Persuasion and presentation include following a methodical path (interviews and field notes), documenting claims (digitally recording data, writing field notes, member checks, triangulation), and practicing reflexivity.

Pragmatic Use

Pragmatic use asks the question, "Does a piece of narrative research become a basis for others' work?" (Riessman, 2008, p. 193). In particular, will this study spur others to do more research in this topic area? The process of the study and the methods used are particularly important and provides validity as it relates to pragmatic use. For others to follow my research, transferability is needed. Transferability includes providing detailed information for the study to be replicated. Those steps include making explicit how methodological decisions were made, describing how interpretations were produced, and making primary data available to other investigators where appropriate (Riessman, 2008). My methodological decisions have been discussed at length previously in this chapter and involve individual interviews and field notes. The stories were transcribed by me and I tried to present them in their truest form so as not to bias or skew any participant's story. The stories are considered my primary data and thus will be readily available.

Political and Ethical Use

The political aspect of validity can be connected to narrative inquiry as referenced previously in this chapter. Chase (2005) provides the intricacies of the narrative process, which connects narrative inquiry with social change. Stating that the "researcher's interpretive strategies reveal the stranglehold of oppressive metanarratives, they help to

open up possibilities for social change. In this sense, audiences need to hear not only the narrator's story, but also the researcher's explication of how the narrator's story is constrained by, and strains against, the mediating aspects of culture (and institutions, organizations, and sometimes the social sciences themselves)" (Chase, 2005, p. 668). This research has the potential to be inundated with the political because sexual orientation is such a political construct. LGBTQ educators may or may not feel authentic due to the political environment of keeping their job or being discriminated against on campus (Kreber, 2010).

As previously mentioned, there are many ethical considerations for research concerning the LGBTQ population. In essence, ethical use of the narrative inquiry data involves practices that allow the participants stories to be heard (Riessman, 2008). As researchers, we must also take responsibility for our interpretations and findings of the stories we have collected. It is the combination of allowing the stories to be heard and taking responsibility and care to report findings without skewing the data which provide sound ethical validity to narrative inquiry.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STORIES

Chapter Four provides the full interview for each of the participants. The interviews are considered to be the stories, antenarratives, and narratives that must be preserved in the time and space in which they were told, for if I were to change them and make them my own, they have the potential to unfold very differently. The purpose of my study was to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom. The following stories shed light in their own ways on how each individual navigates her authenticity.

Kris

[I am] European, White, and I am 48. [I have been a health educator] probably about 20 [years]…. I had known for a long, long time that I wanted to be involved in school somehow…. I knew in eighth grade that I'd have a PhD by the age of 30. I just wasn't sure what in…. I have a cousin who is a clinical psychologist, and I did all the tests; he tested all his intelligence tests on me as a kid. And it kind of led me towards health and psychology. Weird combination…. so I went straight through at school and got my master's in guidance counseling. Undergrad I was a psych major and health ed minor. I worked in schools then as a guidance counselor, but I was also in charge of alcohol and drug use prevention, sexuality education, self-esteem curriculum, HIV AIDS, those kinds of things. So I got to blend them both pretty well. And I realized that I was helping sick kids get well, and I wanted to help well kids stay well…. and that really led me then to go to [doctoral university], since I was born and raised in [the state where university is located]. [It] is such a great program to get my Ph.D. in Health Education

specializing in Community Health Ed., not school health…. So from there [deep breath] I was hired at [a university in the south], and I was given a terminal contract there because of my lifestyle. At the time we called it lifestyle because of my sexual orientation… After five years of getting, what we called at the time "Level 2 meritory service awards" every year, which is the highest level of meritory service they afforded the faculty, I was given a terminal contract… and was told by a lawyer that I don't have a whole lot of recourse because [the university] is a private [religious] university, meaning they could discriminate if they wanted to. So an opening came up here at [current university], and I love the Pacific Northwest, and this program is an awesome program too. And at the time… 11 years ago, it was growing, and I just wanted to come up here. And it worked out that I came up here. I've been here ever since, and I don't really want to leave here. It is a great place to be….

[At southern university, I was] absolutely as far in the back of the closet as I could get… on campus… and you know, the funny thing is… I tell friends here that that time period in my life really destroyed my spirit. Being so inauthentic and having to live such a lie on the outside. I swore when I came here I would never live that way again….

So I taught, you know, process, the difference between content and process…. I taught Stress Management, Environmental health, as the content courses, but I was mainly focused on professional preparation…. So assessing, planning, implementing, evaluating. I had an awful lot of graduate students that I worked with, thesis projects, grant writing, health administration… those kinds of courses.

[Sexual orientation] did not [come up in the content area]. But sexual orientation came up in my duties as a faculty member there [southern university] in the advising

role… often…. [Currently] I have taught the HED 101 class here, and sexuality does come up. It's part of what I have taught here. It's not part of my regular load all of the time, but it is part of what I teach…. [I teach as] an out professor…. you know, I have this kind of code that I live by…. as an aside, you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to know that I am a lesbian…. I don't hide my lifestyle at all; I don't attempt to hide my lifestyle. But I don't see an awful lot of straight people, you know, standing on street corners, waving their banners that say, "I'm straight"…. So I don't do that either. I don't have it tattooed on my forehead, I don't shy away from it, but I don't bring it up as part of normal conversation either. It's not, while it's a huge part of who I am, it doesn't, it doesn't shadow everything I do, it colors everything I do…

I'm in my 16th year as a university faculty member. I haven't had in that 16 years a single student in class raise his or her hand and say, "So are you lesbian or what?"… I haven't had a single student in class… say I'm questioning my own sexuality. That's something that the students reserve for the out-of-class one-on-one time. So I'd say in the classroom faculty trumps everything. I am there to teach. Outside the classroom, when students come to my office, I am there to advise. And the faculty role takes a lesser role, advisor takes the front role, and that's where I get to use some of the skills that I developed through the counseling degree. The active listening, the reflection helping students maneuver their way through any number of questions that they have in their minds. And sometimes sexual orientation comes up during that….

[A memorable or notable story] is a [southern university] story. I was part of an experimental faculty group, if you will, and it was called the… interdisciplinary core. And it was an effort… to really look at the liberal arts education. Not to have so many

credits of math, so many credits of science, but to weave core concepts and skills throughout a common core curriculum that didn't really have boundaries. It was an awesome, awesome idea. But one of the classes that I taught in that interdisciplinary core was a wellness class where we explored a lot of different facets, and its equivalent would be in the regular classroom, I guess, a general education, basic health class…. And one particular student, it was midway through the courses, we had gotten to know one another pretty well. One student was male, we were talking about sexuality in psychology, and I don't recall, it's been quite a few years ago probably about 13 years ago, I don't recall what precipitated the comment, but we were talking about mental illness. And one student said, 'All fags are sick'…. and I absolutely couldn't let that comment go. And I said, "that is an interesting perspective and I'm sure several of us have heard perspectives very similar to that. But I need you to know the fact behind the comment, and that is in 1975 the American Psychological Association actually took homosexuality out of its diagnostic and statistical manual. And it is not classified as a mental illness at all. So once upon a time it was perceived as being a sickness, and now it is not." And I thought well that was a pretty okay way to handle it at the time…. It shut him down, I did it in a professional way, but I intended to shut him down, to be honest with you. But here is why it is so memorable. It got back to me through the president's office that at a [university] fundraiser… one of the parents said that one of the faculty members in the [university] core is telling kids that it's okay to be gay. So that got twisted and worked its way around through the development office and back to me. And I thought, "WOW, that is a real long-reaching Big Brothers arm." So that is why that stuck in my memory banks. Pretty incredible how far back that goes. Yeah.

So I hear comments like that up and down the halls, not in the classroom again, but outside in the halls, before class after class. And I will almost always call that out when I hear it. I don't let it slide. [I hear it] now and again [at current university]. Yeah, but again, it's not even my students, it's not even our majors, it's just up and down the halls. Across campus… it's the typical, you know, when you hear the guys talking about lesbians: "They just need to find the right man, so let them have a piece of me, and they won't be that way." You know, that kind of comment.

[A current story is when] I teach a course called Current Trends in health. And whenever I teach that class, I really focus on the Healthy People 2010 overarching goal of eliminating health disparities, and I expand that and say let's eliminate any disparity in health regardless of what group we are talking about that the disparity exists. And one of the early class activities I do is a stereotyping activity, I put a different group label on top of piece of butcher-block paper, and students have to go around the room and write a stereotype on each one that they have heard about that group. And I always include LGBTQ as one of the labels on there. And I had, let's see, just last year, a student, a lesbian, come out in class and say, "You know, most people would know by looking at me that I am a lesbian. These are stereotypes I hear all of the time and they are absolutely unfounded and not true about me." So part of what I ask…. I didn't point out people and say, "you're Black. Would you comment…" but I said if anyone is a member of one of these groups and would like to share, the door is open. And this student stepped right in and said, "I'm a lesbian and I don't like it when this happens to me. And it feels pretty yucky." So I really watch the group to see what their reaction is to that. And you

know, it was pretty amazing. It was awesome. They didn't treat her any differently the remainder of the class…. It was really pretty cool….

Well, you know, I find it a challenge when my peers do that [call out a person from a particular group]…. I catch them when I go in to observe…. they will call out a particular person as a representative mouthpiece. And I always try to mark that down and say, "You've gotta do this cautiously. I hope you talked to this person before doing that. That you didn't just do that for the first time now."

I've had a leadership role here on campus with faculty. I was the chair elect of our faculty senate and actually had to not slide into the chairs role because we lost two faculty members, and I had to teach massive overloads that year. But I have also served as the chair of our provost search committee 2 years ago. So I've had some of those leadership roles. And again I don't shy away from the label at all. If the rest of the faculty would want me to be the token lesbian of their committee if they are talking about diversity…. I'd rather be there as that token lesbian than not having anyone there to represent at all…. So I don't I don't shy away from that role; I actually embrace that role if we need it. We have a fairly strong growing diversity initiative on campus…. I was approached by a lesbian staff person and asked to go to the president's office to talk about the treatment that people get on campus. And I declined because my question to the staff person was, "If the president says I acknowledge it, what would you want me to do about it… What would you want me to tell him?" And they couldn't tell me anything. They said we don't know what should be different. I said, "I'm not comfortable to complain about treatment if I have no solution to offer. And if the collective wisdom of your group has no solution than I suggest that we wait and talk about it more and come

up with some things that we would like to see different and come up with something specifically and then go…."

I think some [faculty on some campuses include LGBT in the classroom], but I don't think all of them do. I think that there is a growing understanding about the importance of this but I don't think that it's…. It's one of those things that people nod their head and say yes, we understand and yes, it's important, but it's really hard for people to get their teeth into exactly what does that mean and what does it look like. And it interesting that you mention… the book [*Cultural Competence in the Health Education and Health Promotion*] I use [it] in my 370 class. I think that there is a growing understanding, and things like what happened at Rutgers, those things come to the forefront of attention and people go, wow, something happened there that shouldn't have happened. And so with every tragedy comes a greater understanding. But I'd like to get ahead of that curve and not be behind it. I think that some professional prep programs do. I don't think that mine did… when I was there. I don't think that up until the last 5 years – the ones that I worked in and helped to create – I don't even think that we even did as good of a job as we could do with that. You know there is the old question, do you pull it out like in our program HED370, Current Trends, and talk about illuminating disparity, and focus in on it for a quarter. Or do you interweave into every single course you have in your program? We try to do a little bit of both. And we encourage to participate in the initiatives on campus…. but, no, I don't think that you can ever do too much of this kind of education.

There are 11 different centers [of the university]…. You know, here in the northwest, the context is very typical of the rest of society here. But [city where

university is located] we have a very definite bubble around campus, I call it. Okay, we, thank god, are a Democratic state [laugh] because people on the west side of the mountains… there are so many of them that are Democrats that carry the whole state. We are on the east side of the [particular mountain] very Republican, redneck, farmland…. but [the university] is a bastion of liberal thought. It is the bubble of campus that makes it tolerable. Okay. So our students, the majority of our students, don't come from little redneck [city where university is located], they come from [west of the mountain]. [The university is affected by the city west of the mountain]… and I think in a very positive way. A positive way. You know when I moved to [the southern university] people said is it culture shock? And I said, no, it is lack of culture shock. Here it was very similar but… I grew up farm; I grew up rural redneck. So I am comfortable in these environments. And I know, man I can talk [a southern accent] with the best of 'em [laugh], and I do if I have to get along in the world. You know what I mean?... [and] No there isn't a clash at all [with my authenticity]. I am what I am. My partner's here, she moved with me from [southern state]. We've been together 16 years…. So we're the only two people in this town that talk with a [southern] accent. Everybody knows we're together; I say everybody… we certainly don't hide it all again. No, we're very authentic in our lives.

[Navigating sexual orientation]… is just the individual experience that one has. And for me, like I mention, I say that I really lost a part of my soul at [southern university] by having to be so inauthentic. And going through that and trying to fake it till you make it and not even making it after being such a fake there and still getting fired. Like I said, I will never do this to myself again. I would rather be fired straight up. What

you see is what you get, and if you don't like me, tell me, and I'll leave. I would rather have that than the backstabbing that comes from stabbing myself in the back by not valuing and respecting myself and being true to myself. So to me it was, you know, they say a personality sets so early unless some major life event happens to change it. That was a major life event for me. Being so untrue to myself. And I just chose…simply chose. And I don't put it on my forehead, but I don't hide it. If a student were to walk in my door and say, "Are you gay? I'm struggling with my sexuality and I don't know who to talk to." I would say, "Yes I am. Come in and sit down." You know. Plus being in the northwest… come on [laugh] we're Birkenstock-wearing, granola crunchers that hug trees [laugh]. Everybody loves everybody up here… you know, and I'll say that I don't know how different it would be, and I imagine being in a classroom where you have students that get in your face. I would still be true to myself, but I don't think I'd have such a rosy perspective of people up here if that were the case. Yeah. But I have not had that experience. Not here… students do come up to me and say, "I'm really struggling with my sexuality here, and will you talk to me about this." I am more than willing to do that.

My partner's a public health person too. I mean, we met at [southern university], believe it or not. [Giggle]. She was in the program that I taught, and she ended up quitting from [the southern university] a year after I came up here. And she came up here to be our county public health department administrator. So she comes into my courses sometimes. I ask her to come in and do some guest lectures, and I introduce her as my partner. And I don't have a….I just keep right on going. We have a [sorority] chapter on campus. The guy faculty member as we were doing introductions says, "And then I need

to introduce you to my lovely wife [name of wife]." The other male faculty says, "And my lovely wife [name of wife]." And I stood up and said, "This is my lovely partner [name of partner]." You know, I'm like you sons of bitches, don't think you can do that and get away with it. Cause I will too… [Giggle]

You know I think it is going to take a little bit of both [using pronouns or being blatant about coming out] and it depends on each individual's comfort zone with how they do it. You know when I was a TA at [doctoral university] I taught the 101 classes there, and one of my students was a real in-your-face militant dyke, man. She was out loud. And I said to her, we talked, she knew I was a lesbian. I came out to her privately and I said, "Why do you do your life that way?" And she said, "So people like you can do it your way." And I, that really struck me because without the in-your-face, Christopher St. of militant uprising, then I don't think we would be near as far today without that… and we need people who just live their lives, normal lives like everyone else, only their partner's the same sex. You know, I think like when I watch NCIS or mainstream television, which I don't watch often at all, I hate TV. But when I watch it and there is a lesbian character, she is always a fucking psychopath, and I am, like you know, I hate that because we're not all like that. There are some people like that, but not all of us, so why don't they show normal people that have normal lives? So to me the not skipping a beat, you know, this is my partner… and move on, it is normal for me? So why should I make it a big deal when it's not a big deal for me. But if some people…. it's a big deal for some people, and they want to carry that torch and jump on that bandwagon, my golly, let 'em. And encourage that if that is what they want to do and

feel… if that is what they need to do and feel. So I think it's going to take a little bit of both….

Words that resonate with me when I think about being authentic in the classroom are words like integrity, ethics, modeling. Other words that sound odd that resonate with me are things like grace, and compassion and embracing. Those are the words I choose…. Absolutely [I am an authentic teacher]... it truly means honoring the person I am inside as the person I am outside… it is spirituality for me. Yeah. It's the essence of it, man…. You know, I am real sure of who I think I am right now. I had an answering machine, it was not mine, I wish I could claim a piece of fame by saying I thought this up but I didn't, I don't know who did… The answering machine said, "This isn't an answering machine it is a questioning machine, who are you and what do you want?" Consider most people live their entire lives and never truly finding the answer. And I've really got my teeth into that…. I know who I am at this moment in time, and I'm pretty comfortable with who I am at this moment in time. But, you know, they say there are moments in time that we are not at all comfortable with who we are and hence my [southern university] days…. And it's the constant quest. It's not that we know the answer, that's not what's important… that I know who I am. It's that I am willing to jump into the fray and ask. And then do the hard work of what I call "soul work" of trying to find the answer. That's what is most important.

No [I don't believe that the academy promotes authenticity]. Not at all…. Conform, conform, conform. How many publications does it take to get tenure? How many hoops do I have to jump through and how high? And as soon as I jump through the hoops to get tenure and get promoted to associate, a whole new set of hoops come up and

those whole new set of hoops are what does it take to become full professor? And then once those hoops go away, then you have the opportunity to breathe a bit, but I don't think that there is a real good solid process for finding oneself until one's been here 12 years minimum, and by then your patterns are already pretty set.

[In terms of our inclusion and the health profession] I think APHA has a special interest group for gay and lesbian issues… certainly one I would encourage (anyone) to be a part of. Get involved on a lot of levels and I would take them beyond LGBTQ issues to all kinds…. Like you mentioned…. anytime people are looked upon as different, there is a job and a role, as well as the spirituality one.

Debbie

[I am] White and 47 [years old]. Well let me think here [about how many years as a health educator] because I did some… I'm gonna say maybe 9 or 10 years… I have an undergraduate degree, a BS in education, and while I was completing that I was able to get three teaching licenses. So undergrad I was certified to teach special education with a specialty in developmental disability, early childhood, and elementary. So from there I worked in the public schools as a special education teacher for 6 years and then I decided to return… back to [undergraduate university] and do my master's in Health Education…. Then I went to [university] and got my Ph.D. And then my partner and I both were able to find jobs back here at [undergraduate university]. So I come back to [undergraduate university] like every 7 years…. [My partner and I have been together for] 17 years.

I actually specialize in disabilities, and one of the things that I have been very challenged with since I graduated in 2005 is there are few professions that recognize

disabilities as a culture. And what I find in my due diligence. I am trying to put this out there in a cultural context…. and I see this very similar or parallel path when it comes to queer culture…. Now I know that there is a recent book, well, a couple of years ago, that was published called "*Culturally Competent Health Education*" and in that particular book, it is the first book of its time…. It is one of the first health education textbooks that paid attention to queer culture. [If sexual orientation] had not been included in there, it would have been another book on racial disparity….

So I think partly, I know with our NCATE review, which I participated in the institutional review here at [current university], which was last year. When I met with the reviewers, we were asked about diversity, and one of the points I tried to make was that, well, if you are asking about diversity from a racial perspective, then we're not doing well. But if you ask about diversity based upon what professors bring to the programs, we are doing quite well…. Such as I specifically bring disability, we have other people that bring queer culture, I mean so the narrowness with which we define culture is a problem….

We are mostly White. I think we have approximately 24,000 students…. I think we are primarily a traditional school, and we have had record enrollments over the past few years. I think that we are starting to draw more of the adult learner due to the economy, but I can't be sure of what those stats are…. [I teach undergraduate and graduate courses] and yes [specifically human sexuality and the sexuality education programs]…. The human sexuality is an undergraduate class and the sex programs are split undergrad/grad….

I think it was just last year the LGBT group was given space in our student center so they actually have a place of gathering. So that was kind of a big event that occurred. You know that I don't want to speak for us, but several of us have safe zone stickers on our doors. Most of the, particularly our graduate students, know of our sexual identity. But I think that what was interesting when I was teaching sexuality, one of my students approached me after class and she said, "I was calling up a friend of mine and I was bitching up a storm because I told her that all we talk about in this class are gays." And I'm like, "Oh really?" And she said, "Do you know what my friend told me?" And I said, "No." She said, "That the reason that you like to talk about gays is because everybody knows what it's like to be heterosexual." [Laugh]…. So she just, kind of, laughed at herself and went on. I just thought that was kind of interesting. You know, I was curious…. as to why she felt compelled to share that with me, because I am not out in my classes….

Well, I wear… me and my partner both wear bands, which is traditional. And you know just because I would classify as a heterosexual appearance that students automatically project that onto me. And as I was going through my master's program…. some graduate students got into this big debate of: is it important for you to be out to your class? Some of them said yes, and they thought that that helped encourage students or whatever, and some of us thought no, and the reason that I particularly – I don't lie about it - I just don't make a point, and the reason that I don't is because when I talk about queer culture, I don't want my human sexuality students to think that I am speaking from a particular agenda. I believe that if they identify with me, they are more likely to hear me….

I [am not] out in my graduate courses either, the graduate students that have assistantships here and some of the other ones because they go to our houses and stuff like that, so it's not like I hide it…. I usually say they are my spouse or partner, and they can do with that what they think…. I don't think they do [understand that partner means lesbian] because I am very attentive to the language that I use, and I am so used to inclusive language…that, basically, I am all about inclusion and elevation of culture, and I think because I am attentive in other ways to my language, I don't think that they automatically assume that [partner means gay].

I was thinking about this idea of authentic and whether or not one has to make public their sexual orientation or their disability or their race in order to be authentic…. I do an activity with my students where I ask them to categorize their identities. Well, they identify them, and then they have to make a pie chart and determine what percentage of each of these cultures makes them up as a whole. And they find that it is virtually impossible because you are kind of not 50% a woman. You can be because you can decide that 50% of the time you are feeling good about being gender female and the other time you are okay being neutral or gender male. So the goal of that activity is to get them to understand that we are multicultural people, and because of that some of our cultures will be very important to us and some of them won't, and some of those overt cultures that people see they can't assume that is the sum of someone's being. So the whole idea of being authentic… the idea of being authentic to me is, you know, do I feel good about myself? And I'm not sure that that necessarily has to do with gender identity or sexual identity or disability identity or other types of identities that we bring to the table. So the other question I had about authenticity is: who is ascribing the authenticity? Me or the

outsider….? So I really haven't spent a lot of time thinking about how my sexual identity is relating to my professional identity as a health educator other than to say that I am very cognizant of the fact that I try to appear neutral, and if you are gay or lesbian in the class, you automatically count on that I understand the culture, I can speak the language, and you will take that where you need to take it. And if you are heterosexual, then you make assumptions about me than you can take that where you need to take it. I am very comfortable with this almost kind of ambiguity that I try to have in the classroom.

I know a faculty member that looks like KD Lang. Like could be the twin. And one of the things she shared with me one time was that before she got married there was lots of suspicion as to whether she was gay. As a matter of fact, there was another faculty member who told her that of course she's gay, and once she realizes that, come let her know. Meanwhile this faculty member maintained adamantly that she was heterosexual. So she said what happened or what she perceived happened was that when she got married she got that big diamond on her hand with her wedding band that she felt that her relationship with some of the students changed. And, you know, her response to that experience was that now she was a committed heterosexual and how that seemed to affect the student's perceptions of her….

I don't know if you saw my photograph online…. For a lot of my life I have looked very, very young and this has caused some problems for me when I taught in higher ed, and when you teach sexuality to begin with that kind of compounds…. You know there were some situations that were very uncomfortable for me, and so even though my partner wears her ring on her right hand, I wear my ring on my left hand in a more traditional way. The whole idea isn't to say, wow, I am heterosexual… I even tell a

story when we are talking about sexuality and culture, I share a story with the students, there was a woman who I played softball with a few years ago…. I talk about how in this league you are only allowed to wear your wedding bands. So she gets up to bat and the umpire stops the game because she's got a wedding band on her right hand and the umpire asks her to remove her band. And she said, "Well, we are allowed to wear wedding bands so this is my wedding band." And the umpire said, "Well, if it was your wedding band, it would be on the left hand." And her response was, "Not if you're a lesbian." And the umpire says, "Play ball!" And they all go back to the field. [laugh] And so we talk about cultural symbols around sexuality and how this ring, you know, has some understood significance but also some significance that we apply to it… and the other thing too…. When I think about being authentic, I think about being true. And another point that I try to make in my human sexuality class is that I ask them over and over again to really get it through their minds… how do you know someone is a transsexual? They have to tell you. How do you know someone is gay? They have to tell you. To get them to understand that only in the perception, because sexuality is very personal, it is really the perception of the individual that counts. So you can think all you want about somebody, but until they tell you, they can tell you that they are heterosexual, and then ten years later they can tell you that they are gay. And that's all they have to do…. Is what they tell you and how they self-identify. And so I think I try to be very true to that, and I think that is part of why I create this ambiguity around myself because that means that I can be different things to different students….

Another thing about health education… is that our personal beliefs are meaningless in the delivery of health in the classroom. So if I am talking about aborting a

pregnancy in my sexuality class, my beliefs as to whether or not a pregnancy should be terminated should really not be obvious to the students. So I think that again whether we can call it ambiguity or neutrality or whatever I think to be very consistent now that I am talking about it with the way that I approach that.

I don't think that I have ever had someone overtly say a negative comment about somebody who is gay or lesbian. And I'm guessing that it hasn't happened because I am so passionate about culture in everything that I do. And you know, well, I did, for example, we were talking about suicide with males who identify as gay. I made the statement in class that, you know, "Let's think about that. Let's think about what's happening socially that we have young men who prefer to die than continue to live among us. So what does that say about our society?" So I threw the question out and one of my male students who actually has a lot to contribute [laugh] said, "Well, I don't think you can say it's society's problem"…. his point was that you don't have any idea what is going on with that person. And actually just last week I kind of pulled him aside after class and asked how the class was going for him. I noticed that he likes to challenge me, which I'm okay with. I don't like that he seems to want to challenge me or to put me on the spot. So when he challenges me, I don't see that he is challenging me in a learning capacity and so I'm not sure what's going on with him. Because sometimes what happens in a sexuality class, they think they are liberal, but they realize they are conservative, or they start to question their own sexuality, and so sometimes things like that happen.

I mean, the funny thing is I guess I just it's hard for me to know because I am a sexuality educator… it's hard for me to know if it has to do with people seeing me as a

sexuality educator or what…. I must pull off hetero quite well. I don't know… because as I am thinking of that, I probably have more stories of assumed heterosexuality than I do assumed lesbian…. So [a story… there was a] student that was making inappropriate suggestions to me…. He was having difficulty with his girlfriend because he was interested in engaging in sexual activity that she was not interested in. So in that conversation that we had I think he perceived that I supported his activities personally. Neutrality… he realized he went a little bit further than he probably should have… I was quite shocked because I am old…. Well, I'm not some young, you know, woman out there that's got a hot body or whatever. I am just plain old me. I was shocked by that at first, and of course I had to get into academic mode, oh gosh, what would be the appropriate way to you know handle this with him? And then I decided to reply [with an] email, I decided to document my response to him. And I never heard from him again….

When… I was doing my graduate work here at [current university] in health education, one of my professors [and I] were talking and she really was just convicted about the being neutral in the classroom, and it really made me start to think about how important that is. And from that conversation I – and again my love of culture – it just came very natural to me, and I am very private as well…. My partner and I have a few friends in our circle, so I'm not one to - even - in my personal life, to seek out … I mean, after 17 years we're pretty settled [laugh].

I don't know [if students would wonder about my sexuality]. I don't know the students that well, no one has ever asked me or approached me or talked to me in any way as if I thought that they assumed that but because I am culturally aware that I am pro other cultures as well. So I did have one student from women's studies, unfortunately he

had to drop the course, but he did say to me after class that he did appreciate how gay inclusive my lectures were….

I use a lot of media in the classroom. So, for example,… in sexuality studies, we look at the Levis advertising campaign. So they have a commercial out there with two lesbians, one with two men, a heterosexual one and a young adult one. So I show these videos, these commercials and we talk about them. Most of them in the class have seen the heterosexual ones, some of the class has seen the young adult one, but none of the class has ever seen the same sex commercials…. The books that I use for human sexuality particularly, I thought, which is why I picked it, did a really nice job of integrating gay and lesbian culture throughout the chapter. Now, they do have one particular chapter where they talk about sexuality throughout the life span, they are particularly the young adult section, the young adult, middle adult and later adult sections where you talk the most about sexual identity. And then I, you know, talk about sexual identity models, but again I try to have the students, you know, understand that whatever they say they are, then that's who they are….

A couple of times I've had students as they are participating come out, and I felt very happy about that. That they felt – one of my sexuality classes has 50 students in it… so that's a risk… I think that really makes me feel good as a professional. I'm not so sure that I ever thought about it that it would have a personal effect on me. And I think because I apparently compartmentalize… when I teach classes, I walk in and I am a health educator and that's it….

I spent time in the public schools, and I am trying to think when I felt that as far as health education that being neutral was important. I am thinking about when I was

doing special education, I worked with principals who were having a very difficult time understanding that special education was required by the law. You know, I think when I am trying to process them and as they were talking about frustrations and lack of resources, some of it was based upon their lack of knowledge…. I'm not sure if I tried to be neutral, but I tried to use effective communication skills so that I have an opportunity to learn what their concerns are and they have an opportunity to express them. And I'm not sure if that would be an example of being neutral as opposed to trying to be… my partner is a couples therapist, and I have taken some skills counseling classes, blah blah blah, so it might be more of that than it would be to be neutral. You know, talking to parents about their child's disabilities, you know, that is kind of tough. I think more than anything else outside of health education, which I primarily spend in special education, I'm not as neutral as I am an advocate for education for students with disabilities. So I'm not sure that I remain neutral because I find myself in roles where I am actually trying to fight to try and mainstream or as an administrator try to get a principal to hire a special ed teacher. I would say to answer that question, in my experience [neutrality] seems to be pertinent to health education.

What I would be very curious about… is if… heterosexual people [were asked] the same question whether or not they are more comfortable talking about your husbands or… I am raising one of my nephews and I sometimes will use him as an example. And I actually say, "My nephew said to me the other day" because he is a 13-year-old and you know how 13-year-olds think…. so I would be kind of curious to know whether or not people who identify as heterosexual have more or are more comfortable around being out as a heterosexual.

I think what I am very encouraged about by the Y generation is their seemingly openness to diversity. And one of the statements that I talked about in class is I frame the course by saying the sexuality course is about diversity. Now, I have had one student one semester who wrote on a teaching evaluation that she felt that (I am making an assumption about her sexuality) just by the way she attempted to interact with me – but she wrote in short and anger because by the time we got to the end of the semester, that is where she was. She felt that the way in which I presented gay culture was too – let me remember the word she used – too extravagant – too far to the left. That I didn't present a culture as normal people that have everyday lives…. I think she was okay with how much time I spent on the topic. Well, for example, I use Johnny Dangerous video "*Dirty is the New Black,*" and I use it because when he walks down into the tunnel and you see all kinds of sexual diversity underground. What does that mean, what message can we take away from his experience of being gay? So but it's interesting…. I show Madonna and the *Erotica* video and that is really there and sexual and F and M. So my impression… is that she wanted, or she thought, that I was gay, and she wanted more of a relationship than I was willing to play…. [This situation] has made me think a little bit… do I need to have normalcy around sexuality in the class? I haven't really changed anything that I am doing in there although I have been thinking about it… I think what I have been trying to do and, for a lack of a better phrase, is to normalize gay culture as we have normal lives in terms of our sexuality. So when I talk about marriage and relationships, I try to use some pretty innocuous examples of the queer community. I even tell them that the first time I went to a gay bar I had no idea what I was doing. I went there because I was going to see a friend of mine in California who frequently goes

to the bars. I didn't want to be a dork… so I went to the bar, I sat in the corner by myself, and two women approached me, they started a conversation, and one of them asked, "Oh how long have you been out?" And I said, "Oh since about 9:30." [laugh] They [my students] just laugh…. I have stopped clarifying why I went to the gay bar. And at first I thought, why was it so important to say I was going to California to see a friend of mine? So, I just now say that oh yeah… the first time I went to a gay bar. Because I talk about going to drag shows and different events around sexuality. I don't know if they take this as it just happened the first time or maybe I actually go there….

I would kind of normalize it – I start with a scale of cultural acceptance and talk with them about what tolerance really means. It's a way to put ourselves above someone else. So I try to use the word "appreciate" a lot when I am talking about culture whether it be disability or queer culture or whatever. Now when I say the word queer culture, which I said that when I was on an interview, and I had some very raised eyebrows. I was interviewing for a faculty position and I thought, "Oh, I better stop saying that because there are some people that don't seem to know that word." [laugh] So I think sometimes I have noticed if I use the phrase "queer culture" I think some people get a little offended that I would use the word "queer." And then I talk about how the word – that there is a movement to reclaim the word "queer." There is a movement to reclaim the word disability. There are a lot of parallels between disability and queer culture….

I think authenticity, if we are talking about it in relation to myself, is really that feeling of peace and contentment that we can have within ourselves about ourselves…. My authenticity doesn't have anything to do with the outside. It has to do with how authentic I feel, with who I am, and where I get to be comfortable with myself. Being

comfortable with myself, to me, indicates that I am authentic. Now outsiders may think, "Oh my word, you are way out in left field." [laugh] It comes back to, I think, that self-identity or the personality or being personal is what I am trying to get at…. I am going to say I think that authenticity is about comfort. It's about peace. It's about being happy wherever you are, and I think it's about having a sense of self that allows you to be yourself in the greater world. It doesn't necessarily mean that I have to show myself to feel authentic to myself with outsiders… In some ways I kind of like that in my mind that authenticity is like a secret place. I kind of like that because it's mine, and I can you know do what I want with it, and it's okay with what I do with it. Whether I reflect on it or examine it or experiment with it or whatever. It's kind of my own….

I will tell you this…. I did have a professor who everyone knew she was gay. Everyone knew it. And we were doing a class activity where we had to – I forget – we had to do something where we had to talk about what would be our greatest moment. And the example that she gave for herself was, as bizarre as this sounds, was being in a hospital bed next to Mel Gibson. And my peers and I were looking at each other like, where is she going with this? And the fact that for the longest time she just had this front… and I also had another professor who created a boyfriend, an imaginary boyfriend that she talks about to her students. And to me, wow, that was kind of hard… because you don't have to share your authentic self with me, but you don't have to lie about it either…. I am hoping that my students think that I am authentic because I am very focused. I hope that they think that I am fair. I hope they think that I value them. And that's what I am kind of hoping that they… that I am an authentic person and my sexual

identity, I'm not sure if that is a necessary part of the equation. I would not lie. I would never pretend that I am a heterosexual.

[If a student would ask] in front of other students [are you a lesbian], I think my reaction would be… I would ask the student why it is important…. I would probably answer it with another question, only because I try to be respectful of the students. I don't ask them to identify their cultures. I do this activity where they have to do this pie chart. I don't say, "You will be sharing this with your peers." And then when we start talking about that I say, "Don't raise your hand, would you have excluded culture if I would have said that you would be sharing these with your peers." So I respect their cultural identities and their own authenticity.

I haven't found health education to be a very welcoming profession…. Well, for example, I was doing an interview in New York. And for my dissertation I did ethnography on how women with intellectual disabilities experienced sexuality. And I spent 2 years in the field. I had a blast. It was probably one of the happiest times of my life in the past. And so I finished my research, and I get done, and I was really passionate about it, and one of the faculty members slams his hand down on the table and says, "What does mental retardation have to do with health?" At first the initial shock of that question, I was able to gather myself, I think they should have hired me just for the way I reacted [laugh]. I said to them, "Well, it is not very unusual for health educators to have a particular interest in special population such as African American health, gay and lesbian health, mine happens to be disabilities." But I got that everywhere I went. I had another interview where one of the coordinators said to me, "Well, I see that you specialize in disabilities can you do anything else?"

I think part of the problem in higher ed continues to be the domination of men in high places, and women feel the need to hide their sexuality. So I think that there is a definite subculture of lesbian women who tend to know each other and, you know, get together at conferences…. I am out with a lot of people and don't feel that I have been discriminated against. On interviews I talked about my partner, I said her name. You know, it's kind of hard [to find the subculture of lesbians in the field]…. I find it interesting because I probably know more than 15 people that identify as lesbian within the health field [and] I would be curious to know if some of the women who identify as lesbian are thinking, "Why does this even matter?" If you have the belief that neutrality or ambiguity is important in health education, than you may say to yourself, "Well, who cares if I am a lesbian, why does this have any impact on health education or the way I teach?"

Janet

I am White and I am 34…. Let's see, I guess I have had this job title for 2 years and before that I was a youth worker, and I also taught English. In the youth work job I also taught a lot of health education.

I went to get a master's and Ph.D. in [the British Isles]. Originally my field of study was English literature and sexuality studies. So I did a master's degree and then converted it into a Ph.D. in Queer Theory. It was mostly focused on literature and film and representations on queer masculinity. And so I started teaching while I was doing that. Teaching English and teaching film. And then at the same time I got a job as a youth worker at LGBT youth [country], which is a youth project for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered young people. And I started out helping them run groups,

and then I got into… doing one-to-one support, doing safer sex counseling stuff…. So all of my health educator training was on-the-job training in that job…. We got a contract to teach LGBT inclusive sexual health in all the local high schools. So then I became a sexual health educator at the high school focusing on the LGBT awareness of that. And then I also started doing outreach in clubs and bars, so I was doing nighttime sexual health outreach. And then that expanded into working with the police force, so then I started doing LGBT awareness training with the police force. And then some equalities work as well. So it's kind of just turned into… from a part time job to a career-changing experience, and I got to do a whole bunch of things related to LGBT health. And then… when I finished my Ph.D.… I decided to move to the [particular] area, so I moved here without a job and I ended up with kind of like a Ph.D. youth work experience combo; I got this health educator job, at university health services at [current university], which is where I work now.

So my job is teaching semi-traditional academic classes in the school of public health, large scale undergraduate classes that focus on health behavior change, particularly working with a lot of athletes and fraternities and sororities and people who may be less engaged with the academic side of education. And so we do a lot of working on behavior change and making your community healthy and that kind of thing. So I teach a class called Healthy People, and that is a personal and community health intro class so it covers nutrition, sexuality, alcohol and drugs, stress, violence, and a couple of other topics, and I teach another class called Drugs Health and Society in the spring, so there are 160 and 200 people, and they are general enrollment classes in the school of public health. And then the other part of my job is being the liaison between health

services and queer students…. so for the teaching part of my job they call me "professor" and think of me as faculty, and the other part of my job I tend to do workshops and student groups at night, talk to students one on one about coming out, make sure that we get dental dams and condoms and lube to the right places at the right time… parties and such. And then also helping/connecting a research project with three queer interns on HIV on campus. So that is kind of like the other part of the job, which I think is more of a health promotion part of my job, which is much more like doing workshops, having interns, working in youth development doing more health education and doing less traditional classroom teaching. Probably 50/50 [traditional classroom style versus the health promotion].

Yes, most [students] are from [this state]. It is a very ethnically diverse university. I believe the ethnic diversity might be Asian and Asian American…. It's either Asian and Asian American or White, but I think it might be Asian…. African American students are underrepresented, and Latinos are slightly underrepresented for [particular state]. I don't know, but for the United States it's probably more diverse than a lot of other places…. The people that I work with, it's… mega crazy liberal [giggle].… I am the queer identified person in the department, and those are the issues I work on, but I don't ever feel like I am howling into the wilderness. All of my colleagues talk about homophobia and sexual orientation with their students all of the time. And when they do clinical appointments with students, they use all of the right language as far as I can tell. And they are very, very good at creating LGBT spaces for students…. That said, I feel like the work has come much farther with me being there and me being the out queer person doing the queer work. That the work has come a lot farther than it has in a few

years. I don't know if it just having someone focus on it or if it is having an out person in the department who is very visible, or what, but I do think, I know my boss is very happy with the increased level of visibility of queer students here on campus….

We were just ranked in the top 10 of most LGBT-friendly campuses. Well, I would say part of it doesn't have anything to do with us. Part of it is [the city in which the university is located]…. So that is part of it, and the other part is… the area tends to attract a lot of LGBT folks; we do just have a slightly higher percentage of LGBT folk on campus. We have a lot of out faculty and staff, we have the gender equity resource center which… is kind of an LGBT and feminist space that kind of does different empowerment work on campus, has a whole intern program that loads and loads of LGBT students kind of cycle through. So it's just a very visible presence. There is also a gay fraternity and gay sorority, an LGBT co-op housing, and the university also has Unity House which is an LGBT themed floor. So I would say there is a pretty high level of visibility…. I have talked to many people who come to [the university] because they know they will be able to come out when they come [here]….

Yes, I think [that my sexual orientation is visible on campus]…. I always [come out in my classes]…. I think it's pretty easy within a health class actually. We talk a lot about personal and community health. It usually comes up in class. I don't bother hiding it…. It's my way of dealing with it. Like, for an example this year, I was showing the students how to figure out what community that they are a part of that they would like to work with for their action projects. They have to choose a community of interest for them. And they all get very confused with what a community is and they are like "City?" And I am like, "Could you just go a little smaller?" [giggle] So I write down on the

board examples of things that make me me….: I do Yoga, I am in my early 30s, I am queer, I work at the [name of center in which she works]…. And then I say, "So which of these overlap and might be a community? Well, it looks like queer people who work at the [center] might be a good overlap for me because that looks like a community, I recognize those people, we have things in common, we have common interests, I care about them, they always make an effort to say hi to me…. blah, blah, blah." So that was how I did it this time, but it is usually something like that. I will use it as an example and keep going. They just kind of have their various reactions. Well, it's a big lecture hall so… there is a little bit of whispering, and you know the general gossipiness. Usually what I find is their kind of [made noises that might sound like gossip] and then nothing ever happens and then are paying slightly better attention than they were before [giggle]. Yes, that is pretty much it. You know I have had students who are right winged or more traditional with more of a religious background…. They might have a little bit of an adjustment once they realize that about me, and then usually they're, like, if they already like me, then they decide that they like me and they are fine with it. So…. I have never had any blow backs… knock on wood….

Yes, [my sexual orientation is] very much [intertwined with my teaching]. And [my degree in Queer Theory] is one of the reasons that I got hired…. Yes, it is one of those things that having a Ph.D. in Queer Theory, it does the job for you…. but it doesn't exactly endear you to the job market, let's just say, but in [this city], it is a different story….

When I work with a queer group, I definitely use a lot more colloquial language and use a lot more jokes. So I suppose knowing that it is not a predominantly queer

crowd [fraternities and sororities], I don't use a lot of queer jokes. I worry that they might be misconceived, or the sort of jokes that you make that would say, "Oh God, that was such a lesbian thing to say" or whatever. I would normally do that in the Queer Women Group…. So other than that, I wouldn't say that I, based on the population that attends my classes, no I don't alter it [how I teach]. Even if it was a more science group, I would still do it the same way.

I guess I have to think way, way, way back to when I was teaching in high schools in [the British Isle], the LGBT stuff. I guess I use more of those skills from there than I even realized in this job. I think I thought I could be a little more academic and a little more dry when I first started at [current university], but then I just realized that doesn't work with this crowd; they just don't have the patience. So I had to be much more of the sex ed teacher for high school students like I was in [the British Isle] than I thought I was going to have to be. But… I realized, I guess, we always used to do a standard thing every time we would do the high school class. Anonymous questions, you can ask anything you want, we may not choose to answer depending on how appropriate it is, but everyone has to write something down on a piece of paper and hand it in and we will go through it at the end. And all of them, ¾ of them were, "Are you gay?" They were just obsessed with knowing. And I always came out to them. My colleagues who were straight did not like to come out to them because they felt like if the students were homophobic, the students would think, "Well, you're okay then," you know. So they felt if the students didn't know and they had to sit with the discomfort of not knowing, it would be more important for them. But I used to come out, and I guess that the take away for me is that is why I am as I am…. They always responded well. Even if they

were kind of weirded out, they were grateful that you were honest. And you know, we have to do this with 12- and 13-year-olds. They were just very grateful that someone was being – kind of sharing part of their life in a factual and non-judgmental way. I wasn't avoiding their questions or being weird about it, I was just like, "Yeah… next question?" And that made a big impression on me about how hungry they were for real information and real facts, and so I always do anonymous questions with my students now. And it's funny because none of them have ever asked because I have already come out to them…. But they are always so excited about the anonymous questions, and they have so many of them, and a lot of them are related to gay stuff, but a lot of them are just related to having a poor sex education growing up. But I guess that is one thing – I don't know if that has to do with my orientation – but I guess that is one thing that I realized if you are just friendly, open, and non-judgmental, and you just say things in a factual way, adults are so rarely like that with young people that they will pretty much respond well most of the time.

There are so many ways such as standing in front of your students as a White person that excludes. There are a huge group of students that are not going to identify with that part of my experience…. I can use all of the right language, and try to address issues of cultural differences, and I can try to address racism and all of that kind of stuff and challenge people's racist statements if they make them, but I speak from the position I speak from. I can't – I am not going to try to pretend… I don't know….

I suppose it [how I navigate my sexual orientation] is due to my experience of being a youth worker in an LGBT organization like I just got very used to being very out, all of the time. It was a really important part of being a role model for LGBT young

people. And because it was nonprofit and not in the school… there is a certain amount of freedom, they knew a lot more about your life, they saw you in the bars and clubs, they probably knew who your girlfriend was, the small community. There was just a lot more community and an overlap of life and work and sometimes not in a good way. But, you know, mostly in a good way. And I guess having that being a huge part of my work experience, I just got used to a climate in which it was just an accepted part of who I was there, that I was, like, the American, the dyke, who does the girls group on Tuesday…. And especially I think that LGBT teenagers are so lacking for good role models that they were so hungry for that kind of thing, they really responded to that and they were so grateful.... So when you do talk about your life like…. you know, "I found it challenging to talk to my mother when I was coming out, and sometimes it would help if you try 'x'." They love hearing that kind of thing. So I guess because that was my formative experience, I just took that, and when I went into non-LGBT spaces, and I definitely had some moments when I thought, "Should I alter how I am behaving?" And like I said, I don't make as many jokes or do all of my camp voices or whatever. But, I definitely, I just kind of took the ease and comfort with my orientation to all of my other workspaces too because it was unimaginable not to do it that way….

I just feel like being honest about where you come from, what your perspective is, what your limits are in terms of knowledge, and being kind of up front about the things you could know more about but you don't. To me that is a big part of it [authenticity], I always say to the students, "Now, you know you can always come to me if you have a question or if you need my help and I'll try to help you out with it, and if I can't figure it out, then I'll try to find somebody who can and we will work on it together. So to me it's

just about like being able to be humble enough to say when you really have no idea and also just to be able to speak on what you do know. Saying like, "This is what I do know, it is not everything, other people have different experiences but I can tell you what has been my experience."

I feel like they can trust me. That, like, I'll do my best to give them the best information I can, and if I make a mistake, I'll tell them, and if I don't know something, I'll be honest about that. And that they have, I feel like, I know I am not giving you adjectives [giggles]. I guess I think about this to the effect that I want them to have, I want them to trust me, I want them to have an understanding of where I am coming from and what I can provide for them, and, hmmmm, I guess it's really just knowing an adult in their life who is respectful of them and their identity. I feel like part of the authenticity thing is also about respecting them enough to trust them with that information. You know, it's like, "I tell you this because I am going to assume that we are on the same side until you prove to me otherwise. And I tell you this because I respect your adulthood, and I respect your ability to take this information and process it and make respectful choices." And I have never been let down in that, so it has worked so far….

I have had homophobic and, again knock wood, not with my current students but with the police and a couple of high school students back in the day when they were just not open and not interested. And I probably have some and I just don't even know it because I have 200 students…. It's a good chance. But, no, I have never had, I certainly have never had anything like bullying or actually when I get my comments back at the end of the year…. Several people always say they appreciate how honest I am. Or that… I share parts of my life. I always get comments on they like the fact that I share

personal stories, and they feel like I am honest and up front with them. So it is always kind of, I don't know, trusting them creates trust.

Yeah, I usually use ones [personal stories] from my college days….and earlier. I don't use much about my life now…. I worry sometimes because again you don't want to exclude people intentionally, make cultural references people don't understand, or I don't want to make it about me, but to me if you are trying to explain a concept that is a little bit hard to understand, it is just the easiest way to do it, and they can usually remember it. They can give it back to me on a test or something, kind of weird to see that, but I am, like, at least, well, they understood it [laugh].

I do [teach sexuality], yeah…. Well, for the class that I am teaching right now, Healthy People, and the sexuality section of it, which is in November. We kind of focus it on issues common to college students. So I do have guest speakers, it's not all me. We do a thing on STI's, birth control and abortion, we do a lecture on relationships and dating, there is one on coming out, there is one on self-love – feeling good about whereever you are at because a large number of our students are virgins and make their sexual debut at university, and they are really, really inexperienced, and so I feel like partly when you teach sexuality, it is really important to understand that students may not know the touch of another person. And, you know, sometimes I think with health educators, we can be really sex positive or we can make it seem like everybody is doing all sort of crazy stuff all of the time. So, like, part of it is trying to affirm their non-sexual experience if that is the case, and then we have [an outside group]... talk about the community perspective and how they work with teenagers to try to improve their

relationships skills. So we always have somebody come and give a public health perspective. That's how that goes….

Everybody has different ways of relating to people…. I don't think I am to judge when somebody else should feel safe coming out to people. I also feel like I have a certain amount of privilege because I look a certain way. I wouldn't say I am high fem or anything, but I definitely pass as straight if people don't ask…. I [am] aware that women who are on the butchier side of the spectrum or who are androgynous, you know, get a lot more shit and might feel a lot more defensive about coming out or just not want to have to talk about that all of the time whereas I have the privilege of, which I don't even realize in my day-to-day life, is just sort of going around, and people not necessarily picking up on stuff unless I tell them. So I feel like it's a little bit different for me in that respect….

Yes, I would [consider myself an authentic teacher].... I think for me is that I feel very strongly that queer students need good role models and that non-queer students need to see that people survive and thrive and are queer. But I have also been challenged because… the term "lesbian" at certain points in my life has been more applicable than others. And right now, for example, I am single, and I am dating, but tonight I am going out on a date with a trans man, and I am not sure that, like, lesbian strictly qualifies for that, and I have also gone out with poly couples who are bisexual, like man and woman and that kind of thing. And so there are sometimes that I look at that kind of thing, and I don't want to put myself too much in a box because then there's the… it's a small world, students see you out with people then they wonder, you know, there is a point where it feels a bit boxed in to me. It feels like I am putting myself in the gay box, so I always say

very intentionally "queer" and let them figure whatever they want to figure. Then I do feel that in general I tip much more towards lesbian than anything else. I, you know, I am very, very, very far from being a gold star, and students make certain assumptions about your life when you say… when you come out to them. So that to me has been the major downside. The way that it makes me feel, like I boxed myself in to something that I need to live up to. And I have to decide how much, like, I have these gay boy interns who are adorable, and they love – I don't talk to them about my personal life – but they love when I let something slip. And they just totally eat it up. They are always saying stuff to me like, "I overheard you saying you have a date… what is she like?" And if it's, like, a trans man I don't – there is part of me that thinks, "How much do I want to get into right now?" You know, do I correct the pronoun? I don't know if I want them to know that much information. On the other hand, am I being inauthentic by saying, "Actually, it's a trans man." I don't know that has been more of a struggle for me which may be that is just a very [current university] struggle [giggle]. Maybe that people in very, very little places don't have to worry about this that much…. I think if more people were more honest, then a lot of people would admit that there are a lot of grey areas. It can be difficult to be the flag bearers for ambiguity [laugh].

Erin

I am Caucasian and I am 34…. This is my 13th year [as health educator]…. I graduated from [particular university] in 1998 and was focused in psychology/sociology and health education, and was hired right out of college at [a university in the southeast]. I was a health educator there for five and a half years doing a lot of peer education. That was kind of my main focus, but I was a generalist there as far as content areas. Then I

moved up to [a more northern state] and worked for [another university] for 4 ½ years and was a health educator there, and again with peer health education…. So I got heavily involved with HIV…. And then… I moved up to [a more northeastern state]. I am originally from the northeast, so I am gradually making my way back up north closer to the family…. I have been at [current University] since June of 2008, and I am the sole practitioner here, which is very new for me and very different, because [previously] I worked in a full health promotion office with a director and a couple of other health educators…. Here, I serve in a generalist capacity and again, we don't have specifically with regards to LGBT work…. I never had firsthand involvement in [LGBT issues]…. We do not have a physical office on campus or a one staff member who is devoted to that issue, so as a health educator I have taken on all of our LGBT programs and awareness, and designed our LGBT mentoring network…. We just piloted that last spring and it went really well considering for the first semester... and that matches the LGBT faculty, staff, and graduate students as mentors with LGBT undergraduate students as mentees. So… mentors have been coming out of the woodwork for me [giggle], so we are just trying to get the students to utilize the service as well from mentee aspects. I also run our Safe Zones program, which is our 2 hour awareness education program, and I work with our [LGBT] Alliance, which is our only student organization on campus, and train them, and just kind of act as a pseudo advisor for that group….

I do sexual assault, I do our safe zones program, which is 2 hours, most popular in the residence halls is our safer sex program which is about an hour and a half. I do that also for any organization – fraternities and sororities, athletes - but mostly I do a lot in the residence halls…. I do all of the freshman coming in for orientation…. I sit on the sexual

response team. I also serve on our [particular county] response team…. So a lot of work around sexual assault, a lot of work around safer sex, contraceptive choices, women's health, don't get so many women's health because our percentages are about 30% women and 70% men at the University…. I am not faculty or adjunct faculty…. I do trainings and presentations, sometimes I will guest lecture in classes, but when I was at [previous university] I taught our peer educators and that was a one credit course. I was faculty at [previous university] so they did take a credit course, but at [current university] I am just a health educator....

We have 6000 undergraduate students and about 1000 graduate students. Most of our graduate students are international…. for our safe zones program, it is offered to all students, staff, and faculty. That is one of the programs that we reach out a lot to graduate students, but most of my programs are tailored to the undergraduate student body. I also do one-on-one consultations…. Students are referred to me through multiple resources including counseling. I am kind of the go-to person. I am the token lesbian on campus if you will…. [giggle].

I am very, very out on campus. I have been out since I got here. I was not out during the interview process. I didn't feel that it was necessary, but I have been completely 100% out with my colleagues and all of my students, and they know that it is not confidential information.... I encourage them to share it with other people to utilize me as a resource. They can use me as a stepping-stone before counseling if they are looking for that type of a resource. Sometimes counseling will refer them to me because they are working with a student who is working through some of these issues, and they want them to work with someone who is self identified in that way. I do consultation for

all of those topic areas nutrition, fitness, mental health… the whole gamut. I do get a lot of referrals for students who are exploring their sexuality or questioning it or experiencing problems with family or friends….

The undergraduate students are very diverse student population given the size of our school, and compared to the two previous institutions where I worked. Probably our largest minority group is Asian, then Black then Hispanic, although they fall very closely with one another, a lot of international students for undergraduates as well. I actually advise a wellness house, which is one of our themed residence halls and just on that floor alone 1/3 of them are Asian and good handful of them are internationals from China, Japan, India… very diverse. The kind of student, they are all valedictorians of their class…. A lot of them, having worked at a large public university and then a private liberal arts skills before that, social skills are at the lower end. Those are some issues that we work through…. You know, they giggle and squirm when you mention penis and vagina and vulva and all these types of things… so they are techies…. They are great students, but definitely a bit more introverted. They are gaming not as socially sophisticated….

There is [an LGBT group on campus] and what was really exciting this year… so this is my 3rd school year and the past 2 years I had been acting as the pseudo advisor…. We have over 195 clubs on campus, which are recognized under our student activities office and the student union, and our [LGBT group] is one of those recognized groups, so they do receive funds from student activities fund and student union. And that group, in the past, has always been somewhere about 20 students show up for the first meeting and then it dwindles down to the same 6 or 7 students that show up for the rest of the year.

This year I think they said like 25 people showed up for the first meeting and the student activity fair, which happens the first week of school, they had 64 students sign up…. A few of those identified as allies not as LGBT, but none the less, thinking almost 65 students signed up… it was amazing and we were really excited….

And as far as faculty and staff, I am most definitely the most out on campus as far as staff goes. There are other staff members on campus, as I said earlier, they are coming out of the wood work. The mentoring program gained more recognition, but I just learned that our… new performing arts center…, huge beautiful facility, apparently has a lot of staff that identify as LGBT.... We tend to draw a lot of LGBT students in performing arts and computer science and computer arts…. It is a great way to bring together a more united visible community on the campus. I think for the students to know that it is something that is supported by the university on top of the Safe Zones program. It is a visible network of staff… and you have to be out to be a mentor. Not that we are telling all of the students in the program that they have to be out and flagrant, but we need positive role models who are comfortable with their own sexuality and comfortable with others, knowing it, and being out to people to help a student who may be trying to transition to being out as well. If you are not yourself, how can you mentor a student through that process? It is a requirement that you do be out.

[In the safe zones training] being respectful of others, maintaining confidentiality, and if someone does come out to you, and you are comfortable, here are some ways you can help and some resources. Not pushing an agenda. LGBT is part of diversity…. I always start out with what is diversity, and people always suggest race or gender. I always say, " Do we ever think of LGBT community as a part of diversity?" I tell them,

"It is part of [our] mission statement, is providing a culturally diverse campus community…."

Yes, it [the visibility of my sexual orientation] really depends on what happens organically. I'll just give you an example… the other night I was doing an alcohol program with athletes, and I asked for a volunteer. It was an all male audience, and I asked for a volunteer to come up and lay on the table, so I could show him this Baucus maneuver, which is a position that you put someone if they are intoxicated…. So the kid came up and I said, "I want you to lay on the table here so everyone can see you, put your head right here." And then I always ask them if it is okay that I touch their arms and their legs, which is what I need to maneuver to put them into this position. And one of his buddies yells out, "Hey, he has a girlfriend!" and I said, "That's alright, I do too." And they all kind of laughed, but then they all… kind of like had an epiphany like, "Aw, she wasn't joking." [giggle] And I actually don't have a girlfriend, but I actually found it suiting to say that… to kind of bring them to a level of awareness that, "Hey, just because I am female doesn't mean that I am heterosexual, doesn't mean that I am hitting on you etc." So, you know, that was kind of an organic experience. I had no intentions of divulging that, but I did it in a very short sweet way, they laughed, they kind of had that light bulb go over their heads, and they were just kind of okay. In my Safe Zone programs, I say half maybe 60% of the time I bring it up. I let it happen organically again. I don't ever have kind of a place in the program where I am scheduled to say, "By the way, I'm a lesbian" but I let it happen organically, and depending on the dynamics of the audience that I am working with, and if I feel that it will enrich the experience for them, or kind of be able to bring the issue a little bit closer to home for them then I bring

it up. Some groups I don't, and it's just because it doesn't happen organically, or I don't see the need for it or the moment just doesn't present itself. In my… sexual assault [program], I never bring it up, but I am always sharing statistics about same sex sexual assault because a lot of times when sexual assault is presented, it is always… that one in four women will be sexually assaulted during their college experience, and typically those women are heterosexual encounters. So, I always make sure to share same sex status as well, because I don't want people in the room who identify as LGBT to kind of zone out and say this doesn't apply to me. But I don't disclose my sexual orientation there. In safer sex programs, which is probably my second most popular programs as far as residence hall presentations…. But that program I would say 20% of the time it comes up, but again it is always organic. It's not anything that I thrust into the presentation, but if something comes up, I have no reservations about sharing it, but I am always using gender neutral language…. Or when I have people come up to do a condom demonstration, regardless of the gender, that two people come up. Like if it is two guys then they will say, "Oh well, who is going to be the girl and who is going to be the guy?" And I say, "Well, there could be two men too?" And then they giggle and it's a nice little ice breaker for the moment, but then I can… throw in that caveat that, you know, it could be a female/male couple, it could be male/male couple, it could be female/female couple, right? It is just to add a little element of humor, but also to point out that it doesn't have to be a heterosexual couple, this could be two males…. So, you know, I might bring it up in a Safer Sex program, but not as likely as I would during a Safe Zone program.

So I think it is just more about it happening organically, because I don't want students to think I have an agenda. I don't want them to feel that I am pushing anything

on them, but if it is a teachable moment, and the dynamics of the group are right I have no qualms about sharing that and using it as an example to tell a story about, or you know, to better describe a point that I am trying to make…. When it comes to nutrition or fitness, drugs, alcohol, mental health, I don't think it ever really comes up there. But again my programs always include gender-neutral language, and things like that. When talking about relationships and partnerships and things like that, but as far as disclosure of my own sexual orientation, probably most often comes up during the Safe Zones programs….

I share a lot stories with many of my different programs, stories of interactions I have had with students, and I try not to when I first started teaching back when I was in my young 20s, right out of college, I did share a lot of personal stories with students about things that I had experienced, and at the time it felt right and it felt organic. And as I have gotten older, although I look very, very young sometimes, they think I am a student and they could never guess that I am in my mid 30s, and they kind of gasp when I say I am, which again it only comes up if it happens to be organic…. At this point to try to compare my personal life outside of work with their personal life is just two totally separate playing fields. So I tend to… share anecdotal stories of their peers who I have interacted with or heard stories from…. For instance, this student who had a .25 BAC and hadn't eaten since 10AM… they can relate to and it was a peer. Throughout time I have shared less about me and more about the many years of stories that I have had with working with students, and how it can relate to them…. [Although] I have done less and less of over the years, at least when it comes to my LGBT students, the storytelling comes up a little bit more. I am willing to share my personal life, but not as much in my

actual presentations and programs. It's more kind of one-on-one. You know, if a student stops in my office to say hi or something, they might bring something up and I might say, "Oh yeah, well, I experienced this or I remember that happened." But, I guess, I just don't bring it up as much. I actually have never been asked [if I am a lesbian]… and I imagine it's because I appear very feminine…. I would bet that 99.9% of my students assume that I am straight, which that is fine and I don't really care. I've never had a student ask me [in front of the class] and I think it would be pretty neat if it did happen. I think I'd be like, "Wow, this is pretty cool." It would just be nice to be like, "Yes, I am." It is usually me more bringing it up organically and the students having a dumbfounded look on their faces… and then they probably put two and two together, because I said I was an athlete all through high school and college, and they were probably like, "Oh, duh, she is your typical lesbian athlete." I think that they definitely think they had a "what?" moment, and then they associated me with wearing a polo shirt, skirt, and thinking, "She did mention she was a lesbian athlete all through college."….

[If asked] I would say, "Yes, as a matter of fact, I am [a lesbian]." My entire life I have been a very out and open person. I've never hid anything, and I just as easily tell students that I also have OCD. I am not bashful to share information and sometimes it's gotten me in trouble throughout my entire life, and share things with complete strangers about my very personal life, but that is something that I have been my entire life…. People say, "Aren't you worried that people might get offended if you say something like that?" And you know what? They probably do feel uncomfortable. And I hope, I don't put it out there in a way that objectifies myself or the LGBT community, but I think being uncomfortable is okay sometimes…. And actually, the research points to this too, that

having extreme emotions on any end of the spectrum that you go to also is correlated with a change in behavior or thought processes and belief systems. So, you know, if I am putting someone outside of their comfort zone a little bit, hopefully not too much, but if am putting someone outside of their comfort zone a little bit so that they have a reaction of some emotion… I feel like it's going to allow them the opportunity to reflect back on it later and perhaps learn from that experience. So with that kind of a belief in how things work and me sharing, I don't think I ever learned how to include it. I always just have included it…. So I think that has been more what I have learned overtime about sharing anything related to my orientation in the classroom with colleagues and things like, that is how much to disclose and how much not to disclose…. I just feel that being able to share life experiences with other people can help enrich your life by getting the feedback that they give you and it can help enrich their lives as well. I have always kind of thought of it in that regard….

The students that are on my panel for the Safe Zones program, they all had to go through the Safe Zones training first, and many of them are from the [LGBT alliance], but some students choose not to be a part of that…. I mention [during the safe zones training] if anyone identifies as LGBT and are interested in being a part of the panel come and talk with me after the panel or email me. And so, I get to hear all of their coming out stories, and so I have heard many, many different stories and some are good and some are bad and some are half and half…. I have one student that his story really hit me hard because he had come out as bisexual…. When he came out to his family, he was hoping they would be supportive, but they were so upset that they sent him to counseling with his pastor – like pry away the gay counseling, both individual and family counseling

– to pry away the gay. That really hurt me because I could tell the pain that he was experiencing from it and just knowing that his family wasn't accepting of him for who he was presenting himself as and who he identified as…. He didn't cry or anything in our meeting, but I could tell he was feeling pretty down about it. And so I said, "What happened after you went to these counseling meetings?" And he said, "Well, obviously I am still bisexual" and we had a little laugh there, but I said, "Does your family think that you are cured so to speak?" And he said, "Well, I think that they know I am probably not, but we just don't speak about it at all, so now they don't ask me anything about my relationships… females, males, nothing. We just don't talk about it, it as if it doesn't exist." And I said, "Well, that is really sad, because you shared this with them, they sent you to counseling, and they just kind of dismissed that entire part of your life, you know, your romantic relationships, and it is almost as if it doesn't exist for you, and you can't share that information with them and you can't ask them." And that was hard. I think, he never cried, but he looked really sad on the outside and I know he felt it on the inside. He did join our mentoring network last semester, and worked with another bisexual male who was his mentor. And I hope that he had some good experiences from that…. So that is a story that a student shared with me and it is heart wrenching for me, because I could tell he was hurting on the inside for wanting acceptance from his family. I've had other students that say, "Yeah, my family is totally fine with it." But that one student stood out to me the most, because I couldn't imagine being in counseling trying to pray something away….

[I would define authenticity as] being true to yourself…. And I use the word authentic a lot for myself, because that is how I identify. I identify as being authentic… I

think it relates very closely to what I shared with you earlier about how my entire life, as long as I can remember since I was a little kid, just being very bold and very out there, saying what is on my mind…. But I have always been a firm believer in being authentic, which is just being true to yourself, and being who you are, and not everyone is going to accept you for who you, and I am okay with that. I don't… need everyone's approval, the people who do approve of me are the ones that are my friends who will support me, and if people choose not to support me or approve of me I don't yearn for their company. I am satisfied with surrounding myself with positive energy and positive people. We don't all need to have the same belief systems. I have friends that are extremely religious; I am not religious at all. I am more spiritual in nature. I have many straight friends, I have many gay friends, and I definitely don't have any…. [pause] Well, I guess I shouldn't even say that. I was going to say, I don't think I have any homophobic friends, but I am actually sure that I do. But they are probably long past friends, maybe friends that I have reconnected with online….

I think that authenticity is what I ask of my students too – as best you can be true to yourself and your beliefs, and just at the end of the day it is you who you have to live with and if you are trying to live out someone else's dream…. So authenticity is a real, real important part of my belief systems and values, and I try to encourage that with my students as well. And I know that not every situation is perfect. I know that not all of my students can come out to their families. I know that some of my students are dependent on their families financially, or aren't out with their parents right now. They are going to wait until they are out of college making their own money and paying their own bills, and I understand that. I understand that there are situations where you can't 100% be

authentic particularly with regards to sexual orientation or gender identity but I try to encourage them to be authentic in other ways in their life so that they can validate who they are and be validated by others about who they are.

I would never be able to work at a place like that [a place not accepting of LGBT]. I just wouldn't…. I am very blessed and grateful to be in the field that I am because I feel, and I am talking field in general not school specific, I feel like I am very grateful to be in this field…. My field is just kind of health, wellness, acceptance, caring; those are all kind of values that we kind of preach by. And by preaching by those we also expect each other to live by those. It is a little bit easier to be out in my field than it is to be out in corporate America, for example. It hurts me to think that people can't share what's going on in their weekends or their personal lives or if they have a partner being able to talk openly about their partner. It hurts me to see that other people are not able to do that the way I am. So I feel very blessed and feel like I am one of the lucky ones.

But I know that for some schools, for example, particularly some religious or faith based schools, they can't even talk about condoms or distribute condoms. And sexual health was the first area I was ever trained in. That's what I graduated in college with, my expertise was in sexual health and human sexuality and, you know, the thought of not being able to work with college students and talk about safer sex and condoms, and to only preach abstinence just tore me up. I would never work for a place like that even if I was jobless and unemployed, needing the first paycheck I could find, I could never apply to a school that did not allow me to talk about safer sex, or distributing condoms…. And I didn't divulge that information in my interview processes, but I think I had a good gut feeling that it would be a place that I would be accepted and disclosed it when I started.

It wasn't like I walked in the door the first day and said, "Hello, I'm Erin, I'm a lesbian!" [giggle] but you know very soon after…. I organically let it come out in conversation with people. Didn't make it a point to sit down and have meetings with people and talk about it but would just say, "Oh yeah, this weekend I had a date with this woman etc, etc." And [they] just kind of say, "Oh okay." So yeah, I personally would not be able to because I don't think that would be living authentically for me, and I don't want to have to sequester off an entire part of who I am during my work life and not be able, like my colleagues can talk about what they did on the weekend, and with whom, so I just, that would not be an option for me, for myself personally.

[Adjectives to describe authenticity would be] honesty, truthfulness, and validation comes to mind. I don't know, that's tough…. It is a state of being, to me it is a belief system, it is a way of life. I don't really think of it in adjective terms, I think of it as how you chose to live your life. I don't know. I don't think I can give you an adjective term. It's just kind of more of a, I'm trying to think of something to compare it with. If someone identified as [a certain religion], they might have a set of values that they live by, and I identify as authentic with a set of principles and values that I live by, which is the overriding term that I think about is being true to yourself, because when I think of authenticity I think of being true to yourself….

I don't need other peoples validation for me to feel my authenticity, but because I am most times assumed as a heterosexual woman its…. The times that someone does say something, and this has nothing to do with the research, it is just me speaking anecdotally, but the few times that someone has assured me without even knowing it, like, "Oh yeah, of course you're a lesbian, you do xyz, or you look like xyz, or you act

like xyz." It's kind of refreshing, it's kind of like - yeah, I passed the test - you know [giggle]. I don't know, but it is so silly it has no basis for anything, but I kind of get really giddy and excited in those few occasions when someone just kind of at face value just says, "You're a lesbian" and that is because most times people assume I am heterosexual….

I am very out on campus and all of my students know that and I live in a small area…. the college is in [smaller city] and [the bigger city] is where I live... the Mecca of gay life… where all of the gay restaurants and gay events are held. And many of my students come into [the bigger city] to come out. And I remember last spring I had a little bit of a conflict, because I had offered to walk in the pride parade with my students, but pride is also a huge time for me and my friends. So I knew that there were expectations for me to behave and act in my professional way throughout the parade when I was with my students. But when the parade was done I was like, "Okay, it's time for you to head in your direction and I will head in my direction." These are 18 year olds and I am 34… so I am not going to spend the day with my students…. It was hard for me because I wanted to take off my… professional hat and put on my… personal life hat and go out and mingle and wonder with my friends with a drink in my hand…. I was really worried about my students seeing me through the duration of the day, because I just worried that they would see a little too much of my personal life - Erin outside of work, which Erin at work is being authentic, but she is professional and Erin outside of work is authentic, but around my friends and family… you know you have two different hats to put on…. That was the first time that I had encountered it, but I had had worries before that, because there are only a few small bars that are gay. I don't frequent the bars whatsoever, but

when I do go out I like to have a good time, I get all dressed up, all dolled up, I am a very feminine lesbian, and I worry about running into my students in the bar, because at work I dress like a librarian, and I have my glasses on and my hair pulled back in a pony tail, and I look very professional and all… casual professional. But when I go out I wear more risky clothing. Again not inappropriate, but not what my students are used to seeing my in everyday….

So I went to this event and the next week I was doing my Safe Zones program for the pride events, and some of my students mentioned that they were at the same bar I was at and I said, "What? You were there?" And I kind of caught myself, and I thought, "Oh gosh, why did I say that?" And they were like, "Were you there?" And I was like, "Yeah, I was." And they were like, "You were at that bar that night, we didn't see you." And it was kind of this big hoopla that they were making, and I was trying to tone it down like I shouldn't have even opened my mouth. And again, not that it was wrong that I am out. It is kind of a weird dichotomy; I do like having a personal life that does not involve my students. So in a perfect world I would live an hour away and I would have no chances of bumping into them when I am out in public….

[In term of the health education field]… I think we are very inclusive, college health care in particular. Health care in general I can't really speak to, because I work specifically in college health and that has been my main experience. If I had to guess on health care in general I would say, yes. But definitely in college health care it does an amazing job, because before I even became involved with the Coalition of Allies for LGBT Health for American College Health Association (ACHA) you know I was involved with the BACHUS network, which is the national peer education network for

college peer educators, and I have been in ACHA since 1998 and have always felt a presence of this is okay and accepting, so I think it does a very, very good job. And like I said, my heart goes out to those people who may work for faith based institutions or who may work for conservative institutions who are not okay with their staff members/health educators being out. I have never worked in that environment and I never want to. I feel for those people that you know work in those environments and have to keep that a secret. But I think overall college student healthcare I think is very accepting – all of the practitioners that I have worked with, be it mental health or physical health, have always been very accepting. I have never heard ignorant statements or bias or bigotry.… That is why I say for my friends who are in corporate America who aren't out, because of their profession… I feel bad and I feel very lucky. I just happen to have the luck of the draw that I fell in love with a field that happened to be so accepting of it. So yeah, I think compared to many others… and again I don't have experience in those others, but I just have a lot of friends in those others that say to me they can't be out.

[I would suggest]… definitely allies of LGBT Health. I actually refer many of my students to websites. I am on the Human Rights Campaign news feed. GLSEN – Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network. GLAMA – Gay Lesbian Medical Association. Those are a few of the professional associations and be on their news feeds to get up to date information on LGBT news and healthcare and college students and human rights and equality issues. Those resources keep me in touch with what is going on in the field, and they kind of help keep me connected to my community and feel kind of a sense of identity with my community and camaraderie with my community. Particularly with HRC, I am on their Facebook news feed and just whatever current thing is going on

whether it is Don't Ask Don't Tell, Prop 8, the recent suicides related to bullying LGBT students, they just really keep me abreast of what is going on and give me the opportunities to be an advocate.

Mary

I am 59 and, well, I really struggle with [determining race]… Caucasian or Native American. I have Cherokee that I am more prideful about than I am the Caucasian part…. It would be best to say Caucasian. This is my 13th year at [current university] and I had a one-year appointment [before that]. So 14 [years as a health educator] I would say.

[My career path includes] a doctorate relatively late in life. But I finished there in 1997 and defended in August, so I hadn't really actively sought out the job market or opportunities. So there was a one-year position at [first University]... and then took the position here and have been here my entire career. I was very attracted to [current University] based on its reputation in terms of education…. I was really attracted to working with future teachers and helping them see their vital role, even an elementary classroom teacher, in influencing the health of the nation by what they were doing every day…. But I am just returning to faculty this year. I have been in an administrative position for 5 years on campus directing diversity and community involvement… [which] has four centers that I oversaw, and one of them was the LGBT resource center…. So I am just coming back into the faculty…. I continued to teach…. I taught a class each semester for them, and that quite frankly bit my butt, trying to do that and the other thing too.

[Before my doctorate], I had a couple of career paths. Initially, when I finished my undergraduate degree, I did my masters immediately. I was only in public education about 3 or 4 months before I went back to where I had done my master's degree.... It was in the height of Title IX…. And so I went and got that job [women's athletic director] and probably shouldn't have, because I was the youngest women's athletic director in the country. I was their women's athletic director and coach, and also taught health for them, not a whole bunch, as you can imagine, I didn't have a lot of extra time. And when I left there, I got frustrated and… called a press conference and said, "I am submitting my resignation at the end of the year because this institution is not doing what it is supposed to be doing with Title IX and equity in sports." And it did some good…. So basically they told me that, "You have a job as long as you want it, just don't rock the boat." And that wasn't comfortable for me, so I decided, "You know what, I'll rock the boat and see what else I can do here to survive." It was then that I found the field called Therapeutic Recreation, did not even know it existed, but it was a good fit for me and it was a good fit for where I was at that point in my life… my personal life…. My partner, at the time, had a child and I needed, I wanted more time than what coaching involved…. And I might have done that for the rest of my life. I loved Therapeutic Recreation, but the reality was that insurance companies were not really supporting work that we were trying to do with kids…. So I thought, "I always wanted to do a doctorate… let's start it." So… in the midst of my midlife crisis, instead of buying a sports car, red of course, or having an affair, I did a doctorate. And it was fun. It was fun being in a cohort with people that were 15-20 years my junior. But I was the seasoned experienced one… I was the "Mama." So that is where I was before I got here.

[The university where I currently work is] extremely diverse and extremely non-traditional. I think our average age for students is 24 or 25. We are 24,000 or right about there…. We don't have a large resident hall population, we have a much larger commuter population. We have strong international student office; I think we have over 300 countries represented internationally. Just very diverse, I think our African Americans are about 30%, Hispanics are less than that, but growing on campus. A smaller Native American population…. In fact, we celebrate five cultural heritage months…. We have a large Muslim population…. And in terms of our LGBT population, the resource center is very active and very visual. We have a strong LGBT faculty organization; we have an advisory board for the resource center. The campus climate index, we have a 4.5 rating which we have maintained.

Well, to be honest, I have taught everything, because I have been here for so long. Really, when I went up for promotion and tenure when I looked at the number of preps that I have had it was amazing…. We have a couple of tracks, community and school, and most of us are hybrid, we do both. I probably would be listed more on the school side although I also do community kind of classes to…. We have a little bit of a unique situation here in that our master's program in health ed and then we have a minor in health ed. We do not have a major.... I am only teaching one class this term.… I have also taught our drug class. I'd say the only thing that I haven't taught is the sex class. I'd say it is balanced [mix of graduate and undergraduate classes that I teach]. Especially me, coming back and being the graduate coordinator. I am going to put myself in.

[The visibility of my sexual orientation] is very interesting because we would like to say we are a large university with a small college feel and that really is true. Because I

am amazed sometimes that the students that come through our classes that have absolutely no idea what is going on in that big department [diversity] that I used to direct. I have never come out in my classes. Mainly because - you know I've gotta tell you - now let me put a caveat on that, I have had students come in during office hours. And I have always been honest. If they ask questions, I answer them honestly, but I don't feel like I have to be in a class and say, "I am a lesbian, I am your professor for the semester." I think that it is a piece of me, it is a part of me, and it is not the most important part when I'm teaching. I do everything to bring things to the classroom. I'm sure they think I am a flaming liberal, which I am, but I am also very conservative on some issues too…. I tend to be a little bit more conservative there. But if I am doing bullying, I make sure I use examples of the suicide rates of LGBT kids. I try to bring anything into my class's current-event-wise. So obviously we will be talking about the increase of LGBT suicides nationwide, and in fact my class that meets on Tuesday evenings, and the university has a vigil planned for later this month that is kind of a long the lines of take back the night. And so, what I may do is try to tie that in with my class because one of the things that we talk about is social marketing. And then explore what would you have done to market that event from a social marketing perspective. I use very inclusive language and that sort of thing.

But in terms of the university, I am totally out. It is amazing to me but sometimes that doesn't filter down to the classes that I teach in health education, because they just don't know about what is going on university wide. When they interviewed me for that directors position, the woman that would end up being my supervisor, asked a totally inappropriate question, saying how would I answer people that say, "Why have you put a

White woman in that position [director of diversity]?" And I basically said, "At that point it was three of the four centers… I will start with the women's center, I am a woman. Then I'll go to the center for multicultural affairs, I am Cherokee. And then I will go to the LGBTRC and tell you that I am a lesbian." You know, and they knew that, but I guess they wanted me to say it, which I did. Completely out in that division when I was working in it, I was directing an area called diversity. Why wouldn't I be and I talked about it very openly. If a person asked me in the middle of class, I would tell them, but that just hasn't been the case…. Now interestingly enough, there has been a class that has been added, and it's a core class for our graduates. It's diverse pops. And I will be teaching or co-teaching, and we are using, I don't know if you have seen the book *Cultural Competencies in Health Education and Health Promotion*…. My program coordinator and I at the time for the LGBT resource center wrote that [LGBT] chapter in there. And that is the book that we are using, so I don't see how I won't come out there. But otherwise it's pretty much not something that has come up in the classroom, a handful of students have come into office hours and I have talked with them about it then and very honest….

[People assume] if you used the word partner, you've automatically outted yourself, and you know what, on our campus our heterosexual people use the term partner, the inclusive language that is all over our campus and the word partner doesn't immediately make you gay. Usually what I do in my ice breaker kinds of things, I always include myself, and typically we will talk about my grandkids, and I am sure, that through no intention of my own, that they automatically will think that because I have grandchildren that I must not be a lesbian. I feel like there are other things I do from that

point forward and I am living in a space where you know, I think people would think, "Well, that doesn't mean anything." We have faculty that are doing national work on second parent adoption. So it is a very accepting and inclusive campus especially for language. So when I introduce myself and don't say I am partnered, because really I am not. I have a relationship with a woman who lives 30 minutes from here. We are working towards that so I don't know… whether that would be something that I would do in the future. No, it's not a part of my introduction. I usually tell them about my education and talk to them about how all of my degrees are from [state where received degrees], because they right away will notice that accent. Talk to them a little bit about the work that I have done on campus, but returning in to this faculty role, it's going to be amazing if it isn't something. The resource center does a lot of panels on campus called EPIC panels, so I have already signed up for five of those this semester. I don't know how to explain this any differently, I will be going into mostly classes that will be arts and sciences, and it's like we are in funnels, where our colleges are on this campus. And I will see students in those classes that I will never see again. You know, I'll tell them that I am in health education, a faculty member, it's just a different environment, I think.

I've noticed in my graduate classes this fall. Of course I use the word partner when I am doing any kind of example…. In fact, they aren't about LGBT anything, it's just I'll use partner when it is obvious that it is a heterosexual couple that I am referring to, and I think the students, I don't know them that well yet, no, come to think about it, there are a couple that might have gone down the path, "Okay partner, that means LGBT or whatever." So I don't know, that is an interesting mindset I guess.

[Coming out could be] an outstanding teachable moment. And that is where you can just turn it around, it's not any different than saying, "Look, you may not have a kid that is on drugs but I guarantee you that you are going to have a kid whose parents are on drugs and you may not have a child in an elementary classroom that knows what their identity is but you very well may have children that are being raised by gay parents." And so let's talk about that and they do want to know… it is just second nature here, in fact, I would say that we have had a lesbian dean, but we do not now. But not at that level of the provost and VP, but we have numerous department heads and numerous administrators and key important, valued faculty professors that are gay and lesbians on this campus…. Just like it is important to have African American and Hispanic professors that they can identify with and can aspire.

Let me give you one example that will give you a little bit of a better idea of the climate on our campus. Last year, the homecoming king was a gay male, absolutely campaigned as a gay male. This year, we actually had a Muslim male that ran for queen…. He said, "I am not running to take this away… I have very good friends that are running. I am running to show the gender binaries and to demonstrate that our campus would allow me to do this because that is how inclusive we are." And, actually, we had a lesbian who was running for queen and came in second. She was on the court and everything, and I happened to – God knows why – judge for homecoming…. But she, in her answers, talked openly about it. She is a member of our theatre group, and she has done a dialogue about being bisexual, and she is African American. And that is another battle we have is the African American and religious thing on campus, but we are

having dialogues about it and that is important and as long as you are doing that you are ahead of the game.

[I think] if [I] were walking across campus someone would say I am a faculty member [not a lesbian faculty member]. A lot of that depends on if it is in context, for example, there is a forum today that I am not going to but they are trying to do a panel on hate signs. Our school newspaper had inappropriate cartoons about gays and African Americans, and one in particular raised a lot of eyebrows, but interestingly enough it was the one about African Americans. And so we met as an advisory board yesterday to the LGBTRC, and we drafted a letter that we sent to the president and the provost that said, "We absolutely abhor any kind of a thing like this that is representative of discrimination, but we would like to bring to the forefront that there have been several cartoons that have been disrespectful to the gay community and we would like for that to be a part of the dialogue as well."

And so there is always battles to fight and there is always going to be somebody that or there are plenty of people here too that are homophobic such as religion. An interesting thing happened this semester when I went back to faculty. Many student groups were asking me to be their faculty rep. I am already the faculty advisor for the Muslim students and for SAGA [Student Athlete Gay Straight Alliance] but this very religious group, that is a drama group, asked and I said, "We need to sit down and talk about this." So, in the conversation I said, "I don't know if you know this or not, I don't know how you couldn't know this given what my position is here, but I am a lesbian and I am going to tell you that there are some things that I will not tolerate, but I am also a Christian and I also consider myself spiritual, and I'll tell you that your reputation is that

if you are associated with [particular group] and if you are associated with [another particular group] that there have been some issues with both of those groups not being homophobic. I will not accept any kind of language that says, hate the sin, love the sinner. I will not go there." You know, and at the end she said, "I think I better take this to the board." So long story short, I am not going to be their advisor and I am fine with that, but it just gives you an example that in some of the student organizations we still have battles that we fight.

[A notable or memorable time specific to my sexual orientation] in the classes that I teach in health ed, I think the most concrete and specific things would be when I do things around bullying. I always, always include the stats around LGBT youth…. It is impossible for that to come up and someone not to say, "Well, my brother is gay."…. I have never had a student in any of those health ed classrooms come out themselves. I have had examples... in fact, this is one of the students that have come into my office after the class telling me about her partner and asking about me…. And we were doing the bullying and I always just ask them, I'll point out examples of it and they usually say that, "I have never done it but I have watched it." In these classes it is not unusual to have 30-year-old people returning for their post baccalaureate, and they will have welled up tears, sharing the scars that they have from that particular time in life.

But the best example that I could give is on a [a particular] panel. For years I have been out to everybody in my family except my father, and there had been at least three occasions in the past recent history, like the last 7 years, that there was a set time and place that I was going to do it, and there was a medical issue on his part that prevented it from happening. But in these… panels, they try to put as much difference as

they can… they make sure there is a gay male, lesbian, transgendered. It really is about sharing your story, and then the students have questions after that. As I was sharing my story, because we had a panel that was not sharing any difficult stories. So I said, "Lest we forget, let me just give you a coming out story of my own." And I shared with them about this past Thanksgiving, I said, "I don't care about anything else, I'm going in there and I am doing this, because I need to do it." And so I go in and I tell the class, "I was on spot, this was the most beautiful…." I remember thinking that there should be video cameras on me right now because they need to use this for people that need to come out to their fathers late in life, it was that good. So I finish and my father says to me, "Well, you know,… your stepmother and I have said numerous times, we couldn't have asked more from a daughter than we have got from you." And I was thinking to myself, "Excellent. I should have done this years ago." And he says, "But, I don't think it is natural. And the only people that say it's natural are queer psychiatrists." And you could have heard a pin drop [in the room of the panel]…. My buddy that is the special ed teacher, that's also into gay adoption rights, started crying. You know, he says, "I can't believe how horrible that is." I just sort of wheeled back, I was in a chair in [my father's] office and I said, "Well, I wasn't really expecting that Dad. But I'd like to share some material with you that doesn't come from Rush Limbaugh, because there is not a doubt in my mind that I was born this way." And he knows that my mother's father was gay, that her brother was gay… he knows all that. And this is an intelligent man, very intelligent man, but he is also very conservative. So that would be my story. I guess. It is one that I have to laugh about it because it is just too funny. I mean, it's not, and it's not funny, but I don't want it going in the other direction. I mean he is 84 years old and he could very

well live to be 100. His mother did, lived to be 103 and I just…. And I do try to see him several times a year, and I will but I have to get myself organized first.

So when I think about [navigating my sexual orientation on campus], when I share things with people…. A lot of this has happened for me in the last 13 years since I have been here and the campus itself absolutely created the navigational path for me, because it was just… I immediately realized, ”You know what? There are people, very important people on this campus that are visually out and they're respected and they just sort of embraced me and brought me into the fold." But, I do remember having a conversation with the woman who was the program coordinator at the resource center at the time. And we were doing a grant, we were the first university to get money from the Gill Foundation, and we were doing, I was the educational person for it and I was going into the classrooms, any classroom that I could get into, doing anti-LGBT bullying. Our goal was that every teacher or teaching personnel, the administrators, the counselors, the teachers would all have this in-service before they were gone. And she would say, "You gotta come out in your classrooms, you gotta come out in your classrooms." And I would say, "No, I don't [name of program coordinator], no I don't have to." And I would say the same thing, not that I am afraid of any repercussions, I just believe that this is a part of who I am, I don't see it as the most important part, and certainly not the most important part when I am up in the front of the classroom. Will I ever deny it, absolutely not. Will I be honest about it if it comes up in the classroom, absolutely. And I think I do a pretty decent job of making sure of being inclusive, my language is inclusive… that's who I am. It's not just about me being a lesbian, it's about the African American students that are in the classroom, it's about the Latino students. I just want to be sure

that everyone is included…. But the reality is that if I was someone else, I'm not sure I'd be on this path. I certainly wasn't this way at [first university], it wasn't open, at [doctoral institution], absolutely not. There are pockets, of course, and I had a very close group when I did my doctorate, and they were professors that were gay. But it wasn't kind of talked about…. But I, you know, it really is really specific to what [current university] was when I got here and how it allowed me to feel safe and comfortable and….

I do think that now that I am back [teaching again], I will be doing more graduate classes, that it's going to be a different venue in the graduate classes than in the undergraduate classes. I think it will come up more…. I've come back to faculty doing the research project that I am actually collaborating with student affairs and management on and it's called [name of project]. We're going to do bystander training and a distinct component of that will be LGBT students, but it will also be any health topic… substance abuse, sexual assault, suicide, but getting kids to step up. But as I write and do some publications with that, it will be a distinct component of that. So I think it will be hard to sort of escape that venue with graduate students, but pretty much it is probably going to be the same thing, when it comes up it comes up, and when it does we will embrace it and talk about it.

[Situations that have made me feel true to myself] are the handful of students that have come in and sat down. And it has made me question some things, because when I share with them exactly what I have said in this interview… that it is a part of who I am and I don't consider it to be the most important part, we also end up having conversations with them…. The dialogue comes along too. It is so important for me to know the

students perspectives, it is so important for me to know that there are gay and lesbian faculty that you know… and so it's made me sort of question, "Do I need to do this more for the students that are… do it in a more direct way for the students that are sitting in the seats in the undergraduate classes in particular?" And without question, I know it's been… how do I say it… it was reassuring for them to know that there was somebody that they could go talk to. And you know but I, I, every single heterosexual health ed faculty has been through our Safe Training, and I would feel comfortable with students going to talk to them and be very much counseled in a positive direction. I don't think that you have to be gay to work with gay students is my point I guess. I think it is important that they have acceptance from heterosexuals as well as homosexual faculty too.

I think what is important is that you do relate to your students, absolutely, and I think I do a really decent job with that even though there is an age difference there. But I am the coolest Grandma that there is…very hip. But the reality is that I don't want anybody to feel marginalized and if I had…. Last winter, when I was still doing the administrative job and I taught a class… instructional skills and strategies, and it was very interesting, because about a third of that class was special education majors that were minoring in health, a third of them were physical education minoring in health, and the rest of them were an eclectic group, but I also had a lot of student athletes in that group. Now, I think what is important for us when we're in that classroom to use as many examples as you can. Well, if I can relate it to them as a special ed teacher, or them as a student athlete, or whatever it is than that is going to bring home that example even more, and that is also going to make them feel like they're a definite part of that

classroom and can maybe see the realness of how we can maybe use this in the real world. Now, if I knew that there were gay students in there, absolutely, I would want to do the same thing. Not specifically, because of that, but because of the general need to use examples specific to who the students are. So otherwise how do we know…. A lot of times we know if they are a student athlete or a special ed major, but we don't know if they are lesbian or gay unless they come out during the classroom, and so that poses that difficulty. But I think the reality is if we go with the 10%, you are gonna have some sometime….

Being real [comes to mind when I hear the word authenticity]… that is huge for me. It's huge. In fact, it's the single best compliment that I get from anybody is that, when they say, "You're real." And that's what I want. You know, that's important to me, it absolutely alienates me from anybody who is not. I don't trust people; I don't want to be around them, I choose not to be around them. That being said, there are layers to it, and I don't think I am not real because I don't come out to my classroom. I think that the part that makes me real is when they, you know, get a sense of who I am and hopefully… many students have said this to me too… that kind of compliment, and so what takes it to another layer is this, if a student were to ask me and I was dishonest than I am not being real. If a student asks me I am obviously going to respond with honesty, and that carries that layer a little bit deeper. But I don't feel that I am not authentic because I don't stand up the first day and say, "I am partnered with a woman who lives in…. and her life…." If they said something about, "Do you have a partner?" Yeah, I am going to answer them; I'm going to answer them honestly. I just don't typically get those kinds of questions, especially from our undergraduates.

[Adjectives to describe authenticity are] real, honest… walks the talk. Those are the first words that come to my mind. [Authenticity in the classroom would look like this] I think our job, the very first day, is to intrigue them [students] a little bit, get them excited about the class that they will be taking, give them a sense of purpose in how they are actually going to use this in the real world so that they are hopefully going to be engaged from day one. But you are also starting to build relationships with those students, that is huge for me. That is a big part of … if you can't motivate them, which you can't do if you don't have a relationship with them, then you are dead in the water. But why would you want to do anything that first day that is going to alienate them on the first day. I don't see this any different… okay, here are a couple of examples. I could get up there on the first day and say, "And I am a recovering alcoholic." That might be authentic and it might be true, but it might give them an "oh my God, what am I in for here?" You know, they might think, "Why would they start with that? Too much information, too much information!" We could have that going on. Or if I got up and said, "My research area is depression because I have been hospitalized for depression and I think that it is real important that we address this." It would be the same kind of thing; those are the layer pieces if you will. You've gotta get the relationship building going and then add to it, but realizing along the way if they ask, "Have you ever been hospitalized?" or "Are you a recovering alcoholic?" That you have to be true and you have to tell them the truth, but use it to the best of your ability of what the class content is. I always draw it back to that.

[But] I gotta tell ya there are layers of identity, and right now mine is that grandma thing. And they're in [another state] and I am going next week. It's just, it's huge but I don't know. It's wonderful.

Amy

I'm 51 and my race I identify as White, Caucasian. And my orientation, I do identify currently as bisexual…. I have been doing work in health education for let me think… 20 years…. I came into health education as a second career.

So I graduated from high school in 1977. Back then I had no aspirations to go to college. So I had studied short hand and typing. I got a job right out of high school fulltime and that is what I wanted to do. So I got into administrative secretarial work and worked my way up that career ladder and was at a bank in [upstate], NY, where I grew up…. There was a woman in the marketing communications department that would give me work…. She encouraged me to go to the university of Buffalo. And they had a certificate program in public relations and marketing…. You know, 2 nights, a couple of months, what's the big deal? So I did it and I loved it. I felt like I found a nitch around that. And so I completed the certificate program and then enrolled as a part time evening student in an undergraduate program. So now – and again, I am a nontraditional student - I am now in my mid 20's. I did that for, oh, probably 4 or 5 years… going back for a part time bachelor's degree…. You know, it's probably going to take a while. And during that time I was growing discontent with my job at the bank. I was feeling very suffocated, I was getting burnt out…. So when I was 30, I quit my [fulltime] job at the bank, and I went back to school fulltime, and started working part time as a waitress. So here I am 30 years old. My academic career was all that I was about. I was so focused

on it. I was so enjoying it. And when I went back to school fulltime… I double majored in communication and sociology. And it was through my sociology requirements that I needed to do an internship. And I choose an internship at the sexuality education center [on campus]…. And so that is when I really started to do health education. I became a peer educator…. They had a birth control clinic…. An anti-rape task force I was involved in rape prevention, more HIV AIDS education on the campus all those kinds of issues. I was learning how to deal with them as a peer educator…. So finished up my undergraduate degree and the director of the sexuality education center said, "You have to go on for your masters, you cannot stop at your bachelors"…. I found it very easy to talk about sexuality with people…. Long story short, I decided on a Public Health degree with an emphasis on communication… and developing expertise in sexuality and reproductive…. So I… ended up in [a university in a big city]…. [I] got… an assistantship at the residence hall so I didn't have to pay for housing…. I also got a job working in the library so I didn't have to worry about finances…. So I just jumped into [the big city]… and all it had to offer around HIV prevention, reproductive health, urban community health. It was phenomenal and [the] college actually had a peer education program so I got involved with that, and learned about these experiences called sexuality attitude reassessments or SAR's.

And SAR's are an experience that, in that time, were pretty popular for people working in the field of sexuality education…. So these were weeklong or multiple-day-like weekend long retreats that people who were working in the field of sexuality education would go to for their own values clarification process. So it was really being immerged, submerged into sexuality. So you would watch a lot of very explicit videos

looking at different populations, and then talking about what was that like for us. What buttons did it push? Just exploring your self-reaction to that. The overall goal was to be able to do the work in sexuality and worked through all your stuff, and really it could be very intense…. So there was talking about sexual expression, sexual behavior, a lot of work around sexual identity, sexual orientation, a lot of work around victimization, child sex abuse, fetishes… really you know an intense human sexuality course, very interpersonal experiences. I had actually done a couple of different SAR's in a couple of different formats. And it was at one week long SAR that the facilitators [presented] one of the activities… was talking about the Kinsey scale. It was a very experiential week and the facilitators… were asking people to stand on the continuum. And they talked about the different continuums of gender expression, and gender identity, and sexual orientation, you know, all that stuff. The task was: here is your Kinsey continuum, come up and stand on the Kinsey continuum wherever you feel you identify. And I will never forget this… I thought to myself, "Oh my god, I can stand some place on this continuum where I've never been able to validate my feelings of same sex attraction." That didn't really start to come out till I got to [city]. I think part of that process was getting out of [my home town], getting out of where I spent most of my time growing up. Really not exposed to a lot of diversity through my family and through my high school. And, it was just so freeing to stand some place other than heterosexual. So I stood, I don't remember exactly what number it was probably some place between bisexual and lesbian, gay or whatever. So I stood there, and I just remember feeling, very liberating. I can act out on this. I actually can have a girlfriend and it would be okay. And over the coming years, I just explored that…. Let's see we are probably within my mid-thirties…. I don't know, I

just got in touch with the fluidity of sexuality and expression.... So now I am going through this process.

I get my MPH and part of my other work around sexuality, going to conferences and trainings, and all this stuff, is that I made connections with people that worked at Planned Parenthood. And I had always wanted to get a job at Planned Parenthood. So I was able to get a job in [a suburb of the city] working for Planned Parenthood there, and I coordinated a substance awareness and sexual health education program. So, you know, life is good. I graduate with my public health degree, I am working a job that I had wanted to do for years, ever since I started working… in the sexuality education center…. Met a woman who was really, she wasn't really my first, but she was my first sort of girlfriend relationship…. And there was all sort of the feeling out you know: who do we tell, who don't we tell. She was closeted, she wasn't out to her parents, she wasn't out to the people at work. I felt, like, the secretness of it. And didn't really question it too intensely, because it was my first relationship so it was really kind of okay to be secret….

I think, I came out to the director of Planned Parenthood, because she was very supportive. She was a wonderful person. Real… I looked up to her in a mentoring kind of way, and I'm sure that I came out to her. I do, I think, I did tell her in that, "You're not gonna believe this, but I am dating [girlfriends name] was her name." I just remember feeling that, again giving myself permission to act on it. So we dated maybe months or a year max, and I was really tired of living in [a suburb of the city]. I was suffocated, I didn't see all of my friends from [the city], I didn't have you know those kinds of contacts. I remember trying to find a gay committee in [a suburb of city], but I couldn't. It was really sort of under wraps. I was still kind of doing my own coming out

process in terms of getting connections, and how do you find gay people in [suburban area]? And I remember one of my interns that I had from [undergraduate university], once I graduated I would have interns come and learn health education and sexuality education…. Her name was Jennifer…. I remember telling Jennifer, "Jennifer, where can I meet some girls?"…. And so I said, "I gotta get out of here." So I moved to [the city]. I kept my job in [the suburbs], I would drive back and forth to Planned Parenthood. And it was in [the city] that I really embraced the lesbian community….

Now more years have gone by, maybe a year or two, and now I am getting tired of going out to [the suburbs] all the time. So now I've got to find a job in [the city]. So I found a job at [university] as a health educator on a college campus…. I was at the college for almost eight years doing health education....

Looking back, I can see my own coming out process. When I first came out when I was living in [the city] with all the lesbians. I would wear my rainbow jewelry, and I was out and proud. Marched in the gay pride parade…. And then I moved to [another city], which [is where I live now and] now I am partnered with a male…. And then when I moved to [current city] with [current boyfriend] I came out to my lesbian friends as now dating a man, and some of my lesbian friends were just like, "That's not okay."…. Yes, the whole like, we are marginalized. I can remember one of them saying to me, "How can you kiss a guy?" I'm like, I can't believe I am dealing with this. It was just really, that was really hard for me. It was part of that whole process for me that I have come to my bisexual identity is, you know, giving myself permission to feel attracted to him.

Well, I am involved in the GLBT community here in [current city]. And very much advocate for GLBT rights. I identify as a bisexual. It is very much a part of my

life. And one of the biggest struggles for me in dating [him] was not having to identify as heterosexual… and it still is like, you know, when I tell somebody my partner is [name of boyfriend], they assume that I am heterosexual, which is a pretty normative assumption given the society we live in, although I do refer to him as my partner…. That is just really hard for me. I want to just say but I am not heterosexual…. Like, I feel I should say, "I am attracted to both males and females, and my current partner is a male." Because if I don't, I don't feel like I can be true to myself, and I want people to know that I am not heterosexual. So I am just really rebelling against that, and… I don't, it's not – it doesn't feel like it's me. You know, if you have to take on a label or some kind of a judgment, and you are like, "that is not me." So whatever I can do to counteract that image. So that is the process of my coming out….

I will go to the university and put that context to it. So while I was at [first university working fulltime]…. I'm trying to think if I did any work at Planned Parenthood… [deep breath], it's not coming to mind. I might have done some, I know, I talked about gay and lesbian issues at Planned Parenthood just as part of the sexuality repertoire that I would do with classes. I wasn't, I don't think I really came out to embrace the work of health education and my own gay identity until I was at [first college]. And, so part of my work as a health education coordinator, I would do special events around the campus… I taught classes there. I taught human sexuality classes, I taught community health classes, I did a class on HIV and AIDS. And I taught there [first college] for several semesters probably 6 or 7 years…. I was an adjunct professor there and then worked fulltime as a health educator. So that was a primo job, because I was doing health education on the campus and being an adjunct, and then I was an

adjunct at a couple of other different colleges as well over the course of time. Primarily teaching community health and human sexuality classes….

Part of the work in my role as health educator was to develop programming for the students around wellness and so forth. And one of the initiatives was developing a Safe Zones program on campus. So I aligned myself with one of my colleagues who was the director of student activities. [The director] was an out gay man on campus…. I don't remember my coming out process on the campus. I just identified as a lesbian, and I think I was pretty open with… people on the campus. And when I was in the classroom, I made the assumptions that most people knew I was a lesbian… because of all of my work with the Safe Zones program…. [The director] and I had started [the Safe Zones program] and I went to my Dean and I said, "There is a real need for this, we need to give visibility to GLBT students on campus. We need to involve faculty… who are out… this can't just be about the students. It's got to be about the staff and faculty." [At the time], I was dating women openly. I was very involved in [my neighborhood] and the community… I think it was through that world that people just knew that I was gay. And we out one time through the Safe Zones project, it might have been for National Coming out day, we took a picture of allies and out faculty and students who wanted to be part of the Safe Zones. So my picture was there and I guess people could have thought I was an ally, but I think I was just too – I think I owned it.

I remember one time we did a display for the library window, this was another project that [the director] and I were working on, and it featured gay icons. Gay people identified as gay through history. It was very diverse in terms of males and females, race and age, and one of the librarians, there was one African American lesbian who had died,

and the librarian went nuts saying, "Why can't you just leave her alone, let her rest in peace. Why are you bringing that up? She is dead and gone. Why are you talking about her like that?" And, oh my gosh. So there was definitely backlash from some of the college community. Some of the professors, I couldn't believe, would not come out. [There] was a dean, and okay there was some pressure there but he had started the [taskforce for AIDS]. So back several years ago, it was very prominent in talking about HIV prevention and providing care services. He was out in his community as a gay man, a Latino gay man, and he would not come out on the campus. I personally went to him and asked, "Why are you [not out]?" We need support with the Safe Zones program because the more faculty and staff that we can get on board the stronger this is going to be. And, for some, it was really like pulling teeth, and I couldn't understand why, because it was easy for me to be out. I didn't feel like I had risks, I didn't feel like I was going to lose something. And [the director] had always been out too, that is just the way he was, and then through all of the trainings we did around the Safe Zones, the activities we did.

So, I think, in the classroom my perception was that the students knew that I was a lesbian, because of my involvement in the Safe Zones program. Now, I'm sure I said, "Everybody knows about the Safe Zones program, if you ever need more information you can come down to my office, it is a safe space." I don't remember if I ever said, "And I identify as a lesbian." I don't know.

I think that when I was dating women and teaching at the college. I am sure that I used her or she or my girlfriend because that was just my persona. I had no reason not to say that. Things are different now though with the classes that I am currently teaching. I hesitate to – I don't think I ever hesitated when I was at [previous college]. But I hesitate

now because my partner is a male…. I need to preface that, and actually, we were just talking a couple of weeks ago. We were in Family and Contemporary Society class and we were talking about… it wasn't a class on the GLBT family, but it was something else, and somebody brought up a question about relationships… [it was a] graduate [class]. Most of these students are genetic counseling students; there are few health education students in there…. We were talking about the definition of monogamy and the new monogamy. Does this mean poly-amorous and all of these terms? What is traditional marriage? What is gay marriage? You know, stuff like that. And one of the students said something about pitchers and catchers. And I was like, pitchers and catchers? And I am thinking to myself, "They are talking about two gay guys, receptive, you know top bottom… but I want to hear it from them." "Tell me more.. you know, I know pitchers and catchers, I got my own idea but I want to know what you think." So they were trying to find the language, so it took us off in that direction of same sex couple, and behavior, and expression, and monogamy, and I remember just hesitating to say, "My partner he." So I used "they" so they did not have any idea… and I don't like it. I wish I would have been more honest with them and used it as a teachable moment. I think that it's part of my process in coming to my own terms with the current relationship that I am in, and being able to put that out there for people to, sort of, do what they want with it. You know, I like to have control over how people are going to perceive me, and a way that I can control that is to either not say anything and have them assume whatever they may assume… [pause] [or say]… I used to date women but then I met this guy, and how do you do that in five minutes without making the class about me?

And that is my other piece about this, you know, this could be a really good teachable moment for them, but do I want to take the spotlight? Do I want to spend the energy and put myself out there in this class? And, I think it would be different if it were a human sexuality class because I am really cognizant that I don't want to just take it in this direction all of the time because there is a certain focus in the particular class. I also realize that students like to talk about this stuff, they do not get the chance to talk about this stuff, it blows my mind. And I have to be reminded that because… the work that I do in the community, I sit on advisory boards to implement GLBT issues into domestic violence work. Being in the city, I am in it, and I forget that people don't get that or have that kind of background about this, and it could really bring value to the discussion for them to meet someone who identifies as a bisexual.

I know, I would have [come out during that conversation if I was dating a woman], because I was very out and proud at the university. I established the Safe Zones programs; I wanted to do programming around GLBT issues as much as I could on that campus, and found opportunities to work in the community to do training…. So, I have immersed myself in work around sensitivity issues around gender and sexual orientation. So, as I am having this conversation… I find it very easy to talk about these issues and identify as a lesbian, but now that I identify as a bisexual in the classroom setting, it wasn't easy. Now, if I was talking about gay and lesbian issues as part of a training or course that was devoted to that, I think, it would have been different. I think I would have been okay with it. But because it was the Family in Contemporary Society, we were talking and it might not make any sense at all, but we were talking about relationships, and here I am hesitating to come out as a bisexual when really it would have been a great

opportunity to do that. But I didn't want to put myself out there like that… maybe I felt there were time constraints, maybe I felt like it was going to take the agenda, that I had thought about in class way off, and that I wasn't going to be able to cover what I needed….

It is just easier to stop it, block it out, and say, "I am going to address your question about same sex behavior and how can we have these slang terms around pitchers and catchers." You know, talk about HIV risk than it is for me to put myself out there and say, "You know, that there is a lot of different relationships… cause we were talking about sexual orientation…. So, there was a lot of self-monitoring there and I didn't like it. Because I enjoy education, I enjoy… being truthful and sharing experiences in the class…. I remember over the years talking about disclosure because that is an issue in the classroom because it's not about you… as a facilitator as an educator. I don't believe that one should be using… the classroom for their… own agenda. Right? So, I think there is care that needs to be taken in disclosing whether it's what kind of behaviors you are disclosing, whether it's drug use, whether it's identity, whether it's whatever…. There is this whole issue of self-disclosure, and are you going to use it as a benefit in terms of the class and the classroom experience. Like, what is your goal around that? Or is it better left unsaid? And in the therapeutic class it takes on a whole other meaning – self-disclosure.

And I just remember talking and thinking about that in my past and in my own training. I remember, I mean this was so recent; this was last week or the week before. Oh, is this too much self-disclosure? I'm not getting into all this and then gave myself permission not to do it. So, it was okay, it was just self-disclosure; it's not a big deal.

But having this conversation with you here, I am sort of realizing in the moment, like shit, you really could've done that. You could have put that out there, you know. It would have been okay. Then you think, what are the students going to think of me? Are they going to look at me cross eyed now? Are they going to turn on me? Is that going to draw me closer to them? And then you ask the question, why is it important for you to know how I identify? What is that going to do? Are you going to treat me differently? And if you are, are you going to treat me in a better way, in a more compassionate way, or are you going to treat me with more prejudice and discrimination? You know, that whole balancing act….

And it's something that heterosexual people don't ever have to deal with. Never. It is a non-issue. One of the challenging things is that healthy people see that. Like I remember in this panel discussion that I was on last week, and one of the comments I made about, I think it was about the challenges about identifying as a bisexual, is the constant coming out process and explaining your identity. You just, I always feel like I have to explain this, and then I have to possibly deal with the marginalization that comes from the lesbian and gay community. So one of the participants said, "Oh my god, I never realized that." It just never dawned on me, like once you say you're out, you're out. And it's so not true. It's just so not true. And you know, to my advantage, I [now] work in an agency that everybody is out as they want to be. Its HIV service providers, it's not, so I've put myself in those kinds of environments where I really can be me…. I am very out and proud… and want to claim it but in that classroom experience with that class, it just didn't happen.

[The current university] is very White upper class university. It's not diverse. I am used to diversity. I love diversity. I love diversity in the classroom. There is one African American student in the classroom, and she is a non-traditional student in health education. And most of this class are genetic counselors…. Most of them take it because there are not a lot of other electives being offered. And they are scientific, they are biology majors, they like genetic counseling, although you would think that genetic counseling would have really good counseling skills. But they are very… it boggles my mind, their course, and their background is research, biology, laboratory stuff. So I think that was part of my hesitation too…. And there's also a history of that course with the cohort of students that's come through the genetic counseling program. They have been very difficult students. They have been some of the most challenging students I have ever taught. And I have been teaching as an adjunct for a lot of years, a lot of experience under my belt. I don't know if it is their privilege that is coming across or if it that they couldn't be bothered with the class that it's just not as scientific for them? I co-teach it with a psychologist, and we put that out in the beginning that this is not a scientific course. This is about you and your family and how your family experience impacts you and the work you are going to do blah, blah, blah. So, they've just been very cold. It's been a nightmare in the past. Now this is a new group of students. We've changed the syllabus to put some things out there in terms of what their expectations are. And so this cohort is different. They seem a little bit more open to discussion. They are very much more participatory, but I think some of that, that history of the course comes into play when I am in the front of the classroom. I am definitely not my most comfortable in the front of that class. And it's a shame because of how much I love to teach, and I know

what I can bring to the classroom. And I think I put the brakes on in that class, and I'm sure that is what sort of added to the not disclosing around bisexual identity….

I am hoping to teach a human sexuality class. I don't know, I gotta get my foot in the door slowly but surely. But in that class, back [at the previous university], it was awesome. We just really had a lot of fun with that… in taking undergraduates on the journey through sexuality.... I know I was more open in that class. It was a more fun class to teach…. I felt very connected to that whole campus because of my dual roles. So having the role as the health educator on campus and then being able to have started the Safe Zones program… and then as an adjunct. I mean, people knew me on the campus, faculty knew, the students. So there was no self-sort-of monitoring. Keeping myself in check, and in some ways it is a good thing about having this experience, because now I have something to look at and say, "God this isn't always easy." I think, maybe in my experiences because of where I was in my life and my coming out process…. Now, we haven't even talked about my coming out process with my family, which is not – which is horrific… but you get over it, you move on. But in the classroom setting it had always been easy and now it's not so easy, and I'm wondering what I can do differently because you don't feel true to yourself. And it's certainly not because the university is telling me that I have to come out or that I'm in some kind of a religious institution or something. There is none of that.

[I have been an adjunct at the current university for]… 3 years, 6 semesters. But I think some of it too… there is something about whether I feel disconnected from that course and the university like that. It's very different from my other teaching experiences. I was teaching at [previous college], which was a college that was

specifically for non-traditional students. So, all of the students were part time, evening students, have careers. A lot of military folks go there to get their graduate degrees. And there, I was just, like, very connected to the students, because I was one of them. I was a non-traditional student, so I could totally identify. And there didn't have any kind of, you know, difficulties – not difficulties – but challenges in terms of my self-disclosure in the classroom. But it just – it speaks to a couple of different things, the self-disclosure in the classroom, and my own not wanting to come out as a bisexual. So, there are two things that are going on there; coming out as a bisexual, and then self-disclosure on top of that.

I had thought about that [support for the LGBT population at current university]. I don't see it. I am there once a week, but you know on their website there really doesn't seem to be… I don't see stuff on the campus, and actually I think I looked when I first started teaching there to see what was going on, and familiarize myself with the campus, and I don't remember seeing things. I would imagine that there has got to be something in this day in age….

[Disclosing my sexual orientation may have to do with] the content of the class. The historical nature of the student cohort not feeling, sort of being that, just resistance. A resistant class and probably, unconsciously, not feeling like I might get support. So, sort of testing the waters. So many of us test the waters before we come out. And it's like, "I ain't going there." It is not worth it you know… maybe I don't care about the course enough. That sounds horrible. I don't care about whether or not this is really gonna make a difference, like I am just not doing this. This is too much energy. That's a piece of it there. It's a feeling like… not that it matters but just that I want to put myself out there but the cost… the benefit and the cost. I don't see it….

[And then I ask], are you being authentic to yourself? Are you authentic to the class the environment? I didn't lie. I didn't completely disclose. So, but when you use that word, authenticity… it brings a different flavor to it. I still feel like I'm authentic, but I would feel more authentic if I was able to put myself out there and disclose. And, you know, we would probably be having a different conversation if I came out as a bisexual talking about relationships in this Family Counseling class. You know, there are all sorts of relationships. There you go. I just made the segway because it's not that I don't know the content. I have a strong knowledge base…. I can certainly make the connection when somebody is talking about pitchers and catchers and same sex behavior and relationships and bisexuality and the fluidity and all that kind of stuff. I could have went in any kind of direction that I wanted, right? But I didn't go in that direction, and part of it… well, for reasons that we had already talked about but I had never thought about it not being authentic.

I think [authenticity is] being like, sort of, true to yourself. Being honest, being genuine, being real with people… but then when you put on the hat of the professor or teacher… then because you are in that role… does authenticity mean something different? Is it really my job to have to come out to you if I don't want to? And, this is, like, not okay for me tonight, because of whatever I am feeling or whatever we are talking about in class. I have good judgment not to do that, because that is not going to be beneficial to me to do that, because that is going to affect my role as your teacher. Is that part of the process of being true to myself? I don't know? It is almost philosophical in a way. I think that the more authentic you can be, the more powerful you can be, or you are empowered to be true to yourself…. I can identify with how good it feels to be

out and proud and own your identities, however you define them. This is a very empowering feeling that brings a lot of self-efficacy and a lot of self-confidence to the situation. And, when I don't do that I can feel less empowered, and sort of self-confident about it. I think some of that does come across in that class… that I don't feel as self-confident as I do…. I have the knowledge base… but it's not a course that I am in to. I am stepping up to the plate…. Yeah, I can co-teach this. We are not in the classroom co-facilitating we are flipping classes. I am not a Family Systems gal. That is not my background, although that is layered through the class. So, maybe in some way I am trying to navigate my own familiarity with that sort of context with the course, and trying to do my own thing.

But another thing about the students is that I don't know their names, and that drives me crazy. It just… the first class… how can you learn student's names? It's challenging enough once a week but every other week. It's just, it so pushes my buttons as an educator because I know how… it may seem really silly to someone who is not in the classroom, but the value of knowing the names, and to be able to validate their expressions. Be able when they raise their hands to call them by their name instead of just looking and saying, "Okay, what do you think? What do you think?" So not my style, and now that this has come up, there is my validation for not doing this. I don't feel really connected to this. I can hear myself saying, "How can you not come out in the classroom?" But then I just did… I didn't come out. So, you sort of, I'm glad I had that experience. I am really glad we are talking about this, because it is helping me to kind of process that. And I know that walking to the train from class and thinking, "Oh god, that class, there was something about that class that is not jiving with me and as much as I

love to teach there is just something about that class that I am not putting my best foot forward." And I think some of it is the disconnect about every other week, knowing students names…. And it's just not an experience I am familiar with….

[Intertwining my sexual orientation with the classroom allows me to] just to bring myself, to be true to myself, to feel empowered about what it is that we are talking about. Now, it is hard for me to think about teaching a class that – well, family counseling could be one of those examples, but I will put this out there – that is not related in some way to sexuality or sexual orientation – right? Community Health, I was out in the classroom, because of all my work on the campus. It was like a non-issue I don't have to come out. It is what it is kind of thing. But like a course in, like, science or math or health education theory, you know, would you necessarily come out if the opportunity didn't present itself? I don't know, I don't think I would… come out as an introduction in the class…. I don't talk about my personal life like that. I introduce myself on the first night of class with my educational background, and what I could bring to the class, what I hope to get out of the class, student activities, and expectations, but I do not talk about any kind of family, partner… I never have done that stuff….

I will find the work that I need to do, and I will find opportunities in order to be true to myself. It is dealing with systems and things like that. Not a good feeling to not be true to yourself in the classroom. Why do people choose the role of teacher? That is another whole question? Why education? Why teaching? Why tenure? Why not?.... You know, I am not going to lose my job because I came out in the classroom. But I can imagine there are situations where tenured professors feel, well, look at what happened with my safe zones program. A tenured professor did not want to align themselves with

the program because of the politics on the campus, and how does that impact your teaching?

[I learned to navigate my sexual orientation, because] I came from the field of sexuality. Sexuality education, and that was just part of it. Like, if I didn't have that kind of preparation I'm not sure what I would do. I think that's been a benefit for me. Either I have found that field because I needed to be in that field, or that field found me. Somehow I was pulled towards sexuality and sexuality education, and it's always been very comfortable for me to talk biologically, the identity, the fetishes, all of the ranges…. I can talk about that stuff and it is comfortable. Navigating it, I don't know, I just did it. I found the opportunities to do it. Whether it was being a peer educator, my training and facilities skills, my own values clarification process around these SAR's. Internalizing this stuff and where I felt about that. So, that was my foundation, all that work helped me to navigate it. It's been relatively easy, except for the current situation. But that is good. Like I said earlier, it's good to have that contrast; it raises the bar for me to think about that. So, that is really the navigation. It's not so difficult.

Dierdre

I am Caucasian and 47 [and I have been a health educator for] about 23 [years]… for the last 5 years I have been a department chair and administrative faculty, but we still teach at least one class a semester and sometime others. And, I have also taught part time at another university, and prior to that I started out as health education faculty, and then went to administration, but basic community health, women's health, we didn't call it wellness, but we had a personal health course, stats and measurement, community health, ethics, which I still teach, quantitative stats, measurement and eval, program planning.

So, you know, the usual mesh. And then did administration for 6 years where I taught next to hardly at all.

[The students] are pretty much different [from semester to semester]. Mainly for the past couple of years just grad students in MPH, the community health or masters level, from across the university… there have always been some undergrads….

[I introduce myself] just as a faculty member… I really don't go into too much personal in the first couple weeks just talking about professional roles. Typically, I am a department chair and I sign all kinds of forms, so most of them I already know going in. I have taught at three [universities], but I will do the two most recent. They all have been public. Current one is a doctoral granting university… with enrollment of roughly 16,500. The average age is 25.7 for first year students. We are more non-traditional, and primarily a commuter campus. And, the second one was a suburban, probably about 12,000 – 13,000 traditional average age. Incoming freshmen were straight from high school, and it was residential…. The one I am in now is an urban institution. The previous one probably about 8% were people of color…. Both campuses were more progressive then not [in terms of LGBT supports], and had safe space alliances particular faculty groups, social networking. This one, being in an urban city, lends itself to greater non-university LGBT activities…. In the previous institution, there was an academic interest group that was more LGBT related…. Currently, I serve as a Board of Directors [for an event specific to gay athletes]…. As the department chair, I really don't have…. So not as much within the University, other than a safe space member as much as in this current rendition of the university more in the community.

I'm with a partner, so socially people know [the visibility of my sexual orientation]; it's not Deirdre and guest but [name of partner] and Deirdre. And, we actually have run into a lot of our students at different social events including…. There was some drag show entertainment… which are females impersonating males. Actually, one of our faculty members, a straight faculty, introduced me to [them] as her department chair person… rather amusing [giggle] for all of us. I was on her thesis committee, and she just defended a couple of weeks ago…. Trying to think, our university faculty group is not that active… partially, because there are domestic partnership benefits. A lot of things that other universities don't have, we already do. But on occasion probably more of student life issues, and I am also a faculty athletic rep with athletics. So, occasionally I will be pulled in for a particular sounding board, but not necessarily as an official median or anything like that.

It depends on what class I am teaching [as to whether my sexual orientation comes up in the classroom]. In graduate courses, a lot of the students I see, because they are public health and I have a public health background at different meetings and there is more of a blurring… so some of the same fundraisers and some of the same meetings types of things. There will be more discussion about [partner] and I [at] fundraisers where we show up as a couple or things like that. So, probably more so… outside of the classroom at graduate, unless there is a particular student working on an LGBT issue, and they often to date have felt very comfortable coming up and asking questions about xyz. Whether it's about some of the bullying that has gone on lately, or some of the Facebook… not necessarily as part of the academic content, but whether it was an online post of, "Hey, did anyone see this?" Or more as a resource in the classroom for

graduates. There is more interactions and engagement beforehand. With the undergrads especially the women's health courses and the personal health although not necessarily the first year I was at each university but talking more about bringing in current events and talking about well my partner and I. If we have to take care of a parent, this is what we have decided in terms of advance directives. Those content within those two courses often lead to more of a connection as opposed to stats and measurements. Measurements and evaluation really not content related so… on occasion depending on the topic, and what the culture is [I will use my story as an example]. The one I am calling to mind had to do with advanced directives, and kind of an ethics component of health. We were talking about aging, and who has access to the ICU, and who doesn't, and why and why not, and how you can legally work around those, and in some states how that work versus others.

I am thinking of three different semesters but all in women's health. Talking women's sexuality… talking probably about some of the changes about women's health, and some of the politics and feminism from the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, and now being probably about 8 years ago… looking at gay straight alliances and thinks like that. And, afterwards in each class a student pretty much came out. They came up to me in an office hour, and came out looking for resources… no not really [in class], whether they knew or could have cared less or didn't care enough to know. Like I said depending on the content…. Yes, after class. It's hard to say if you become known as a gay friendly teacher or ally, then they will tell their friends to register and so on.

I am thinking back to when I was a graduate assistant back in the dark ages… I was co-teaching a class with a straight male, and we had some young immature males

make some comments about another individual in the class who was very flamboyant who was more Kurt on Glee type…. You are asking me to think way back…. [Name of co-faculty] and I both caught each other's eye; he was my co-faculty. We were both working on our doctorates at the same time…. So, we stopped the course and asked people if they had any thoughts, and why we had stopped. And, eventually somebody said that there were some disparaging remarks. We asked the gentlemen to repeat them, and after staring them down for a few minutes, they did, and publicly apologized, and then the rest of the class, you could tell by their looks, and a few comments on their way out…. They kind of were telling them to shut their mouths in class, and leave the kid alone…. At the time I was well known for going out in the community, all communities, because I was the AIDS educator from the department in the middle of no where…. I was doing AIDS classes, and condoms, and sexuality for many things… for anything from medical professionals, church groups, to college kids. So, no, and I don't want to sound cavalier, but it was just the normal course of the day.

I was fortunate [in terms of learning how to navigate my sexual orientation], there was a group of people when I was in grad school, and before I worked at a hospital setting that [people] were gay and out, and so it was easy to…. I am just thinking of the peer group back in those days, and so there was always a sounding board. It probably helped that we also were in the health related content. Whether it was sexuality or AIDS, and so those types of questions regardless would come up…. Where perhaps if you were teaching oceanography or botany, they wouldn't lend themselves as well….

Yeah, it [my sexual orientation] did [come up in class], more as offering another perspective, because the first time when I was at this institution and taught it, if there

were other gay students in the class they did not come out or did not self-identify. In other semesters where I have taught that, there have been a couple of students who have self-identified, and they are able to bring a different perspective, there was a transgendered student at one point. So, they are able to bring different perspectives in. The group that I am talking about where there was nobody that self-identified, and I felt it was important to offer the other perspectives. Although I was only one voice, there were certain other resources. I brought together a panel of faith based reverends. I think there was a rabbi as well, talking about the church's view of sexuality and lesbian and gays…. It was my first semester at this institution, so I was still getting the lay of the land. It was not as easy, it was more difficult to read students than now where we see some of the same ones are friends or colleagues…. I did teach a sexuality class at the suburban school as well, but nothing is really standing out about that class….

At the previous institution I did not have a partner…. I think that if you are partnered… whether you are gay or straight, I think if you are partnered, there may be more opportunities to talk about "we" or people might feel more comfortable talking about the social aspect, because it is more than just you. You can talk about in-laws, you can talk about we went somewhere, or we did this, and you can do that as an individual as I did, and many of us do, but sometimes there are other connections when you are partnered, or going out somewhere, or missing an anniversary, or missing a birthday, or something like that. It is hard in hindsight, because it was quite a few years ago when I was not partnered.

I think if they are in higher ed, I think it [teachers coming out in the classroom] varies a lot depending on the political climate of your institution. I have been tenured

since 1996… and that might give people a different sense of freedom. I think that there is a life experience factor that is going to factor in, regardless of orientation…. Now, if you were talking to students who were one year out of their doctorate, or if both a teaching assistant and a student, you might get very different answers.... I am just thinking of a couple of people that I know of at that age, and what they would say to these questions. I think a lot of these students, it's not unusual for students to be out at this institution. It is not unusual for some of the teachers at the public schools to be out, and that is going to vary district by district….

I am talking out loud… but when you are looking at authenticity I think that you first need to step back, and look at the philosophies to teaching, and approaches to teaching, because some faculty are more interested in establishing a report with students, and looking for those common connections, others are more interested in delivering a lot of content, others want a mastery of skills. When I walk in to the classroom, the first thing I want people to know about me is not my orientation. And, I am not counting or looking at some of my friends that teach, I don't know of any of them that they would say that, yes, that would be the first thing that they would want them to know. I think that you set your expectations, you manage them, you go through the syllabus the first day, and then as you develop a report with that particular class, people may or may not feel comfortable sharing personal items. I think that is true whether gay or straight. I think that teaching health, especially teaching a women's health or sexuality, there are far more opportunities if somebody wants to come out, and to do that, and do that appropriately in those teachable moments types of things. Just like it is for somebody who is teaching adaptive physical education, and they have a Down Syndrome child. At the same time, a

person that is straight can do a good job of teaching sexuality. A person who is divorced could do a course on marriage, and family, and relationships, and have a different perspective. So, I think that authentic or not, there are some attributes that go with how people approach teaching in terms of how they develop report, and what type of connections that they want with students that are going to flavor that authenticity whether positively or negatively. Now, when you say authentic, I think candid…. And I am going not from a research term such as authenticity and triangulation of data, but just looking at authenticity and freed of hypocrisy. I think that we can all look back at faculty and instructors that we have had in classes, and identify very easily why that person didn't connect with classes. Or why/what makes a good teacher good or a bad teacher bad. And I think it's… if you are looking at a good quality it's authenticity, and being candid, and straightforward, not trying to BS the students, having a solid understanding of the content which again with sexuality and health, and women's health, and public health in general that is an easier connection to sexuality, sexual orientation, marriage equality, and anything else than some of our colleagues who teach in different fields….

I think, pretty much, if you were to ask any of my grads, or undergrads, or colleagues pretty much what you see is what you get. When I used to be a fulltime administrator where I met [mutual friend], there were some times where you are a bit more polished, and less forthcoming given the environment from 9:00 – 5:00, but that doesn't interfere with your activities from 5:00 on. And I have been very fortunate with most places that I have worked where the majority of supervisors with one notable exception, that being gay was just, you know, no different than one of the deans that was straight or one of the other deans that was divorced….

I would say that I think of myself first as an educator/teacher, and lesbian is a qualifier that comes later. There is a group in town that is called Older Lesbians Organizing for Change. More kind of radical in my view radical, in my definition… more separatist, more feminist…. They were asking, I think you have to be like 62 to join, and they were asking my partner and I, "What would make you two join?" And I said, "Well, right now it's easier to ask what would stop us, and that is the separatism." And, you know, some of our best friends are men, and, you know, perhaps because you fought the fight for us, but we're not coming in with that militant viewpoint, and, you know, the first thing that everyone needs to know about you is that you hate men or that you are gay…. And those are exaggerations, but I think there is a different evolution, at least in my sphere of influence, not necessarily nationwide where those groups that were so relevant, and so imperative to the women who are now 60, 70, 80 years old might not survive if they are counting on the 40's and 50's to join them, and pick up their cause, or it might be a very different cause, or they might have to evolve to different causes or a different missions… I am not sure that I would say I have a mission per se. It is what it is. I think that there are at times that I… am helping the community for example the [event for athletes]… is a committee and it has nothing to do with my job. Has no compensation. I probably spend 15 – 20 hours a week on it. But I think for those people that come for those youth that know about the [event]… to know it is a possibility for them when they turn 18 and so on. I think that there is a commitment on my part, not to make a difference I think that is overused, but to make progress, and whether it is a more accepting and affirming environment than when it was when I was that age. I think that you can do that within your own little sphere whether it is your classroom, your

institution, your groups you belong to, the church you belong to, the friends you hang out with and families…. Making an impact for youth in general, and that is one way perhaps more maybe that's a personal philosophy or a sign of the time, and the places that I worked or the people I've been around, I've never felt I had to hide or be militant to be heard or anything like that. So, it is hard to account for all of those factors. Even if you did a multiple regression and put everything in, it would be so hard to say what would be significant and what wouldn't, because everybody's life experience is so qualitative, and you can't, you know, just give, and experience a number, and think that that is going to measure everything….

[The recent LGBT suicides provided] a heightened awareness, I think. In the college of education, there has been a greater emphasis on professional development, on cyber bullying, on panels, doing some brown bag discussions, semi-formal, not major presentations with multiple speakers and multiple dollars. What was the film about? The Mormon and Prop 8… I think HRC was giving it out, and I think that some of the student groups that I know have gathered some people together to watch that. I think that some of the churches have tried to sit down, and figure out what to do. I am not involved in PFLAG, so I don't know if they have gotten more calls or not. I think, overall, the gay straight orientation, but the implications of things going viral, and Facebook, and the whole social media…. Everybody can connect to that more, because of the gay suicides, but I think that that has certainly helped.

I think at the university yes [we have an open environment]…. Most of our students grew up within a five county region, and will stay in a five county region…. You have a lot of different nationalities, you have the clinic, you have 39 different

languages spoken in the school district, and they are teaching Chinese in the elementary schools. We have a big rich tradition in ethnic neighborhoods. We've got an urban, and it's crime, disenfranchised, and poor socioeconomic next to very affluent suburbs…. And, I wouldn't say the University is any different than the surrounding area in terms of attitudes. I think that there are differences in what a 20-25 year old thinks versus a 60 year old….

Well, I think over the years, we have some principal friends who are gay and out, and some school teachers who run gay straight alliances, and we also have a department where we supervise masters students who have their undergraduate degree in physical education, and they are getting their certification in health education, their endorsement. And from what they tell me in the high schools, and I am not a supervisor so I don't really walk in the high schools or deal with it on a day-to-day basis, but kids are pretty out. It is not uncommon to see girls holding hands or making out in the hallways just like straight couples. So, I think for today's college freshmen age group, it might be easier because others have cleared the path, so to speak…. And, there is the Internet. You Tube just had the Trevor Project, *It Gets Better*, which provided an opportunity for somebody who doesn't have the resources at their church, at their school, within their coaching ranks, and depending on what their activities are, their co-curricular activities… there are other ways where the school isn't the only place to find role models, or to engage in conversations. Probably the Internet has been the biggest change in demystifying everything.

[Professionally] I think that APHA has a - I haven't been a member in a while – but they've got the gay lesbian caucus. I'm sure they have enough numbers to make it a

subsection. There are diversity groups on all of those; there are standards and teaching methodologies and journals that you could be published in. All institutions I've been at are writing on gay and lesbian issues is just as valid as science… drugs, sex, alcohol, tobacco, obesity, diabetes… I haven't personally haven't been anywhere where that has been an issue and in some it might give you unique marketing…

And the American School Health Associations, and again I have been active in different associations at different times, but all of them have had their conflict resolutions, their anti-bullying, their open and affirming. Subgroups, and even if it is not a group, there might be a board member, or a couple of board members who are out, and for somebody who has not been around an LGBT environment, by the time they realize that a board member is out and gay it defeats the purpose. Maybe if they had any prejudices coming in, you know, that everybody is just trying to be the best they can be regardless. Health education, in particular, and again it is my own frame of reference, I haven't been in the stats, or social studies, or psychology groups much at their conferences, but I think there are a substantial number of health education people that go to the conference and bring their partners, or certainly are open to advancing a cause. Typically it has to be something that is connected the associations business to a curriculum issue or something like that.

Peggy

[I am] Caucasian and [I am] age 47… I am a college professor in kinesiology… in our department health education and health promotion are included, and so it is called a kinesiology department, but it is a broad definition in the fact that it includes health education and health promotion…. The topics that I focus on now in my health

promotion class are more related to physical activity, nutrition, stress management, smoking cessation, drug and alcohol prevention. It is sort of like our department has taken on that role. I used to teach a personal health class, but I have not taught that since I left [University A], so that would have been 1996. I have taught health classes a lot, but recently my focus is shifting… now I am doing a lot more exercise science kind of stuff. I do still teach theories and models of behavior change….

[My doctoral] degree… was a little bit unique at the time, and this was in 1996 when I got my degree, but it was maybe the second graduating class from that degree, because it was a brand new degree at the time. It was a degree in exercise and wellness, and that was attractive to me, because it included not just exercise, but also the wellness kinds of things…. After that, my first job was at [University A], and that is where I got to teach personal health to classes of 200, which was interesting, but it really was a lot of fun. I thoroughly enjoyed it. There are some definite strategies to teaching large classes, and that is a whole other story, especially when you are talking about personal health issues. So anyway, then I went to [University B], because I had the opportunity to direct their doctoral program in health promotion. Went there but didn't really like [University B], missed the west, got invited to apply for a position at [University C], which was again back in the mountain west area. Once I went to [western state] I was kind of sold on living out in the west. At [University C] I had some really good opportunities as well, and at the time it was one of the top programs in the country. I'm not sure that it is still there, but it, you know, it was one of the top 10-15 programs in the country. I am here at [University D], because I took a position to be the department chair for 4 years. I did that for 4 years, and now I am back in the faculty ranks. And so I teach a huge variety of

classes because that is the program here. It is much more of a generalist place. I have taught organization and administration. I have taught ice hockey. I have taught theories and models of health behavior change. Probably my biggest emphasis right now is I have come full circle to what I really want to be doing, and that is the applied strength and conditioning stuff…. Classes [at current university] are tiny compared to anywhere else I've ever been. Probably my biggest class has been 30, and every other place I have been… the norm was about 70.

[Sexual orientation was] not really [a factor for changing jobs] for me. It was professional opportunity and really wanting to get back to the west. I like it here. I like the outdoor stuff. My partner does as well…. [We will be together for] 11 years in February… and so [University B] just wasn't a good fit. The program was great, the people were great, I just needed the outdoor stuff. You know, there [University B] hunting and fishing were the big things, and here mountain biking, hiking, and cross country, and downhill skiing are much more along my lines of interest….

[The current university] is not very diverse, 90% to 95% White. I don't even know if I have had an African American in my class, maybe one. The Hispanic population is becoming more prevalent in pursuing higher ed opportunities. We have several refugee folks from places like Bosnia – that is the place where I have had the most diverse students from - Bosnia. So there are some refugees and the Hispanic population is growing, but for the most part it is White. I would say the majority of our students here are from [in state], they haven't traveled a whole lot. A lot of them are from rural areas, so some of the topics that I have discussed here have been very different…. It's been a very different experience than when I was at [University C], for

example. Believe it or not [University C] was more liberal, the people were, the students were more internationalized, because a lot of them had done [religious] missions. It was a different experience, you know, teaching at the different places. And then [University A] was the traditional college student population, so the mean age of 19-20, but the mean age of [University C] and here is like 26…. It is definitely a returning student population….

When I was at [University C]… I taught secondary PE kind of stuff. One of the topics that I covered was safe spaces for gay and lesbian students. [At University C] you would expect to get annihilated bringing that topic up, but for the most part we had really good discussions. In the 5 years that I was there I think there was one student who was of a certain religious persuasion who had a problem with the discussion and walked out. Everybody else was fine, they weren't shocked that he walked out… but for the most part they get it, and they take what we discuss to heart, and it seemed to me that they believed it was an important thing to consider as a PE teacher, because that might be one place where they see discrimination against gays and lesbians, for example. More so than the regular classroom because of the kinds of things that go on in PE classes. To sort of contrast it, in my Organization and Administration class [at current university], the topic of discrimination against gays and lesbians in the hiring process has come up and it's been a lot different experience for me. I felt like I had to sort of dance around the topic a lot more, and be really creative with how it is discussed as compared with [previous institution] where it was a lot more comfortable, and people believed in what we were talking about, they believed in the importance of it. And I think, you know, I have thought a lot about why that might have happened, and I think here… there are a lot more

rural students. So they probably haven't been exposed to gay and lesbian people and that may be one of the things. I don't know.

[In terms of the visibility of my sexual orientation]… I definitely say some places have been easier than others. I think [University C] it was easier for me to be out, and it was not a problem, and again, I know that that is probably shocking the hell out of you… but part of it was there were several other lesbians in the department, so it wasn't like it was something unique about me in that department. You know, my partner came to all the events and people asked about how she is doing… and the same thing is true here… but I am not as out here as I was at [University C], and I think part of it is it is super Republican here. And [current city] compared to [previous city] is a little bit different. There are some pockets of liberal people believe it or not. It is the people in [particular parts of the city]… that are known as sort of the liberal places…. So, yeah, it has been a different experience for me. And here there are no other lesbians in the department…. Well, no, I take that back, there is one other one, and she, like myself, is not very out… within the department, yes, it is not a problem at all, and even within the college. All the faculty in the college with whom I interact, they ask about my partner all the time…. I would say the grad students know, because [partner's name], that's my partner, she is around a lot. You know, she'll come and help me with different things, and so people know her, but the undergrads probably not as much.

I haven't [come out in the classroom] and I haven't really been asked either. So, you know, when I first got to [University C] it was kind of funny, because all the kids would say. "Are you married and do you have kids?" And as soon as I said a few times to a few people, "No and no." - then the questions stopped, but that is okay, because it

was a little irritating initially, you know, I was kind of like, "Okay, how many times am I going to have to answer these questions?" I don't [hear those questions at current university], and I never did. Which is kind of interesting, because there is a similar demographic in that there is a higher proportion of people [from a particular religion] here, but I don't know, it seems to be [they] are a little less strict, for lack of a better way to put it, and I hope that doesn't sound biased or anything, but I am being brutally honest here…. They're not as judgmental about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. You know, in terms of drinking coffee, and smoking cigarettes, and being gay or lesbian… it's just a little different.

I would say no [there are no supports on campus for LGBTQ faculty and students]. Not here. At [University B], interestingly, they actually had as part of the new faculty orientation a gay man that talked about his life as a gay faculty member at [that particular institution]. That was pretty cool, but that is the only place that I have ever seen that. No other new faculty orientation included anything like that.

Here in [current institution], yes, [it is a very closed environment].... Absolutely, absolutely… [University C]. Yeah, but not as much. [University A], yeah, pretty closed… one of my colleagues was a lesbian, and I knew that, but she never once came out to me in 2 years. And I knew it, because I played basketball with some of her good friends. So even [University A] was pretty closeted. So, yeah, I have yet to be at a very liberal university. We call it the "Mountain Tax." There are things you have to give up in order to live in the mountains and have the recreational opportunities. For now, yeah, yeah [that is one of the things that I am able to give up], because I value the others so much, and you know living here I have some really, really good friends. I don't have the

community of lesbians like I have at the other places where I've lived. I have maybe three or four lesbian friends here, most of my friends are straight. But it's because we all play hockey, and those are the people that I hang out with so it's different, but it's okay.

[I am out to my colleagues and administration on campus], if that wasn't the case, I don't think it would be nearly as comfortable a fit for me here. But I really like [current city], it's a great place to live….

In [University C] it was comfortable [in terms of bringing in LGBT content to the classroom], and I don't know how else to put it, but I never went into the classroom fearful of what someone would say. But I can give you an example [from current university] of a health promotion topic that we were talking about, and a comment that a student made, and I was flabbergasted because in my… 10 – 14 years of teaching I've never had anybody make a comment like this in front of a class at the graduate level. So it's a grad class, health promotion, we're talking about health care…. So we are talking about health care and the need for universal healthcare. I wouldn't call it socialized medicine, which is the negative term, but universal healthcare, and one of the students made the comment that, "Well, the Hispanics just come over here, and suck the system dry, and, you know, they don't put anything back into the system." I had to stop it, and make a comment about how that is a gross generalization, and that it is stereotyping, and there are plenty of instances where folks have made great contributions to the community, and the whole thing…. And I have never had to do that before in a classroom… and everybody in the classroom was just stunned. But that is sort of typical of the rural mentality of some of the students. It is a super Republican state. Rush

Limbuagh and Glen Beck are the icons of the civilianization around here, which is pretty scary….

You know, I think for me [the most memorable time in the classroom was] the first time that I taught about homophobia… at [University C], and I was scared to death, scared to death to go into my secondary PE methods class. And I realize that it's not a health class, but there is relevance, I think… I was so well prepared. You know, with questions, strategies, and I had used the homophobia materials put together by Pat Griffin and the Women's Sports Foundation, the National Association for Girls and Women in Sports…. I had worksheets, I had activities, and I was really scared to go in and do it. I just remember it going really well. I remember people being really shocked at how much discrimination, overt and covert, there is against gay and lesbian students, and I was just ecstatic, and I remember going around talking to some different people about it, and they were shocked as well, my other colleagues in pedagogy. And so, it was kind of cool, because as a result of me having success with that, some of the other professors also started adding units into elementary, and… into other areas that they taught in their classes. It really started a really rich discussion among our faculty, or at least for those who care… about how to do it, how to deliver that kind of information, to have those conversations, how to make it a safe space…. So that was really memorable, really powerful, and from then on it gave me strength and courage to say, "Okay, I can do this, and it needs to be done, because it opens eyes of future teachers who can have a really powerful impact on our kids."

I [teach about homophobia] in my Organization and Administration class, a little bit more cautiously, and the interesting thing is the last time I did it there were some

students in class that really had a problem with it, and basically wrote me down on the evaluation saying that I was an ultra feminist, and trying to push my feminist ways down their throats kind of thing. And, I have never had that either on a student evaluation, EVER, anyplace I've been, so that was a little bit shocking. Kind of like the voice of the right wing gets power, and they use it in those kinds of ways. And, you heard about it, you know, with 9/11 for example, and how some faculty that spoke out were lambasted by the right wing, and this big movement formed to get them fired and all this kind of stuff. It sort of made me think of how powerful and mobilized the right wing can be sometimes at certain times. Especially in certain places… I don't have any idea what it would be like to teach these certain topics in California, or Minnesota, or someplace that might be a little more liberal… or a lot more liberal…. I can't even imagine what that would be like [working in a liberal place]. But I think part of it is just where I've been….Yeah, I think that [being out or in as environmentally driven] is crystal clear, but part of it is the places that I have chosen to work and live are somewhat Republican narrow minded, but like I said it is the Mountain Tax….

[In terms of the evaluations], one of the guys, because we were talking about women coaching men, and one of the guys was like, "That wouldn't work for me. If she was good looking I wouldn't pay any attention to what she had to say." And just going on, you know, in ridiculous ways. So people in the class again were shocked, and didn't really say anything to him. And, you know, I talked to him a little bit afterwards, but he was really rude and belligerent, and just was just so anti women coaching men. And he just said, "Well, I wouldn't even appreciate or value their skills." He's like, "I know I could beat them in whatever the sport it was. For them to sit there and tell me how to do

something better would just be a joke." And so it was complete sexism gone rampant, and there were some females in the class that spoke up. And there was actually a gal in the class who had applied for, I believe it was a boy's basketball JV position, and she had played basketball here at [current university]. And she had gotten an interview, but she didn't get the job. And she talked about the impact of that on her, and so I think in some ways there was a counterbalance of what he was saying by the reality of, yes, this does happen to women. They get discriminated against when they apply for coaching males, but males can coach females, no problem…. So there was definitely discussion, it was definitely heated, and this kid who made these statements is, sort of, known as the class joker. He is not a great student, and every faculty member knows that. And [sigh] so, I don't know, I think there was a lot of conversation after the conversation that went on. The other thing was that there was a group of women in the class that did a presentation on women in administration shortly after that, and so, you know, they just thought spending two class periods on women in leadership was ridiculous… this cohort of men. So, yeah, there was conversation, but there were no outright negative comments made to me it was more I'll get back at her in this more subtle student evaluation way. [It was an undergrad course], and maybe [the students would have known that I was a lesbian].... Now, I mean the fact that I am not married and 47, some of them would make that assumption.

[Another situation was during a safe space discussion]… I'm trying to remember exactly what happened… we were discussing homophobia in the classroom, and how it affects students. And one of the things that I ask them to do is to write on a piece of paper when someone says the words gay or lesbian what comes to mind. And so it was

early in the discussion and he pretty much, as soon as we started to do this activity, he said, "I don't agree with this topic, I'm not going to stay for this discussion" and walked out the door. And I talked to him the next day, and I said, "Are you okay?" and he said, "I just really don't agree with that topic" and I said "You don't think it is important that everybody be treated fairly and equally, and you don't think that discriminating against these folks is a problem?" And he said, "Well, no, not really. I just disagree with this lifestyle, and it's, you know, sinful and all those kinds of things." And I said, "Well, I would just urge you to think about the potential impact as a teacher that you could have on gay or lesbian, and then we talked about the suicide rate, and those kinds of things." But he was very closed-minded, and not really willing to listen. So I tried, but it was a tough road. But everybody else I think was fine. I didn't hear any comments, and like I said I've never been slammed on my evaluation except this past time that I taught this class, this Organization and Administration class. That was the first time that that had happened…. It makes me worry about teaching it here, to be perfectly honest, because it's not nearly as much fun teaching when you really have to worry about what is going on behind closed doors. And if they are running to your chair saying that you are trying to promote a lesbian gay agenda, or, you know, it's an interesting dynamic here from that perspective…. But now would I still teach the material, yeah, and do I still teach the material, yeah. I just know going in that… I may have some challenges that I haven't faced before.

I think that our provost just added it [sexual orientation] into the mission statement, but at the state level there a lot of problems with it. So from a university level, it's okay, but if the state legislature were to get a hold of that information, my guess is

that they would not be accepting of it. Because I know we had legislation put forth, it's probably been 3 years where they were trying to legalize gay marriage, and do some things to help gays and lesbians become acceptable parts of the work place at the colleges and universities, and the legislature just slammed it. So even if the people voted it in the legislators would not – 95% Republican legislatures here…. You know, I don't think about it [being a lesbian professor in a conservative state], I really don't. I think if it ever came to something where it was a problem, to be brutally honest, I know that I am employable at a number of different places so, you know, if they all of the sudden decided that they didn't accept me, or that part of my lifestyle, then I could go elsewhere, and that would just be what would have to happen. But it really hasn't been a problem for me to date. At least not from the administration, school perspective. So, you know, when you ask if they were supportive when these evaluations came through… yeah, they were. They realized that it was a situation where it was a bunch of students that didn't get it. And that it is still okay to have those conversations. But I think that our Dean is accepting and understanding. She knows about me, and she has met my partner, and so has the [former] provost - same thing. But she is now gone, and we have a new provost, so I don't know how things are going to shake out.

I just don't even go there [talking about navigating own sexual orientation in the classroom]. I know. And again I am probably the only one that has said that. I don't go there, and I have never been asked by a student in a class if I am gay… outside of class maybe, but again it's graduate students, and you know that is a different situation. And the graduate students don't even ask. They just ask about [my partner], and don't blink an eye about it.

I do [use a lot of stories in the classroom]. I tell a lot of stories especially in the Organization and Administration class. I have many, many stories from which to draw…. I would say they are mostly professional. And it's interesting, because I am teaching an online class, and we just got evaluations back from three people who went through my website, and they said something to the effect that, "Your staff introduction is very – I don't even remember what word they used – but open up a little bit more, let the students get to know you, tell them a little bit more about you kind of thing."…. What I talked about was what I like to do outdoors, and I like to play hockey, so I included both of those aspects of my life, and the fact that I have dogs and cats. I'm not sure what they are getting at with what I could have added, but anyway it's food for thought….

I think I use the partner thing. And, actually, I am assisted by one of my colleague's who is married, but calls her husband her partner. So, it's sort of the norm of the term in our department.

[Authenticity means] being able to be yourself, being able to reflect on who you are, and what your beliefs are. [In terms of the classroom] [pause and a sigh], you know, I think that the type of material that I teach, it doesn't necessarily require me to be authentic about my sexuality. At least not now, not with the conditioning procedures class and the health promotion class, with the understanding that our department is going to do nutrition, physical activity and stress, and the Health Sciences department is going to do other things, including sex education and environmental education. So with that in mind, I am okay with it, because I don't feel like it ever is really relevant to the material that I am teaching. Where it does become relevant is, for example: if you are talking about organization and administration. If you are talking about going to a function, you

know, going to a fundraiser, and people are asking you about your husband and your kids. That is where it becomes relevant. And I might use an example of somebody else, or a friend, or put yourself in this scenario, but I wouldn't make it my own. Not outwardly, even if the story might be very relevant and related to who I am.

I do [consider myself to be an authentic teacher], because I really believe in the stuff that I teach, and I really try to live what I teach in terms of being fit, trying different strategies for strength and conditioning, and then with health promotion, the same thing with physical activity, nutrition, and stress management. Although the stress management, I am not the best role model for that. I really do feel like I can be authentic in those ways for those topics. Where it becomes less comfortable for me is when I am talking about organization and administration relative to the discrimination that goes on towards women who are trying to break the glass ceiling, and get into athletic administration or coaching, because there are just so many issues that they face. I have told stories about search committees that I have been on, and at different places, not necessarily at [current university], but some of the inappropriate questions that are asked, you know, why it's not a good strategy, and why it is important to follow affirmative action protocols… those kinds of things….

[If I were at a liberal university I think it would be different]… I think so, I hope so… I really do [laugh]. Yeah, I do… actually [use inclusive language such as partner in that particular class as well at those particular times].

Two things come into my head [in regards to our field and inclusiveness]. One is Mariah Burton Nelson who is the executive director who is the executive director of AAPAR [American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation] within AAPEHRD

[American Association for Physical Education, Health, Recreation, and Dance]…. She and her colleagues in AAPAR have been very active in fighting for social justice issues. I think that is a great place to network, meet people, have conversations about teaching, these kinds of things, and I think the world of Mariah. She is awesome. She is just a great leader and I respect her a lot. Another leader in this area is Pat Griffin from the University of MA, who has worked for 20 years in homophobia education. She, I'm sure, would be aware of resources. She would be a great person to start with. Just the material I have found with the Women's Sports Foundation and homophobia has been brilliantly done. They are time tested, because they have used them in a number of different settings in a number of different places, and had a lot of success with it. The other thing is that the NCAA has a homophobia awareness program for their athletes. They have a video about what it is like to be a gay athlete or a lesbian athlete. There may be a group that works in the NCAA on these issues as well.

Nancy

I am Caucasian and I am 37. I started this position [teaching full time] in… August of 2006. I began teaching as a master's level student, like most of us…. I was really thrown into the mix, because as a master's student my advisor went on sabbatical, and so I was teaching a core kinesiology course that was looking at the social factors influencing peoples physical activity behavior. I was thrown in pretty quickly into a lecturer type class, and that was my first really good experience in focusing on what you would deem to be health education…. And then from there I continued to teach that type of course…. And then I did a post doc at the [second teaching university], and I taught basically the same course…. And then I took the position here, and now I teach theory

related classes to design health promotion programs. We really target the health disparities in the initial steps of the class to get an idea of what the health of our nation is….

[The first university where I worked] is predominantly Caucasian… it's a state school. So we tend to get a little less diversity…. It is more Caucasian people, and probably the next race is Hispanics…. A town of about 40,000 people, so pretty small…. [The second university] is about 250,000 people, so it is definitely more diverse. There is a large Caucasian population…. There are Hungarian people, Ukrainian people with all different backgrounds. There are predominantly Caucasians, and there is a little bit bigger aboriginal population, which is kind of compared to the native Americans in the US. And then [city of current university] is 105,000 people, and is 20 minutes from a metropolitan city…. So once again not very diverse. More Caucasian people live here… just a midsized kind of town here I guess.

[At first university] there was… an LGBT group for students. It kind of had its ebb and flow…. Not a lot of attendance, and there was actually a Lutheran pastor who took it under her wings, and they really built that group up. I can't say how it is now. So, you know, I would see LGBT students on campus, and I had some interaction, but very little. I felt that the actual campus was just okay. There were definitely faculty members involved, and I was a part of a group that was doing the Safe Zone type thing for LGBT students, so it was more active in that sense, but… as a whole it was very good with a good grass roots type of advocacy movement, and that stemmed from the LGBT folks in town as well as PFLAG [Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays]. We had a really good PFLAG movement…. Now when I went to [second university], I

really wasn't immersed in it other than friends, and so, I don't know how that really went. I didn't do any lesbian research there… so there I didn't really experience much. And in [current university], there is an LGBT group that is not very active. I think it is starting to gain some momentum, but not very active. There is an LGBT faculty staff group that seems to come and go, so not a lot of action there either. And in terms of advocacy related for LGBT issues, there is a support group available. There is not a lot of stuff going on. Now the city does provide a bit more, but I do find this particular area to be very… hidden in a lot of senses. It is very difficult to get into the LGBT… community here….

Well, at [first university] I was not comfortable at all, maybe because I was a student, and just coming into my own. I think that occasionally I was part of a gender issues and physical activities course where I was a panel speaker and represented LGBT. I tend to be that token individual that gets called up for that type of stuff…. I didn't out myself to my students. At [second university] I did not out myself to my students, it never really came up. Here at [current university] I have been very careful in not really outing myself to undergrads. However, one semester I was asked what my research was and I made it clear. Otherwise I just let students who are interested find out what I do.… I don't hide it, but I don't necessarily walk into the class and say what the particular population that I research is. My graduate students, I am very vocal with them, and they all know, and my department is very aware of what I do. And I am very vocal about that, so it bleeds down to the undergrads, but I think I have a bit of apprehension, because I presented LGBT health statistics in classes before, and I consistently get the hand in the back raised up and they say, "Why are we looking at these populations? Why are you

covering their information?" I continue to cover and talk about discrimination related to sexual orientation in classes, and bring things up, but I don't necessarily come out and say, "I am a lesbian health researcher" to them. And that also can be because I have had hate blogs written about me from religious groups here….

I think that it is known that I am a lesbian. I think that [pause], you know, I don't in the undergrad classes come out and say anything. You know, as a lesbian woman you should blah, blah, blah, or you should, or this is the type of thing I am experiencing. And I think that is also due to a little bit of keeping my personal life away from undergrad students. I don't really, I always try to present both sides of the issue. So, I don't really honestly always give my personal opinion on a lot of things, because I want them to see both sides of the coin, and I want to make sure that I present. So, my identity with them, I'm not sure if I have a bit of internalized homophobia in terms of not talking about issues related to my life. It's just the fact that it is the role that I play in front of the undergrad students is keeping my life a little more distant.

In terms of grad students, you are so close to them, and you are involved with them so much that I want to be real and be up front, and I also want to make sure that I don't bring in students that are homophobic that I will have difficulty with. So, yeah, the role that I play with them is, I don't want to say more honest, but it is definitely more upfront. You know, this is who I am, this is what I do…. So it is definitely a different role that I play, and like I said, I can't really determine if it is just because I keep separate from the undergrad students a bit more.

I think my colleagues would [speak about me and] say this is what she does…. [She is a faculty member] not that she is a lesbian…. Yeah, my colleagues are very

accepting…. I do have some very conservative colleagues, and I am very open with them. I really don't care, and they don't seem to care. I don't know if they talk about things behind my back, but we seem all fine. I do have one colleague though, one time he just didn't know how to say it, I think, and he was really hesitant in saying something in relation to my lesbian identity. I think he called it "that." He couldn't even say the words. He is still very open, and he has become better. I feel very supported in that sense from my colleagues. I don't feel any homophobia…. There was actually three of us [lesbians in the department]. Okay, so, there were three out of four tenure track or tenured faculty females. Three of the four were [lesbians], but one moved, and so there are two of us now.

I think I have a couple [of memorable times from the classroom]. The first one was when I… was a Ph.D. student. And I was teaching that social aspects of physical activity type class…. We tend to have a lot of fraternity and sorority type students in our classes. It was a young woman who was definitely a sorority student, and she raised her hand and said, "Why do we have to understand the health status of these types of people?" And it was very profound for me, because I had somewhat anticipated a moment like this. But you don't really know how you are going to react sometimes when you are faced with it directly. I suppose I created a scenario in my head that someday I would likely encounter this, but still you feel very put on the spot at that moment. And so I went in to this hopefully good explanation as to this is an underserved population in which everybody has the right to be looked at and understood, and if we do not bring to light this subpopulation people, or these subpopulations of people, then we are doing an injustice to everybody. And so, I gave, you know, that sense of this is a marginalized

group, and that it is important to understand all aspects of our population regardless of your personal opinions in terms of whether you think lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered is right or wrong. It is your obligation as someone who is going into a health profession, or who is a health major to understand, and provide equal access, and opportunity to every individual. And, so, it was very profound for me, I was young, I was just, like I said coming into my own, and it was a moment I felt proud about. It was a moment that I felt I stood up to that marginalization that I had experienced for the majority of my life. The girl might have rolled her eyes or said something after I responded. Maybe she said something negative, maybe she said something positive, I don't know, but regardless it was a moment that made me a better teacher, and it was the moment that I knew I was doing the right type of research in terms of examining aspects of lesbian health. So that was very profound for me.

But probably the second one is, I guess, I can't remember very much in terms of specific details, but it's been since I have been to [current university], and I had my first student ask me what I research, and what particular population. Because I always tell them the research to recruit for potential opportunities to be involved in the research, but he asked me what populations I looked at. And I remember I looked at him and I said, "Adult lesbian women" and all eyes came to me. It really was one of those moments where people looking down looked up. And I said that this is a population, once again I went through the "shpeel" of being underserved, and what it did is it created a dialogue that was very open and felt very accepting. And just an entire 30-minute discussion that probably would have driven me a little insane otherwise, because I had a lecture to give, right? And so it was probably a 30-minute discussion on LGBT individuals, and bringing

to light, and allowing students to have open dialogue about what particular things meant. It was not threatening at all, it was challenging with some questions. In particular, "I don't understand what it means to be transgendered" and there were some challenging questions in terms of how to - in a very small amount of time - explain something like that. It was very enlightening that there was this one section, this one semester of students that I felt incredibly comfortable with to talk about that. And so the rest of the semester they would bring up things. And students came and talked to me, one woman talked to me about that she didn't understand sexual orientation, and she was afraid to have her kids see her sister who is a lesbian at Christmas. And she talked to me about that, and I had a student athlete come and talk to me about his homophobic coach, and I had another student come and talk to me about being involved in a lesbian organization. She was scared about insinuating that I was a lesbian, because I didn't ever say that I was a lesbian, but she assumed after that…. Yeah, she just wanted to express that there was an organization… And I just think that it just created that open dialogue for the rest of the semester it was just so powerful. And, I don't know, undergrad classes from semester to semester can be very different. So one semester you can have these amazing very engaged students, and the next semester you can have these kids who roles their eyes at you, and could care less what you say in front of the classes. And so it happened to be the class that seemed engaged, and so it made it even more exciting and more enjoyable to be able to bring to light issues that LGBT students, and people, and organizations experience on a daily basis…. That is probably the only one I've really connected with, and really felt comfortable with that completely in terms of LGBT issues, and being a health educator…. I do bring to light, you know, at the beginning of my classes I talk

about prevalence and deaths rates of particular chronic diseases…. Basically, I look at physical activity, healthy eating, smoking, you know, these types of things, and how many people do it in our population based upon a said group. For instance, most of the time I say, African Americans or Blacks have higher rates of chronic disease compared to other races. So, yeah, I break it down to social factors; age, race, sexual orientation, gender, present statistics, and information.

I think most times students say nothing [when topics of LGBT are brought up], and I don't know if… I have become a little more… I don't want to say I was too nice when I was a grad student, but I was fluffy nice, and I probably seem a little more stern, and little more forward, and I don't know if they are afraid to say something. But I haven't really experienced anything negative as much as when I had the students raise their hands and say, "Why are we looking at these people?"

At the undergraduate level, I came out to the two students…. The one student that was the student athlete that said his coach was homophobic. And in the discussion with the one woman who was confiding in me and asking for some type of advice in relation to her lesbian sister and Christmas, and that type of thing. Those are the only two for undergrad. Now grad students I tell, pretty quickly.

[Coming out is]… based upon my level of comfort, because you know a little bit. You mostly know about the background, the resume of the student coming in, and I think that I gage the water a little bit before I say something. Now, does it mean that they don't already know? I think that obviously there might be an assumption, because I do lesbian health research, but if they haven't heard it from another graduate student, and they haven't put that together, and I don't know if they know. I just gage the water. It sort of

depends on the student, if I can tell if a student is very okay, maybe their language has or the discussions have somehow revolved around sexual orientation, and I have picked up that information, and I hear them talking about things, and it seems friendly then I say it. If I hadn't heard anything, I wait just a little bit longer, but then I eventually say it pretty quickly, no matter what… I bring it to the forefront. Now, if I were to encounter a student that was not one of my students that has a problem with sexual orientation, I would probably bring it up pretty quickly.

Well, honestly, I have to say that for the first time in my graduate classes I think about it [sexual orientation] a bit more, and it has to do with a particular student. He is a student [of a particular religion], and I definitely think twice for sure about particular things that I say. And I always end up saying what I want to say, but it makes me stop for a moment. So, because of him I have had hesitation, and I think I put a decent amount… of energy into being cognizant of him. And I have never experienced that before, because with other students I haven't really cared. You know, I don't know why I care, I think it is because earlier this year I was reading the response from the church about same sex marriage, and from Don't Ask Don't Tell. Maybe if I wasn't so updated on my on the actions in our country from particular responses from the religious right… maybe I wouldn't worry so much. I don't think I worry, but I wouldn't be as cognizant as I am. Now, in terms of my undergrad students, I think about it quite a bit, and I think it's because… I don't know, maybe I have a bit of internalized homophobia, like I said before, and what does that mean. Am I gonna get a lack of respect, and, you know, I suppose we can worry about that as being women too. So it's kind of hard to, you know, I do think about it. Definitely more energy is used thinking about it with the undergrad

students than the grads. Quite a bit more with the undergrads, but I can't say that on a grand scheme it really takes a lot of my energy.

I think that I would, and I feel very strongly about this [coming out if asked by a student in the class], that this isn't necessarily the decision that everybody should make… I feel like I definitely would say. I would put it out there, and, you know, what I think at this point, I am going up for tenure next year, which is also something that's important for me in terms of the career marker. You know, you always walk on tiptoes in terms of things that you do, you don't say things in the faculty meetings as much, you know. You know, you kind of keep the fieriness down, but I think I would take that moment and cherish it, because you don't get those moments much, and the impact that you could potentially have on even one student could be amazing, and so, I think I would take that opportunity, and use it to the fullest and say, "Yeah, I am a lesbian, and many of the things we talk about I encounter, and this is why I do lesbian research." And, you know, I think that it is nothing that I am ashamed of, and I think that I would want to use words that would make that very clear. That it is very okay to be LGBT, and be able to say it out loud, because I can have a voice, and I feel like I can do it, and I have the confidence to do it whereas that is not always necessarily the case for some people. Confidence because… I know that we are very conditioned in our heterosexist society to be, I guess, hidden, and on some levels we are supposed to be ashamed of who we are. And so, I think that, yeah, it is a fine line that we are pushed in that way, and every ideology, and every normative value that our country pushes on us is heterosexist, but I do believe a bit of it is confidence, and I think in the end it is a personal decision although these social

factors influence us, it is a personal decision, and I think as one develops more confidence the more comfortable they become in their skin. So, yeah, on some level I do.

I actually have to give an immense amount of credit to the people around me [as they have helped me to learn to navigate my sexual orientation in life]…. I knew I was gay at a young age, and I hid it. I did the… I am going to try to be the person that I am supposed to be for so many years. And my awakening, I suppose, really happened in graduate college, and probably the person, whether she knows it or not, that was really important in the process for me was my major advisor for my master's degree, and she was actually my major advisor for my Ph.D. as well. I came with an article, we had to critique an article for class, and I came with a lesbian health article, and I was scared. And, yet, excited at the same time, and she praised me over and over for choosing this population and choosing this article to critique. She really is the one that propelled me into continuing… "don't be afraid if you want to look at this population" and then eventually it led to research in the area. And so I think that… having that experience with her made me more comfortable as a person, and that just bled into the ability to bring sexual orientation into my class. So becoming more and more comfortable, becoming… you know, I suppose at the beginning having a justification, "Why are you looking at that population?" Whoa, they're underserved, see we can look at the government guidelines on who we should do research on and they're in there, see! But it really was more about moving beyond that justification and becoming comfortable, and she really propelled me to do that. So I think her in particular, and then I think the older lesbian women that I have encountered who have experienced so much, and who had hidden for so long, and were so important to the battle to… strive for equality and to gain

equality, and so, as a thank you to them I constantly think back and say, "Okay, I need to do more as a lesbian woman, and this means I need to bring statistics in to my classes, this means that I need to if I am faced with the opportunity to disclose my sexual orientation in a class, albeit directly, that I would do it." And [in addition] my most influential person, she is a heterosexual woman, and that was just even more profound for me. And, you know, sometimes you think you are out there, and, oh, you know, what heterosexual people are liberal enough to accept me. So that was obviously very eye opening experience for me as well from that perspective….

I suppose uniqueness comes to mind [when I hear the word authenticity]. I suppose being real… I think just truthfulness, I just think uniqueness and truthfulness comes to mind for me. I think that we [lesbians in the classroom] are authentic. I think unique, I think that, you know, even if people do not disclose who they are you are giving a perspective and a set of values that are going to be different than the main stream, and I think that makes us all authentic. I think our voices are so powerful, and our thoughts are so powerful, and it doesn't even matter if you are closeted versus being wide open. I think that our perspectives, because we are lesbian women are very authentic in that way. And I think that that is not, I guess, students should consider themselves lucky, I suppose, to be able to get the perspective, the authentic perspective of lesbian health educators, because you don't come across it as much as you do other people. But, you know, everybody is authentic in their approach, but I guess I am just speaking from the sexual orientation side….

[Regardless if a professor is in or out of the closet]… I think that obviously some professors can provide a bit more, you know, I think if you are closeted. I think that there

is a tendency to not be involved in the community, and maybe not be involved in advocacy, or the issues at hand, or maybe they are just very informed, and just keep shying away. But my assumption is that there is likely a correlation between being extremely closeted and keeping away from issues, so while they do bring a particular authenticity to the student, I think it is very different obviously if somebody is a lesbian health educator and is very informed and out, but I still think, yes, they can still bring some sort of authenticity on the basis of sexual orientation….

I definitely say I am unique [in terms of authenticity]. I think I get that quite frequently. Well, when students leave my class, particularly the undergraduate class, they leave with a sense that I am out for equality and equity. And I do that in a very passionate way, and I put the bubble of health around that. And I think that I am authentic in my perceptions that I have, and sometimes I think I can lose people in terms that my perceptions can be so authentic. But, yeah, I do, I would say that I feel like I am an authentic lesbian health educator….

[In terms of end of the year evaluations]… I teach a theory course.... I try to make it entertaining. You know, I have application days where we go over to the gym where we demonstrate a theory by them shooting hoops. So, you know, I try to be very creative. But I do teach a theory class, so I get why do we need this class? Blah, blah, blah. But then I also get the students who… it's like they either really like me, or they don't. And I get many more that say, "You have opened my eyes to a lot of health disparities, and I can't thank you enough for that. And I see health promotion differently because this is a very physiology type program – exercise physiology type program." So, I open their eyes to a different way of thinking about health promotion, and health…. So

on the student evaluations, getting those positive words of encouragement and such, and also some good ideas in terms of how I can maybe change the course…. But I think one of the most important things that I felt in terms that I was doing the right things, is that I received a teaching award two years ago. And it was a teaching award, it wasn't a university in the sense that I got it from the college of arts and sciences, which we are housed in…. But I got it from the student athletes. The award is the Most Inspiring Faculty…. It just meant so much to me, and I know our job is so revolved around research, but the fact that I was chosen out of all faculty on campus, there were four of us that were chosen, and I was the only woman…. It meant so much to me, and I always hope that it comes back to the fact that I teach about equality and equity in terms of health, which equates to every aspect of everybody's life, and that it also included sexual orientation. And I always bring it back to sexual orientation, it's such a huge part of who I am, it is one of my main identities. And so I always think, "Oh yeah, good, alright, the lesbian in health won the most inspiring teaching award." So I am always like yeah! I don't know, two points for the lesbian team or something…. I do bring it back to hopefully that students understand that, you know, I try to teach about disparities, and like I said before equity and equality….

[In terms of the health profession as a whole], I would say, it depends on what university you are at [to determine inclusiveness]. And I would say on a whole, boy that is tough to answer, because there are so many universities that still have excluded sexual orientation in their anti discrimination clauses. So, on a whole I would, I don't want to say it's not accepted, but when you look at a journal, when you look at a conference program, when you look at some other aspects of what is required in our positions, you

don't see a lot of lesbian health research or gay men research, unless it is HIV. You don't see a lot of research on bisexual or transgender. So that it highlights the notion that is it, you know, is it really accepted. So I would argue on the grand scheme probably not, but it's moving along…. You know, my experience has been pretty darn good…. Like I said, when you pick up the journals and you don't see any lesbian articles, that is the key. When our stuff isn't getting in mainstream journals that is a sign that maybe it's not being as accepted. I remember one time I went to a conference, it is one of the biggest psychology of sport or exercise physical activity conferences, and there was this whole discussion. Has there ever been lesbian in a title in a presentation or on a poster here? And I was like what? And this was I think in 2004? Yeah, and so there was this whole discussion, and I think we came to the conclusion that one person had included lesbians in a study, but it had not been included in the title. Now I find that very interesting. Now they could have been inaccurate. Now this is one of the top lesbians, who, she didn't study lesbian research, but she is a lesbian, but that was based on her perception. But you know, I think if things were more, if there were more funding opportunities on the national level, the Bush administration really cut the funding and so now there is a little more thriving in terms of funding potential, and so that can bring it to light, but that also is a sign of acceptance, and I feel like our country has failed in that.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS

As suggested in Chapter Three, the stories in Chapter Four were co-constructed by the researcher and the participants. The interviews were a journey that ebbed and flowed for the participant and the researcher. Looking back on Chapter Four, one can discern the differences between the antenarratives, stories, and narratives (Boje, 2011). The first part of this chapter provides a brief look at the participant's words from my perspective in relation to the important thoughts and stories that were brought forth throughout each particular interview. The second part of this chapter provides a look at how the stories intersect with the purpose of my study as it relates to the literature. This section provides threads of connections not only from the stories but also myself as I am coming from the perspective of a health educator. To be clear, although Chapter Five uses the words and phrases of the participants, it is written from my point of view. Table 1 appears on the following page in order to provide an overview of the demographics of the participants.

Table 1
Summary of Educator Demographics

Educator Pseudonym	Age	Title	College Location	College Information
Kris	48	Professor of Public Health – Tenured	Pacific North West	10,000+ students Suburban/Public
Debbie	47	Assistant Professor Tenure Track	East	24,000+ students Urban/State
Janet	34	Health Promotion Faculty	West Coast	35,000+ students Urban/State
Erin	34	Health Generalist	East	7,000+ students Suburban/Private
Mary	59	Associate Professor Tenured	Central	24,000+ students Urban/State 30,000+ Urban
Amy	51	Health Educator Adjunct	East	4,000 students Suburban/Private
Deirdre	50's	Associate Professor Tenured	East	16,500+ students Urban/Public
Peggy	47	Professor Tenured	Mountain West	19,000+ students Urban/State
Nancy	34	Assistant Professor Tenure Track	Mid West	30,000+ students Suburban/State

Individual Story Analysis

The individual story analysis provides a look at the stories as they mesh with the research questions as well as the researcher's thoughts of how the interview unfolded. Within each personal story are the events in the participants lives that greatly affected

them. The individual story analysis provides some background information for each participant followed by the portions of the interview specific to the research questions. Chapter Four was an unabridged version of the participants' stories whereas this chapter provides my interpretation of the story as it unfolded. The subheadings for the following interpretations include background and context, visibility of sexual orientation, navigation of sexual orientation, authenticity, and teaching sexual orientation. These categories depend greatly upon the flow of the interview and the creation of the story for both myself and the participant.

Kris: It Doesn't Shadow Everything I Do; It Colors Everything I Do

Kris describes herself as European American and 48 years old. She has been a health educator for 20 years. She received her Ph.D. in health education specializing in community health education. She has had the opportunity to teach at two universities since she received her Ph.D. She is currently a professor of Public Health.

Campus context. There is a stark contrast in campus climate between the two universities of employment for Kris. She describes her experience at University A as life changing. During her time at University A, Kris received "Level 2 meritory service awards every year, which is the highest level of meritory service they afforded." However, she was "given a terminal contract" due to her sexual orientation. She was told by a lawyer that she did not have a "whole lot of recourse because [the university] is a private [religious] university meaning they could discriminate if they want."

Kris currently works on a campus that is located in a "very Republican, redneck, farmland…, but [the university] is a bastion of liberal thought." She says, "it is the bubble of campus that makes it tolerable." The university is located in a democratic state

but this affiliation is due in part to a large city "on the west side of the mountains." She says that the university is affected by the city "in a very positive way." However, Kris "grew up on a farm, I grew up rural redneck," so she feels comfortable living in such a town. She says there is "no clash with my authenticity. I am what I am." She and her partner "are the only two people in town that talk with a southern accent. Everybody knows we are together." She adds, "Being in the northwest… we're Birkenstock wearing granola crunchers that hug trees. Everybody loves everybody up here."

Visibility of sexual orientation. Kris describes her time at University A as being a time when she was "absolutely as far in the back of the closet as I could get." In contrast, now she considers herself "an out professor," saying that "I have this kind of code that I live by…. As an aside, you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to know that I am a lesbian. I don't hide my lifestyle at all…. I don't have it tattooed on my forehead…. I don't shy away from it…, but I don't bring it up in regular conversation either…. While it's a huge part of who I am, it doesn't shadow everything I do; it colors everything I do."

Coming out. In terms of coming out in the classroom, Kris says, "Faculty trumps everything…. I am there to teach." Students have chosen to come out to her during one-on-one time in her office but not in class. When asked what is the best way to break down heterosexism in the classroom, Kris says, "It is going to take a little bit of both," being blatant by coming out in the classroom experience and being a bit more subtle by using pronouns.

One way that Kris comes out in the classroom is she asks her partner, who is a public health person, to be a guest lecturer in her courses. Kris introduces her as her partner and "I just keep right on going."

Teaching sexual orientation. Kris tells two stories about how she does include sexual orientation in the classroom discussion. The first happened at University A. She responded to a student in class who said, "All fags are sick." Her response included information about the history of sexual orientation and how the American Psychological Association took homosexuality out of its diagnostic manual. So she answered him with statistics and information. However, she ends this story with a look back at how the information she provided that day weaved its way from her classroom to a university fundraiser to the president's office when "one of the parents said that one of the faculty members… is telling kids that it's okay to be gay."

At the current university, Kris teaches a course called Current Trends in Health. She focuses on the overarching goal of Healthy People 2010 in eliminating disparities. She completes a class activity where she has the class write stereotypes on butcher block paper and then discusses these stereotypes. She had a lesbian student come out during this particular activity.

Navigation. Kris says that she learned to navigate her sexual orientation via her individual experiences. She mentions that she "lost a part of my soul at [University A] by having to be so inauthentic…. I would rather be fired straight up [than work at a place like that]." She referred to this experience as "a major life event. Being so untrue to myself. And I just chose…, simply chose."

Authenticity. Kris provides adjectives such as "integrity, ethics, modeling… grace, compassion, embracing" to describe authenticity. She "absolutely" feels as though she is an authentic teacher as "it truly means honoring the person I am inside as the person I am outside…. It is spirituality for me." She also suggests that it is a process when she says, "You know I am real sure of who I think I am right now" and "it's the constant quest. It's not that we know the answer…. It's that I am willing to jump into the fray and ask. And then do the hard work of what I call 'soul work' of trying to find the answer. That is what is most important."

Debbie: Authenticity is My Secret Place

Debbie is 47 years old and White. She has been a health educator for 10 years. Debbie has a Ph.D. in health education and specializes in disabilities. She is currently working at the university where she received her undergraduate degree and teaches undergraduate courses in human sexuality and graduate courses in health education.

Campus context. Debbie teaches at a university that she describes as mostly White and traditional. The population encompasses about 24,000 students. There is an LGBT group that was given space in the student center, which she said was a big event on campus. Some of the faculty members have safe zone stickers on their doors.

Visibility of sexual orientation. Debbie wears a traditional wedding band on her left hand and suggests that her appearance may classify her as heterosexual to her students. Debbie tells a story of a time in class that a student may have crossed the lines in terms of the student-teacher relationship, and Debbie says that her youthful appearance and her wedding band may allow her to "pull off hetero quite well." She suggests that she has "more stories of assumed heterosexuality than I do assumed lesbian."

In terms of coming out in the classroom, Debbie remembers having a discussion in graduate school with one of her professors about being neutral and not coming out. Her professor "was just convicted about being neutral in the classroom, and it really made me start to think about how important that is." Debbie also remembers a conversation with other graduate students in one of her classes about coming out: "Some of us thought no," that it is not necessary to come out. Debbie says that she doesn't "lie about it, I just don't make a point - and the reason that I don't is because when I talk about queer culture, I don't want my Human Sexuality students to think that I am speaking from a particular agenda. I believe that if they identify with me, they are more likely to hear me." In addition, Debbie considers herself to be a "very private" person as well. So "when I teach classes, I walk in and I am a health educator and that's it."

Debbie is not out in her classes. If a student in a classroom situation, would ask Debbie if she were a lesbian she would first ask the student why it is important for him or her to know. She then would probably "answer it with another question, only because I try to be respectful of the students. I don't ask them to identify their cultures."

Debbie is "very cognizant of the fact that I try to appear neutral" in the classroom as a health educator. In remaining neutral, Debbie suggests that LGBT students can "automatically count on that I understand the culture, I can speak the language… and if you are heterosexual, then you make assumptions about me, then you can take that where you need to take it. I am very comfortable with this almost kind of ambiguity that I try to have in the classroom." This relates to a point that Debbie stresses to her classes, and that is people's perceptions of others. She continues to stress that sexual orientation is invisible until someone tells one exactly how he or she identifies.

In addition, Debbie discusses sexual orientation with her classes in a way that provides the notion of a fluid sexual orientation, but she discusses this in terms of her own ambiguity. Debbie stresses the notion of fluidity by saying someone "can tell you that they are heterosexual and then 10 years later they can tell you that they are gay." This statement is followed by, "I think I try to be very true to that and I think that is part of why I create this ambiguity around myself because that means that I can be different things to different students."

Debbie feels that when teaching health education, "our personal beliefs are meaningless in the delivery of health in the classroom." She compares this to teaching abortion saying, "My beliefs should not be obvious to the students." As the interview progressed, Debbie became "very clear about neutrality and ambiguity."

Authenticity. Debbie separates authenticity into two separate places, her authenticity (private) and others' beliefs of authenticity (public). In describing the private, Debbie suggests authenticity to be a "feeling of peace and contentment that we can have within ourselves about ourselves…. My authenticity doesn't have to do with the outside…. It's about how authentic I feel with who I am and where I get to be comfortable with myself." She does not care what outsiders think. "I think it's about having a sense of self that allows you to be yourself in the greater world." Debbie also describes authenticity as a "secret place," a place that she reserves for herself.

Debbie uses an example of a gay professor in her graduate education to describe an inauthentic public experience. She said that all of the students knew that this professor was gay. However, this professor "put up a front" of heterosexuality. Debbie reflects on

this situation by saying, "Just because you don't share your authentic self doesn't mean that you have to lie about it."

Teaching sexuality. Debbie is "all about inclusion and elevation of culture" in her classes. She uses inclusive language and also notes that she does not feel that all students understand that "partner" may mean being gay or lesbian. She uses stories, some about herself, in the classroom to discuss sexual identity. She tells the students about her experiences of going to her first gay bar, talks about attending drag shows, and different events around sexuality. Debbie also uses media (Levis commercials and *Dirty is the New Black*) and certain books to talk about diversity and sexual orientation in the classroom.

To emphasize her resolve to bring LGBT into the classroom, she tells a story about a student who was talking about how "all we talk about in class are gays." The student's friend responded by saying, "that is because everybody knows what it is like to heterosexual."

In light of her resolve to be inclusive and culturally appropriate in the classroom, Debbie has received some teaching evaluations that have been negative. For example, a student wrote that, "The way in which I presented gay culture was too… extravagant – too far left." She reflected, "I think that what I have been trying to do is to normalize gay culture as we have normal lives in terms of our sexuality."

Janet: Role Models Who Survive and Thrive and Are Queer

Janet is 34 years old and White. She has a Ph.D. in Queer Theory and previously worked as a youth worker for LGBT youth in the British Isles. She has worked in her current university for 2 years teaching health education and doing health promotion in

university health services. She teaches undergraduate courses that focus on health behavior change to classes of 160 – 200 students. 50% of her job is teaching while the other fifty percent is health promotion and workshops, interns, and youth development.

Campus context. The current university where Janet works is "very ethnically diverse and mega crazy liberal." She is the "queer identified person in the department" working specifically on LGBTQ issues. She feels that her "department is very good at creating LGBT spaces for students." The university is ranked in the top 10 for the most LGBT-friendly campuses. The city where the university is located "tends to attract a lot of LGBT folks. There are many out faculty and staff." LGBT resources are very visible on campus as "there is a gender equity resource center, LGBT and feminist space, intern programs for LGBT students…. Students know that they can come out when they get to campus."

Visibility of sexual orientation. Janet "always come out" in her classes as she thinks "it's pretty easy within a health class." She feels that the topic usually comes up in the course content. She provides an example of a class activity in which she comes out to her students. She was "showing the students how to figure out what community that they are a part of that they would like to work with for their action projects… I use myself as an example… I do yoga, I am in my early 30s, I am queer, I work at…. so that is how it happened this time, but it is usually something like that."

There are various reactions when she does come out. However, the large lecture hall makes it difficult to see everyone's reaction. Generally she hears "whispering, gossipiness, they make noise, and then nothing ever happens, and then they are paying slightly better attention than they were before." There are some right-winged or religious

students needing "a little bit of time for adjustment, but if they already like me, then they decide that they are fine with it."

She also has strong feelings about others coming out. "I don't think I am to judge when somebody else should feel safe coming out to people." She also feels that she has a "certain amount of privilege" due to her physical appearance. She suggests that she isn't "high fem" but she could "definitely pass as straight," suggesting that her students would not assume her to be queer.

She also touches on the fact that her colleagues who were straight in British Isles did not want her to come out because "they felt if the students didn't know and they had to sit with the discomfort of not knowing, it would be more important to them."

Teaching sexuality. Janet uses different strategies when teaching sexuality that she has found to be successful. For example, she allows students to write down anonymous questions concerning sexuality. This is a tool that she uses to continue the open, real atmosphere in her classes. She feels that she is "open and non-judgmental" answering their questions "in a factual way."

Janet also speaks to her positionality in the classroom saying, "There are so many ways [such as standing in front of your students as a White person] that excludes. There are huge groups of students that are not going to identify with that part of my experience…. I can use all of the right language, and try to address issues of cultural differences, and I can try to address racism and all of that kind of stuff and challenge people's racist statements if they make them, but I speak from the position I speak from. I can't – I am not going to try to pretend."

Navigation. Janet believes that her experiences of being a youth worker carved her path for navigation of sexual orientation in the classroom. "I just got very used to being very out, all of the time." She speaks to the importance of being a role model for LGBT youth. Her formative experience provided her with the "ease and comfort with my orientation to all of my other workspaces too because it was unimaginable not to do it that way."

Authenticity. Authenticity in the classroom for Janet is "being honest about where you come from, what your perspective is, what your limits are in terms of knowledge and being kind of up front about the things you could know more about but you don't." It involves "trust, [and we should] respect [students] enough to trust them with that information." She states, "Yes, I would consider myself an authentic teacher." Janet again stresses the importance of good role models for queer and non-queer students as they both "need to see that people survive and thrive and are queer."

She suggests that student evaluations reaffirm her sense of being authentic in the classroom as well, saying, "Several people always say they appreciate how honest I am, or that… I share parts of my life. I always get comments on they like that I tell personal stories, and they feel like I am honest and up front with them."

Fluidity of identity. Janet was specific about noting the fluidity of her identity in terms of how she identifies as queer. She states, "I don't want to put myself too much in a box…. I always say very intentionally 'queer' and let them figure whatever they want to figure." She has dated a trans man and poly couples. She takes into consideration the possibility that she may see one of her students out at a club and she does not want to confuse them by suggesting that she is a lesbian.

She also shares that she puts energy into how much information she provides to her students wondering, "How out should I be?" She does not want to box herself in to "gay," but her interns always key into her personal life and ask about her dates and "if it is a trans man… there is part of me that thinks, 'How much do I want to get into right now? Am I being inauthentic by not saying?' "

Erin: An Organic Experience

Erin is White, 34 years old, and in her 13th year as a health educator. Erin's degree is in sexual health and human sexuality, and she was hired right out of college. She is currently the sole practitioner on a campus that has 6,000 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate students. She serves in a generalist capacity. Erin teaches sexual assault, safe zones program, safer sex, contraceptive choices, and women's health, all of which are tailored to the undergraduate student body. She has responsibility for the LGBT awareness and programs and has designed the LGBT mentoring network. Erin notes that the student body is very diverse.

Visibility of sexual orientation. "I am the token lesbian on campus…. I am very, very out on campus." This statement parallels her persona as she says, "My entire life I have been a very out and open person." She hopes that by her outness she does not objectify herself or the LGBT community. She feels that it is okay to be uncomfortable sometimes, saying "extreme emotions" are "correlated with a change in behavior or thought processes and belief systems." With this in mind, her hope is that if she is "putting someone outside of their comfort zone a little bit…. I feel like it's going to allow them the opportunity to reflect back on it later and perhaps learn from that experience."

When asked about coming out in the classroom, she responds by saying, "It really depends on what happens organically." And she provides an example during one of her alcohol trainings where she was using a male student to demonstrate a technique. As she touched him one of his friends yelled, "Hey, he has a girlfriend." Erin responded, "That's alright, I do too." Erin believes that using humor to create that "light bulb" experience for the students can be powerful. She called this a "very short, sweet way that brought them to a level of awareness." She explained this moment as an "organic experience." Erin has never been asked if she is a lesbian. However, she imagines "it's because I appear very feminine…. I would bet that 99.9% of my students assume that I am straight…. I think it would be pretty neat if a student did ask me. I think I'd be like, 'wow this is pretty cool'…. It would just be nice to be like 'yes I am.' "

Erin follows up on coming out by saying, "depending on the dynamics of the audience that I am working with, and if I feel that it will enrich the experience for them or kind of be able to bring the issue a little bit closer to home for them, then I bring it up…. so I think it is just more about it happening organically because I don't want students to think I have an agenda. I don't want them to feel that I am pushing anything on them, but if it is a teachable moment and the dynamics of the group are right, I have no qualms about sharing that."

Teaching sexual orientation. While she only comes out in situations where there is a teachable moment, she always makes references to LGBT statistics and relationships throughout her presentations. For example, she uses the story of saying "what about two men" when demonstrating proper condom use. In addition, she always

uses gender-neutral language. Erin also shares a lot of stories some about herself that she feels the students can relate to.

Navigation. In terms of learning how to navigate her sexual orientation, she states, "I don't if I have ever learned how to include it; I always just have."

Authenticity. Authenticity for Erin means "honesty, truthfulness, validation… a state of being. To me it is a belief system, it is a way of life…. It is how you choose to live your life. Being true to yourself." Erin uses the word *authentic* for herself because that is "how I identify." She describes herself as being "very bold and very out there." She also teaches authenticity to her students because it is such a "belief system" for her. She does acknowledge that there are situations in which LGBT people cannot be 100% authentic. In terms of working at a university that would not be accepting, she would not be able to work "at a place like that." She considers herself blessed to be in the health education field, one that preaches "health, wellness, acceptance, caring…. And by preaching those we also expect each other to live by those."

"For me, it wasn't like I walked in the door the first day and said, 'Hello I'm Erin, I'm a lesbian'…. I organically let it come out in conversation. I don't want to have to sequester off an entire part of who I am during my work life and not be able, like my colleagues, [to] talk about what they did on the weekend and with whom, so I just, that would not be an option for me, for myself personally."

Erin also brings to light the energy that she expends in keeping her personal life personal in light of the fact that she is out to her students. She tells stories about the particular city where she lives. This city is where the gay bars are located and where the big LGBT events take place. This is likely where her personal and professional collide.

This speaks to the small LGBT community in that there are not many choices of places to go out.

Mary: Campus Allowed Me To Feel Safe and Comfortable

Mary is 59 years old and describes herself as Caucasian and Native American. Mary has worked in three different fields throughout her career. She has been in the role of women's athletic director, worked in therapeutic recreation, and is now a faculty member and an administrator in higher education. Of importance to this study is Mary's experience as a women's athletic director in that she stood up to discrimination by resigning from her job due to inequality for women. Mary has fought the battle of gender equity in sports by making a stand and following her beliefs.

Mary went back to school to get her doctorate in health education "relatively late in life." Mary is now a tenured faculty member. She has taught all of the courses in the health education master's degree and undergraduate minor in health. She has been in an administrative position for the last 5 years as the director of diversity and is now back in the faculty ranks.

Campus context. She now works at an "extremely diverse and extremely non-traditional" university with a population of 24,000 and average age of the student is 24 or 25. The LGBT resource center is very active and very visual, the LGBT faculty organization is strong, and the campus climate index is a 4.5. Mary tells a story of her interview for the director's position and her answer provides the openness with which she maneuvers on campus; she provided a very visible account of her diversity: "I will start with the women's center, I am a woman. Then I'll go to the center for multicultural

affairs, I am Cherokee. And then I will go to the LGBTRC and tell you that I am a lesbian…. So I am completely out" in terms of administration.

While Mary feels as though she is out in terms of the university and within her administrative role, the classroom seems to be a more elusive environment in which to describe the visibility of her sexual orientation.

Visibility of sexual orientation. Mary begins with "I have never come out in my classes." Mary has not been questioned about her sexual orientation in class either. She would tell them if they asked. Mary has had students come in during her office hours to talk, and she has "always been honest… if they ask questions." She does not feel that in class she has to say, "I am a lesbian. I am your professor for the semester." She feels that her sexual identity is "a piece of me, it is a part of me and it is not the most important part when I am teaching."

In terms of the visibility of her identity, Mary suggests that she uses herself as an example during an icebreaker for her classes. During this time she mentions that she is a grandma. She then reflects that through no "intention of my own that they automatically will think that because I have grandchildren that I must not be a lesbian." But she still contends that the campus is very inclusive, especially when it comes to language.

Mary does suggest that coming out could be "an outstanding teachable moment," yet she grapples with the idea of coming out. Mary goes back and forth about the possible student needs. Mary says that moments that are most true to her are those times that students come in and sit down to talk with her about sexual orientation. However, it is those conversations that make her wonder and ask questions such as "do I need to do this… in a more direct way for the student that are sitting in the seats in the

undergraduate classes in particular?" She suggests that it is "reassuring for them to know that there was somebody that they could go talk to."

Mary has also worked with a woman who was the director of the resource center on a grant that focused on LGBT bullying. The woman would say, "You gotta come out in your classrooms… and I would say, 'No I don't, no I don't have to.' " Mary is not afraid of repercussions; she believes that sexual orientation is "a part of who I am, I don't see it as the most important part and certainly not the most important part when I am up in the front of the classroom." She would never deny it and would be honest if it were brought up. The reason that Mary does not come out directly is that she wants to "make sure that everyone is included…. I don't want anybody to feel marginalized." She points out that it is important to bring in examples to the classroom to be inclusive highlighting that "if I knew that there were gay students in there, absolutely, I would want to do the same thing…. So… how do we know?… A lot of times we know if they are a student athlete or a special ed major, but we don't know if they are lesbian or gay unless they come out during the class and so that poses that difficulty. But I think reality is if we go with the 10% you are gonna have some sometime…."

Navigation. Mary contributes much of how she learned to navigate her sexual orientation to the campus climate where she currently works. **"**The campus itself absolutely created the navigational path for me because… I immediately recognized there are people, very important people on this campus, that are visually out, and they're respected, and they just sort of embraced me and brought me into the fold." She reiterates later that the campus environment has "allowed me to feel safe and comfortable."

Teaching sexual orientation. Mary is very inclusive minded when it comes to teaching as she considers herself a "flaming liberal" and she bring current events into the classroom such as the recent suicide rates of LGBT youth. She also uses "very inclusive language and that sort of thing."

Mary also differentiates between graduate and undergraduate students, saying that graduate classes are a "different venue" than undergraduate classes. She believes her sexual orientation will come up more due to her research project dealing with bystander training as it has a "distinct component" with LGBT students.

Mary will also be teaching a course in which she will be incorporating a book in which she authored a chapter on LGBTQ health. She says, "I don't see how I won't come out there." In addition because Mary does work involving the LGBT population whether that be through her writings, her research, or her work on campus, she feels that as she gets back into the classroom and shares her research with her students that "it's going to be amazing if it isn't something" suggesting that her sexual orientation may come up in the classroom.

Authenticity. Mary believes that authenticity in the classroom is when teachers can "walk the walk." She describes authenticity as being "being real…. That is huge for me. It's huge." She goes on to say, "I don't think that I am not real because I don't come out in my classroom." Mary describes being real by suggesting that the student can get "a sense of who I am." She talks about authenticity in "layers" and provides an example: "If a student were to ask me and I was dishonest, then I am not being real. If a student asks me, I am obviously going to respond with honesty, and that carries that layer a little bit deeper."

She goes on to describe the objective on the first day of class "is to intrigue them" and to " get them excited." A big component for Mary is to build relationships with the students so that she can motivate them. She then states, "Why would you want to do anything that first day that is going to alienate them? I don't see this [coming out] as any different." She gives examples of teachers who are alcoholics or who are depressed. "It would be the same kind of thing; those are the layer pieces, if you will. You've gotta get the relationship building going and then add to it but realizing along the way if they ask, 'Have you ever been hospitalized?' or 'Are you a recovering alcoholic?' that you have to be true and you have to tell them the truth, but use it to the best of your ability of what the class content is. I always draw it back to that." An additional comment that Mary made about the layers of identity was, "I gotta tell ya, and there are layers of identity, and right now mine is that grandma thing…. It's just, it's huge, but I don't know. It's wonderful."

Amy: It's a Balancing Act

Amy is age 51 and has been working in the field of health education for 20 years. Health education was a second career for her. Amy completed her undergraduate degree in communication and sociology and her graduate degree in public health specializing in sexuality education as a nontraditional student in her 30s. It was through her experience of specializing in sexuality education and taking part in Sexuality Attitude Reassessments (SARS) that provided her with the opportunity to validate her feelings of same-sex attraction. Her memory of validation was "Oh my God, I can stand some place on this continuum where I've never been able to validate my feelings of same-sex attraction."

Campus context. Amy was hired as a health education coordinator and adjunct faculty member at a university in a large city for her first job in higher education. She

felt "very connected to that whole campus because of my dual roles." She was very "out and proud" as a lesbian as she established the Safe Zones program, completed programming around LGBT issues, taught human sexuality classes, and found opportunities to do community trainings. She reflects on the sexuality class for undergraduates as "awesome. We just had a lot of fun with that… in taking undergraduates on the journey through sexuality." It was through her involvement in the Safe Zones program on campus that she felt the "students knew that I was a lesbian." She was sure that she said, "Everybody knows about the Safe Zones Program; if you ever need more information, you can come down to my office. It is a safe place." Trying to remember if she used pronouns or referred to her partner in classes, she is sure that she "used 'her' or 'she' or my girlfriend" because that was "just my persona."

In contrast, Amy currently teaches as an adjunct instructor at a very "White upper class university," which in her description is "not diverse." She co-teaches a course called Family and Contemporary Society to those majoring in genetic counseling. She meets them every other week and has little contact with the other teacher. Now Amy identifies as a bisexual and is dating a man. "And one of the biggest struggles for me in dating [him] was not having to identify as heterosexual…. And it still is like, you know, when I tell somebody my partner is [name of boyfriend], they assume that I am heterosexual."

So in class "things are different now though with the classes that I am currently teaching. I hesitate to… I don't think I ever hesitated when I was at [previous college]. But I hesitate now because my partner is male…. I need to preface that." Amy discusses the time in class when they were talking about different types of relationships, an

opportunity for her to bring up her relationship, and how she hesitated to say, "My partner he" and instead "used 'they' so they did not have any idea.… and I don't like it. I wish I would have been more honest with them and used it as a teachable moment." She then ponders that although it "could be a really good teachable moment for them, but do I want to take the spotlight? Do I want to spend the energy and put myself out there in this class? And I think it would be different if it were human sexuality class because I am really cognizant that I don't want to take it in this direction all of the time…. I also realize that the students like to talk about this stuff. They do not get the chance to talk about this stuff…. It blows my mind." And later she goes on to wonder, "Maybe I felt there were time constraints, maybe I felt like it was going to take the… class way off and that I wasn't going to be able to cover what I needed…. It is easier to stop it, block it out, and say, 'I am going to address your question'…. There was a lot of self-monitoring there, and I didn't like it."

Further reflections on the situation include, "I think there is care that needs to be taken in disclosing whether it's what kind of behaviors you are disclosing, whether it's drug use, whether it's identity... and then you think, 'What are the students going to think of me? Are they going to turn on me? Are they going to draw me closer to them?' And then you ask the question, 'Why is it important for you to know how I identify? What is that going to do? Are you going to treat me differently? And if you are, are you going to treat me in a better way, in a more compassionate way, or are you going to treat me with more prejudice and discrimination?' You know, the whole balancing act…."

Visibility of sexual orientation. In talking about coming out, Amy states, "So many of us test the waters before we come out. And it's, like, 'I ain't going there. It is

not worth it, you know?… This is just too much energy.' That's a piece of it there. It's feeling like… not that it matters, but just that I want to put myself out there, but the cost… the benefit and the cost. I don't see it…."

Navigation. Amy learned to navigate her sexual orientation because she "came from the field of sexuality… sexuality education, and that was just part of it…. Navigating it. I don't know, I just did it. I found the opportunities to do it. Whether it was being a peer educator…, my training and facilities skills…, my own values clarification process around these SARS. Internalizing this stuff and where I felt about that. So that was my foundation – all that work helped me to navigate it."

Authenticity. In terms of authenticity, authenticity is "being… true to yourself. Being honest, being genuine. Being real with people…. But then when you put on the hat of professor or teacher…, then because you are in that role… does authenticity mean something different? Is it really my job to have to come out to you if I don't want to? And this is, like, not okay for me tonight cause of whatever I am feeling or whatever we are talking about in class? I have good judgment not to do that because that is not going to be beneficial to me to do that because that is going to affect my role as your teacher. Is that part of the process of being true to myself?" She goes on to say, "I think that the more authentic you can be the more powerful you can be or you are empowered to be true to yourself…. I can identify with how good it feels to be out and proud and own your identities, however you define them."

Amy also reflects on her current situation and says, "I still feel like I'm authentic, but I would feel more authentic if I was able to put myself out there and disclose. And,

you know, we would probably be having a different conversation if I came out as a bisexual talking about relationships in this family counseling class."

Dierdre: What You See Is What You Get

Dierdre is Caucasian and 47 years old. She has been in health education for about 23 years, and for the last 5 years she has been a department chair and administrative faculty. She has worked at two other institutions other than the one where she is currently employed. The previous institution was suburban and public, serving about 12,000 to 13,000 traditional average-aged students where the incoming freshmen were typically straight from high school. In contrast, the current institution is an urban public institution with an enrollment of roughly 16,500 students serving more non-traditional students with an average age for first-year students of 25.7 years. It is also a doctoral granting university.

Campus context. "Both campuses are more progressive than not" in terms of LGBT supports, "having safe space alliances, particular faculty groups, social networking…." However, currently "our university faculty group is not that active… partially because there are domestic partnership benefits. A lot of things that other universities don't have we already do." In terms of LGBT activities, the current university is urban and therefore "lends itself to greater non-university LGBT activities." Dierdre is currently serving on the Board of Directors for a large LGBT event that the city is hosting.

Dierdre suggests that her sexual orientation is visible on campus partly due to her involvement in social events. "It's not Deirdre and guest but Deirdre and [name of partner]. And we actually run into a lot of our students at different social events… such

as drag show entertainment…. A straight faculty introduced me to [a student] as her department chair…. I was on her thesis committee."

In the classroom her students "are pretty much different" from semester to semester. "Mainly for the past couple of years just grad students in Masters of Public Health, the community health or masters level from across the university…. There have always been some undergrads."

Visibility of sexual orientation. Dierdre thinks of herself "first as an educator/teacher, and lesbian is a qualifier that comes later." In the beginning of class, she introduces herself "just as a faculty member" and talks about her professional roles. "When I walk into the classroom, the first thing I want people to know about me is not my orientation…. I think… that you develop a rapport with that particular class" and students "may or may not feel comfortable sharing personal items." She believes this to be true regardless if one is "straight or gay." She agrees that "there are teachable moments… just like it is for somebody who is teaching adaptive physical education and they have a Down Syndrome child."

"It depends on what class I am teaching" as to whether her sexual orientation comes up in the classroom. In graduate classes "there is more of a blurring" as to when she comes out because she sees them in social settings, such as the fundraisers. There tends to be more discussion about her and her partner because they show up as a couple to social events. So her sexual orientation is seen more outside of the classroom with graduate students.

In terms of teaching the undergraduate students, Dierdre talks about the women's health courses and personal health courses as opportunities to bring in current evens and

using statements such as, “Well my partner and I.” Dierdre uses herself as an example in class such as, “if we have to take care of a parent, this is what we decided in terms of advance directives. The content within those two courses often lead to more of a connection as opposed to stats and measurements… although [sexual orientation does come up] on occasion depending on the topic and what the culture is” she will use her story as an example. Another example relates to “the ethics component of health. We were talking about aging and who has access to the ICU and who doesn’t and why and why not and how you can legally work around those and in some states how that works versus others.”

Dierdre has come out when teaching her sexuality class, “more as offering another perspective.... If there were other gay students in the class, they did not come out or did not self-identify... Although I was only one voice, there were certain other resources, I brought together a panel of faith-based reverends… talking about the church’s view of sexuality and lesbian and gays…. It was my first semester at this institution, so I was still getting the lay of the land. It was not as easy, it was more difficult to read students than now where we see some of the same ones who are friends or colleagues.”

Coming out in the classroom for teachers “varies a lot depending on the political climate of your institution.” Dierdre has been tenured since 1996 and suggests that there is “a different sense of freedom” with tenure. There is “the life experience factor” as well in terms of coming out.

In relation to using story or references to those in our lives during class, Dierdre says, “I think that if you are partnered… whether gay or straight… there may be more

opportunities to talk about we or people might feel more comfortable talking about the social aspect because it is more than just you. You can talk about in-laws, you can talk about we went somewhere or we did this." Dierdre also used examples in the classroom in talking of the ICU or advanced directives in relation to her partner as well.

Navigation of sexual orientation. Dierdre felt fortunate that "there was a group of people when I was in grad school and before I worked at a hospital setting that were gay and out and so it was easy to… I am just thinking of the peer group back in those days, and so there was always a sounding board."

Authenticity. "What you see is what you get. I think candid… if you are looking at a good quality it's authenticity, and being candid and straightforward, not trying to BS the students, having a solid understanding of the content, which again with sexuality and health, and women's health and public health in general, that is an easier connection to sexuality, sexual orientation, marriage equality, and anything else than some of our other colleagues who teach in different fields."

Peggy: I Pay the Mountain Tax

Peggy is Caucasian and 47 years old. She is a professor in kinesiology. Peggy has been the director of a doctoral program and a department chair. She is now back in the faculty ranks teaching a variety of classes. She says that the current university is "much more of a generalist place." However, she has taught a personal health class in the past and now teaches a health promotion class focusing on physical activity, nutrition, stress management, smoking cessation, and drugs and alcohol. She also teaches an organization and administration course.

Peggy has taught in four different universities but says that her sexual orientation was not really a factor for changing jobs, viewing the job changes as a "professional opportunity." She notes that she and her partner enjoy the outdoor activities that the area has to offer including biking, hiking, and skiing.

Campus context. Peggy describes her current university as "not very diverse" due to the overwhelmingly White population. The majority of students are from in state, rural areas and are not well traveled. Peggy compares this institution to University C by saying, "Believe it or not, University C was more liberal…. The students were more internationalized because a lot of them had done [religious] missions." In addition, there are no supports for LGBTQ faculty and students on either campus.

The city where she lives and works currently has "pockets of liberal people, believe it or not." Peggy says she has "yet to be at a very liberal university. We call it the Mountain Tax. There are things you have to give up in order to live in the mountains and have the recreational opportunities…. I don't have the community of lesbians like I have at the other places where I've lived…. I have maybe three or four lesbian friends here, most of my friends are straight…. so it's different, but it's okay."

Visibility of sexual orientation. Peggy's describes the visibility of her sexual orientation in relation to her current university and University C. She says, "Some places have been easier than others." University C was easier for her to be out not only because the ideology may have been different, but also because "there were several other lesbians in the department so it wasn't like it was something unique about me in that department." Her partner came to all of the events, and they would inquire about her partner. She says that the "same thing is true here… but I am not as out here as I was at University C, and I

think part of it is it is super Republican here… and here there are no other lesbians in the department… Well, no, I take that back, there is one other one, and she, like myself, is not very out." Peggy says that she is out within the department and in the college but not to students in the classroom. Peggy suggests that the cities where the universities are located are different.

Peggy has not come out in the classroom although, when she "first got to University C, it was kind of funny because all the kids would say, 'Are you married and do you have kids?' and as soon as I said a few times to a few people, 'No and no,' then the questions stopped." She says the questioning was a bit irritating. In contrast, she does not hear those questions at her current university. She notes this as "interesting because there is a similar demographic in that there is a higher proportion of people [from a particular religion] here, but I don't know, it seems to me [they] are a little less strict.… They're not as judgmental about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. You know, in terms of drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and being gay or lesbian…. It's just a little different."

Peggy is out to her colleagues and the administration on campus saying, "If that wasn't the case, I don't think it would be nearly as comfortable a fit for me here. But I really like [the current city]; it's a great place to live." She believes that one's inness or outness is driven by the political climate in which one lives… "I have chosen to work and live [in areas] that are somewhat Republican, narrow-minded, but like I said, 'It's the mountain tax.' "

Teaching sexuality. Peggy provides some examples of how she teaches in terms of the two universities. At University C she taught secondary PE courses, which included

topics like safe spaces. In this particular context one would expect to get "annihilated bringing that topic up, but… we had really good discussions…. They get it and they take what we discuss to heart, and it seemed to me that they believed it was an important thing to consider."

In contrast, currently in her "organization and administration class the topic of discrimination against gays and lesbians in the hiring process has come up. And it's been a lot different experience for me. I felt like I had to… dance around the topic a lot more and be really creative with how it is discussed." Peggy thinks that due to the rural population, "they probably haven't been exposed to gay and lesbian people, and that may be one of the things."

Peggy talks about one of her most memorable times in the classroom as the first time she taught about homophobia at University C. She says she was "scared to death" but knew there was relevance for the discussion in the particular class. She was so well prepared and she remembers it going really well. "I remember people [students] being really shocked at how much discrimination, overt and covert, there is against gay and lesbian students." She also talked about how it started conversations within the faculty as they wanted to add it into their courses as well. Peggy says the experience was "really powerful, and from then on it gave me strength and courage to say, 'Okay, I can do this, and it needs to be done because it open eyes of future teachers who can have a really powerful impact on kids.' "

She also teaches about homophobia in her current organization and administration class, but it has been met with student opposition. Students "basically wrote me down on the evaluation saying that I was an ultra feminist and trying to push my feminist agenda

way down their throats kind of thing. And I have never had that either on a student evaluation, EVER, anyplace I have been, so that was a little bit shocking. Kind of the voice of the right wing gets power and they use it in those kind of ways."

Peggy uses inclusive language in the classroom in terms of using the descriptors "partner" or "spouse." Peggy also uses story in the classroom when discussing all topics but does not use herself as an example in the stories.

Navigation. Peggy plainly states, "I just don't even go there. I don't go there and I have never been asked by a student in a class if I am gay…. Outside of class maybe, but again it's graduate students and, you know, that is a different situation.… I would say the grad students know because [my partner] is around a lot. You know, she'll come and help me with different things, and so people know her, but the undergrads probably not as much."

Authenticity. Authenticity means "being able to be yourself, being able to reflect on who you are and what your beliefs are." In terms of the classroom, Peggy feels that "the type of material that I teach, it doesn't necessarily require me to be authentic about my sexuality…. I don't feel like it ever is really relevant to the material that I am teaching." Where it does become relevant is in "organization and administration… [and] going to a fundraiser, and people are asking you about your husband and your kids…. I might use an example of somebody else or a friend or put yourself in this scenario, but I wouldn't make it my own. Not outwardly, even if the story might be very relevant and related to who I am."

"I do [consider myself to be an authentic teacher] because I really believe in the stuff that I teach, and I really try to live what I teach in terms of being fit, trying different

strategies for strength and conditioning and then with health promotion, the same thing with physical activity, nutrition and stress management…. I really do feel like I can be authentic in those ways for those topics. Where it becomes less comfortable for me is when I am talking about organization and administration relative to the discrimination that goes on towards women who are trying to break the glass ceiling."

Nancy: I Would Take That Moment And Cherish It

Nancy is 37 years old and Caucasian. She has been teaching since 2000 in kinesiology with a focus in social factors influencing people's activity behavior. She continues to teach that type of course, but now she teaches "theory-related classes to design health promotion programs. We really target the health disparities in the initial steps of the class to get an idea of what the health of our nation is…." Nancy has taught at three different universities and currently completes research about "adult lesbian women."

Campus context. Nancy began teaching at a state school that was predominantly White (University A). It had less diversity due to the small size of the town where it is located. University A has an LGBT group for students that "had its ebb and flow" in which Nancy had "some interaction but very little." She was working with Safe Zone programming and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). She then taught at University B, which is a much larger and more diverse university. Nancy was not really "immersed in" the LGBT culture. Currently Nancy works at University C, which is about 20 minutes from a metropolitan city, yet she describes the climate as "not diverse… more Caucasian, just a midsized kind of town." There are LGBT student and faculty groups on campus. The "city does provide a bit more, but I do find this particular

area to be very… hidden in a lot of senses. It is very difficult to get into the LGBT… community here."

Visibility of sexual orientation. At University A Nancy "was not comfortable at all" because she was a student herself and coming into her own. She was occasionally part of LGBT panels as she tends to be "the token individual" on campus. At Nancy's current university, she has "been very careful in not really outing myself to undergrads…. I don't hide it, but I don't necessarily walk into the class and say what the particular population that I research is. My graduate students, I am very vocal with them, and they all know, and my department is very aware of what I do.... so it bleeds down to the undergrads, but I think I have a bit of apprehension because I presented LGBT health statistics in classes before, and I consistently get the hand in the back raised up, and they say, 'why are we looking at these populations? Why are you covering their information?' So I continue to cover and talk about discrimination related to sexual orientation in classes…. but I don't necessarily come out and say, 'I am a lesbian health researcher,' to them. And that is also because I have had hate blogs written about me from religious groups here."

She goes on to say that she does not bring up her sexual orientation or her research population to undergrads in part "due to a little bit of keeping my personal life away from undergrad students…. I always try to present both sides of the issue.… I don't really honestly give my personal opinion on a lot of things because I want them to see both sides of the coin…. so my identity with them, I'm not sure if I have a bit of internalized homophobia in terms of not talking about issues related to my life."

"In terms of grad students, you are so close to them and you are involved with them so much that I want to be real and be up front, and I also want to make sure that I don't bring in students that are homophobic that I will have difficulty with." Nancy will come out "pretty quickly" based upon her level of comfort: "I just gauge the water." Nancy pays attention to the student's language and conversations regarding LGBT populations. For the first time Nancy is spending a bit of energy discussing sexual orientation in a graduate course due to a particular student who is of a religious background. She says that she "always ends up saying what I want to say, but it makes me stop for a moment. So because of him I have had hesitation and I think I put a decent amount… of energy into being cognizant of him."

Nancy says that her colleagues are very accepting. However, "I do have some very conservative colleagues, and I am very open with them… I do have one colleague, though, one time he just didn't know how to say it. I think and he was really hesitant in saying something in relation to my lesbian identity. I think he called it 'that.' He couldn't even say the words. He is still very open and he has become better." Nancy goes on to say that there have been two or three tenured or tenure-track lesbians in her department as well.

Nancy says she "would feel very strongly" about coming out if asked by a student in the class; she feels like she "would definitely say." Nancy then says she is going up for tenure next year and how this may make people walk on their "tip-toes." She still thinks "I would take that moment and cherish it because you don't get those moments much and the impact that you could potentially have on even one student could be amazing." She notes that a bit of confidence plays into the ability to "say it out loud" but

creates a segue to discuss "that we are very conditioned in our heterosexist society to be… hidden and on some levels we are supposed to be ashamed of who we are…. Every ideology and every normative value that our country pushes on us is heterosexist." In light of this thought, Nancy feels that coming out in the classroom "is a personal decision…. One develops more confidence the more comfortable they become in their skin."

Navigation. Nancy gives credit to "the people around" her, especially her major advisor for her master's degree and Ph.D. Nancy talks about being scared to bring a lesbian health article as a critique for an assignment to her advisor, "I was scared" to bring the article but "excited at the same time." Her advisor (who was heterosexual) praised her over and over for choosing this population and continued to say, "Don't be afraid if you want to look at this population." And so this experience "eventually led to research in the area… and made me feel more comfortable as a person, and this just bled into the ability to bring sexual orientation into my class."

Nancy also gives credit to the "the older lesbian women that I have encountered who have experienced so much and so had hidden for so long and were so important to the battle to… strive for equality, and to gain equality, and so as a thank you to them, I constantly think back and say, 'Okay I need to do more as a lesbian woman, and this means I need to bring statistics in to my classes, this means that I need to if I am faced with the opportunity to disclose my sexual orientation in a class, albeit directly, that I would do it.' "

Teaching sexuality. A memorable time for Nancy relates to the time when she was asked by a student, "Why do we have to understand the health status of these types

of people?" Her answer was profound for her as she "somewhat anticipated a moment like this. But you don't really know how you are going to react sometimes when you are faced with it directly. I suppose I created a scenario in my head that someday I would likely encounter this, but still you feel very put on the spot." She replied with an explanation about the underserved population and marginalization. Nancy made sure to make the point to her students that "it is important to understand all aspects of our population regardless of your personal opinions in terms of whether you think [LGBT} is right or wrong. It is your obligation as someone who is going into a health profession or who is a health major to understand and provide equal access and opportunity to every individual." She describes this moment as "profound" as she was a young professional coming into her own. It was a "moment that I felt proud about. I was a moment that I felt I stood up to that marginalization that I had experienced for the majority of my life." The moment made her a "better teacher," and it was when she realized she was doing the right type of research.

The second memorable experience was a time in the classroom when an undergraduate student asked Nancy what particular population she researched. "And I remember I looked at him and I said, 'Adult lesbian women,' and all eyes came to me. It really was one of those moments where people looking down looked up." The class then had a meaningful conversation about the need to include this particular population. This transaction seemed "to create that open dialogue for the rest of the semester it was just so powerful." Nancy then went on to reiterate that the make up classes can be so different from one semester to the next, making it hard to get really connected with the students and feel comfortable.

Authenticity. "Being real… I think about truthfulness… I definitely say I am unique… particularly the undergraduate class, they leave with a sense that I am out for equality and equity. And I do that in a very passionate way, and I put the bubble of health around that…. I would say that I feel like an authentic lesbian health educator." "I think that we [lesbians in the classroom] are authentic. I think that even if people do not disclose who they are, you are giving a perspective and a set of values that are going to be different than the mainstream…. I think our voices are powerful and our thoughts are so powerful, and it doesn't even matter if you are closeted versus being wide open, I think that our perspectives because we are lesbian women are very authentic in that way…. Students should consider themselves lucky, I suppose, to be able to get the perspective, the authentic perspective of lesbian health educators because you don't come across it as much as you do other people."

The Connections: Collective Analysis

While it is impossible to compare the stories, we can look at the connections among them in order to describe the similarities and differences. There is a need to stress that these are my interpretations of the similarities and differences of the participants' stories. The connections are discussed in four themes: the health educators' overall role, assessing the geographical and campus political context, classroom outness/inness determined by contextual factors, and moving towards authenticity in context.

The Health Educator' Overall Role

In the beginning of this study, the focus was to include participants who were lesbian health educators, teaching general health education in higher education settings. Due to the nature of research concerning populations that are at risk for discrimination,

there was low interest for participation in this study. The women who did respond had varied backgrounds in health education and were hired to fulfill distinctive roles at each university. The women held positions of health generalist and professor or assistant professor of health education. It is important to highlight these roles as there were some differences in how the individuals presented themselves on campus in terms of their sexual identity in light of these roles.

The generalist. The health generalist, as described by the participants in this study, is responsible for teaching the undergraduates on campus basic health skills via trainings and presentations that are typically 1 or 2 hours in length. The program topics, for example, consist of safe zone, sexual assault, safer sex, and women and men's health. Erin, Janet, and Amy could be considered health generalists in varying degrees. Erin and Amy both described themselves as health generalists. Janet teaches semi-traditional academic classes 50% of the time while the other 50% is spent doing workshops and talking with student groups at night, which she terms the health promotion part of her job.

While Amy, Erin, and Janet have teaching responsibilities, they also have key roles in working with the LGBTQ group on campus. Janet was hired specifically for this responsibility while Erin and Amy took on the role because of their interest in advocating for the LGBTQ community. They take responsibility to create and present the Safe Zones programs, LGBTQ mentoring programs, and, in Janet's case, working with the LGBTQ interns. The level of involvement and the roles with which they were perceived on campus allow them to be a bit freer with the expression of their sexual orientation. Amy, Erin, and Janet said that they were the queer identified people on campus, very open, and very out.

Health education programs. Kris, Mary, Deirdre, Debbie, Peggy, and Nancy teach in health education programs to both undergraduate and graduate students. Their job titles range from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, and some have experience as administrators and directors. Kris, Mary, Dierdre, and Debbie teach within health education programs typically consisting of community health and school health education. Nancy and Peggy teach with more of a focus on kinesiology. Although we could delineate the specific programs with which the women work, they have commonalities in the types of courses that they teach. These commonalities include diversity in health education with a focus on the sociocultural aspects of health, diverse populations, and human sexuality. Their role is not to be the queer identified person on campus, and therefore there are different levels of visibility. They advocate for LGBTQ students and faculty on campus; for example, they are members of diversity panels and some teach Safe Zones programs. The only person who did not allude to advocacy work on campus was Peggy. Peggy was very forthright in suggesting that she works in a Republican state with students who are indigenous to the area who have not been exposed to the LGBTQ community. Keeping this in mind, there are not supports in place on campus for the LGBTQ population.

The visibility of sexual orientation of the health educator seems to be intertwined with the role of the health educator on campuses. Looking deeper into the varying degrees of visibility, context becomes a factor.

Assessing the Geographical and Campus Political Context

Most of the participants' descriptions of their context on campus are linked to the area in which the university is located and provide insight into how they navigate their

sexual orientations in the classroom and the degree of visibility on campus. The political climate was mentioned many times throughout the interviews when talking about where the university is located. This directly affected the inclusivity of LGBTQ individuals at the university. Universities were placed on a spectrum of political affiliations from mega-liberal, as described by Janet, to super Republican, as described by Peggy and Kris.

Mega-liberal to super-Republican. Janet, Kris, Mary, and Deirdre commented on the diverse populations of their respective campuses. Janet used the phrase "mega-liberal" to describe the context of the university, saying that the city is probably more diverse than many other places in the United States. Janet says that many people choose the university because they know that they can come out when they arrive. Mary connects her ability to navigate openly on campus with the diversity that the campus provides. While Mary does not link the campus to a political affiliation, she does say that the student body is extremely diverse and that the campus has a specific resource center for the LGBTQ population; she was the director of diversity for the campus over the last 4 years as well. Both Janet and Mary say that their campuses are rated high on the Campus Climate Index. The Campus Climate Index rates colleges and universities from one to five stars on how inclusive the environment is for LGBT students. It is also a tool used to provide information about how to make campus climate more inclusive for colleges and universities (Campus Climate Index, 2010).

Deidre and Kris describe their campuses as very liberal as well, but the location of the campuses differs greatly. Deirdre works at an urban, public, non-traditional campus that mirrors the diversity and demographics of the city in which it is located. The university is embedded within the city; therefore, there are more non-university LGBTQ

events and activities. She makes mention of the university having same-sex partner benefits and says that diversity for LGBTQ has been a part of campus for a while. Kris, on the other hand, describes the town where the university is located as different from the campus. She provides a rich description of the campus location and student body saying,

> You know, here in the northwest, the context is very typical of the rest of society here. But we have a definite bubble around campus…. We – thank god – are a Democratic state because people on the west side of the mountains… there are so many of them that are Democrats that carry the whole state. We are on the east side of the mountain very Republican, redneck, farmland…. but the university is a bastion of liberal thought. It is the bubble of campus that makes it tolerable.

Kris also alludes to the questions she received from friends about "culture shock" when she moved to the northwest. She says there is no culture shock for her as she "grew up farm; I grew up rural redneck. So I am comfortable in these environments." This highlights the notion of a Republican context with the infusion of liberal thought from the campus and Kris's comfort with the country as a safe space for her to be open about her sexual orientation.

Similar to Kris, Peggy lives and works in the mountain west area and describes the city where the university is located as "super Republican" with some pockets of liberal people. Peggy compares her experiences at two particular universities where she has/is working as having similar demographics of higher proportions of people from conservative religious backgrounds. She delineates the two experiences saying that at the previous university the population was more internationalized as they had gone on religious missions whereas the current university students have not had the opportunity to

travel thus "probably haven't been exposed to gay and lesbian people." Peggy believes that the religious values are a bit less strict at the current university than at her previous institution by saying, "They're not as judgmental about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. You know, in terms of drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and being gay or lesbian." Peggy makes clear that she lives in this area because of her love of the outdoors, and her interests of biking, hiking, and cross country clearly outweigh the amount she has to pay in "mountain tax." Peggy describes the mountain tax as the "things you [lesbians] have to give up in order to live in the mountains and have the recreational opportunities."

Similarly, while Nancy did not denote the political affiliation of the city with which she works, she did talk about the city as providing advocacy for the LGBTQ population. However, she discussed this advocacy as being "hidden in a lot of senses. It is very difficult to get into the LGBT community here." She also suggested that she is not very open to undergraduate classes because she has had hate blogs written about her from religious groups in the area.

For Peggy and Kris, the political and religious undertones of the universities provide uncomfortable experiences as they discuss this in relation to the political power on campus. Kris tells a story of the "long reaching big brothers arm." She responded to the comment "all fags are sick" made by a student in one of her classes at the institution in which she was fired. This situation "got back to me through the president's office that at a fundraiser…. one of the parents said that one of the faculty members in the core is telling kids that it's okay to be gay."

Peggy tells a story of a time when she taught homophobia in her class. Some students took issue with the subject, and wrote on her evaluation that she was "an ultra feminist and trying to push my feminist ways down their throats." She refers to this as the "voice of the right wing gets power and they use it in those kinds of ways." She follows this statement with the fact that it is "crystal clear" that visibility of sexual orientation is environmentally driven.

Classroom context. The life experience factor surfaced during the interviews, and feeds into the context of the classroom. The life experience factor was related to the number of years of experience in the classroom and the comfort with which educators can navigate situations. Dierdre talks about the differences in navigation of sexual orientation for those that are younger or one year out of their doctorate. She suggests that depending on the political context of the campus, those that are younger may be more open due to the openness of the new generation of teachers. Nancy, on the other hand, talks about the importance of gaining confidence as a teacher in order to navigate the fact that "we are conditioned in our heterosexist society to be I guess hidden and on some levels we are supposed to be ashamed of who we are…. as one develops more confidence the more comfortable they become in their skin."

Peggy reinforces this aspect of confidence by telling a story of the first time she taught homophobia in class. She says, "I was so well prepared…. with questions, strategies…. I had worksheets, I had activities and I was really scared to go in and do it. And I just remember it going really well.... that was really memorable, really powerful and from then on it gave me the strength and courage to say, 'okay I can do this and it

needs to be done because it opens the eyes of future teachers who can have a really powerful impact on our kids.' "

Navigating context also depends on tenure. Mary, Deirdre, Kris, and Nancy are tenured professors each having at least 16 years or more experience in the classroom, and have had much experience navigating the classroom and political context on campus. Deirdre says that tenure "might give people a different sense of freedom." However, Nancy and Debbie are on the tenure track and feel some reservations. Nancy made mention of the fact that she is going up for tenure next year, and talks about her reservations with being too outspoken, "You know you always walk on tiptoes in terms of things that you do, you don't say things in the faculty meetings as much, you know. You know, you kind of keep the firiness down."

Kris reflects on the process of tenure saying that it is the most inauthentic experience and very contradictory to what academic freedom may suggest;

> Conform, conform, conform. How many publications does it take to get tenure? How many hoops do I have to jump through and how high? And as soon as I jump through the hoops to get tenure and get promoted to associate, a whole new set of hoops come up and those whole new set of hoops are, what does it take to become full professor? And then once those hoops go away, then you have the opportunity to breathe a bit but I don't think that there is a real good solid process for finding oneself until ones been here 12 years minimum.

Graduate and undergraduate students. The type of students adds to the layers of context in the classroom experience as well. Mary, Nancy, Peggy, and Deirdre point out that there are differences in teaching graduate students and undergraduate students.

They suggest that there is a closer relationship with the graduate students in that their lives intertwine outside of the classroom. This happens due to research interests and community involvement. Mary and Nancy complete LGBTQ research and disclose this information in their graduate courses, but not in undergraduate courses. Deidre says that she goes to community events relating to health promotion in the city with her partner, and that the graduate students are very aware of her sexual orientation. Nancy recognizes the close relationship that an advisor needs to take with the graduate students coming through the program. She says, "I want to be real and be up front, and I also want to make sure that I don't bring in students that are homophobic that I will have difficulty with."

In terms of undergraduate students, the relationships seem to be relegated to inside the classroom. Nancy and Debbie say that they typically keep their personal lives away from undergrads. Nancy says she is very careful about not outing herself to them. Mary wrestles with the idea that the undergraduate students may need to have more role models of LGBTQ teachers in the classroom setting. She realizes this as she was talking about how dialogue with the undergraduates in a one-on-one session provides valuable insight into the need for them to hear the voice of an LGBTQ faculty member. She asks, "Do I need to do this…. in a more direct way for the students in my undergraduate courses?"

Strength in numbers. Although there were varying degrees of political ideologies and religious backgrounds in each of the women's work experiences, all nine of the participants were out to their administration and colleagues. Most described their administration and colleagues as being open and accepting. Mary equates her comfort

levels of being out on campus to the out people in administrative positions on campus. She says, "There are people, very important people on this campus that are visually out and they're respected and they just sort of embraced me and brought me into the fold."

Peggy and Nancy also make the connection of those that are out but in a departmental sense. Both said it was easier to come out in the department when there were other lesbians in the department. Nancy said that while there are some very conservative faculty members in the department (one faculty member referred to her sexual orientation as "that"), there is no homophobia and they have become more open. She does point out that there "were three out of four tenure track or tenured faculty females. Three of the four were [lesbians]." Peggy also says that at her previous university there "were several other lesbians in the department, so it wasn't like it was something unique about me in that department." Janet says that she does not feel like she is "howling into the wind" in terms of advocating for LGBTQ populations as all of her colleagues talk about homophobia and sexual orientation, and that they are good at creating LGBTQ spaces on campus.

In summary, context becomes very important when trying to understand the environment with which the teachers work and live. The political arena becomes the backdrop with which one feels safe and comfortable in terms of their sexual orientation on campus. The women in this study were very aware of the political climate of the universities where they work as well as the context of their administration and department. The political backdrop was directly linked to the varying levels of visibility on campus for the participants.

Classroom Outness Determined by Contextual Factors

Coming out, as discussed in chapter two, is a fluid and dynamic notion. There is a continuum with which the educators were both in the closet and out of the closet. The participants described coming out during teachable moments when it was content appropriate. The notion of student interest and not being viewed as bringing their own agenda into the classroom was very important to the teachers in this study. They did not want the class to be focused on them. The ways that they accomplished this was to come out organically, to live out by using appropriate pronouns when discussing their partners, and to provide perspective and include statistics for the LGBTQ population.

Coming out as an organic experience. Coming out as organic means that when the participants did disclose their sexual orientation it was in the flow of the teaching moment. While it was not a planned "I am a lesbian" statement, it was done in a careful way that took into consideration the students in the classroom and the content that was being taught.

Janet says that she always comes out in classes as she feels it is "pretty easy within a health class." She tells a story of coming out while preparing her students for an assignment on communities, where she uses herself as an example. Janet actually says, "I am queer" within the context of the explanation. Erin says that coming out happens organically for her. She tells a story of coming out during a demonstration for an alcohol awareness course. She had no plans to come out during this particular presentation, but the situation presented itself and she came out "in a very short sweet way, they laughed, they kind of had that light bulb go over their heads." When she comes out it is within the

moment and it brings a level of awareness to students. Summing up her experience Erin says,

> It is just more about it happening organically because I don't want students to think I have an agenda, I don't want them to feel that I am pushing anything on them, but if it is a teachable moment and the dynamics of the group are right, I have no qualms about sharing that and using it as an example to tell a story about or…. to better describe a point that I am trying to make.

Deirdre and Kris also come out in their classes when it is appropriate. Deirdre has self-identified as lesbian in a sexuality class to provide a perspective for the students. She also uses stories about her life to make points in class when it directly relates to the content. For example, Deirdre talks about the preparations she and her partner need to make to be prepared for a situation, such as navigating a visit to your partner at the critical care unit in a hospital. Kris invites her partner to guest lecture in some of her classes and she introduces her as "my partner.... and I just keep right on going." Kris considers herself an out professor, saying that she "lives out" and doesn't hide anything.

Silent yet inclusive. On the other end of the visibility continuum are those that have not come out in class, but are inclusive and very passionate about teaching LGBTQ culture. Debbie and Peggy do not come out in their classrooms, while Nancy and Mary both say that they have not had the opportunity to come out in class, but would embrace it if it were presented to them. Mary says that if a student were to ask, she would answer them honestly. Nancy says,

> I would take that moment and cherish it because you don't get those moments much and the impact that you could potentially have on even one student could be

> amazing and so I think I would take that opportunity and use it to the fullest and say, 'yeah, I am a lesbian and many of the things we talk about I encounter and this is why I do lesbian research.'

Debbie teaches human sexuality and is not out to her students. Debbie says,

> I don't lie about it, I just don't make a point. And the reason that I don't is because when I talk about queer culture I don't want my human sexuality students to think that I am speaking from a particular agenda. I believe that if they identify with me they are more likely to hear me.

In light of this, Debbie is very inclusive and is focused on the elevation of culture in her classes. Debbie describes her decision to stay in the closet by saying,

> I am very cognizant of the fact that I try to appear neutral, and if you are gay or lesbian in the class, you automatically count on that I understand that culture, I can speak the language, and you will take that where you need to take it. And if you are heterosexual than you make assumptions about me, then you can take that where you need to take it. I am very comfortable with this almost kind of ambiguity that I try to have in the classroom.

Peggy on the other hand does not come out in class due to the political nature and religious demographics of the students and university in which she teaches. Peggy says, "I just don't even go there."

Prepared for the "moment". Regardless of the level of visibility of one's own sexual orientation in the classroom, all participants brought heightened awareness about the LGBTQ community to their students. They did this by discussing LGBTQ statistics when talking about health equity, incorporating the LGBTQ population in projects about

culture, and using media and current events to highlight discrimination towards this population. In so doing, they must be prepared to discuss "why" this population must be a part of the health education landscape.

Nancy, Peggy, and Kris refer to stories in the classroom when students ask "why?" Peggy talks about how overly prepared she was for teaching homophobia in class. Kris and Nancy tell stories about how they answer questions similar to the "why" question. Nancy says that moments of questioning was are;

> Very profound for me because I had somewhat anticipated a moment like this. But you don't really know how you are going to react sometimes when you are faced with it directly. I suppose I created a scenario in my head, that someday I would likely encounter this, but still you feel very put on the spot at that moment.

Moving Towards Authenticity in Context

The personal stories of the participants in this study give a glance at just how complex the concept of authenticity may be for the lesbian health educator. All nine of the women made reference to the fact that they are moving towards or feel authentic in their particular context. They also discussed authenticity as a sense of being, and implied that authenticity may look different when one steps in front of the classroom in the role of the teacher.

A sense of being. When asked for adjectives to describe authenticity, the participants provided words and phrases such as integrity, ethics, trust, respect, honesty, validation, being candid, being genuine, being real, and being straight-forward. Kris also described authenticity and spirituality as being one in the same, using descriptors such as grace, compassion, and embracing. In so doing, Kris is able to honor the person she is on

the inside as the person she is on the outside, which also connects to the research completed in spirituality. Debbie describes authenticity as something that is very personal; "a feeling of peace and contentment that we can have within ourselves…. it's about having a sense of self that allows you to be yourself in the greater world."

Authenticity was also a way of life or a state of being. Erin says that it is a belief system; it is how she identifies. She considers herself "very bold and very out there" suggesting that it is "how you choose to live your life" that makes one more authentic. This state of being is affected by ones personality. Erin describes herself as very bold and out while Debbie describes herself as a very private person. Erin has come out in classroom situations while Debbie has not. This suggests that different personality types may affect how one may present information about themselves in a social context. This is integral to what authenticity may mean in the personal realm. Janet says that "being honest about where you are coming from, what your perspective is, what your limits are in terms of knowledge, and being kind of up front about the things you could know more about." Dierdre believes that respected teachers must have a solid understanding of the course content.

The hat of the professor. Amy wonders if authenticity looks different when she puts on the "hat of the professor," suggesting that authenticity takes on a different form in the classroom. Specifically asking, "what is the role of the teacher? Is it my job to come out to you?" While Amy questions, Janet and Kris stated that teachers are role models and that queer and non-queer students "need to see that people survive and thrive and are queer" (Janet).

Authenticity was talked about in terms of "layers." Mary perceives one of those layers of identity as sexual orientation, but it is only one aspects of her identity. Mary says that students get a sense of who she is by spending time with her in the classroom. Answering questions from the students honestly, even if it is about sexual orientation "carries that layer a little bit deeper," suggesting that we build authentic interchanges in the classroom.

Authenticity in the classroom is built on interchanges in the classroom beginning on the first day of class. Mary and Deirdre both suggested that on the first day of class they would not disclose their lesbian identity. None of the participants did disclose their sexual orientation on the first day. Deirdre suggests that she is "an educator/teacher first and lesbian is a qualifier that comes later." Mary concurred by saying her sexual orientation is "a part of me and it is not the most important part when I am teaching." The layers of authenticity rest on particular aspects of the classroom and the university. In listening to the women in this study, those layers are dependent upon the interactions with the students, society, and the teacher's sense of self. The concept of layers not only related to revealing ones different identities in the classroom (eg. Professor) but it was in reference to the level of relationship or rapport with particular classes. A theme of trust rose across the words of the participants. Janet believes that we should trust and respect students enough to trust them with the information that one might be queer.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are presented in the following areas. First, the health educators' overall role on campus was intertwined with the visibility of sexual orientation in the classroom and on campus. Second, assessing the geographical and campus

political context surfaced in how the educators were able to maneuver on campus and in the classroom in terms of their sexual orientation. Third, coming out in the classroom was determined by contextual factors. In culmination, moving towards authenticity then for lesbian health educators became a contextual phenomenon.

CHAPTER SIX

THEORETICAL VIEWPOINT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom. Nine lesbian health educators teaching in higher education settings participated in this research. Chapter Four presented the unabridged stories from the interviews while Chapter Five provided the individual and collective analysis from the perspective of the researcher. This chapter serves the purpose of fusing the theoretical viewpoint of a lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy and authenticity with the literature as well as providing implications for practice and future research.

Discussion in Light of Theoretical Viewpoint

The theoretical viewpoint for this study is grounded in feminist pedagogy and is considered *a* lesbian standpoint feminist pedagogy in particular. A standpoint is discussed as a process, not necessarily an ascribed perspective or viewpoint (Harding, 2004). Standpoint feminism suggests that women's experiences at the margins provide valid insight into the complex natures of the world (Collins, 1989; Hartsock, 1983). Standpoint theory also suggests that knowledge is socially situated and is cultural and temporal (Harding, 2004). The agents of standpoint are multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory suggesting motion and movement in the margins. Hooks (2004) describes marginality as multifaceted and a site of possibility, "a space of resistance" (p. 156). Feminist pedagogy not only includes the curriculum, instruction, and evaluation of education but also involves how the societal hierarchies and the political dimensions of education affect teaching (Crabtree, Sapp & Licona, 2009).

Central themes of feminist pedagogy include personal experience, voice and/or silence, ethics of caring and safety in classroom environments, authority and power of the instructor and student, shifting identity, and positionality (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Tisdell, 2005). The participants in this study were asked to reflect and tell their stories about their own positionality in the classroom, the campus context, visibility on campus and in the classroom, navigation of sexual orientation, pedagogy, and authenticity. The findings of this study indicate that dealing with the issue of sexual orientation and authenticity in the classroom was determined by the health educator's role at the university and their assessment of the geographical and political climate. Their degree of outness in the classroom itself was related to classroom contextual factors and their belief in the notion of authenticity as contextual. In order to begin to unpack some of the findings in terms of pedagogical themes I first address the dominant heterosexual center; the grand narrative. This next section reviews heteronormativity and heterosexism as the grand narrative of sexual orientation in society and how the educators view this in the health education classroom.

Construction and Deconstruction of Knowledge

Knowledge is "always socially situated" (Harding, 2004, p. 7). The construction of knowledge in society is based in societal norms; hegemony then is the "permeation of a set of values into every sphere of social life" (Hill, 1995, p. 146). The underlying issues of the social are embedded in hegemony where marginalized groups are placed in the undercurrent of white, supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal society (hooks, 1994). It is the deconstructing of these degrading social truths and the reclaiming of an inclusive social outlook that may increase acceptance and equality for the LGBTQ individual. The

classroom is a site of social knowledge construction for both teacher and student, in order to understand construction and reconstruction of knowledge we must bring to light the grand narrative of sexual orientation in society.

Grand narrative. The notion of grand narrative was coined by Lyotard and is considered to be a metanarrative that "subjugates and marginalizes other discourses" (Boje, 2001, p. 35). Sexual orientation's metanarrative as determined by society could be heteronormativity and heterosexism. Heteronormativity is understood to be the hegemonic social rules that embed heterosexuality into the minds of society placing it as the norm. Heterosexism then is the repressive social system of mandatory or compulsory heterosexuality, often understood without being expressed (Hill, 1995). The stories of discrimination throughout the interviews show the constant force of heterosexism. Whether it was the colleague who referred to Nancy's sexual orientation as "that," the student who continues to raise her hand during the discussion of the LGBTQ population to ask "why," or a sense of internalized homophobia as Nancy describes her inability to come out in the undergraduate classroom. It is by identifying the grand narrative that the stories of resistance are able to stand out. This acknowledgement of the range of student questioning and internalized homophobia is connected with unseating heteronormativity (Cummings, 2009). The stories of resistance (hooks, 1994) of the participants both reinforce and resist the grand narrative of sexual orientation within society at large and within health education as a profession.

Students also encounter a "broad range of beliefs about sexual orientation in the world around them" (Winans, 2006, p. 103) with the strongest beliefs due in part to religious and political realms. Therefore, students come to the classroom with

preconceived notions of how the world works (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). The grand narrative of heterosexism gives the students a sense of power over the lesbian teacher in the conservative classrooms. This power comes when students evaluate teachers at the end of each semester. Typically, these evaluations are anonymous, therefore the students can write without taking ownership of their comments. Comments are directly related to the teachers' job evaluation. Therefore if an educator teaches about sexual orientation or comes out in the classroom there is always a risk of retribution from the students in the form of the evaluation. This risk may deny reappointment, lose merit pay, or have promotion and tenure denied (Brookes, 2006; Carillo, 2007; Pryor, 2006). Peggy and Debbie both recalled evaluations suggesting they were being overly feminist in their teaching. Kris responded to a student's comment "all fags are sick" with statistical information regarding sexual orientations removal from the DSM in 1974. This situation made it's way from the student, to parents, to the president's office, and back to Kris by someone saying a teacher is telling kids that it is okay to be gay. Kris refers to this as a far reaching "big brothers arm." This understanding or construction of knowledge of the lesbian health educators involves the type of students sitting in front of them, the understanding of the political context in which they teach, and the understanding that as a sexual minority one may not be protected at the workplace (Rasmussen, 2004). Therefore heterosexism is embedded in the classroom experience for both teachers and students.

The notion of sexual identity as invisible provides much debate over how to make visible sexual orientation in a heteronormative society. Miller and Lucal (2009) discuss how LGTBQ "bodies embody (in)visibility politics" (p. 257). The authors describe their

presence in the classroom as a performance of sorts saying that when identities are not visible the presumption of heterosexuality prevails. Teachers must then decide how, why, and when to come out given the heterosexist assumptions of students. The authors describe themselves as lesbian and bisexual and say, "regardless of our best attempts, as teachers we have little control over how students 'read' our gendered and sexual identities" (p. 261). This is the connection to the educators in the present study as they recognized assumed heterosexuality by noting their physical appearance. They discussed ways in which they handle themselves in the classroom that may confirm heterosexuality. For example, Erin, Janet, and Debbie make mention to the fact that they are young, feminine, and could pass as heterosexual. Mary and Debbie also make statements in the classroom referring to familial relationships, which may allow the students to assume heterosexuality. Mary is so proud that she is a Grandmother that she identifies as such in an ice breaker for one of her classes. She couches this by saying, "I am sure that through no intention of my own that they automatically will think that, because I have grandchildren that I must not be a lesbian." Amy now identifies as bisexual and feels that if she comes out to the class by using the term boyfriend they will automatically assume she is heterosexual when she is bisexual. This is another example of assumed heterosexuality that is inhibiting Amy from coming out as bisexual in her classes. The understanding of heteronormativity and heterosexism is understood by lesbian health educators, and is one of the reasons why some lesbian health educators do not feel they can or should come out in the classroom.

Grand narrative of health education. In looking at the health education profession in terms of heteronormativity and heterosexism, we must now return to the

statement made by Eyre in 1997, "health education is typically grounded in Western, patriarchal, abled, middle-class heterosexist assumptions" (p. 273). While this statement may seem outdated as it was made in 1997, there is no current information to defy it. To highlight this possible lack of information we can turn to the major associations in health education. For example, one of the major health education professional associations is housed in the American Alliance for Physical Education, Health, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD). AAHPERD is the alliance of five national associations, six district associations, and research consortium. The mission of AAHPERD is to "promote and support leadership, research, education, and best practices in the professions that support creative, healthy, and active lifestyles" (www.aahperd.org, 2011). The American Alliance of Health Education (AAHE) and American School Health Association (ASHA) are two of the five national associations and serves "health professionals who promote the health of all people through health education and health promotion strategies" (www.aahperd.org, 2011). The American School Health Association (ASHA) is another health related association and promotes effective school health policies and practices. When registering for AAHPERD, AAHE, and ASHA, registrants are not required to provide demographics such as race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This could suggest that there is no known data for the demographics of this particular health education professional population. The American Association for Health Education advocates for all health educators to understand the "meaning of culture, its complexity within each group, and its effect on health decisions and practices" but the demographics of the health profession may not be known to suggests it's participants diversity.

The health education field is beginning to recognize LGBTQ as a culture but is in the infancy stages. *Cultural Competency in Health Education and Health Promotion* was released in 2008 and has a chapter titled "Culture and Sexual Orientation" (Woodiel & Brindle, 2008). This book was suggested to be the first book of its time (Debbie, Chapter 4) to include sexual orientation as a culture. While Perez and Luquis (2008) categorize sexual orientation as a culture other books place sexual orientation as a "non-ethnic group" in the same chapter as migrant farm workers (Ritter & Hoffman, 2010). The inability to name sexual orientation as a culture provides a sense of questioning as to where sexual orientation might "fit in" to health education and the health education profession. Currently students in health education programs receive information regarding sexual orientation under the sexual education curriculum not in the health education curriculum. Specific classes like human sexuality or a cultural competency course discuss the topic directly. However the issue of the educator and disclosing sexual orientation is not addressed. Health education should continue to move forward with the goal of interweaving sexual orientation within the curriculum and the profession in order to provide a strong sense of inclusivity for this particular population. As this possible confusion and lack of recognition as a culture only continues to feed heterosexism and heteronormativity.

The participants provided differing views on the inclusiveness of the LGBTQ population in the health education profession in part due to the differing roles on campus. For example, Erin suggests that her role as generalist on campus allows her the freedom to be out. Therefore she feels that college health care is very inclusive. She has found that the associations in which she belongs, The Coalition of Allies for LGBT Health,

American College Health Association (ACHA) and the BACCHUS Network have always been very affirming. However, the inclusiveness levels in the health education profession of those that teach in health education programs were discussed in a different light.

Inclusivity in this study was also discussed via the amount of research about the LGBTQ population, their interactions with other professionals in the field, and the social justice initiatives of professional associations. Nancy makes a point of saying there is a lack of research about lesbians and by lesbians saying, "when you pick up the journals and you don't see any lesbian articles that is the key. Because when our stuff isn't getting in mainstream journals that is a sign that maybe it's not being as accepted." Debbie says that she hasn't "found health education to be a very welcoming profession" by telling two stories of when she was interviewing for positions in health education departments. She also says, "I think part of the problem in higher ed continues to be the domination of men in high places, and women feel the need to hide their sexuality. So I think there is a definite subculture of lesbian women who tend to know each other and you know get together at conferences."

Other participants noted that there are positive social justice efforts from the professional health associations. Dierdre talked about the American Public Health Association (APHA) and refers to the LGBT caucus and the open and affirming atmosphere due in part to the conflict resolutions and the anti-bullying policies that the association has in place. She feels that there is a "substantial number of health ed people that go to the conferences and bring their partners are certainly open to advancing the cause." Peggy talks about the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR) as active in fighting for social justice issues. She suggests this is a

"great place to network, meet people, have conversations." Peggy also noted the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) as providing excellent work on homophobia education.

Research suggests that teachers are being prepared to teach to different ethnic and race groups; however, sexual orientation was out of the scope of research completed in cultural competency and health education preparatory programs (Luquis, Perez & Young, 2006). Therefore research has not been completed on whether teachers are being prepared to teach about the LGBTQ population. This lack of knowledge coupled with the notion that "the scholarly evidence indicates that we are not yet offering our services in the most competent or culturally sensitive way" (Woodiel & Brindle, 2008, p. 226) provides a sense of where LGBTQ issues stand in the health profession: on the margin.

Kris sums up the thoughts on the inclusiveness of sexual orientation in the health education curriculum by saying, "I think (some faculty on some campuses include LGBT in the classroom) but I don't think all of them do.... It's… one of those things that people nod their head and say, 'Yes, we understand, and, yes, it's important' but it's really hard for people to get their teeth into exactly what does that mean and what does it look like…. I think that some professional prep programs do… I don't think that up until the last 5 years – the ones that I worked in and helped to create – I don't even think that we even did as good of a job as we could do with that. You know there is the old question… do you pull it out… like current trends and talk about illuminating disparity and focus in on it for a quarter. Or do you interweave into every single course you have in your program." Winans (2006) discusses the need for instructors to consider where, why, and how LGBTQ issues can be added to the curriculum. She suggests the following

questions would allow students and teachers to look at their position in relation to knowledge construction and heteronormativity: "How do I feel and what do I know about this topic? Where does my knowledge come from? What is unknown to me? What is unthinkable to me and why?" (p. 105). These questions are imperative to the positionality of the teacher and the student as discussed later in this chapter.

Counternarratives. Counternarratives are considered to be life stories from members of marginalized groups which emphasize experiential knowledge as legitimate and appropriate (Bergerson, 2003). This knowledge of counternarratives pertaining to sexual orientation is referred to as fugitive knowledge in adult education (Hill, 1996). In this research counternarratives are considered those times in the classroom that the women were able to unseat heteronormativity or heterosexism by using their own story, by using their own voice. For example, Erin uses humor to debunk heteronormativity. Erin talks about providing redirection when students continue to use male/female relationships noting the possibilities of male/male or female/female. She was quick witted when commenting about the fact that she may have a girlfriend too during one of her presentations. Humor in the feminist classroom has been used as one of the ways to deconstruct the dominant cultures (Copp & Kleinman, 2008).

Other examples of counternarratives in this research are Janet's continual ability to find ways to come out in her classrooms coinciding with literature claiming that an "I am" statement unseats heteronormativity (Brueggemann & Moddelmog, 2002; Silin, 1999). Dierdre's seamless integration of her own sexuality into her classes connects with those that suggest the use of voice as connecting to their way of being in the classroom, the research that they complete, the notions of using pronouns reflecting their personal

relationships (Khayatt, 1997). While Debbie does not use herself as story in her class, she is overly conscientious about providing the students with a culturally inclusive environment using references to LGBTQ populations. These examples provide ways in which the educators infuse their voice in the classroom to unseat heteronormativity.

Nancy reflects on a story in her class when a student asked "why do we need to look at this population." She remembers her response as "a moment that I felt I stood up to that marginalization that I had experienced for the majority of my life… it was a moment that made me a better teacher and it was the moment that I know I was doing the right type of research in terms of examining aspects of lesbian health… that was profound for me." These counter narratives are considered to be "counter-hegemonic discourse" and instead of viewing these stories as "sites of deprivation" they should be viewed as "spaces of resistance" so that the "possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (hooks, 2004, p.156-157). Counternarratives are forms of activism which have the opportunity to offer students "new ways of seeing and being in the world" (Hill, 2004, p. 91).

Positionality

Positionality is defined as "the knowers specific position in any context, a position always defined by gender, race, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (Maher & Tetrault, 2001, p. 22). Classrooms are considered to be diverse settings combining students and teachers of different cultures, backgrounds, and identities affecting the content of learning, the process of learning, and the cognition of learning (Brookfield, 2005). When teachers enter the classroom, they bring personal histories that "overtly and subtly influence their professional practices" (Turner, 2010, p. 297).

Maher and Tetrault (2001) found that position greatly "influences the construction of knowledge, and that positional factors reflect relationships of power both within and outside the classroom itself" (p. 23). As previously discussed, the relationships of power were found in the study at hand through the stories of students refusing to stay in the class when discussing sexual orientation (Peggy). The participants also made comments about not wanting the students to feel that they are bringing in their own "agenda."

Most of the literature in feminist theory and pedagogy discusses teaching and learning with concerns for students believing that a teacher is bringing in their own agenda (Khayatt, 1997; Pryor, 2006). Although theorists in adult education believe that there is no neutrality within education (Baptiste, 2000; Brooks, 2006) and suggest that classrooms are diverses settings that combine students and teachers of different cultures, backgrounds and identities that affect the content of learning, the process of learning, and the cognition of learning (Brookfield, 2005). The idea of positionality as viewed by the participants in this study specific to health education was in terms of their role as faculty without much emphasis placed on the intersection of their many identities in the classroom. They placed importance on how their sexual orientation may influence student learning especially when viewed as bringing in their own agenda. This connects to the notion of the "safe classroom" as depicted in early feminist literature.

Early feminist studies indicate the notion of a safe classroom for women to learn. The safe classroom has been described as a classroom in which the authority of the teacher was downplayed so that the students could be "empowered to come to voice through the use of democratic dialogue and sharing their own experiences" (Donadey, 2009, p. 210). Another definition of safe space within feminism is a "discursive arena

that enables women to talk about issues that are too dangerous to discuss in other contexts" (Kozol, 1999, p. 10 as cited in Donadey, 2009). The safe classroom as described by hooks (1994) is on the opposite end of the spectrum and suggests that there is no safe classroom. That the student and teacher must be fully engaged in the learning environment bringing attention to the diversity of each person and integrating the many differences, accepted or not, into the classroom. This becomes a site of resistance and a powerful way of learning. This site of resistance often includes feminist practices that "embrace and validate discomfort and vulnerability as important components of learning and teaching" (Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009, p. 95). In addition, to "imagine that learning only occurs in a place of 'calm' is to miss the ways in which contradictions, ambiguities, anger, pain, and struggles can be sources of energy to facilitate critical consciousness necessary for individual and social change" (Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009, p. 98).

While the participants in this study did not identify themselves as feminist educators some were able to come out in the classroom and embrace the differences and power relations while others were not. Many participants referred to not providing information (coming out) that may seem as if they are pushing their own agenda within the classroom. In so doing, the participants in the current study focused on creating a safe space for students more so than for themselves. This notion of creating a safe space for the students is connected to the thought of providing both sides of the coin on all health concepts.

Positioning: Both sides of the coin. All participants said they position themselves as faculty first in the classroom. Dierdre says, "I think of myself as an educator/teacher and lesbian is a qualifier that comes later." Mary says that her sexual

orientation is a part of her but not the most important part when she is teaching. Kris says that her sexual orientation doesn't shadow everything she does; it colors everything. These statements suggest that the women understand that their sexual orientation is a part of the classroom experience but as we continued our conversation some grappled with the idea of what it means to come out and if they should come out in the health education classroom in light of the fact that health education revolves around debatable issues such as abortion, depression, and alcoholism. The participants noted that the times they would come out would be directly related to the course content and directly related to student learning which is reflected in the literature (eg. Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006; Kyahatt, 1997).

Health education courses can be a very personal journey for the students especially sexuality education. Health information is socially and culturally constructed (Breslow, 2002). The media has an impact on health decision as well (Brown & Walsh-Childers, 2008). Thus when discussing any topic in the classroom there is the potential for debate depending upon one's own culture or the impact of media. The health educator must present topics that that may be highly contested in some cultures and debated in the media. For example, debates of sexual orientation and same sex marriage are ongoing and not accepted in some religions (Faulkner & Hecht, 2010). The media has its take on same sex marriage and the government continues to provide mixed messages in providing rights for same sex couples (Human Rights Campaign, 2011). Therefore sexual orientation could become a very contentious topic in the health classroom; when teachers bring to light their own sexual orientation in the classroom it forces students to move outside of their heteronormative box and think differently. This

notion reinforces the perspective that the personal becomes political in the classroom (Rabinowitz, 2002).

One finding in this study was the need for health educators to present "both sides of the coin" (Nancy). Instead of revealing their position in health debates they present all information about the topics that they cover in the health education classroom without including their own opinion. Debbie reinforces this by saying "our personal beliefs are meaningless in the delivery of health in the classroom." She gives the example of aborting a pregnancy and says that her beliefs as "to whether or not a pregnancy should be terminated should really not be obvious to the students." Nancy says that she tries to provide the students with both sides of the coin meaning she shares information without taking a stance which goes against what many adult education theorists say (Baptiste, 2000; Brookfield, 2005). This then becomes a discussion of self-disclosure.

Self-disclosure. Recent research regarding teacher self-disclosure parallels the participant's thoughts and concerns on student feelings on self-disclosure (Cayanus & Martin, 2008). The study looked at three dimensions of teacher self-disclosure: amount, relevance, and valence. Amount refers to how much and how often a teacher uses self-disclosure in the classroom. Relevance is if the disclosure is related to course content. Negativity entails disclosing the bad things such as routinely lying to someone. While the study did not focus on types of disclosure, such as sexual identity, the findings did suggest that when teachers self-disclose and relate the disclosure to course content that students were better able to understand them. When teachers made disclosures that were more negative, students reported that the class was less meaningful to them.

The participants in this study grappled with the idea of self-disclosure of any identity in the health education classroom and disclosure of their own sexual orientation was no different even when placed in the context of heteronormativity. Amy, Mary, and Deirdre discuss their thoughts on disclosing identities in the classroom. Amy enjoys education because she feels that she can share experiences and be truthful in the class. She also reflects on her education of self-disclosure saying that the classroom is not primarily about the teacher, the teacher is a facilitator and that "there is care that needs to be taken in disclosing whether it's what kind of behaviors you are disclosing, whether it's drug use, whether it's identity… there is this whole issue of self-disclosure and are you going to use it as a benefit in terms of the class and the classroom experience? Like what is your goal around that? Or is it better left unsaid?"

Deirdre views self disclosure as intricately related to the "individual teachers philosophy of teaching and approaches to teaching as some faculty are more interested in establishing a rapport and others are interested in delivering content. People may or may not feel comfortable sharing personal items. I think that teaching health provides far more opportunities if somebody wants to come out and to do that appropriately. In those teachable type moments, just like if someone is teaching adaptive physical education and they have a down syndrome child." This is also the case in a recent study by Jackson (2006). One of the participants in the study suggested that "teaching health kept her closeted for a while because 'I didn't want people to know I was gay because here I am talking about sex and all this stuff.' Health, a subject that directly addresses gayness, presented the opportunity to come out but also prevented it" (p. 42).

The findings in this study provide a sense of how the participants are grappling with the idea of how, when, and if they should disclose their identities (not just sexual orientation) in the health education setting. Mary spirals around this idea of disclosure saying that she has not come out in class, yet "it might be important for students to know that they have a teacher who is lesbian," maybe not doing it on the first day as that may be too much information for the students. She does equate self-disclosure with other topics in the health education classroom as well saying that if you disclose that you went through a major depression or you were an alcoholic, you better be willing to talk about it honestly with the class if asked to do so.

The participants in this study said that great care was taken when disclosing. They took into consideration the dynamics of the class and the disclosure was related to course content as suggested in the literature (Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006). However, I feel that the educators took great consideration into how the students would view their coming out in the classroom. Some participants said that they did not want students to feel that they had their own agenda while others wanted to make sure to reach all students.

In addition to self-disclosure, little to no emphasis is placed on how the positionality of the health educator impacts learning in the health education classroom. Tisdell and Swartz (2008) allude to the notion of positionality in Cultural Competency in Health Education and Health Promotion. Ritter and Hoffman (2010) provide an individual assessment of cultural competence for the health educator in their book Multicultural Health. The focus of these books is not on the positionality of the health educator in terms of learning and teaching but on assessment, planning, implementation,

and evaluation (Teixeira, 2007). There is a need to address the teachers' positionality in the classroom, and how this positions the class in terms of knowledge production.

Authenticity and Lesbian Health Educators

As suggested in the literature, discussing authenticity with those that have not read about it in the literature may not be an easy or straight-forward process (Kreber et. al., 2007). Therefore, interviews were structured in a way that the participants initially were asked to discuss their careers as teachers, the contexts in which they teach, stories of visibility, the navigational process of sexual orientation in the classroom and then asked to talk about how authenticity plays a role in each of those aspects of life. Authenticity was intentionally placed as the last topic of conversation for the interviews in order to unearth stories that may unveil movements towards authenticity.

Adjectives used to describe authenticity by the participants include integrity, ethics, trust, respect, honesty, validation, being candid, being genuine, being real, and being straightforward. These words resonate with the terms used to describe authenticity of teaching in the research (Brookfield, 2006; English, 2006; Kreber, et al., 2007). Kris also used the words grace, compassion, and embrace to connect authenticity with spirituality. In so doing Kris is able to honor the person she is on the inside as the person she is on the outside, which also connects to the research, completed in spirituality (Tisdell, 2003). Debbie describes authenticity as something that is very personal; "a feeling of peace and contentment that we can have within ourselves… it's about having a sense of self that allows you to be yourself in the greater world." These values are termed as the personal virtues of authenticity (Guignon, 2004).

Authenticity is considered by postmodernists to be socially constructed, culturally, and linguistically conditioned (Guignon, 2004). The journey towards authenticity then is shaped by society and "involves the ability to be a reflective individual who discerns what is genuinely worth pursuing within the social context in which he or she is situated" (Guignon, 2004, p. 155). The working definition of journeying towards authenticity for this study is "knowing and understanding the collective and carefully, critically determining how we are different from and the same as the collective" (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 4). Central to the purpose of this study was to understand how lesbian health educators navigate towards authenticity in light of the heteronormative higher education setting in which they teach. This environment is a product of the university community, the state, and the broader society. As found in Chapter Five, context plays a large role in the visibility of lesbian health educators in the classroom and on campus. This is the "rub" of how the lesbian health educator negotiates the space, which is cloaked in heteronormativity, and acceptance is very determinate on political climate.

The discussion now moves to how the women create space in the classroom to move themselves and the classroom experience towards authenticity. This was accomplished by a high level of awareness of context, the continuous balancing of their own sexual orientation with the dynamics and needs of the class, the careful and reflective way in which they infuse their own sexual orientation into the classroom at appropriate times in the flow of conversation, and by making the notion of sexual orientation matter in their classrooms.

A balancing act: Self-others-society. An underlying assumption about authentic teaching is that the teacher "cares about teaching, believes in its value, wants to work well with students, and has a professional respect for students in general" (Cranton, 2001). Authentic teaching has many layers and has many faces as it deals with the interactions of student, teacher, and context especially in light of heteronormativity. The negotiation of self with student and context becomes a balancing act for the teacher. If teachers are to contribute to the "development and growth of the group by sharing our knowledge, resources, expertise, and our person… we challenge, support, guide, and come into conflict with the collective spirit and collective truth of the group" (Cranton, 2001, p. 84). Leveraging sense of self within the classroom in light of heteronormativity and the priorities of teaching becomes an art. Amy talks about this balance in detail, asking more question than providing answers. She says, "What are the students going to think of me? Are they going to look at me differently? Are they going to turn on me? Is this going to draw me closer to them? Why is it important for them to know how I identify? What is that going to do? Are you going to treat me differently? And if you are, are you going to treat me in a better way, in a more compassionate way, or are you going to treat me with more prejudice and discrimination? You know, the whole balancing act."

A finding of this study, which is not new to the feminist literature but will contribute to the authenticity literature, is the role of context in authenticity. Context is rarely addressed in the authenticity literature (Cranton, 2001). One of the studies that implicitly informed my study interviewed twenty-three faculty members (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). The researchers found five dimensions of authenticity as suggested by

their findings: self-awareness, awareness of others, relationship with students, awareness of educational context, and critical self-reflection. Sexual orientation of the participants was not identified in this particular study. In the current study, context was pivotal as a finding and described in a broad sense of political climate and state. In addition, positionality is of importance to the scope of authenticity research injecting a different outlook into the issues surrounding context and authenticity.

Authenticity in context for this study is described best by flanking Janet's description of authentic teaching in context with Peggy's description of authentic teaching. Janet is employed at "a very ethnically diverse and mega crazy liberal" university and references authentic teaching and coming out by saying, "I think it's pretty easy (to come out) within a health class. It involves trust and we should respect the students enough to trust them with that information." On the other end of the spectrum is Peggy who "pays the mountain tax" to live in the mountain west area and considers it a super Republican. She believes that authenticity is "being able to be yourself, being able to reflect on who you are and what your beliefs are." She says that in the classroom "the type of material that I teach, it doesn't necessarily require me to be authentic about my sexuality…. I don't feel like it ever is really relevant to the material that I am teaching…. I really try to live what I teach in terms of being fit, trying different strategies for strength and conditioning." What becomes uncomfortable for Peggy is when she teaches the organization and administration course, which deals with topics such as discrimination. This notion of context parallels the tensions of what Kreber (2010) was alluding to in her first person account of authenticity. Kreber begins to flesh out this notion of how context and society are at odds with authenticity and one's sexual orientation describing

the experience as a struggle. The author describes becoming authentic by drawing on the notions of complacency, compliance, and contestation. "Becoming authentic was described as an ongoing struggle than involves complacency (not challenging oneself) and compliance (not challenging others, including norms and expectations) and engaging in contestation and public deliberation (challenging oneself and other, including norms and expectations). In other words, authenticity is fought over by pushing oneself to contest dominant agendas" (p. 194). As shown throughout this study, the participants fell along the spectrum of complacency, compliance and contestation in terms of their own journeys towards authenticity. Kreber also suggests that authenticity is an ideal that must be upheld in society. One way that the participants in this study continue to journey towards authenticity is to engage in the ideal of authenticity for society by coming out. They did this in the classroom via that flow of conversation.

Flow: Authentic conversation. As discussed in Chapter Five, coming out can be organic. Coming out organically is coming out within the flow of the teaching moment: a moment that was connected to the content and the dynamics of the class (Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006). It was not a planned "I am a lesbian" statement it was done in a careful way that took into consideration the students in the classroom and the content that was being taught. This flow relates to authentic conversation (Gadamer as cited in Guignon, 2004). Authentic conversation takes place when conversation revolves around the "*subject matter"* under discussion not the opinions of each person involved, this is referred to as the "between" (p. 163).

> In vital, intense discussions, egos fall away and are replaced by something much more important: the matter that matters… in terms of an unfolding event through

> which people and the matters at hand come to have the concrete identity they have. In dialogical events of this sort, what is at stake is not standing up for one's own position or beating out one's opponent, but merging distinct horizons of understanding in order to reach an agreement about the truth of something that matters (Guignon, 2004, p. 164).

Nancy tells the story of flow when a student asked her about her research and inquired about the particular population in which she researches. "And, I remember I looked at him and I said, 'adult lesbian women' and all eyes came to me. It really was one of those moments where people looking down looked up." Nancy went on to explain that this population is underserved and her response invoked a "dialogue that was very open and felt very accepting… It was not threatening at all… It was enlightening that there was this one section, this one semester of students that I felt incredibly comfortable with to talk about that… it just opened dialogue for the rest of the semester, it was just so powerful." This is an example of flow or authentic conversation. "It is a way of getting into the swim of what is going on around us without asking where we stand in it all" (Guignon, 2004, p. 164).

While educators yearn for the open, authentic conversation as described by Nancy, the classroom does not always provide such spaces. The collision of personal and political, self and social happens. In the feminist classroom, bell hooks would suggest that sites of resistance are not safe spaces for conversation yet provides great emotion and reflection, for exposing certain truths and bias (diversity) in the classroom and often creates chaos and confusion (hooks, 1994). Reflecting on and learning how to create productive conversation in the classroom is imperative when introducing difference (such

as sexual orientation) into the classroom. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) suggest that the mediation and facilitation of discussions in class should (1) help participants reach a more critically informed understanding about the topic, (2) enhance participants' self awareness, and (3) foster an appreciation among participants diversity of opinion that emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly.

Engaged pedagogy seeks to empower both student and teacher. "Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share" (hooks, 1994, p. 20). Engaged pedagogy then asks the lesbian health educator to be vulnerable by bringing his or her own stories into the classroom as a way of journeying towards authenticity. Teaching vulnerably is then to be constantly aware of the power dynamics in the classroom and is considered an ethically and politically complex undertaking (Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009). This linkage of confessional narratives to academic discussions illumates how personal experience enhances understaning of academic material (hooks, 1994). Apps (1996) describes this risk as beginning to touch the core of who you are; for "to be authentic, the educator is bold, dares to take risks, and recognizes that he or she will not always win over the people" (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 8).

"Silence and articulation, tensions and contradictions, claims and denials are all part of the intellectual slippages which we negotiate in the classroom" (Taylor, 2009, p. 40). We cannot deny the multiple identities or the personal side of who we are nor can we deny the social perceptions of the context in which we teach (democratic or

republican) but we can try to reach a "between" or a middle point with students and ourselves. This means that lesbian teachers may not or should not put their lesbian identities in the middle of conversation but provide ways in which we can discuss the topic of LGBTQ individuals in our classrooms. The educators did all three: came out, carefully injected their identities, and choose to stay in the closet. In all senses, they were being true to self, they understood the context, and …"It is not only being genuine but understanding what genuine means in a deep way for ourselves, and this involves critically questioning the world outside of ourselves. To differentiate ourselves from the collective psyche, we need to come to terms with which social norms have been uncritically assimilated. What do we really believe? What do we hold dear? What resonates with us, and what does not? It is in this place, I think, where we can see that being (or becoming) authentic has the potential to lead us to rise up against the evils of the world" (Cranton, 2006).

It is only appropriate to conclude with the words of the participants in order to conclude what moving towards authenticity might look like for the lesbian health educator.

> I think that the more authentic you can be the more powerful you can be or you are empowered to be true to yourself… I can identify with how good it feels to be out and proud and own identities however you define them… I still feel like I'm authentic but I would feel more authentic if I was able to put myself out there and disclose. (Amy)

> You know I am real sure of who I think I am right now… it's the constant quest. It's not that we know the answer… it's that I am willing to jump into the fray and ask. (Kris)
>
> We as lesbian health educator are authentic… you are giving a perspective and a set of values that are going to be different than the main stream and I think that make all of us authentic (Nancy).

In conclusion, the journey of authenticity for the lesbian health educator is riddled with tensions due to the surrounding heteronormative society. The understanding of the heteronormative grand narrative, how knowledge is constructed and deconstructed, the understanding of positionality of both teacher and student in the classroom, and authenticity in context encompasses this journey as a continual balancing act of self and society.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings from this study offer several implications for dealing with sexual orientation in health education and adult education both for theory and practice. Although this study was limited in scope to lesbian health educators, the experiences provide a continuation of theorizing for feminist pedagogy in particular the positionality of invisible identities as well as implications for teaching and learning in adult education, inclusiveness in health education, and authenticity. This section concludes with suggestions for further research and final reflections.

Implications for Feminist Pedagogy and Feminist Theory

This study offers implications for how we theorize within adult education specific to feminist pedagogy as there has been a lack of discussion in the theorizing of feminist pedagogy in recent years. As suggested, feminist pedagogy encompasses recurrent themes including personal experience, voice and/or silence, ethics of caring and safety in classroom environments, authority and power of the instructor and student, shifting identity, and positionality (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Maher & Tetrault, 1994; Tisdell, 1998). Therefore, feminist pedagogy constitutes a reexamination and reimagining of the classroom experience focusing particularly on the relationship between teachers, students, education, and society (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). Central to feminist teachers theorizing and practice include questions that provide students and teachers ability to explore connections between themselves and social structures (Tisdell, 1998).

The findings in this study place emphasis on the connections of lesbian health educators, their own sexual orientation, and how this interacts and connects with the journey of authenticity in the classroom. In so doing, emphasis was found in theorizing about positionality, voice, and knowledge construction in light of a heteronormative environment. As suggested previously, there have been more articles written in the first person account or co-authored by self-identified lesbians or openly queer authors placing emphasis on the LGBTQ teachers' positionality (Brueggemann & Moddelmog, 2002; Bryson, 2002; Johnston, 1995; Kyahatt, 1999; Miller & Lucal; 2009; Silin, 1999; Storrs & Mihelich, 1998). Studies related to positionality in terms of sexual orientation are few (Jackson, 2006; Kyahatt, 1992; Martin & Van Gunten, 2002). Therefore, the current

study brings forth a continued effort to focus on sexual orientation within the literature in feminist pedagogy.

In addition, feminist pedagogy is grounded in feminist theory; therefore it is important to note the discussions of post feminism. Post feminists believe that difference and contradiction are the way things are (Tong, 2009). This difference and contradiction provides "ceaseless contestation of boundaries and exploration of unforeseen modes of being" (McNay, 2010, p. 512), in this case the lack of categorization of identity of lesbian, making it difficult to create political change. Zimmerman (2007) discusses the dismissal of the category "lesbian" by saying, "in our mere three decades of self-conscious existence, so thoroughly established the lesbian subject that we can now blithely discard her" (p. 49). She continues on to connect this to the academy by asking, "what are we doing now to strengthen our presence as lesbians (and women) within institutions, to further the work of investigating our histories and shaping our future?" (p. 49).

The need for a lesbian and female presence is made clear in the work of Maher and Tetrault (2001) as they re-interviewed women for their study. They found that their participants are "very concerned about, the place of gender and feminism in the 'shifting sands' of a new era" (p. 267). Participants in my study make light of the continued need for feminist discussions in the classroom as well. Peggy tells a story of a male student in her class that was belligerent and rude when discussing females coaching males by saying he wouldn't appreciate or value a woman's skills. Debbie also makes a comment that the problem in higher education continues to be the domination of men in high places; therefore women feel the need to hide their sexuality.

In terms of lesbian feminism, Dierdre talks about the transition of lesbian and feminist groups from the 60's, 70's, and 80's until now. She says, "I think there is a different evolution at least in my sphere of influence, not necessarily nationwide, where those groups that were so relevant and so imperative to the women who are now 60, 70, and 80 years old might not survive if they are counting on the 40 and 50 year old to join them and pick up their cause or it might be a very different cause or they might have to evolve to different causes or different missions." While Dierdre is acknowledging that there is a transition she still says that there is a need for feminism. Nancy also makes mention to the older lesbian women "who have experienced so much and who had hidden for so long and were so important to the battle to… strive for equality and to gain equality and so as a thank you to them. I constantly think back and say, 'Okay, I need to do more as a lesbian woman and this means I need to bring statistics to my classes, this means that I need to if I am face with the opportunity to disclose my sexual orientation in a class, albeit directly, that I would do it." It is with these statements that feminism and lesbian feminism in particular continues to be of essence to the lesbian community in terms of creating space for identity lesbian providing reason to continue the discussions around feminism and lesbian feminism.

Implications for Health Education

Sexuality education continues to be one of the most controversial topics in health education (Price, Dake, Kirchofer, & Tellhohann, 2004). Most health education preparation programs in higher education fail to address the diverse needs of the growing US population (Luquis, Perez, & Young, 2006). While some textbooks briefly address the need to understand one's own positionality as a teacher (Perez & Luquis, 2008; Ritter

& Hoffman, 2010) most health education preparatory programs do not require or offer courses entirely dedicated to cultural competence (Luquis, Perez, & Young, 2006).

The findings of this study suggest that there is a need to address the LGBTQ population on a more consistent basis in the classroom setting for both teacher and student. The current definition of cultural competency is "the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures" (p. 234). In order for sexual orientation to have a consistent presence in the curriculum and in the health education profession it must be embedded in the curriculum, pre-service and current health educators should be trained for LGBTQ inclusiveness, and LGBTQ should be considered as a culture within the discipline.

Health education seems to take a cognitive approach to teaching and learning rather than an affective approach to teaching and learning as the focus in health education is on assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Teixeira, 2007). The cognitive domain focusing on synthesis, recollection, comprehension, evaluation, and analysis while the affective domain focuses on values, motivation, attitude, stereotypes, and feelings (NAGT Workshops, 2011). A cognitive approach to learning would not facilitate self-disclosure in the classroom whereas an affective approach may lead to both personal and academic questions of dealing with positionality of both teacher and learner (Foster & Perry, 2010, p. 28). As Nancy states, "it is our obligation as someone who is going into the health profession or who is a health major to understand and provide equal access and opportunity to every individual." Erin feels that "health, wellness, acceptance and caring; those are all of the kind of values that we preach by. And by preaching by those we also expect each other to live by those." In living by those standards and

values, this study suggests that we as a health education profession need to take a closer look at the inclusivity of sexual orientation whether that be as a culture or as a non-ethnic group.

Implications for Authenticity and Teaching

This study also gleaned insight into the theorizing and practice of authenticity in teaching as the findings indicate that dealing with the issue of sexual orientation and authenticity in the classroom was determined by the health educator's role at the university and their assessment of the geographical and political climate. The notion of context has been discussed in previous research that did not outwardly deal with sexual orientation (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). However context becomes a pivotal issue within lesbian teachers ability to journey towards authenticity in the classroom setting.

The findings of this study continue to place emphasis on the teaching and learning of adults in all educational settings in terms of learning "how teachers in higher education learn about their practice" (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 6). The interviews became a source of reflection on teaching and positionality within the classroom experience for the participants, some of the participants alluded to the interviews as being a journey of learning and understanding their own situations in the classroom as it relates to their own sexual orientation (Amy). We as academics are indebted to learning how to provide students the best balance of who we are with the passion of teaching. For sexual minorities this means that professors must take risks when employing an open classroom setting where teachers and students have the ability to grow and are empowered by the process (Hooks, 2004, pg. 21). hooks concludes: "Since our place in the world is constantly changing, we must be constantly learning to be fully present in the now. If we

are not fully engaged in the present we get stuck in the past and our capacity to learn is diminished" (p. 43).

Suggestions for Future Research

The previous section implies some of the connections and insights of how lesbian health educators may move towards authenticity in their practice. It seems that conducting research often creates more questions than it might answer. Therefore there are some suggestions for future research.

The call for participants in this research was to find lesbian health educators teaching in general health education at the higher education level. There was a lack of response from those teaching in general health education. Therefore both health educators working in college health services (generalists) and those that were working in health education programs were deemed appropriate for this study. As the findings suggest, the role of the health educator played an important part in how open the educator feels that they can be on campus. Further research may specifically include health educators that teach only in health education programs or only health education generalists. The narrowing of the term health educator and the specific role may provide for a higher participation interest in the study.

In addition to getting more specific with the health educator's role on campus, research specific to lesbian health educators that have children may be of interest to study as well. In my case, I have two children and am married to a woman. This puts me in some peculiar situations in the classroom when referring to my children and my partner as indicated in Chapter One. References to familial relationships were briefly discussed in this study as Mary talked about being a Grandma and Debbie talked about raising her

nephew. In the same vein, many times throughout this research project I was asked if there was research on heterosexual health educators and the notions of relating to their own sexual orientation in the classroom in terms of their marital status and familial relationships. Therefore, research with heterosexual health education faculty may be warranted to see how natural it is for them to use language relating to their husband, wife, daughters, and sons into the classroom.

Specific to health education, further studies need to be conducted on demographics of the health education profession. As suggested in this study, there may be no known data providing demographics of this particular health education professional population. The American Association for Health Education advocates for all health educators to understand the "meaning of culture, its complexity within each group, and its effect on health decisions and practices" but the demographics of the health profession may not be known.

Conclusion

To sum up my research I need to begin where I started and that is with the purpose of my study: to explore how lesbian health educators navigate authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom. As suggested in Chapter Two, authenticity is a complex and messy journey. As found in Chapter Five and discussed in Chapter Six, the lesbian health educators provided a true sense of what it meant to them to journey on this road towards authenticity. Their journey coincides with previous research by confirming that authenticity is a process that develops over time involving experience, self-exploration, and reflection (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). It goes beyond the

techniques and book knowledge learned in the teacher education process and is viewed as the expression of one's genuine self in the community and society (Cranton, 2001).

Final Reflections

"*When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.*" Audre Lorde

I had no idea the true power of education until I entered the Adult Education Program at Penn State Harrisburg. I began my journey towards my degree in August of 2004 aware of my passion for teaching but unaware of the internal struggles I was having as a teacher in terms of my sexual orientation. At the time I had not thought about coming out as a teacher in the front of my classes nor had sexual orientation been discussed in any class that I had taken for my undergraduate or graduate degrees. Therefore my sexual orientation did not seem like it had an affect on my job as a teacher (or so I thought). It was this program that introduced sexual orientation as a part of the classroom not something that I had to leave at the door. It forced me to take a look at who I was as an individual in terms of my own culture(s) in order to become aware of how I was presenting myself in the classroom as a teacher. As I try to sum up my thoughts on my research I turn to the literature that drove my study, my place in it all, and the power of story.

Two thoughts that stand out the most as I reflect on what I learned from my study come from literature written by two of my professors Libby Tisdell and Patricia Cranton and deal intricately with my study. Tisdell (1998) writes in a piece about poststructural feminist pedagogy that she "creates activities that will help participants explore the connection between who they are as individuals and the structural systems of privilege and oppression (such as gender, race, and class) that partially inform how they think, how

they teach and learn or construct knowledge on an individual level, and what is constructed as the 'canon' or 'official knowledge base' of a particular field" (p. 139). I know that for the first time I am able to begin to critically connect who I am as a lesbian individual with the structural system of privilege (heteronormativity) and oppression (my identity as lesbian). My education has enabled me to learn to continually reflect on how I teach and construct knowledge in my practice. Through this research I was able to begin to look at the field of health education in light of heteronormativity. Patricia wrote the second connecting point in a study on authenticity. Cranton & Carusetta (2004) say, "To be authentic, the educator is bold, dares to take risks, and recognizes that he or she will not always win over the people" (p. 8). Connecting the realization of who I am in light of the structures of society (namely heteronormativity) and the call to be bold as I journey towards authenticity was the driving force behind my research.

As I listened to the stories of the ten women, I could not help but put myself in their shoes and wonder what I would answer to the exact questions that I was asking. While my story is different the findings would be the same. My outness is determined by my role as a health educator, the geographical and political context with which I teach, and authenticity as contextual. My position as "out" ebbs and flows just as the participants position as "out" ebbs and flows. And so answering the question of how we handle coming out in the classroom "the answer is a well-informed scholarly response based on decades of research: it depends" (Cress, 2009, p.15). With the answer "it depends" we are constantly balancing life as personal and life as social. This is the tension that I continue to circle back to on my journey towards authenticity.

I began this research project as a naïve student embarking on the necessity to complete research in order to obtain my doctoral degree. I could never have imagined the impact every step and decision that I had to make would have had on this process. During the interviews I was struck by the power of the words and the stories from the participants. My naivety was most evident as I began to transcribe and analyze the interviews. The process of transcribing was an integral step for me as a researcher, because it provided me with a sense of the power of each story, and gave me the sense of just how messy story and authenticity could be. It also became clear to me that authenticity is a personal journey that changes from one second to the next. As I began to listen I was perplexed as to how I would be able to capture the experiences, which were so dynamic, and ever changing in order to represent them "authentically" in my research. It was my job to structure what seemed to me was not supposed to be structured. After much deliberation and as stated in Chapter Three, I took two roads: a thematic road and a grand narrative/microstoria road. My hope was that I was true to the stories yet true to the process of the dissertation, for this is the beginning of my journey to listen and value the stories of others.

So what is it that I was in search of during this dissertation process? To learn what authenticity may look like in the face of contradiction? To listen and learn what sexual orientation might appear to be in my profession? I'm not sure that I have found the answers. What I do know is that this research reinforced that life isn't about finding the answer, life is about the journey, the telling, the retelling, the listening, the making of story, the making of life and self… it is endless. The journey of life is not easy it is full of contradictions yet it is the quest to balance the personal with the social, to want to do

what is best for me and for society. This is the tension that has taken me on my road and will continue to fuel my passion of striving one day at a time, one minute at a time towards my understanding of authenticity.

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APPENDIX A

Email Recruitment Letter

Hello! My name is Becky Weiler-Timmins and I am a doctoral candidate at Penn State University – Harrisburg. My advisor is Dr. Patricia Cranton. I am currently conducting a research study to explore how lesbian health educators navigate the journey of authenticity in the classroom.

There is a changing landscape in education towards the acceptance of LGBT individuals. The creation of LGBT centers, groups, and safe spaces continue to be positives steps for inclusion (Windmeyer, 2006). In light of these positive steps forward, there continues to be discrimination and bias as well (Rankin, 2003). As a lesbian health educator myself, I am presented with situations in the classroom regarding my own sexual orientation that can be empowering and/or challenging especially considering the wide range of topics that we teach in health. I believe the balance of being lesbian and becoming authentic is an art. My hope is that this research would provide great insight for the field of health education and possibly break down more barriers for the lesbian community in education overall.

I am seeking volunteers who are lesbian health educators teaching general health or wellness courses in the higher education setting. The study will involve one ninety (90) minute interview occurring during the fall semester (2010) and one sixty (60) minute follow up interview after fall semester (2010).

If you express interest in this research, please email me and I will be in touch to answer any questions you may have about the process. Responding does not obligate you to participate in the study. You may modify or withdraw your information at any time.

In addition, I wanted to assure you that confidentiality is of utmost importance in this study. The individual interviews will be completed by me at a place of your choice.

Please contact me at rat146@psu.edu for more information.

This study is being conducted for research purposes and is approved (IRB #34337) by the Office for Research Protections at the Pennsylvania State University.

Thank you,
Becky Weiler-Timmins
Instructor of Kinesiology
Penn State Harrisburg
777 W. Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, PA 17057

APPENDIX B

Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Authenticity and Lesbian Health Educators

Principal Investigator: *Rebecca A. Weiler-Timmins*
Penn State Harrisburg *Education Activities Building 209*
777 W. Harrisburg Pike *Email: rat146@psu.edu*
Middletown, PA 17057 *Phone: (717)571-6863*

Advisor: *Dr. Patricia Cranton*
Penn State Harrisburg *Olmsted Rm E331*
777 W. Harrisburg Pike *Email: pac23@psu.edu*
Middletown, PA 17057 *Phone: (717)948-6405*

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to explore how lesbian health educators navigate their own authenticity in a heteronormative higher education classroom. The goal is to discuss ways in which lesbian health educators deal with their own sexual orientation in the classroom.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to participate in two interviews, both digitally recorded. The first interview will be 90 minutes in length conducted at the start of the fall semester and the second interview will be 60 minutes in length and will be conducted at the end of the fall semester. During the interviews you will be asked questions about how your own sexual orientation plays a role in your classroom experience.

3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. However, you may experience some discomfort in being asked specific questions about your sexual orientation as it relates to your classroom experience.

4. **Benefits:** The benefits to you include an increased awareness of how your sexual orientation may influence your teaching. The benefits to society and the health education profession include the increased awareness and a better understanding of the experiences of lesbian health educators.

5. **Duration/Time:** You will need to be available to participate in one 90 minute interview and one 60 minute follow up interview. The interviews will be scheduled at the beginning of the fall semester and at the end of the fall semester. Both interviews will be transcribed and a copy of your comments will be mailed to you for your review and approval of accuracy.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses. The digitally recorded interviews will be kept on a password protected computer at the home of the primary investigator. The primary investigator will be the only person to have access to the recorded information and the information will be destroyed at the end of the year 2013.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Becky Weiler-Timmins at (717) 571-6863 or Dr. Patricia Cranton at (717)948-6405 with questions or concerns about this research. If, due to participation in this research, you experience psychological conditions beyond your normal daily living, please contact Dr. Ray Christner at (717)632-8400 for assistance. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Question about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I appreciate your willingness to discuss aspects of your life as a teacher specifically in regards to your sexual orientation. I encounter experiences in the classroom based on the fact that I too am a lesbian health educator. I am intrigued by these experiences and this is why I am interested in hearing stories about how other lesbian health educators navigate their sexual orientation in the classroom. I assure you that all of the information you provide in this interview will remain anonymous and that no records of this interview will include your name. I will be digitally recording this interview for the sake of accuracy. Is that okay?

So to give you some direction for the interview, I would like to first discuss a little bit about your background in teaching followed by some experiences in the classroom regarding your sexual orientation and end with your thoughts on becoming an authentic teacher.

Interview Questions

1. Personal demographics: (Race, Age, Number of years as health educator).

2. In order to understand your teaching career better, tell me a bit about your career path. Where you began teaching and how you have come to teach at this university.

3. Please provide the demographics of your school.

4. As we know, the context of the classroom is at times difficult to understand especially in a phone interview for research. How would you describe the context of the classroom in which you teach? Society… students… How does this affect your teaching in so far as being in or out as a lesbian health educator?

5. In light of your experiences at these university(s), how visible is your sexual orientation in the context of your classroom?

6. Levels of identity: Do you intertwine your teaching with your sexual orientation?

7. Think back over your experiences in the classroom. Please describe a notable or memorable time specific to your sexual orientation that happened in your classroom and how it may have influenced your teaching. Tell me that story, and include details such as when the incident took place, where it took place, and who was involved. Why was this particular story so memorable? Why did it matter?

8. Thank you for sharing that story (from question #3). I am now wondering if you can remember a time in the classroom that was more challenging in terms of your

sexual orientation and how it may have influenced you. (the wording of this question will depend on the participant's experience from question #3). Please tell me that story and include details such as when the incident took place, where it took place, who was involved, and why it was so memorable?

9. In light of these experiences, how did you learn how to navigate your sexual orientation in the classroom?

10. You did/did not mention that you teach about human sexuality… If so, how do you go about teaching sexual orientation?

11. Has there been a time in the classroom or a specific interaction with a student (OR media, course content) that has made you feel true to yourself in terms of your dealing with or expressing your sexual orientation?

12. I am also interested in how we become more authentic teachers in the classroom. There are many different ways to describe authenticity as it relates to the classroom experience. What adjectives would you use to describe an authentic teacher in the classroom?

13. What does authenticity mean for you? How do you move towards being a more authentic teacher?

Table 1
Summary of Educator Demographics

Educator Pseudonym	Age	Title	College Location	College Information
Kris	48	Professor of Public Health – Tenured	Pacific North West	10,000+ students Suburban/Public
Debbie	47	Assistant Professor Tenure Track	East	24,000+ students Urban/State
Janet	34	Health Promotion Faculty	West Coast	35,000+ students Urban/State
Erin	34	Health Generalist	East	7,000+ students Suburban/Private
Mary	59	Associate Professor Tenured	Central	24,000+ students Urban/State 30,000+ Urban
Amy	51	Health Educator Adjunct	East	4,000 students Suburban/Private
Deirdre	50's	Associate Professor Tenured	East	16,500+ students Urban/Public
Peggy	47	Professor Tenured	Mountain West	19,000+ students Urban/State
Nancy	34	Assistant Professor Tenure Track	Mid West	30,000+ students Suburban/State

VITA

REBECCA A. WEILER-TIMMINS

EDUCATION

D.Ed., Adult Education Penn State University-Harrisburg, 2011
Dissertation (Chair: Patricia Cranton): Authenticity and Lesbian Health Educators
M.Ed., Physical Education and Administration, The College of New Jersey, 2007
B.S., Physical Education, Manhattan College, 2005

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Kinesiology, Penn State University-Harrisburg, 2006 to the present
Assistant Director of Adult Health Education, Byrnes Health Education Center, 2004-2006
Head Women's Basketball Coach, University of Mary Washington, 2001-2003
Assistant Women's Basketball Coach, Princeton University, 1999-2001

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Weiler – Timmins, R. A. & Weiler – Timmins, E. M. (2010). *Addressing the Needs of the LGBTQ Community from the 'Out' to the 'Invisible'*. Keystone health Promotion Conference, Lebanon Valley College.

Weiler - Timmins, R. A. (2009). *Authenticity and Lesbian Health Educators*. Adult Education Research Conference, Penn State Harrisburg.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Weiler-Timmins, R. A. (2010). Sexual Orientation and the Educator: Should We Come Out in the Classroom? . In Eichler, M. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 51st Adult Education Research Conference*. Sacromento, CA: California State University at Sacramento.

Bettinger, T. V., Timmins, R., & Tisdell, E. J. (2006). Difficult dilemmas: The meaning and dynamics of being out in the classroom. In R. J. Hill (Ed.), *Challenging homophobia and heterosexism: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues in organizational settings* (pp. 63-71). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 112. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.