Becoming a Queer Teacher:

Perceptions of Queer Teacher Candidates in Initial Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract

This study used narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of queer teacher candidates during their Initial Teacher Education Programs (ITEP) in Ontario. The study sought to further investigate: (a) stories teacher candidates tell about being queer in ITEPs; (b) how queer teacher candidates respond to social bias and stereotypes in the learning community; and (c) if and how queer teacher candidates' narratives can inform teacher education reform. Through interviews and lettered correspondence, the participants and I share stories of being queer in ITEPs. The study examined our stories using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) 3 commonplaces of *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place*, as well as, Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013, 2014) 3-R narrative elements of *narrative reveal*, *narrative revelation*, and *narrative reformation*. Four themes emerged: the complexity of the queer teacher candidates' experience; the separation of personal and professional identity; silencing; and shame. These poignant narratives contribute to the literature by providing a context for teacher education programs and researchers to reconsider teacher education reform.

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Prologue: Diversity Narrative

In January of 2011, I was enrolled in an Initial Teacher Education Program at a prominent Ontario university. One Tuesday, like so many other Tuesdays before, I sat in my Teaching Methods classroom and waited for our weekly presentation to begin. The two student presenters put up their first slide and announced the topic of the week: Diversity. As they passed around their handout they explained their icebreaker, a game called I am a _____ but I am not a _____. The purpose of the game was to discuss how stereotypes can sometimes profile us as something we are not. In order to help explain the game, one of the presenters, Cathy, gave her example. She said, "I wrote, I am a soccer player but I am not a lesbian!" My eyes sprung up from my paper. Two of my friends' eyes darted toward me. I sat stunned while Cathy explained. She told us how she received a scholarship for soccer to a college in the United States. She said that people used to assume that she was a lesbian because she played soccer, wore sweatpants, and wore her hair up in a bun. She was clearly outraged and offended by this assumption, as she continued to express her discontent for the people who profiled her this way.

I looked around the classroom and, besides my two friends, nobody else had reacted at all. I was astonished. In attempting to highlight how stereotyping marginalizes people, Cathy used an example that marginalized and discredited queer people. To many of the other teacher candidates, Cathy had just given an example of the activity, but to me, Cathy had just attacked the core of who I am. I was normally an active participant in class but, in that moment, I completely shut down. Gone was my desire to be present; I just wanted to leave. I sat there wondering why the only two people who reacted in that room were the only ones who knew that I am gay. How was it that, in a classroom with

32 prospective teachers engaged in a discussion about diversity, this blatant act of

homophobia could have gone unnoticed? Were these not the very people who would be

responsible for educating youth, some of whom would undeniably be queer as well?

Were these not the people who should have taken notice? (C. Fleet, personal reflection,

April 16, 2012).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I opened my thesis with a diversity narrative because it has become a powerful

living metaphor for me that has shifted my way of being and thinking. This happened

between the time that the story occurred in January 2011 to another incident that

piggybacked this story in the fall of 2012. In the latter incident, I took a position as a

Teacher Assistant for a class entitled Introduction to Foundations of Education. It is an

introductory class, mandatory for all students in their first or second year of concurrent

education. We had been discussing current issues and the importance of not showing any

bias as educators, specifically focusing on homophobia in schools. I read the story

presented in this paper's Prologue to my students, hoping to inspire a fruitful discussion. I

told my students it was a true story sent to me from a colleague, so they did not know that

it was my story. I did not want that to impact how freely they would speak.

After reading the story, I asked them to share their thoughts and opinions. I was

truly shocked by the response. Many students expressed that because the author was a

lesbian, she was overly sensitive to the other teacher candidate's remarks. One student

told me that he did not understand why gay people make a big deal of this because they

have historically not been oppressed. In taking a poll of the class only one student of 20

felt there was a problem with how this teacher candidate spoke. This disturbed me

greatly. I left class with flashbacks of my teacher education program experience. After

retelling the story, I could not help feeling the same anger and frustration I had during the

initial experience. In this moment, I realized the truth of my experience. In living, telling,

and retelling my story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I had confirmed what I already

knew—that there needs to be more research and greater awareness of the queer

experience in Initial Teacher Education Programs. It is through countless stories like these that I knew I had to act, in a formal sense, to debunk this *deficit* (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013) way of thinking.

"Few are immune to deficit ways of looking at our world because of the very nature of our lived past experiences and the stereotypes that exist in our society" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013, p. 2). Deficit ways of thinking are deeply entrenched societal views that a minority group is lacking, in this case, sexual minorities. Initial Teacher Education Programs must encourage teacher candidates to recognize and reject these deficit ways of thinking by teaching to transgress against social boundaries. hooks (1994) explains social boundaries as "the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences" (p. 130). It was my struggle to cope with the effects of social boundaries and deficit thinking during my Initial Teacher Education Program that inspired my interest in studying the perceptions of queer teacher candidates.

The purpose of this research is to use narrative inquiry to examine the epistemologies and experiences of queer teacher candidates in Ontario. This study intends to explore the ways they experienced social bias and stereotypes in the teaching and learning community. It addresses how participants perceived attitudes towards sexual minorities from colleagues, instructors, and the professional institution they attended. It draws attention to participants' decision of whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation within the university community and the emotional and social ramifications of their choice. By better understanding the narrative experiences of queer teacher candidates, we can begin a process of deeper understanding which may suggest possible

needed reforms in Initial Teacher Education Programs, where teacher candidates can reject deficit ways of thinking (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013) and transgress against social boundaries (hooks, 1994) in order to eliminate stories of prejudice, which participants and I, as a co-participant, experienced.

Background of the Problem

The movement toward queer rights is a relatively new phenomenon. Until 1969 sex between two males was illegal in Canada (Government of Canada, 2001). Similarly, in 1977 Quebec became the first province to prohibit the discrimination of lesbian and gay people (Hurley, 2005). It was not until 2005 that Canada became the fourth country to nationally legalize same-sex marriages (Government of Canada, 2005). In the last 40 years, the movement towards queer rights has come a long way. While, on paper, queer Canadians have received equality, it is unfortunately not the reality for many members of the queer community. With the pervasiveness of heteronormativity, it becomes very difficult for people outside of the queer community to understand the many ways queer people experience prejudice on a daily basis.

Queer people critique privilege, entitlement and status that are obtained by obeying mandatory heterosexuality and other heteronormative behaviors. Queer conceptualizations inherently destabilize discourses. Queer life in critical public space not only interjects transgressive subject matter into contemporary social settings, but it also intervenes and disrupts dominant power (Grace, Hill, Johnson, & Lewis, 2004, p. 308)

The disruption of heteronormative dominant discourse becomes particularly problematic in educational institutions. Theorists like Paulo Freire (1970) have drawn attention to

schooling and education as breeding grounds for dominant societal values. However, despite an increased awareness of queer issues in education, the presence of dominant values, such as mandatory heterosexuality and the idea of the nuclear family, remain ever present in education. What happens when the lifestyle of a queer teacher disrupts this dominant discourse? How do queer teacher candidates react to these notions of mandatory heterosexuality in our education system?

Statement of the Problem Situation

In recent years, the queer landscape in education has changed a great deal. In preparing for my literature review I combed through articles from a variety of databases. I read 11 books, more than 70 scholarly articles, and about 25 newspaper articles to plan for this study and to truly understand the queer landscape in education. In searching for resources, it became apparent quite quickly that the language has changed a great deal in recent history. While I chose to use the term *queer* throughout my study to refer to sexual minorities, I recognize that the literature uses a variety of terms, such as queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT), and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ), among others.

Over the last 30 years, there has been a great deal of research presented on queer students, yet there is much less on queer teachers and even less on queer teacher candidates. For example, in conducting a quick search of peer-reviewed academic journals using the Brock University Library SuperSearch, I found that the term *queer students* turned up 2,748 results and the term *LGBT students* turned up 4,172. In searching the term *queer teachers*, 1,363 results were found and *LGBT teachers* showed 1,378. In conducting a search for the term *queer teacher candidates*, 10 results were

found and for 22 results for found for *LGBT teacher candidates*. In searching *queer teacher candidates Ontario* and *LGBT teacher candidates Ontario*, only one academic source was found and it was not relevant. This gap in education research is troubling as teachers and teacher candidates play an enormous role in education. With the use of narrative inquiry for this study, the storied experiences and challenges facing queer teacher candidates are illuminated, deconstructed, and problematized for deeper insight and meaning in our educational systems.

I argue that narrative inquiry (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2010; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig, 2011; Griffin & Beatty, 2010) is a useful tool in understanding the experience of marginalized groups. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write that "life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (p. 17). However, in my thesis, I argue that it is also advantageous to engage in the narratives of queer teacher candidates because it provides an opportunity to analyze and draw conclusions from those silenced experiences through a process of living, telling, reliving, and retelling from the participants point of view.

Using narrative inquiry we can begin to understand education through the eyes of a queer person. This is essential in the movement toward creating inclusive learning environments. The study of queer narratives can help researchers pinpoint how queer teacher candidates experience discrimination, its effects, and what changes need to be made to Initial Teacher Education Programs. Grace (2006) notes that, by writing the queer self, we "create a space to confront homophobia; to transgress heteronormativity as *the* normative perspective on sex, sexuality and gender; and to explore an illimitable

array of queer personalities" (p. 828). By having the knowledge and courage necessary to create change in Initial Teacher Education Programs, stories of discrimination can be reshaped to become stories of understanding and acceptance.

Purpose of the Study

This research uses narrative inquiry to examine the epistemological views and experiences of queer teacher candidates throughout Ontario. Through narrative, the study deeply explores the ways participants respond to social bias and stereotypes. It addresses how participants perceive attitudes towards sexual minorities from colleagues, instructors, and the professional institution they attended. It draws attention to participants' decision of whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation within the university community and the inherent emotional and social consequences of their choice. It investigates the willingness of queer candidates to seek support and use the university resources available to them. It is my hope that this research can be used not only as a tool to promote change in Initial Teacher Education Programs but also as a foundation upon which other researchers can build.

This study explored the storied experiences of four participants from the queer community who graduated within the last 5 years from an Initial Teacher Education Program in Ontario. As a participant and a researcher, I explored my own personal narrative and the narratives of three other recent graduates from other teacher education programs in Ontario. It was important for me to explore this topic through narrative inquiry because it allowed the voices of this minority group to be heard. Participants were able to share their own story independently but I also engaged them in dialogue through semi-structured interviews and conversations. I shared parts of my story with participants

but I also journaled about my experiences and kept thorough field notes. Throughout this process, I shared how my own interactions with participants helped me to grow and develop my own narrative understanding of the experiences of queer teacher candidates. Further details will be provided in the methodology chapter.

Research Questions

This study explores the experience of queer teacher candidates, specifically looking at their experiences with social bias and stereotypes during their Initial Teacher Education Program. During my Initial Teacher Education Program, events, like the one in my opening narrative, left me feeling angry and upset. This anger and frustration has prompted me to reach a deeper understanding by further investigating the narrative experiences of queer teacher candidates.

Specifically, this research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What stories do teacher candidates and I tell about being queer in Initial Teacher Education Programs?

2. How do queer teacher candidates respond to social bias and stereotypes in the learning community?

3. Can queer teacher candidates' narratives inform teacher education reform?

Using narrative inquiry, I explored the questions with the broader topic of perceptions of queer teacher candidates in Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on the narrative experiences of queer teacher candidates in Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario. Narrative inquiry requires the development of a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants (Clandinin

& Connelly, 2000). In order to ensure that the relationship between the participants and myself became one that fostered care and trust, this study consisted of only four participants. Although various qualitative studies include a larger number of participants, the use of narrative inquiry relies on the storied data and amount of storied experiences rather than the number of persons involved in the research project (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The participants all successfully completed Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario but this study did not take into account the experiences of queer teacher candidates who did not complete their respective programs. Similarly, this study did not purposely rule out intersectionality issues.

This study was broadened by the fact that all participants were from different universities, with experiences in different programs and school boards; however, this study was limited to participants from four Initial Teacher Education Programs in Southern Ontario. It did not include the experiences of queer teacher candidates at other universities in Ontario or in other parts of Canada. While this study is localized in context, the findings are expansive in their scope. The results are transferable to other environments as a good narrative inquiry study has the ability to inspire others to be mindful and *wakeful* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in their own surroundings.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this thesis and have the meanings set forth below:

- Queer: The term *queer* was once used derogatively to refer to a gay man (Mallan, 2011). In recent years, it is used academically as a term to refer to anyone who identifies as a sexual minority.

- LGBTQ: An acronym used to refer to people who identify as Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender or Queer.

- Out: The act of revealing one's sexual identity to others.

- Teacher Candidate: A student undertaking her/his Initial Teacher Education Program in order to become a teacher.

- Consecutive Initial Teacher Education Program: A 1- or 2-year Initial Teacher Education Program completed after a teacher candidate's undergraduate degree.

- Concurrent Initial Teacher Education Program: A 5- or 6-year Initial Teacher Education Program completed in conjunction with a teacher candidate's undergraduate degree.

- Primary and Junior Divisions: During an Initial Teacher Education Program, a candidate may become certified to teach the primary and junior divisions, which includes all grades from kindergarten to grade 6.

- Intermediate and Senior Divisions: During an Initial Teacher Education Program, a candidate may become certified to teach the junior and intermediate divisions, which include all grades from grade 7 to grade 12.

- Experience: The term *experience* is used in this thesis because the study of experience is the crux of narrative inquiry. Experience is a central focus of this study as "humans live storied lives" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014, p. 241). The term *experience* appears throughout the thesis and is not meant to be repetitive but rather intentional and as it appears in the narrative inquiry literature.

- Narrative inquiry: Narrative inquiry is "a way of understanding experience as lived and told through story" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014, p. X). Connelly and

Clandinin (2006) explain that "to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study" (p. 477).

In chapter 2, I explore the literature related to queer studies in education. I provide an overview of the current political and social climate before exploring the literature on queer students in higher education, queer teacher candidates, and queer teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

I open this chapter with the following narrative because it shows my inspiration for choosing to pursue this thesis topic.

Losing My Voice

As a teenager, I never felt like I fit in. I was captain of the field hockey team and part of the youth group, yet I never felt like one of the team. I had countless friends in different cliques, and my boyfriend was the star wide receiver but I always felt alone. Countless people in my life told me that all teenagers felt that way, but I always felt it was something more.

Growing up in a small town and attending Catholic schools, I had few examples of anyone outside the "norm." All of my friends wanted to grow up, get a job, find a man, get married, and start a family. I never felt the same but I wasn't sure why. Now it is easy for me to look back and see all the reasons but then I didn't know. As young as 8 years old, I can remember goofing around with my best friend in my basement and knowing I wanted to kiss her. As fast as the feeling had come, it was squashed with the thought that kissing her was not okay. Girls couldn't kiss girls!

When I entered high school, I had never had a crush on a boy, but all of my friends had and I knew I was supposed to, as well. When my friends asked whom I liked, I would make up someone obscure that I didn't know well, so they would not ask me out. Unlike the other girls, I never felt goofy or giddy around boys. When my friends would gather by their lockers and greet each other with a

hug, I would get extremely uncomfortable. I never knew how tightly to hug them or where to put my hands. I never wanted anyone to suspect I may be "gay."

I was 17 years old when I began my undergraduate degree. I began dating a boy in my residence within a few months and continued to wrestle with confusing thoughts about women. I continued to go on dates with men throughout my undergrad and I even dated one for about a year. During my fourth year, I broke up with one of my boyfriends and, for the first time, I truly began to acknowledge that I had intense feelings for women. I began secretly watching all of the episodes of *The L Word* in my room. I watched every gay and lesbian movie that I could find. I began for the first time admitting to myself that I was gay. Although, I could admit it to myself, I was still not ready to admit it to my friends. I became reclusive and kept to myself. I began playing the guitar and learning songs by lesbian artists. I did many things on my own because I did not want my friends to know what I was feeling. Finally, I told one of my roommates. She was so incredibly supportive and kind, yet, I continued to fear coming out to those around me.

After all these years of confusion about by my sexuality, I eventually came out to my parents in 2008, when I was 22 years old. It was a very difficult time for my family. As the eldest of four children and the only girl, my parents and brothers struggled with the news and the subsequent transformations they saw take place. My Roman Catholic family wrestled with feelings of shame, embarrassment, and concern for my well-being, while I grappled with their lack of understanding.

I continued to work on becoming more comfortable with myself, until one day I had enough of people wondering about me and talking about my sexuality. I decided that I would rather allow people to talk about me on my terms. I concluded that if I shared it on social media sources (like Facebook), it would save me coming out to dozens of people and it would allow me to address my sexuality without feeling uncomfortable. One day in October of 2008, after a few deep breaths, I changed my relationship status to show that I was dating my girlfriend at the time. Within days countless people knew. I didn't feel nervous or concerned; instead, I felt free. I no longer felt the anxiety and weight of the secret I had been carrying. I felt for the first time in my life that I was showing my authentic self to those around me. I lived true to myself, honest and open with those around me—until I entered into the teacher education program.

In 2010, I entered into an Initial Teacher Education Program at a prominent Southern Ontario university. Throughout the 8-month program, I felt I had to hide my sexual identity. Part of my decision to hide my sexuality was because I entered into a cohort with a Catholic focus, but it was coupled with the attitudes of other teacher candidates. I witnessed countless closed-minded remarks from colleagues and, as the year went on, I became more angry and upset. I was not happy with what I felt was ignorance among my colleagues and I did not know what to do about it. I felt that in order to be gay and a teacher, I would need to separate my personal and professional identity. In attempting to do this, I felt anxiety constantly. I felt perpetually angry and that I was losing the parts of my life that made me feel happy. This happiness was intrinsically related to my

beginning teaching and the development of a teacher identity that I felt wasn't reflective of me. (C. Fleet, personal reflection, October 22, 2012)

Such was my perspective as I began to consider the focus of my thesis. In their article, "Using Freirean Pedagogy of Just Ire to Inform Critical Social Learning in Arts-Informed Community Education for Sexual Minorities," Grace and Wells (2007) discuss Paulo Freire's term *just ire*. *Just ire* is essentially a synonym for legitimate anger. Whenever humans get angry, they have a choice in how they react. They can react with negative external behaviours (e.g., scream, yell, or even get violent), or they can choose to respond, rather than react, positively. Legitimate anger is the act of turning anger into a positive outcome and creating change or social mobilization (Grace & Wells, 2007). The anger—the just ire—I felt during my teacher education helped me to realize that the queer teacher candidate's voice needs to be heard. Through my research, I want to legitimize my anger by bringing awareness to queer narratives in teacher education.

Exploring the Research Problem

Narrative inquiry is essential to the study of the queer experience in education. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that there is truth in human experience. Narrative inquiry allows participants to express their true thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, and it is through the latter that researchers find meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Unlike other methods of qualitative data collection, narrative inquiry allows the participants to direct the conversation. By studying participants' stories, narrative inquirers are able to draw meaning from what they have shared and also what they have not. Narrative inquiry allows the truth of the queer experience to be heard through personal narratives, like mine, creating space for grand narratives to be challenged.

I have reviewed several research bodies of work that include queer teachers and queer studies in teacher education. Gilbert's (2013) research focuses on teacher candidates' readiness to address LGBT issues in their classroom based on what they were taught or not taught during their Initial Teacher Education Program. Similarly, Turnbull and Hilton's (2010) work explores the impact of integrating LGBTQ issues into the Initial Teacher Education Program at the University of Prince Edward Island. Contrary to these and similar studies (e.g., Grace & Benson, 2000; Nixon & Givens, 2004; Russell, 2010), this study specifically intends to gain a greater understanding of teacher education through the lived experience and perspective of queer teacher candidates in such programs. Using a narrative inquiry method, it focuses not on specific course programming but rather on the storied experiences of queer teacher candidates throughout their course study within Initial Teacher Education Programs. Therefore, this study allows for the diversity as well as specificity of voices in four distinct Initial Teacher Education Programs across Ontario and it does so, uniquely, by using story and narrative inquiry of lived experiences of queer teacher candidates from various cohort models in various faculties of education in Ontario.

Studying the lived experiences of queer teacher candidates is crucial to building the knowledge and understanding necessary to challenge prejudice and stigmatization:

> Autobiographical queer life narrative research provides a communicative space where w/e can speak to and with others about queerness as part of a politics of revelation designed to advocate enhanced visibility and presence for queer persons in education, culture and society. (Grace & Benson, 2000, p. 94)

Thus, by enhancing communication through narrative research, we are creating greater knowledge of queer life experiences. It is only through greater knowledge and awareness that a process of revelation can occur and we can begin a movement toward reform (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013) in education. I want to use my pedagogy and narratives of just ire to bring awareness to this important topic and to provide possible social reform ideas and hope for teacher education programs and education, in general.

<div align="center">**Political and Social Climate**</div>

The growing awareness and acceptance of queer people and queer relationships is a relatively new phenomenon (Renn, 2010). The word *queer* originated in the mid-1800s as an offensive term for someone who was male and homosexual (Mallan, 2011). This continued to be the dominant meaning for much of the 20th century; however, more recently, queer has come to be used as an empowering term for sexual minorities. Queer can now be defined as an "encompassing term to name and describe sex, sexual, and gender differences in the multifarious intersections of identities, identifications, desires, differences, and representations that lie inside and outside pervasive, conservative heterosexualising discourse" (Grace & Hill, 2004, p. 176). Therefore, anyone who identifies himself/herself as outside the boundaries of the heterosexual norm can identify as queer if they so choose.

In "Positioning Queer in Adult Education: Intervening in Politics and Praxis in North America," Grace and Hill (2004) recognize that "Some unity in queer difference is needed for mobilising the kind of collective or concentrated action needed to increase civil rights for queer persons" (p. 181). While queer people recognize that each different sexual minority group has its own history and experience, they recognize the similarities

in their struggle against the pervasiveness of heteronormativity. Grace and Hill contend that although queer people have various histories, they have developed their own queer culture:

> Queer culture is a flexible formation that incorporates diverse understandings of "We're here! We're Queer! Get used to it!" These ways of knowing queer refuse an essentialist epistemology of a unitary queer and reflect the many fluid identities, differences, and positionalities of the sometimes aligned, sometimes competing members of a spectral community of queer Others. (p. 182)

Therefore, queer culture is reflective of all sexual minority groups and embraces the various identities of each in order to socially mobilize for change.

Over the last 50 years, sexual minorities in Canada have experienced numerous social and political advancements. While Canada is currently one of the most progressive countries when it comes to the legal rights of queer people, this is a recent development for Canadians. We have come a long way since 1969, when "consensual homosexual sex between adult males was an indictable offence in Canada, punishable by jail. The concomitant personal costs associated with merely being charged with such offences were, in the long term, worse than the legal consequences" (Egan & Flavell, 2006, p. 260). Until 1972, the American Psychological Association considered homosexuality to be a mental illness (Egan & Flavell, 2006). Thus, it is understandable that, before the early 1970s, it was virtually impossible for anyone queer to feel free to live their life *out and proud*.

It has taken some time but, fortunately for Canadians, we are citizens of one of the most advanced countries when it comes to homosexuality and queer rights. Canada is

one of the only countries in the world with equal rights for same-sex partners and families (Egan & Flavell, 2006). Yet, while Canada has made great political developments, for many queer people, societal fears continue to be of greater worry than any political or legal concern. The threat of homophobia is a very real fear for anyone queer and the people who love them:

> Homophobia is a belief that queers are to be feared, that we present a genuine threat to society at large, that any degree of tolerance or acceptance of queers is dangerous—to the very fabric of "normal" society. … In everyday terms, it argues that queers are unacceptable and are to be isolated or even exterminated. (Egan & Flavell, 2006, p. 264)

Grace (2006) explains:

> As a gay man living in Canada today I enjoy many protections. However, while legal and legislative progress has been significant since the mid 1990s, it has been slow to translate into substantial social and cultural changes. Thus, I still have to make my way in a pervasive homophobic culture of threat where physical, emotional, and psychological violence remain realities for many queer persons in everyday life, learning and work spaces. (p. 828)

Despite quick political advancements, homophobia is still deeply entrenched in Canadian society. Statistics Canada's (2012) report on hate crimes in 2010 identifies 218 police-reported hate crimes that occurred as a result of sexual orientation, two-thirds of which were violent.

Homophobia is not only limited to blatant acts of hate or violence; it is also deeply engrained in the fabric of Canadian society through heterosexism. "Heterosexism

allows that queers exist, but they are inferior to 'normal' (with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity) heterosexual people. … In everyday terms, it argues that, although queer is okay, straight is better" (Egan & Flavell, 2006, pp. 262-263). Heterosexism can be seen throughout society, in that most of Canadian society assumes heterosexuality. Sexual minorities need to feel safe in order to announce their non-heterosexual status among peers, co-workers, and family, in order not to be assumed into the wrong category.

Canadian society's homophobic undertones can also be seen through the acceptance of "hegemonic masculinity," a term meaning "that at any given historical moment, there are many different masculinities, not only one—but the hegemonic one (or ones) is the most valued one, the ideal" (Connell, as cited in Cohn & Weber, 1999, p. 461). This proposes that what society most values is the "ideal" male, a man who is tall, strong, and handsome. This becomes a real problem for gay men because regardless of their appearance or mannerisms, the mere fact that they enjoy sex with other men infringes on the perception by society, in general, of their manhood.

From Queer Students to Queer Teachers

For most queer students entering university, the threat of verbal and physical harassment is a very real concern. From age 16 onwards, 45% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people have experienced some form of victimization (e.g., verbal threats, harassment, being spat on, chased, or followed) because of their status as a sexual minority (Herek et al., as cited in Jewell & Morrison, 2010, p. 2095). This statistic is troubling as people often forget that bullying and violence continues beyond high school and into adulthood.

Queer Students

Jewell and Morrison (2010), of the University of Saskatchewan, conducted one of the only studies on the nature of homophobia in Canadian Universities. Their study at a mid-sized university in Western Canada focused on anti-gay behaviours toward gay men on campus. Jewell and Morrison (2010) found that

> participants reported engaging in a number of overt antigay behaviors such as (a) yelling insulting comments at gay men (43%); (b) playing jokes on gay men (14%); or (c) warning gay men to stay away from them (11%). Approximately, 4% of the sample reported attending antigay protests or verbally threatening a gay man, whereas 2% indicated they had physically hit, pushed, or damaged property belonging to a gay man. (pp. 2089-2099)

Although they had admitted to acting negatively toward gay men, all the participants interviewed were unwilling to see their actions as anti-gay and did not want to be perceived as gay bashers (Jewell & Morrison, 2010). Unlike previous studies (e.g., Poteat, 2007), Jewell and Morrison found that participants feared losing friends or not gaining friends by expressing their homonegative behaviours. This is a clear demonstration of how Canadians have begun to recognize policy changes, but societal views are still slow to progress. Additionally, Jewell and Morrison's study emphasized that the threat of physical and emotional violence is very much present in the daily lives of queer postsecondary students.

A prime example of emotional and psychological violence in higher education is evident in the case of former Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi, who committed suicide in 2010. His roommate was charged with a hate-crime after he broadcasted

Clementi kissing another man via webcam. Yvette Taylor from the University of Newcastle studied the responses of the Rutgers University community and society in general following Clementi's suicide. She found the responses alarming. Taylor (2011) discovered an overwhelming desire to pin the suicide on the accused students, instead of recognizing it as a community or national issue. Rather than admit the presence of homophobia on campus and a need to reevaluate policies, Rutgers released an official statement in the days following in which "it was asserted via an email from the University President that Rutgers is 'extraordinarily proud of its diversity and the respect its members have for one another'" (Taylor, 2011, p. 336). Similarly, people called for manslaughter charges and petitioned online for the deportation of the individuals involved:

> Signatories called for the accused to "return to their countries" ascribing homophobia to other countries and cultures thus exempting US society for its deeply ingrained heterosexism: this position occurred despite both accused students being American citizens from the New Jersey area. (Taylor, 2011, p. 337)

Taylor's work highlights the deeply engrained homophobia within university environments. It is the responsibility of universities to reevaluate problems in their current environment and strive to create a more inclusive atmosphere on campus.

In Ontario, many of our universities have policies in place to protect students from discrimination and harassment. The University of Western Ontario's (2011) *Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy* is very clear in outlining that the university adheres to the Ontario Human Rights Code and prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of

"race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or disability" (p. 1). This document is also very clear that the university does not tolerate personal harassment. The university provides a clear definition of personal harassment:

> Conduct and/or behaviour which create an intimidating, demeaning or hostile working or academic environment whether or not it is based on the prohibited grounds defined in the *Human Rights Code*. For the purposes of this Policy, *Personal Harassment* includes *Workplace Harassment* as defined under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably known to be unwelcome. (University of Western Ontario, 2011, p. 2)

In conducting a search of codes of conduct and non-discrimination policies, numerous Ontario universities had similar policies in place and made reference to the Ontario Human Rights Code. Among these, McMaster University's (2013) *Student Code of Conduct* outlines the rights of the student, explaining that:

> Pursuant to the laws of Canada and Ontario, you have the RIGHT to the safety and security of your person in an environment free from harassment, intimidation, discrimination or assault. You have the RESPONSIBILITY to treat others with respect and to refrain from acts of harassment, intimidation, discrimination or assault. (p. 14)

While many Ontario universities (e.g., McMaster University, 2013; University of Western Ontario, 2011) have policies and codes of conduct in place to protect queer

students, Jewell and Morrison's (2010) study reminds us that acts of discrimination and homophobia often are unreported at universities, which suggests the latter should develop both greater awareness and an ability to enact policies to prevent such hostile and potentially dangerous environments for all students.

Queer Teachers

Queer teachers in Ontario have faced a complicated and problematic history. In 1977, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) made a recommendation to add sexual orientation to the criminal code, resulting in a massive uproar from the public. Newspapers immediately began reporting on what this would mean for schools and children. Claire Hoy of the *Toronto Sun* wrote that

> homosexual equality enabled homosexuals to "poison children's minds, to get into schools and recruit kids." Adding sexual orientation to the OHRC's "list of protected species" prevented the firing of "teachers caught promoting this so-called alternative lifestyle." In a subsequent column, Hoy argued OHRC changes removed "legal barriers to getting [homosexual] prophets into schools." (As cited in Graydon, 2011, pp. 331-332)

The opinion of Claire Hoy was echoed across Toronto from various school board trustees and reporters, and the public's resistance to allow queer people to teach their children was heard loud and clear by officials across the province (Graydon, 2011).

In 1982 and 1983, Didi Khayatt interviewed 19 Ontario lesbian teachers regarding their experiences in the school system. Khayatt (1990) had to be extremely careful, as discovery meant a potential job loss and harassment for her participants. Khayatt (1990) explains that during this time it was believed that

to be allowed to teach as a lesbian would be to condone automatically her sexual choice. Consequently, lesbian teachers have to rely on concealing their sexuality, in part, by becoming more aware of the distinction between the private and the public worlds and by existing in each differently. (p. 186)

In December 1986, Bill 7, Section 15 of the Ontario Human Rights Code was passed making it illegal to deny employment, housing, or services to anyone on the basis of sexual orientation (Khayatt, 1990). In 1988, Khayatt decided to interview the 19 teachers with whom she had previously spoken, to ask them how Bill 7 had affected them. Of the 19 she had previously interviewed, 11 had left the teaching profession, and she interviewed five of the remaining eight teachers. Each participant she interviewed indicated that Bill 7 had little to no impact on how they live their lives, except that it gave them the means to fight in the event of a wrongful dismissal (Khayatt, 1990). One woman explained that "even though there is legislation on paper, which is an important first step, there still is not the social acceptance. For that reason, even though she felt that the Bill gave her psychological security, she could not feel safe coming out publicly" (Khayatt, 1990, p. 189). Therefore, while Bill 7 was an important political advancement for queer people, it had little effect on the lives of queer teachers.

Since Khayatt's work in the 1980s, there have been several political and social advancements, yet for many queer teachers, their reality remains unchanged. Many teachers and teacher candidates continue to live in fear of coming out (Grace & Benson, 2000; Nixon & Givens, 2004). Consequently, this pattern of having to divide their personal and professional lives has continued to be common among queer teachers and queer teacher candidates. Similarly, despite the recent political and social advancements,

there has been little change in teacher education programs. Teacher candidates are encountering programs that give little or no instruction on how to create inclusive classroom environments for queer students. Consequently, teacher education programs are failing to create safe environments for queer teacher candidates.

It is estimated that 10% of Ontario's general population is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans (LGBT) (Toronto Public Health, 2001, as cited in Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2008). With 1 of every 10 people in the province identifying as a sexual minority, it is important to provide future teachers with knowledge of queer issues and the tools necessary to create positive school environments. In an age when teachers "engage in educative and cultural work for liberation, many teacher education programs are deterring queer inclusion by failing to provide pre-service and practicing teachers with any significant focus on queer issues" (Kissens, 2002, as cited in Grace, 2006, p. 833).

In 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Education released *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* which states that:

> A board is also expected to provide sensitivity training in the areas of gender and sexual orientation, as well as training in effective early intervention and prevention strategies and practices to deal with incidents related to racism, gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. (p. 32)

While this statement highlights the profound policy changes taking place in Ontario's education system, there needs to be accountability for school boards and educators to follow through on such promises. Otherwise, how can we ensure that the Ontario

educators are receiving necessary training?

Each public school board in Ontario has some version of a human rights policy that states that they operate in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code (1990). The Toronto District School Board's (TDSB's, 2004) Human Rights Policy, in particular, shows the board's commitment to proactively ensure its policy is upheld:

> Teachers have a particular obligation to ensure that the learning environment is free of discrimination and harassment and to respond speedily to breaches of this policy when they occur. The Board recognizes that preventive education and proactive practices are the best long-term strategies to achieve an inclusive learning and working environment. It is essential, therefore, that Toronto District School Board programs, curriculum, teaching methods and management practices support the values embodied in this policy. (p. 3)

The TDSB's policy is extremely clear in outlining the expectations and policy on matters of discrimination and harassment and the responsibility of students, teachers, and administrators in ensuring the policy was upheld. Similarly, the Thames Valley District School Board (2010) goes further to recognize the presence of systemic barriers but shares its commitment to transgress beyond the latter:

> The Thames Valley District School Board is committed to incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, programs, procedures, guidelines, and practices. The Thames Valley District School Board is committed to the removal of systemic barriers to improve student learning, close achievement gaps, and to ensure equitable opportunities for students and staff. (p. 2)

While most school board policies I explored were very similar in values and policy, I was disheartened to find how difficult some of the policies were to find on school board websites. I was able to find most very easily, yet others were hidden and buried within a number of links on board websites. The policies of equitable and inclusive practices of school boards should be prominent on their websites, as each student and employee is meant to know and adhere to their guidelines.

In 2007, Catherine Taylor and Tracey Peter began conducting the first national report on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. They found some disturbing results. Of all the LGBTQ students surveyed, 10% reported having heard homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Similarly, 23% of trans youth heard their teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Teachers, like it or not, are role models for students. While all teachers walk into their respective classrooms with their own personal beliefs, they have to put aside their views and instead behave in a respectful manner towards the beliefs of others. The Ontario College of Teacher's (OCT's) ethical standards for the teaching profession are in place "to promote public trust and confidence in the teaching profession" (2006, p. 2). Teachers need to be mindful of the language they use and uphold the ethical standards of trust, respect, integrity, and care (OCT, 2006) in their teaching environments. Teachers are prohibited—with dire consequences—if they use racial or religious slurs in the classroom (Taylor & Peter, 2011); yet, the use of comments like "that's so gay" by some teachers can go unnoticed. Equally concerning is teachers' lack of response to homophobic slurs. Taylor and Peter's study also found that 75% of LGBTQ students reported that school staff did not intervene when they heard students making homophobic

comments. These results among others led Taylor and Peter to recommend "That Faculties of Education integrate LGBTQ-inclusive teaching and intersectionality into compulsory courses in their Bachelor of Education programmes so that teachers have adequate opportunities to develop competence before entering the field" (p. 140).

Kitchen and Bellini's (2012) article "Addressing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Issues in Teacher Education: Teacher Candidates' Perceptions" suggests that the implementation of a 2-hour workshop for teacher candidates can go a long way to creating inclusive classroom environments. However, the research they conducted primarily focuses on teacher candidates' perceptions of the usefulness of the workshop. It in no way speaks to the overall effectiveness of the workshop at creating a safe space within teacher education programs or in teacher candidates' future classrooms. What is needed is research on the effectiveness of such programs and how these types of programs may help queer teacher candidates and, more importantly, how the latter's lived experiences can add to the discussion on transformation itself within teacher education programs.

Nixon and Givens (2004) conducted a study on the experiences of six lesbian, gay, or bisexual teacher candidates at an English university. They found that teacher trainees felt a struggle to divide their personal and professional identity. Teacher trainees felt the prevalence of compulsory heterosexism, and they wrestled with the pervasiveness of hegemonic masculinity. Nixon and Givens were stunned by their findings, writing:

> We remain shocked, however, that research done in a liberal academic
> community at the start of the twenty-first century should expose a culture which
> by means ranging from silence to physical threat and assault marginalizes one

group of students in their pursuit of professional qualification. (p. 233)

Therefore, despite political and social changes, there continues to be a presence of

mandatory heterosexism within teacher education programs, which furthers the

marginalization of queer teachers (Grace, 2006; Grace & Benson, 2000).

Andre Grace, of the University of Alberta, is one of the leading names in the

study of queer issues in education. In 2000, having noticed an absence of queer narratives

among teachers and teacher candidates, Grace developed the Agape program, now

renamed ISMSS (Institute for Sexual Minorities and Student Services). Agape essentially

was intended to be a large focus group for students, faculty, and staff, meant to

concentrate on the personal and professional needs of the community (Grace, 2006).

Grace opened the doors of Agape to teachers across the Edmonton area and to members

of the community, in an effort to get as many voices and perspectives on queer issues in

education. Grace (2006) writes,

> Agape members have worked hard to build an on-campus queer resource base that
>
> is useful to teachers in training, practising teachers and community members. The
>
> focus group networks with other educational and community groups to promote
>
> inclusive education as part of building cultural democracy. (p. 830)

The University of Alberta and the surrounding community have worked hard to create a

valuable and unprecedented resource for students, faculty, and staff.

While the program has grown steadily since its inception in 2000, Grace (2006)

noticed an alarming pattern among students:

> Only a small number of pre-service teachers in training attend. Sometimes one of
>
> them will email me or drop by my office for an impromptu chat. When I ask them

about attending Agape, they often raise concerns about being seen entering or

leaving the meeting room. I have changed venues to a more obscure location, but

still they stay away. They tell me that they worry about being outed or, if

heterosexual, being labelled queer and how such profiling might affect getting a

job and being personally safe and professionally secure. Indeed many pre-service

teachers fear how homophobic or paedophilic suspicions—the latter being of

particular concern to males who want to teach in primary or elementary schools—

might ruin a teaching career before it even gets off the ground. (p. 831)

While Grace created an important resource for the educational community at the

University of Alberta, the program is failing to target an entire group whose perspectives

and personal narratives are essential to the topic. Many queer teacher candidates and

classroom teachers do not feel comfortable participating in groups, which may draw

attention to their sexual orientation (Grace, 2006). Thus, the bigger issue is that

universities are not succeeding in creating pre-service environments where teachers feel

secure in presenting their authentic selves. Initial Teacher Education Programs are not

creating safe environments, yet such programs stress that teachers create them within

their own classrooms. When teachers begin their educational careers in a pre-service

program with a sense of discomfort and a lack of acceptance, how are they ever supposed

to feel secure being themselves as queer educators?

Breaking Down Barriers

With growing research on queer teachers, one thing is transparent: most queer

teachers feel the need to separate their identity as a person and as a professional (Nixon &

Givens, 2004).

Separation of Personal and Professional Identity

Many queer teachers feel a struggle to keep their private life and professional life separate (Nixon & Givens, 20014). Schools are breeding grounds for heteronormativity and there is a fear for many queer teachers of being exposed. This fear seems to transcend beyond borders, as it is evident in studies from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada (Graydon, 2011; Hill, 2006; Nixon & Givens, 2004). Through her research on queer educators, Griffin "found that queer teachers believe a deliberate disconnection of the personal and the professional is necessary to sustain personal safety, job security[,] and credibility among students" (as cited in Grace & Benson, 2000, pp. 96-97). This is particularly true of teachers who work in Catholic schools. According to Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it is illegal to discriminate against anyone on the basis of sexual orientation. However, Catholic schools seem to be one of the only exceptions to this rule. Canada's constitution, which has never been amended, allows religious groups the freedom to discriminate in order to uphold their religious values. For any queer teacher in a Catholic school district, being discovered is not an option. As Callaghan (2007) explains, in Alberta, there have been numerous cases over the years of Catholic teachers who have lost their jobs for not representing Catholic values and for living a queer lifestyle instead. Many queer teachers spend their lives living in "hiding," forced to separate their personal and professional identities for fear of being fired from the publicly funded Catholic schools (Callaghan, 2009).

Grace (2006) argues that while many closeted teachers struggle to separate these two parts of their lives,

teacher educators walk into classrooms with their personal histories that overtly

and/or subtly influence professional practices. The contexts, dispositions

(attitudes, values and beliefs) and relationships that shape the teacher as a person

constitute an emerging history that influences the teacher as a professional. From

this perspective, a teacher's practice is shaped in the intersection of the personal

and the professional. (p. 827)

Therefore, what makes a teacher is a combination of personal life experience and

professional experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) would agree, arguing that

narrative inquirers believe it is impossible to separate the personal from the professional,

as all teachers enter the classroom with their own personal practical knowledge.

"Personal practical knowledge is knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences

that make up a person's being. It's meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of,

a person's experiential history, both professional and personal" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362).

Thus, if individuals cannot separate their identity, what is the consequence for queer

teachers who try?

In a study of gay and lesbian teacher candidates, Nixon and Givens (2004) found

that the greatest commonality among participants was a difficulty in developing their

sense of identity as an individual and a teacher. Similar to my own experience, many of

the candidates interviewed by Nixon and Givens felt the effects of homophobic jokes and

slurs. Overall, Nixon and Givens were stunned by their findings, which showed evidence

of harassment and physical threat.

Come Out or Hide Out

Coming out and choosing to come out is a difficult decision for any member of the queer community. The term "coming out" refers to the moment when members of the queer community reveal their sexual identity to the people in their lives. While coming out remains a large step for any queer person, it would not exist if it were not for the pervasiveness of heteronormativity. Without presumed heterosexuality, there would be no need for queer people to come out at all, however heteronormativity continues to remain as a form of bias that is often overlooked.

There has been much argument among scholars as to whether or not queer teachers should expose their queer identity. Many scholars argue that within the queer community there is a severe lack of role models and even less within the school environment. Nixon and Givens (2004) argue that:

> Given the ever-present threat of harassment, LGB teachers and trainee teachers require personal examples if they are to preserve and maintain healthy identities (staying out); but beyond this, tolerant and affirmatory role-models are needed for all pupils as they are growing up, irrespective of sexual orientation. (p. 226)

In saying this, it is not only queer teachers and teacher candidates who need positive and tolerant role models; all teachers and pupils need role models who confidently stand up against intolerance and promote social justice and equality in every respect. This being said, there is a great debate among scholars as to whether being a role model for queer teachers and youth entails "being out."

Rodney Wilson, a history teacher, saw his coming out as a freeing act, explaining that he no longer wanted to participate in his own oppression (Grace & Benson, 2000). By sharing his story and engaging in this freeing act, Wilson chose to make himself

known as a person in the school community. He no longer had to separate himself as an individual and a professional, but instead he created the opportunity for others to see his true self. Grace and Benson (2000) state:

> When queer teachers are invisible in schools, queer students are denied the opportunity to identify with them as part of their own coming out and coming to terms with being queer. In a real sense this contributes to an educational shunning of queer students who are left to trespass hetero-normalized school where heterosexism and homophobia are at work. (p. 99)

In choosing to come out, Wilson created a communicative space within the school community, where people felt free to talk about sexual identity and challenge heteronormativity and homophobia. Thus, by sharing his experiences, he allowed for the continued education of others and promotion of equality.

Many studies delve into the ethical dilemma of whether queer teachers have a responsibility to queer students to come out (Khayatt, 1997; Nixon & Givens, 2004; Russell, 2010). According to Nixon and Givens (2004), "To remain silent is to signal consent to homophobic and heterosexist practices, among which there is a good measure of confusion and conflation" (p. 227). This can be seen in the case of Pat McCart, a school principal who

> felt that privatization of her lesbian identity had two important consequences. First, it detracted from her authenticity because the personal (her lesbian identity) was omitted from the professional (her performativity as a teacher and a role model). Second, it kept her invisible to her students and "helped keep the fear,

misinformation, prejudice, and homophobia alive among these adolescents,

whether they were straight or gay." (Grace & Benson, 2000, p. 92)

By saying nothing about her sexual identity, McCart felt that she was separating a very

real part of herself. She was unable to bring visibility to the queer community through her

lived experience and, instead, contributed to keeping homophobia alive in her school

environment. I recall feeling the same way:

> Like many other queer teachers, I, too, felt I had been guilty of keeping
>
> homophobia alive. One day, during the Initial Teacher Education Program, I sat at
>
> a table with two male teacher candidates, John and Mike. John was discussing
>
> with Mike how his girlfriend's brother had just come out as gay. They both began
>
> talking about how gross that was and Mike offered his condolences. John
>
> proceeded to mock his girlfriend's brother, while I sat there and said nothing. I
>
> was devastated that these two men, who I had considered my friends, could be so
>
> narrow-minded. On one hand, I wanted to tell them I was gay and make them
>
> realize the profound mistake they had made, but on the other, I was terrified of
>
> what that would mean for my career. In the end, I chose to remain silent. I still
>
> wonder: if I had come out during my Initial Teacher Education Program and
>
> allowed for myself to be seen as a queer teacher, would it have changed many of
>
> the attitudes and prejudice I witnessed among other candidates? (C. Fleet,
>
> personal reflection, November 15, 2012)

Khayatt (1997) calls all teachers to queer their classroom environments, by

creating inclusive environments where queer issues, among others, can be explored.

Teachers can use a variety of sources, from queer literature to pop culture, to educate

students about queer culture and promote inclusivity. Khayatt's views are noteworthy in that they suggest all teachers should advocate for tolerance and acceptance within the school community. Khayatt (1997) argues that teachers should not solely advocate for queer rights; instead, it is more effective if they appear to their class as advocates for respect. When teachers are successful in creating this environment, students, no matter with what they are dealing, should feel safe enough to be their authentic selves.

<center>**Critical Pedagogy**</center>

The following personal reflection illustrates how I lost my voice during my Initial Teacher Education Program.

In My Grandmother's Words

My grandmother used to say, "Courtenay has such a strong sense of what's right and wrong, and she's not afraid to use it." As long as I can remember, I have never been afraid to challenge the things that I did not feel were just. My mother and my grandmother taught me that anything I wanted to be or anything I wanted to do was achievable. They encouraged my love of Lego, bought my brothers dolls, and they supported all of our passions. At a young age I was taught to question things and to do it in a respectful and appropriate manner. I stayed up late to watch Federal elections, I marched on picket lines, and instead of asking for presents for my 10th birthday, I asked friends to donate Thanksgiving dinner items to a shelter in Toronto. When I was told as a child I could not play hockey because I was a girl, I played anyway. I was the kid who stuck up for people on the playground and stopped initiation rituals in high school. I stood up for what I believed to be right and I was fearless.

When I was 21, I moved to South Korea to teach English. One day, I was sitting in my tiny bachelor apartment, "Skyping" with my mom, when she told me that she was proud of me for never being afraid to be myself. Within seconds I burst into tears. It was in that moment that I told my mom I was queer. I felt an almost immediate sense of relief. I had carried the weight of that secret with me, and the longer I carried it, the heavier it got. After I told my mom, she asked that I try to keep it quiet for a while, giving my family some time to adjust to the news.

For about a year before I told my mom, I felt I was going to explode every day. I hated when people would ask me about boys, or why I was single. Not allowing myself to be my authentic self had devastating effects for me emotionally and physically. I struggled with bouts of insomnia, lost weight, become anti-social, and anxious. Although much of this subsided once my family found out, I still felt the inability to be my authentic self and suppressed the need to explode daily. Finally, a few months later, I had enough. I decided I could no longer hide. When I changed my relationship status on Facebook, I chose to allow everyone I knew to talk, on my terms. It was in that moment I decided I would never go back "in the closet." I never wanted to be anything less than myself.

It took 3 years for me to make the decision to go into a teacher education program. Friends and teachers I knew convinced me that times had changed and that it was now possible to be queer and be a teacher. Although I entered a Catholic stream, I truly believed it would only be a short time that I would have to keep my sexuality quiet. I had no idea the anxiety and discomfort I would feel on

a daily basis. I felt crippled by homophobic jokes and slurs from other candidates, heteronormative undertones, and a lack of awareness from professors and teacher candidates alike. For the first time in my life, I felt I could not question something unjust. I was scared of what it meant to be my authentic self in that setting and I did not know what to do or with whom to talk. I sensed something was not right and I had no knowledge of an avenue to voice it or demand change. (C. Fleet, personal reflection, November 24, 2012)

In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Paulo Freire (1998) refers to a culture of silence. He argues that a culture of silence forms through dominant social relations, which instills a negative perception of self on the oppressed (Freire, 1998). He explains how this can be seen in terms of colonization, when countries conquered others and there was a clear distinction between the dominant and the dominators. He goes further to explain how it is seen between so-called first and third world countries today (Freire, 1998). While Freire's work largely looks at class relations, it can be applied to the queer community and the current social and political climate. The pervasiveness of heteronormitivity and the dominance of heterosexuality creates an environment where many queer people face a culture of silence and must fight to overcome their negative perceptions of self. It is this culture of silence that contributed to my inability to stand up to the injustices discussed in my narratives. It is what allowed me to remain silent in the face of homophobic jokes and comments, despite my hurt and rage.

Critical pedagogy recognizes the essential role the education system plays in perpetuating the views of the dominant class. Unfortunately, the dominant values of society are constantly thrust upon students through an education system where they are

taught to be passive consumers of information (Freire, 1970). This "banking model" of education suggested by Freire (1970) instructs students in an environment that produces adults who have not learned to question their surroundings and have never developed a critical consciousness. Richard Schaull (2000) writes "the submissiveness of the oppressed is a major product of an educational system that does not encourage students to develop the critical awareness necessary to break the pattern of oppression" (p. 12). This can be seen through several studies (e.g., Grace & Benson, 2000; Nixon & Givens, 2004) that show queer teachers feel compelled to divide their personal and professional identities. Instead of refusing to accept their oppression and embrace their full authentic identity in their teaching, many queer teachers choose to hide a part of themselves because they have grown up in an education system that has not taught them to transgress. Thus, the education system has continued to perpetuate an environment that oppresses queer people by creating a culture of silence that leaves them without the means to change their reality.

bell hooks (1994) contends that the most important goal of teachers should be teaching students to transgress against gender, racial, sexual, and class boundaries in order to attain true freedom. She builds upon the teachings of critical pedagogy and suggests that instead society should adhere to what she calls "engaged pedagogy," meaning "that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Therefore, hooks believes teachers must work to achieve their full potential and feel empowered themselves before they can expect to empower their students. Yet, we must instruct our teachers to become political agents of social change in

order to see transformations among students. "Transformative teachers bring their personal meanings and interpretations of the social world to the task of curriculum development and practice" (Mogadime, 2012, p. 204). However, it becomes difficult for teachers to achieve self-actualization if they feel oppressed and feel a need to hide a portion of their identity.

Henry Giroux's (1981) *Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling* advocates for a theory and practice of education that would not only critique traditional institutions and practices but would seek to transform them and ultimately transform society. The current research (e.g., Grace, 2006; Jewell & Morrison, 2010) shows a need to transform schools policies and practices when it comes to the treatment of queer students and the queer community. While things are slowly changing in schools, transformations must be evident at all levels of education for true change to occur. Thus, we must also be critical of the institutions in which our teachers are being trained. This study seeks to better understand the experiences of queer teacher candidates during their time at these institutions, in the hopes that it can eventually foster the type of transformations Giroux suggests.

Having reviewed the literature that has informed my study, and having offered my own narrative storied insights throughout this chapter, in the following chapter I will provide an outline of the narrative inquiry methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study uses narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of queer teacher candidates in Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario. My goal as a researcher is to develop a greater understanding of the narrative experiences of queer teacher candidates in Ontario. By analyzing themes within the storied experiences of queer teacher candidates, it is my hope to inform future practices and programming in Initial Teacher Education Programs related to issues of equity and diversity, and to provide safe and open spaces for queer teacher candidates.

Participant Selection

The participants in this study all identify as a sexual minority and have graduated from an Initial Teacher Education Program in the last 4 years in Ontario, Canada. Participants were selected through snowballing. They were found through word of mouth and were then approached because of their interest in the research. Participants received a recruitment email, which informed them of the study using a letter of invitation. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that choosing to do so would in no way impact my ability to complete the requirements of my degree. Upon acceptance of their invitation to participate, participants were sent an informed consent form, as cleared by the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File no. 12-023-Ciuffetelli Parker; see Appendix D).

There were four participants in this study: Elisabeth, Norah, Marcus, and myself. These names are pseudonyms that have been given to participants to protect their anonymity. I have known Elisabeth for 2 years. She is a peer who expressed interest in the study because she believes it is a topic that needs to be critically addressed in

education. Norah is a colleague whom I have known for 3 years. She approached me because she was interested in being a part of the study. Marcus is an acquaintance whom I met through a mutual friend. When Marcus heard about the study, he was eager to participate and share his experiences as a queer teacher candidate. I am the fourth participant, or participant researcher as is common in various narrative inquiry studies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), exploring my own narratives and weaving them with the experiences of my participants.

Participant Profiles

Elisabeth is a peer who attended her Initial Teacher Education Program in a large urban area in South Central Ontario. She completed her teaching practicum in both public and Catholic school boards. She attended a consecutive program and is certified to teach intermediate and senior music and history. She was recently hired for a long-term occasional (LTO) position, teaching high school music in Ontario.

Norah is a colleague who attended her Initial Teacher Education Program in an urban area of South Central Ontario. She completed her teaching practicum in the public school board and graduated from a consecutive program. She is certified to teach the primary and junior divisions. Norah is currently pursuing graduate studies at an Ontario university.

Marcus has recently completed his Initial Teacher Education Program at a suburban university in South Western Ontario. He completed his teaching placements in public school boards and is certified to teach primary and junior divisions. He graduated from a concurrent education program and is currently applying to school boards.

I completed my Initial Teacher Education at an urban university in South Central Ontario. My teaching placement was in a Catholic school board. I attended a consecutive program and I am certified to teach the primary and junior divisions. Upon completion of my Initial Teacher Education Program, I entered into a full-time Master of Education program.

Data Collection

There are many ways of collecting stories as data in narrative inquiry methodology. For this study, data collection consisted of three components: conversations as field text, writing as field text, and field notes as field text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Conversations as Field Text

Participants were asked to take part in conversations. This took the form of an interview. The interview lasted between 1 to 2 hours in length. With the permission of participants, I recorded and took notes of the interview. Participants chose the private setting in which they felt most comfortable. Locations included my home, a room in a coffee shop, and a library study room. As the researcher, I accommodated the participants' location request to the best of my ability.

I began the interview/conversation by sharing a personal storied experience with participants. Participants read my opening narrative, the diversity narrative (see Prologue). Afterward they were asked what stories they could share about their time in their teacher education program. Other questions that helped to guide the conversations included (but were not limited to):

- Can you please describe your experience becoming a teacher? Who are you as a teacher?

- Can you please share an experience you had, positive or negative, as a teacher candidate during the time that you were studying in an Initial Teacher Education Program in Ontario?

- Describe an event where you chose to share or not share your sexuality with a colleague, professor, and/or associate teacher.

- Will you share an event from your Initial Teacher Education Program where your sexual orientation impacted your learning?

- Based on the storied experiences you have shared, what suggestions can you make to improve teacher education programs for other queer educators?

I recorded approximately 4.5 hours of conversation from the interviews and spent approximately 20 hours transcribing 46 pages of data myself. The transcriptions were typed and placed in their own password-protected files. Participants were then asked to engage in a process of member checking to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

Writing as Field Text

I engaged in letter writing (via email) individually with each and every participant and we shared narratives and stories about being queer and becoming a teacher. I began email correspondence by sharing a story from my experience as a queer teacher candidate with each participant in separate emails. I then asked each participant if they had a story or experience they wanted to share. Participants were given the freedom to direct the writing in the manner they felt most comfortable. Therefore, as the researcher I did not ask specific questions. I developed further questions and prompts to the email responses from each participant. Further probing often included asking participants to elaborate, asking how specific situations made them feel, asking if their decisions had

repercussions, and asking how events impacted their feelings, impressions, insights, or other actions experienced toward or about the teaching profession. During this time approximately 39 emails were exchanged with participants and the researcher, resulting in 72 pages of data. All documents pertaining to the research were password protected to ensure the privacy of the participants was protected. Similarly, during this time, I journaled about my interactions and experiences with the participants and reflected on my own experiences during my teacher education program.

Field Notes as Field Text

I used field notes as field text for the duration of the study. Throughout the study, I journaled about my interactions and experiences with the participants, which accumulated more than 16 pages of field notes during this time. I reflected on my own experiences during my teacher education and subsequently analyzed my field notes along with the other data I had collected. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain, "These ongoing, daily notes, full of the details and moments of our inquiry lives in the field, are the text out of which we can tell stories of our story of experience" (p. 104). Using field notes, I was able to garner more insights on how to proceed with the letter writing. These field notes allowed the study to move more fluidly from one part to the next.

<div align="center">Narrative Inquiry</div>

Narrative inquiry methodology is crucial to this study because it allows researchers to take into account multiple factors, which shape participants' experience.

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the

world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study

of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about

experience. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 474)

 "Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between

researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social

interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). As much of the research

has shown, many queer teacher candidates feel they must separate their identity as a

teacher from their personal identity. Narrative inquiry is critical to this study because

narrative inquirers believe that you cannot separate your identity—personal and

professional or otherwise (Clandinin, 1985). Narrative inquirers see the formation of

identity as one fluid concept. One's identity may change and adjust over time as it

becomes influenced by events, society, and places, yet it cannot be separated or

fragmented. Instead narrative inquirers would recognize identity as constantly changing

and transformative. This thesis uses elements of narrative inquiry, one set from Connelly

and Clandinin (2006), the other from Ciuffetelli Parker (2013), to analyze the narratives

of participants.

Data Analysis Using the Three Commonplaces

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) identify three commonplaces of narrative inquiry:

temporality, *sociality*, and *place*. As narrative inquirers, they suggest that it is important

to recognize the temporality of participants' lives and the events and places that shape

meaning in their lives. Therefore, the past, present, and future of each participants' life,

and the places and events within each storied life, become an integral part of narrative

studies. Sociality "invites teacher educators and teacher candidates to take into account

personal conditions (such as hopes, feelings, and morality) alongside social conditions (such as milieu, surrounding factors, and other people) that shape the context of their experiences" (Ciuffetelli Parker, Pushor, & Kitchen, 2011, p.15). Lastly, Connelly and Clandinin's theory of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry commonplaces takes into account the physical attributes in a setting, which impacts experience (Ciuffetelli Parker et al., 2011).

By taking into account temporality, sociality, and place, we can better understand the compounding factors that contribute to the queer experience in teacher education.

> Attending to experience through inquiry into all the commonplaces is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies. Through attending to the commonplaces, narrative inquirers are able to study the complexity of the relational composition of people's lived experience both inside and outside of an inquiry and, as well, to imagine the future possibilities of these lives. (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 438)

This study explored the commonplaces simultaneously, in order to greater understand the complexity of these queer teacher candidates' experiences. I explored temporality as it happened during participants' time in their Initial Teacher Education Program, and then looked back on it, and on their identity as future teachers. Narrative inquiry recognizes that people are constantly evolving and changing. This means that in order to study life events, researchers must consider what has come before and possibly after.

Temporality

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) state that "events under study are in temporal transition. Narrative inquirers do not describe an event, person or object as such, but

rather describe them with a past, a present, and a future" (p. 481). Narrative inquirers recognize that people are always in a process of change and transition. Like Dewey (1938), they believe that all events happen along a continuum. Thus, temporality looks at how a person's history affects their current experiences, and how those, in turn, come to affect future ones.

In this study, I explored the experiences of queer teacher candidates during their teacher education. For queer teacher candidates, temporality is an essential piece of their storied experience. Because narrative inquirers highlight the importance of understanding previous and future experiences, participants' experiences during teacher education cannot be examined in isolation. While teacher education is temporal, it is important to recognize that previous experiences with sexuality or with education may have had an impact on participants during their teacher education. In addressing experiences in teacher education, it is also important to recognize the temporality of that experience. Participants' experiences were unique to a specific institution at a particular point in time, therefore, the experience of students from one year to the next may change drastically as the students, instructors, and classes may change, too.

Sociality

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that understanding sociality implies an acknowledgment that

> Narrative inquirers are concerned with personal conditions and, at the same time, with social conditions. By personal conditions we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions of the person, whether inquirer or participant. By social conditions we mean existential conditions, the

environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form the

individual's context. (p. 480)

By taking into account both personal and social conditions, narrative inquirers ensure a

more holistic view of the social context, in which experiences have taken place.

Therefore, the study of sociality addresses the impact and implications of social context

on experiences.

Another important aspect of the sociality commonplace is the relationship

between the participant and the narrative inquirer. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) state

that "inquirers are always in an inquiry relationship with participants' lives. We cannot

subtract ourselves from relationship" (p. 480). Thus, there was an understanding that

participants and I worked together in the inquiry process.

In the analysis of narratives and the commonplace of sociality, it was important

that participants shared the feelings and thoughts they had during their storied experience.

When retelling stories it was important for participants to use great detail in describing

their own attitudes but also in describing what the social conditions around them were

like. As a researcher and a participant, I reminded both myself and the participants not

only to take into account their own thoughts and feelings when retelling their experience

but also all their perceptions of attitudes around them, including peers, administrators,

and the institution they attended. The more detail participants use, the greater

understanding narrative inquirers can gain of the social context of the stories explored.

Place

Place refers to "the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of

place where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, pp. 480-

481). As a narrative inquirer, it is essential to recognize that the environment can have an impact on experience. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) acknowledge that the "specificity of location in crucial. When narrative inquirers write about the relevance of their work for others, they need to acknowledge the qualities of place and the impact of the places on the study" (p. 481). Therefore, while it is in the details of our surroundings that we, as narrative inquirers, can find meaning, we also must be detailed in describing our surroundings in order to maintain the accuracy and significance for others. When analyzing participants' stories in teacher education, it is vital to acknowledge that there are multiple locations of importance. For teacher candidates, place cannot be limited to areas within the walls of the university; it can also be each participant's home, practicum location, workplace, or community spaces. While places may change, it is the job of the narrative inquirer to explore the influence of each place on the experience (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007). Thus, places are more than just buildings and spaces; they also are places that help to form experience. For example, in this study, place refers to the university, the classroom, and schools where placements occurred, among other locations.

Data Analysis Using the 3R Framework of Narrative Inquiry

Ciuffetelli Parker (2013, 2014) identifies the 3Rs of her narrative inquiry framework: *narrative reveal*, *narrative revelation*, and *narrative reformation*. Narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation are useful terms to help burrow deeply into the storied assumptions of queer teacher candidates. As narrative inquirers, it is important to recognize that peoples' understanding and perspectives shift and change over time. In this thesis, I use Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013, 2014) framework of *narrative*

reveal to show how assumptions and bias can be revealed through a process of living, telling, and retelling a narrative; *narrative revelation* to show how queer teacher candidates experiences can be "excavated through lived and storied experience—the *living* and the *telling*" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013, p. 1119) and how with every new retelling the complexities of experiences can be understood at a deeper level; and *narrative reformation* to show how their practices can be reformed through an awakened perspective (Pushor & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013). Ciuffetelli Parker's work is intended to debunk deficit notions of stigma and marginalization, which makes it advantageous to analyzing the narratives of queer teacher candidates.

By taking into account *n*arrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation, we can better understand the complexity of the queer teacher candidate's experience in education. This study explored the 3Rs in order to better understand the assumptions and mindsets of queer teacher candidates in Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario.

Narrative Reveal

Narrative reveal shows how repeated tellings can bring unconscious assumptions to the surface of a narrative (Pushor & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013). All people hold their own bias and assumptions based on their previous life experiences. The element of narrative reveal helps us to uncover "excavated assumptions that surface in stories" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014, p. 245). In exploring the narratives of marginalized populations the element of narrative reveal can offer insight into the assumptions and bias held by marginalized groups. In analyzing the narratives of the participants, I use the element of narrative reveal to bring to light the hidden assumptions and bias in the stories of queer

teacher candidates. By uncovering the assumptions and bias of queer teacher candidates, we are better able to understand the beliefs and values of queer beginning teachers. In exploring participants' narrative reveal, revelation, and then reformation, we are able to uncover truths in their experience and follow participants along a journey of self-reflections and discovery.

Narrative Revelation

Narrative revelation exposes how experiences can be interrogated further to lead to an awakened perspective (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013). Ciuffetelli Parker (2014) explains that a narrative revelation is achieved through a process of living and telling stories. This thesis analyzes participants' narratives "to help make newly formed narrative revelations worthy of further interrogation for future practice" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013, p. 1119). By reflecting on one's lived experience, a deconstruction of the experience can help reveal a person's mindest, way of living, and way of thinking. If that story gets continued to be retold in ways that help reshape the narrative, then deconstructing further we might see individuals' narrative revelation of their own storied experience and how they might begin to reshape that experience for their future actions, leading to a narrative reformation. Through excavating story in this way it becomes possible to better understand the complexities of the queer experience in education at a much deeper level and begin to push back against deficit ways of thinking.

Narrative Reformation

Ciuffetelli Parker (2013) explains that "much like *reliving*, the element of *narrative reformation* implies, too, that we must live on edge amidst intersecting narrative threads" (p. 1122). I use the element of narrative reformation to show how

queer teacher candidates began to reform their knowledge through an awakened story. Through the analysis of participants' narratives of reliving their experiences in tension, it becomes possible for narrative reformations to be brought to light. Their stories illustrate how participants began to live out a new narrative by reflecting on their retold narratives and engaging in a process of self-interrogation (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013). Narrative has the potential to create a profound impact on the understanding of both one's own and others' life experiences (Pushor & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013).

Analysis of the Data

In this section, I describe the procedure used to analyze and interpret the data. Before I began analysis of the data, I looked to Creswell and Plano Clark (2006) who explained that data must be coded and then categorized until themes begin to come to light. It is through coding and then identifying themes we add greater insight into the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012). The analysis of the data was guided by my theoretical frameworks; Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional commonplaces of narrative inquiry, and Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013) 3R framework.

I began my data analysis by compiling all of my data into one large MS Word file. Each participant had their own heading, under which I placed the transcription of our conversation followed by our emailed correspondence in chronological order. I then placed my own heading with all of my journals and field notes. I then printed the MS Word document and kept it in a master binder.

Once all of the data was compiled and organized I began reading and rereading the data. Participants told many stories from different times in their lives, some more relevant than others. To help guide the selection of central stories, I looked back to my

first two research questions: What stories do teacher candidates and I tell about being queer in Initial Teacher Education Programs? How do queer teacher candidates respond to social bias and stereotypes in the learning community? I looked for stories that represented the experiences and identities of queer teacher candidates.

The first task was to determine the framework that was best suited to explore each participant's story. In order to do this, I began what I call coding for a framework. I started going through each of the participants' stories, underlining the data using different colours. Each colour corresponded to a different facet of a framework; *temporality* was green, *sociality* was blue, *place* was pink, *reveal* was yellow, *revelation* was purple, and *reformation* was orange. After I categorized the data by colour, I began to notice that different participants' stories were more closely aligned with one particular framework over the others. It became clear very quickly that Norah's narrative was far more reflective and that the elements of narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation would be used to analyze her story. Marcus's story was closely aligned with temporality, sociality, and place; therefore, the three commonplaces would be used to explore his story. Elisabeth's narrative showed elements o*f reveal and revelation* and would be best explored through the 3R framework. Courtenay's stories were harder to determine. Both of her stories showed elements of each framework, however, the coding showed that each of the stories were more closely aligned with one framework over the others. In the end, one of her stories was analyzed using the 3R framework and the other using the three commonplaces.

Once I had identified the framework for participants, I began to further categorize their narratives. For example, Norah's stories presented assumptions within them so the

3R framework was a way to deconstruct further those assumptions to understand better and with deeper meaning the issues of stigma in queer storied accounts. Once again I read and reread the data, and I made a number of notes in the margins. I began to see commonalities in my notes in the margins. For example, words like "shame," "internal debate," and "could not come out" were repeated, among others. As I read and reread the data, some of these words in the margins became my reoccurring themes. I began writing these words at the tops of pages where I found them and then marked the page with a sticky tab. The theme and colour combinations were as follows: silencing was yellow, personal versus professional identity was blue, shame was green, complexity of experience was orange, religion was pink, comfort was purple, and family was neon yellow.

In the end, it became clear that four major themes were present across all of the stories: the complexity of the queer teacher candidate's experience; the separation of personal and professional identities; silence; and shame. Each of the four major themes were coded the following number of times: the complexity of the queer experience was 27 times; personal versus professional identity was coded 23 times; silencing was coded 21 times; and shame was coded 16 times.

Trustworthiness of Data

In narrative inquiry, storied experience and the retelling of storied experience continues to be reliable and valid, despite the fact that it is unique to an individual at a specific point in time. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that "every response is valid to some degree and contains the seed of an important point" (p. 181). Therefore, to ensure the trustworthiness and the accuracy of my interpretation of the data, participants

were asked to partake in the process of member-checking. Following the email correspondence and the interview, participants were asked to check the accuracy of the accounts and to confirm that the representations were fair and genuine.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct this study was granted from the Brock University Research Ethics Board (Appendix D). During data collection, personal identifiers such as names, gender, and locations were collected; however, pseudonyms have been used in the final research project. The pseudonyms assigned to participants have been used in all writing and discussion pertaining to the study. A master copy of transcripts, participant lists, and any information in which participants are identified are kept in a locked and secure location. Also, general descriptions of the university and community have been described but specific locations or dates have not been identified. Members of my research will have access to the data. This includes my thesis advisor and myself.

All email correspondence between the researcher and participants was done through password-protected documents. Any identifying information has been kept in a locked and secure location at all times. During data collection and analysis, all audio recordings and written records were kept in a locked secure location in the researcher's home. All written records and audiotapes will be kept in a locked box in my home for a period of 5 years and then destroyed.

As a result of the sensitive nature of this study, some participants could have felt upset or uncomfortable. Participants were provided with contact information for freely accessible support services in their community, which they could contact at any point should they have felt distressed. In addition, participants were made fully aware that they

may withdraw from the study at any time if they so wished, and that it would in no way affect my ability to fulfill the requirements of my Master of Education program.

In chapter 4, I present the data, and a deconstruction and discussion of the data in tandem. While many other theses may delineate the presentation and deconstruction/discussion of data, this narrative inquiry study, like others (e.g., Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Grenville, 2012; Munn, 2013) presents them fluidly in tandem.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF STORIED NARRATIVES—QUEER

TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

In this chapter, I use narrative inquiry to explore and gain insight into the storied experiences of queer teacher candidates. Throughout this chapter, three former teacher candidates and I share our experience of being queer in Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario. I explore the influence of these stories on our identities as beginning teachers. In the course of this inquiry, I lived alongside my participants as we shared stories of our past and present experiences in education. Through the analysis of these experiences using both Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional commonplaces and Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013) 3R narrative inquiry framework, important themes emerged that offer great insight into the storied accounts of queer teacher candidates.

In the process of sharing our stories, I used the following questions to guide the research: What stories do teacher candidates and I tell about being queer in Initial Teacher Education Programs? How do queer teacher candidates respond to social bias and stereotypes in the learning community? Can queer teacher candidates' narratives inform teacher education reform? Following data collection, I analyzed each participant's story using one of two theoretical frameworks: Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional commonplaces (temporality, sociality, and place) or Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013, 2014) 3R narrative inquiry framework—narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation. I used the theoretical frameworks to deconstruct and analyze the storied experiences of all participants, including my own storied experiences. In this chapter, I highlight one theme per participant and I deconstruct each participant's

narrative using one framework. Then I discuss how all themes cross all participant stories.

I use Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) commonplaces of narrative inquiry framework to explore the story of my first day; I also use Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013) 3R narrative inquiry framework to explore my diversity narrative. I begin with my stories first in order to illustrate how each is deconstructed from two narrative inquiry frameworks. Following my own storied analysis, I use the 3R narrative inquiry framework to deconstruct "Norah's Professional Mask." Next, I unpack "Marcus's Dilemma" using the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry. Finally, "Elisabeth's Discomfort: is analyzed using the 3R narrative inquiry framework. From this analysis, four themes emerged: the complexity of the queer teacher candidate's experience; the separation of personal and professional identities; silence; and shame.

Courtenay's Narrative: Complexity of Queer Teacher Candidate Experiences

In my reflections and conversations with the participants for this narrative inquiry, I described alongside them the impact of my sexuality on my life as a queer teacher candidate. Like the other participants, I am a recent graduate of an Initial Teacher Education Program in Ontario. I attended my program at a mid-sized university in South Central Ontario. Upon completion of my Bachelor of Education, I entered into a Master of Education program.

In this section, I share and explore two of my narratives. The first story is deconstructed using Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013, 2014) 3R framework of narrative inquiry: narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation. The second story is

analyzed using Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place.

My Diversity Narrative: Preconceived Notions of Queer Teachers

I use Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013) 3R framework to deconstruct another of my stories. As Ciuffetelli Parker (2013) explains,

the terms *narrative reveal*, *revelation*, and *reformation* are useful to help burrow deeply into storied assumptions and how teaching gets enacted when those assumptions also get enacted in classrooms. Storied assumptions of diverse topics, especially in our rapidly changing society, can be dangerous beginning points for beginning teachers. (p. 244)

Using the 3R framework to deconstruct my opening narrative, the following section shows how my own bias and assumptions caused me to question my own identity as a beginning teacher and how I ultimately was able to learn to value my emotions and find positivity in the truth of my experience. The theme that surfaces out of this narrative is the assumptions and preconceived ideas of queer teacher candidates. Let's go back to the story that opened this thesis. I titled that story *my diversity narrative* (see Prologue).

Excavating My Story Using the *Narrative Reveal* Narrative Inquiry Element

In this section, I will use the element of narrative reveal to show how, through a process of *telling* my story, I came to *reveal* my own assumptions and bias. In my own exploration of this thesis, the pivotal story for me was my diversity narrative (see Prologue).

My diversity narrative tells my story as a teacher candidate in my teaching methods classroom. In my story, two of my colleagues began our weekly presentation

with an icebreaker about the topic of diversity. This quick game/activity was meant to show how stereotypes sometimes profile us as something we are not. In an effort to give an example, one of the presenters, Cathy, gave an example that marginalized and discredited queer people.

Exploring the dimension of narrative reveal in my retold story as first presented in this thesis's Prologue shows how one single event caused a string of complex emotions which stirred deeply within me. My initial reaction in looking around the classroom is telling in itself. When Cathy "told us how she received a scholarship for soccer to a college in the United States" and expressed her discontent, it was as if I was hoping others would see fault in what Cathy had said and to rush to my aid. Looking around the classroom and realizing that none of my fellow teacher candidates or the professor were disturbed by the way the presenter spoke, further supported my assumption that there was a stigma around being queer in education. I was hurt; as I wrote in my story, "to many of the other teacher candidates Cathy had just given an example of the activity, but, to me, Cathy had just attacked the core of who I am." The realization for me now, but perhaps not then, is that my sexuality is intrinsically wrapped in my identity. When Cathy gave that example, I felt my identity attacked and this act made me feel that she (and others) believed there was something wrong with whom I was as a queer young woman. When my other student colleagues said nothing in response, I perceived that they agreed with her. When the professor said nothing, I felt that the message given by the instructor was that this type of comment was accepted.

I explained "I was normally an active participant in class but, in that moment, I completely shut down. Gone was my desire to be present, I just wanted to leave." This

reflection here uncovers that, in that moment of crisis, I became frozen with an overwhelming anxiety within me. I felt a tension from the overlapping complexity of identity within my storied experience of what it meant to be queer juxtaposed with what it meant to be a valued human being in society, where I could be accepted for who I was. I did not have an outlet in my classroom to express the authenticity of my feelings and, as a result, I withdrew from the rest of the lesson. My frustration with my colleagues became evident as I began to question how none of my fellow prospective teachers recognized this "blatant act of homophobia." I increasingly felt concern that the other teacher candidates would one day have queer students in their classrooms. Might they not be able to recognize how moments like this one that had occurred for me in questioning my value as a human being during the strategy used for the topic of teaching diversity could shape a young vulnerable individual?

It becomes clear in dissecting this narrative using the element of narrative reveal that there are a variety of emotions at play here. The complexity of my emotions clouded how I felt in that moment and caused me to judge everyone around me. My bias towards anyone and everyone in my methods class led to me questioning my own identity yet again.

Excavating My Story Using the *Narrative Revelation* Narrative Inquiry Element

In this section, I use the element of narrative revelation to explore my storied experience further to show how it led me to an awakened perspective. In my opening diversity narrative I describe how I became a teaching assistant, as a graduate student, for a class entitled Introductions to Foundations of Education. In a discussion centered on avoiding bias as educators, I read the first- and second-year students in the course my

diversity narrative. I had told them it was a true story sent to me by a friend because I did not want it to impact how freely they would speak if they knew it was my own lived story. After I read the story, I was surprised by the responses from the students. Most of the students did not feel there was anything wrong with the example Cathy chose. In my storied account I wrote,

> Many students expressed that because the author was a lesbian she was overly sensitive to the other teacher candidate's remarks. One student told me that they did not understand why gay people make a big deal of this because they have historically not been oppressed. In taking a poll of the class only one student of twenty felt there was a problem with how this teacher candidate spoke. (Personal reflection, April 16, 2012)

Choosing to share this story with my students became a turning point for me. As I process and then analyze my students' comments in this story, I make visible two major revelations. First, I entered into that seminar with the assumption that my students would react differently than my colleagues 2 years before. To me, I thought that the message of bias and homophobia enacted by teachers in my diversity story was clear, that is why I had used it as an example in the foundations course for which I was a teaching assistant. Yet, my students reacted in much the same way my colleagues had. They did not see anything wrong with how Cathy had behaved; as I wrote, "I was truly shocked by the response [of my students]." It had not occurred to me that my students might not have recognized the homophobia in the narrative. By excavating further my story, I reveal my own assumption. This allowed me to come to the revelation that the issue of homophobia

in education is very deeply embedded in our mainstream society. The complexity of the dilemma for me, I suddenly came to understand, was not always easily identifiable.

Second, after retelling my diversity narrative and recognizing that my students could not identify the homophobia in my story, I left my seminar with flashbacks of my Initial Teacher Education Program storied experience. I explain, "After retelling the story I could not help feeling the same anger and frustration I had during the initial experience." This time, however, I was not crippled by the complexity of my emotions. I did not withdraw and shut down. Instead, by interrogating this storied experience while in the midst of doing narrative inquiry on this topic as a graduate student, I came to an awakened perspective—that there was *truth* in these emotions and in my experience, and that it was important to bring this revelation to the forefront both in my studies as a graduate student, and as a queer teacher doing work in a diverse society. All students deserve to be treated with value and equality.

Excavating My Story Using the *Narrative Reformation* Narrative Inquiry Element

Ciuffetelli Parker (2013) describes narrative reformation as a process by which teacher knowledge has been transformed through an awakened new story. The narrative reveal in my story is that I carried my own bias and assumptions as a queer teacher candidate. The narrative revelation after further deconstruction of the layered story is that the complexity of homophobia is important for me to keep deconstructing as a queer teacher with a social justice stance for all students of diversity, as I entered into my thesis work with a sense of purpose. After my experience as a Teaching Assistant, I explained, "I had confirmed what I already knew, that there needs to be more research and greater awareness of the queer experience in Initial Teacher Education Programs. It is through

countless stories like these that I knew I had to act, in a formal sense, to debunk this

deficit (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013) way of thinking." Within my story, I make visible an

important narrative reformation within my narrative experience as I deconstruct deeply.

Regardless of the complexity of the queer experience in teacher education, I chose to not

only see the truth in my experience but to do something about it. T*he* narrative

reformation was, in a true sense, my decision to pursue this thesis topic and to do it

openly in an educational setting.

My First Day:

When I entered my Initial Teacher Education Program I knew that I was queer. I

had been dating women for years. I was out to my family and friends and happy

with where I was at in my life. Choosing to enter into teaching was a hard

decision for me. Growing up, I had been raised in a Catholic home and attended

Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Although high school was a

confusing time for me, I had largely positive experiences. My sexuality was never

an issue for me in Catholic school because it was only in university that I began to

explore my feelings for other women. I had largely positive memories of my

youth in the Catholic board, so when the time came to pick a board for my teacher

education placement, I chose the school board in which I had been raised. This

means I also registered in the teacher education program within its Catholic

cohort stream. It had occurred to me that my sexuality might pose some

difficulties but I thought I understood the environment because I recalled it as

positive. When I entered my Initial Teacher Education Program I entered into the

Catholic stream, partially to appease my mother and partially because that was all

I had known. In my teacher education program, we were divided into cohorts based on the school boards where we were doing our practicum placements. I had chosen the board that I had attended for both my elementary and secondary education.

On my first day in the program, I got there early. There was one other person in the classroom so I picked a table and sat down. Slowly the classroom began to fill up around me. As I sat there, I saw people I recognized and knew from high school walking into the room and taking a seat. I began to feel a little nervous because I was sure that at least a few of them would know that I was queer. I did not know any of them well enough to feel sure that they would keep my sexuality to themselves. As the class began, we opened with a prayer. Then each of our three instructors introduced themselves and spoke about their backgrounds in education. During his introduction one of the instructors, Professor Justin, explained more about the cohort. He spoke about how lucky we were to have a publicly funded Catholic system and the importance of our faith in education. Professor Justin then explained to the class the importance of embodying Catholic values as teachers of both the curriculum and the faith. He told us that, if we did not feel that we live our life according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, to let one of the instructors know and they would gladly move us to another cohort. In that moment, I panicked. I stayed sitting but I just wanted to run. I felt like I was a fraud that snuck in somewhere where I did not belong. It is no secret to anyone that the Catholic Church does not support homosexuality and I truly felt that if somebody in that class outed me to one of

my instructors, that I would be asked to leave. I silently carried this feeling with

me throughout the duration of my program (Personal written reflection).

In the following section, I use Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) commonplaces

of narrative inquiry (place, temporality, sociality) to deconstruct my own personal story

of my first day as a teacher candidate.

Excavating My Story Using the *Place* Narrative Inquiry Commonplace

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that it is essential to take into account the

impact environment has on experience. Examining the element of place in my story

reveals how the level of comfort in a place can change as a person changes. On my first

day, when I entered into my Catholic cohort and teacher education class at the university,

I was ill prepared. I wrote,

> as I sat there, I saw people I recognized and knew from high school walking into
>
> the room and taking a seat. I began to feel a little nervous because I was sure that
>
> at least a few of them would know that I was queer. I did not know any of them
>
> well enough to feel sure that they would keep my sexuality to themselves.

My level of comfort in the Catholic cohort began to waver the moment the first teacher

candidate walked in that I knew. While my sexuality may not have been an issue to those

peers, I began to feel nervous that it could have been. Not knowing them well enough to

know that they would keep my secret made me feel nervous. These feelings only

intensified as Professor Justin began to speak; he

> explained to the class the importance of embodying Catholic values as teachers of
>
> both the curriculum and the faith. He told us that, if we did not feel that we live

our life according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, to let one of the

instructors know and they would gladly move us to another cohort.

Instantly, my comfort in the program went from wavering to almost non-existent. The

discomfort I felt in the place of my cohort created a dilemma for me. I was caught in a

complex situation—where I was struggling between a place I had once felt welcome and

now I felt like an outsider. Entering the program, I had placed pressure on myself to

appear as the ideal embodiment of Catholic values and as Professor Justin spoke those

words, I began to further suppress a large part of my identity.

Excavating My Story Using the *Sociality* Narrative Inquiry Commonplace

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) tell of the importance of addressing the impact of

social context, feelings, and relational impact on experiences. In this narrative, sociality

plays an essential piece of the puzzle. When people I had known from high school

entered my cohort on the first day, I was nervous they would out me. It had taken me a

number of years to feel comfortable with my sexuality and begin to live an open and out

life. Stepping back into the closet was hard enough for me to do entering a Catholic

cohort but I had not anticipated that there would be people in that environment that would

know the truth. As a result, I always kept certain people at arm's length.

When Professor Justin made the statement about making sure we all embody

Catholic values, I interpreted that his strict Catholic values were the same as everyone

else in the cohort. I felt troubled by this. Here the element of sociality offers insight into

the complexity of my experience as a queer teacher candidate in a Catholic cohort. I

began to feel tension between my own beliefs and values in life, and how I interpreted the

beliefs and values of those around me. I was confused, scared, secretive, and on the

margins, believing that everyone was on the same page as my professor whereas I had to hide my real authentic self.

It is only years later and after significant time has passed that I can recognize that Professor Justin's views may not have necessarily have been the same as everyone else's in my cohort. The people I keep in touch with from my cohort are often shocked to find out how I was feeling during this time. I was very outgoing and was often the person organizing the social events in our cohort. I was an overachiever and put a great deal of effort into everything I did, in order to fit in, to feel accepted, and to be social for the benefit of creating, perhaps, my own positive community in a community where I felt at odds with myself. Sometimes I wonder if I was trying to overcompensate in some way for not presenting my authentic self to those around me. Keeping this secret from my colleagues and friends left me with feelings of guilt. Others shared their personal stories and experiences with me but there was always a portion of myself that I never spoke about and kept hidden. It took time before I realized that, during my Initial Teacher Education Program, I had been stuck in a complex space. I was trapped in the middle of who I wanted to be and who I thought others wanted me to be. Deconstructing the sociality of my narrative sheds light on this complexity at a very deep level.

Excavating My Story Using the *Temporality* Narrative Inquiry Commonplace

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) state that when studying an event, it is important not to explore it in isolation but to also take into account what comes before and after. For myself, I had very few negative reactions to my sexuality in the past. Having come out after secondary school, my sexuality had never been an issue in my education. Never

having experienced negative reactions to my sexuality in my Catholic upbringing may have left me a little naïve about how entering a Catholic cohort would affect me. I certainly had reservations and knew I would not be able to be as open as I had been, but I did not know the extent to which I would feel closeted. Having been unprepared to face such a wave of emotions left me feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation. I still remember wanting to run out of that classroom on that first day of my Initial Teacher Education Program and the confusion I felt.

Years prior, I had struggled with my family's lack of understanding but, in my mind, that came from a place of confusion. They "wrestled with feelings of shame, embarrassment, and concern for my well-being, while I grappled with their lack of understanding." Although nobody in my immediate family identifies as queer, I never felt like I did not belong or that I was not loved. Being in a cohort was the first time in my life that I felt like I was not accepted. Although many of the people in my cohort never knew I was queer, and many of the people in my cohort never expressed homophobic beliefs, I felt that, by merely existing as a queer teacher candidate in a cohort that upheld Catholic values, I was excluded and displaced. Initially,

> my decision to hide my sexuality was because I entered into a Catholic program,
> but it was coupled with the attitudes of other teacher candidates. I witnessed
> countless closed-minded remarks from colleagues and, as the year went on, I
> became more angry and upset. I was not happy with what I felt was ignorance
> among my colleagues and I did not know what to do about it.

Originally, I had chosen to keep my sexuality quiet because I chose to enter a Catholic cohort. However, it was as I "witnessed countless closed-minded remarks from

colleagues" outside of that cohort that I continued to remain closeted out of fear that they would not accept me. While I continued to live in the closet out of fear, my fears changed over time. During the short 8-month program, "I was not happy with what I felt was ignorance among my colleagues and I did not know what to do about it." During this short time, I never did work through my complex emotions and develop the courage to reveal my sexuality to my peers.

My Excavating Summary

In this inquiry, a deeper understanding of the complexity of the queer teacher candidate's experience was achieved by exploring the commonplaces—place, sociality, and temporality. As I *retell* my storied experience we experience the confusion and intense emotions I struggled with during that time. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that we need to explore all of the commonplaces. In my case, this such an exploration, we can better understand the compounding factors that contribute to the queer experience in education. In exploring this narrative, the complexity of the queer experience and the confusion that surrounds this particular time in my life is evident. The commonplace of place shows how my feelings of comfort changed within the same school board as my role changed from student to teacher candidate and as my sexuality became a factor. The commonplace of sociality shows how I struggled with my perceptions of Professor Justin and the teacher candidates whom I believed knew my truth. The commonplace of temporality shows how my experiences in education changed over time and as my role in education changed. Taken together, the deconstruction of this narrative using the narrative inquiry commonplaces uncovers an important theme of the complexity of the queer teacher candidate experience.

Personal Versus Professional Identity: Norah's Professional Mask

Norah is a colleague who expressed interest in participating in my study. Norah grew up in South Western Ontario where she attended elementary and secondary school. She knew that she wanted to be a teacher from an early age. She attended a consecutive Initial Teacher Education Program at a mid-size university in South Central Ontario. She is certified to teach in the primary/junior divisions. She currently is working on a graduate degree in education. Throughout the process, her enthusiasm was evident in the care she took with her responses and the detailed interpretations of her stories. I analyzed Norah's story using Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013) 3Rs—narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation—in order to show the significant shifts in Norah's beliefs and assumptions. Through my analysis of the storied data, the theme of separation of personal and professional identity is apparent in Norah's narrative.

The Tensions Found in Teacher Identity: Narrative Reveal

In this section, I deconstruct Norah's narrative using the framework of *narrative reveal* to show how repeated tellings can bring unconscious assumptions to the surface of a narrative (Pushor & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013). Through Norah's telling of her narrative, assumptions are revealed about both her sexuality and teaching. I present her story in sections as I weave my analysis throughout, as is found in other narrative inquiry works (Grenville & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013; Munn, 2013).

Norah shares the story of how she struggled with her identity as she was growing up. Like many other queer people she felt something was different but was clouded by heteronormative beliefs and social ideals. She shares her story:

I can say that feeling personally comfortable within the *marriage*, *babies*, *job*,

happily ever after role was a large reason I took a long time to understand my sexuality. My understanding of being a lesbian as a high school student was very rudimentary in that I really only thought of it within the realm of *butch* and *femme* stereotypes, or kissing other girls as a show for men. My knowledge was found mostly from media representations in regards to daily life as a lesbian—teacher and family influence discussed it on a basic anatomical level or centered around "sin." I very much desired a traditional family because that is what I had been taught was the definition of stability and happiness, and also because I am a caretaker personality. In coming out, it was initially a struggle for me to recognize that I could have a stable, happy, nurturing family outside of a heterosexual two-parent home. (Letter correspondence)

While Norah may have struggled with her sexuality growing up, she always knew that she wanted to be a teacher. She had been excited about entering into her Initial Teacher Education Program. The excitement she felt at entering her dream profession quickly began to fade as Norah began to feel uncomfortable in her own skin. As she describes:

My own teacher education program put an extreme amount of stress on professionalism. Their particular brand of professionalism involved leaving yourself at the classroom door. This made me feel uncomfortable in my own skin, especially during practicum experiences. I feel that stringently avoiding who you are as a part of your teaching detracts from your ability to develop genuine relationships with students. It is very hard to develop a trusting student-teacher relationship when part of who you are is completely absent. (Letter correspondence)

Norah's story reveals the tension she feels between leaving herself outside of the classroom doors and representing her authentic self, inside the classroom. As she says, "My own teacher education program put an extreme amount of stress on professionalism. Their particular brand of professionalism involved leaving yourself at the classroom door." This tension represents a major struggle for Norah as she begins to unravel her identity, which includes becoming a teacher. Norah does not feel she is able to fracture her identity into the personal and professional. She states, "This made me feel uncomfortable in my own skin, especially during practicum experiences." Norah also reveals something critical in her narrative here and that is the importance of developing trusting student–teacher relationships as she wrote, "It is very hard to develop a trusting student-teacher relationship when part of who you are is completely absent." Through this statement, we feel and imagine how Norah values being a good teacher and building meaningful relationships with her students, but that she is silenced in showing her true self. This creates a tension for Norah as she is unsure of how to build meaningful relationships with her students, while keeping a professional front.

Norah's story further reveals this tension during her Initial Teacher Education Program. She shows tension with her narrating words:

> While we weren't explicitly told which components of our lives to leave out, we were warned that speaking informally or sharing too much would make us seem juvenile. The prevailing advice seemed to be that we needed to be better than the staff: more capable, more formal, more willing, less complaining, [take] needless breaks, take on more. I had trouble with how far this removed us from our humanity as learners and teachers. We were warned against discussing our

program or friendships informally. While it wasn't specifically expected that we
not share details of our family, religious, or recreational lives, it became a little bit
confusing to separate the insistence on formality from what was acceptable for
conversation with students and staff. I feel as though I second-guessed all of the
personal details I shared. (Letter correspondence)

In this narrative excerpt, we see clearly and feel the confusion Norah feels trying
to decipher what details are acceptable to share and which are meant to be kept to herself.
She wrote, "While it wasn't specifically expected that we not share details of our family,
religious, or recreational lives, it became a little bit confusing to separate the insistence
on formality from what was acceptable for conversation with students and staff." This
shows how Norah wrestles with upholding a notion of professionalism but is confused
about where to draw the line. Her statement, "I had trouble with how far this removed us
from our humanity as learners and teachers" reveals and highlights deeply her difficulty
with her Initial Teacher Education Program. Norah's frustrations with the teachings of
her program are evident and show that this approach to teaching is clearly not one that
works for her values and beliefs. Her narrative reveals that she has "second-guessed all
the personal details" and she "had trouble with how far this removed us from our
humanity as learners and teachers." Norah's story, when deconstructed, reveals
embedded issues of authenticity of self.

Diversity: Narrative Revelation

In this section, I use the element of *narrative revelation* to explore further Norah's
narrative storied experience, in particular, with the topic of diversity. Norah's struggle to
understand how to separate her personal identity from her professional identity motivated

her to further explore her philosophy as a teacher. Her teacher education diversity class, and her feelings about the way her diversity class was taught, became a turning point for Norah, and allowed her a space where she could be vulnerable. She describes her experience in a class she took while in her Initial Teacher Education Program:

> Diversity was a 5-week class that was contained within four walls and unfortunately did not enter daily discussion. Teaching practice was removed from human beings. My diversity class did move towards understanding one's social position as a teacher, however, I felt that the program would have been improved by focusing on teaching practice in conjunction with the personal experience of the student and teacher. What good does it do to teach students that adults are all robotically similar? As I have stated, my teacher candidate program was headed in the right direction within the diversity class I took. It moved away from tokenism. In my opinion, learning to incorporate human experience, rather than study it in isolation, would improve the classroom lives of students, student teachers, and certified teachers. (Letter correspondence)

Norah recognizes here a need to see diversity not as an issue to be explored in isolation, but as a topic that must be integrated into each and every facet of her Initial Teacher Education Program. She explains, that she "felt that the program would have been improved by focusing on teaching practice in conjunction with the personal experience of the student and teacher." There is an important revelation in Norah's story: she demonstrates the notion that personal experiences matter in education. She writes, "Learning to incorporate human experience rather than study it in isolation would improve the classroom lives of students, student teachers, and certified teachers." Norah's

words show that she sees value in integrating the personal experience of students, student teachers, and certified teachers into classroom learning and that diversity is, in itself, a way of living out the curriculum of teaching and learning with students, rather than a topic to the side of curriculum.

The revelation in Norah's story is further understood through the description of her diversity professor and his class. She shares her experience:

I did enjoy my diversity class because I felt like my diversity professor was working against oppression even within the confines of the strict power structure of the education department. My professor himself brought his own experiences into his teaching. He discussed how being part of a racial minority while recognizing male privilege impacted how he felt he was received as an educator. He encouraged us to recognize our own social positions and how that impacted our decisions as teachers. He encouraged sensitivity to many types of people without being superficial. The way that he did this was to emphasize the importance of listening to the experience of the learner. This was an interesting position to uphold within an institution that was asking us to put on what seemed like a constant formal mask. The sensitivity my diversity professor encouraged is something that I feel [like] can't be really accomplished without some level of vulnerability, the amount that it takes to develop a relationship with a student. (Letter correspondence)

A revelation can be seen in Norah's retelling of her experience as she realized, "The sensitivity my diversity professor encouraged is something that I feel [like] can't be really accomplished without some level of vulnerability, the amount that it takes to develop a relationship with a student." When her professor chose to share his stories and

personal experience with the class, he, in essence, allowed a safe diverse space where Norah and the other teacher candidates could also feel free to present their authentic selves. Norah acknowledged that her professor's class was the only place where she did not feel compelled to wear her metaphorical mask to hide her full identity. Her professor's willingness to show his vulnerability and share his story, allowed a meaningful relationship with his students. It is only when Norah experiences this professor's class that she is able to come to an awakened realization—her revelation after many retellings of the experience—that she honours the place of personal experience and she sees humans as having a need for authenticity in both their private and professional lives. Norah is awakened, too, to the complexity of what it means to have a teaching life and a personal life in tandem with one and the other.

Norah also revealed biases that exist in mainstream society during our correspondence. She noticed that certain types of identities are more accepted than others. She takes a stance as she says:

> I also felt as a student and as a teacher that a certain type of personal life was more shared than others. Permanent teachers seemed to not have to think twice about sharing their experiences with heterosexual spouses and children as part of a family unit. Teachers who I knew had other experiences (divorce, children out of wedlock) were not as frequently open about their lives. I feel like this sends a subtle message to students that traditional families are still a more valued type of life. So, part of "changing at the staff level" means sharing lots of ways of living in discussion with students. Teachers are real, diverse people, too, and I think students need to know that. (Letter correspondence)

By interrogating her storied place of teaching further, Norah's perspective or revelation is that she understands stories and personal experience as valued in different contexts to people in society, based on traditional societal norms. In this portion of her narrative, she expresses her awareness that teachers more commonly share traditional family values than non-traditional values, which, in turn, tend to be hidden. In her experience, Norah observed "Permanent teachers seemed to not have to think twice about sharing their experiences with heterosexual spouses and children as part of a family unit. Teachers who I knew had other experiences (divorce, children out of wedlock) were not as frequently open about their lives." Norah draws the conclusion that, by choosing not to share non-traditional values with students, teachers are subtly sending the message that traditional families are more valued. She offers a solution that teachers should share "lots of ways of living in discussion with students" in their school classrooms. Norah also makes a powerful admission that "teachers are real, diverse people, too, and I think students need to know that." Norah's belief that students should see their teachers as 'real, diverse people' is a critical revelation in her story here. She is both interrogating the notion that teachers are supposed to present a "professional front" in the classroom, and she also is challenging mainstream traditional values as she has seen them played out in her classroom experiences as a teacher candidate. She explains that she believes in the importance of "sharing lots of ways of living in discussion with students."

What Norah's narrative illustrates is that she has had a significant shift in her way of thinking. She had assumed that the only way to interact with students was to wear a "professional mask." However, the revelation of her story, through the telling and

retelling of her experience, is that there is greater value in teachers' diverse ways of living and interacting with their students.

A New Way of Easing the Tensions: Narrative Reformation

Norah has continued her work in the education field through the pursuit of a graduate degree. She still engages in a process of *reliving* her narrative past experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that while it can be hard to retell a narrative, it is "significantly more difficult to relive, to live out the new person" (p. 478). Ciuffetelli Parker (2013) explains that *narrative reformation* implies "that we must live on edge amidst intersecting narrative threads" (p. 1122). This means that through the process of reliving and self-questioning, Norah is able to achieve a new way of understanding. Narrative reformation is seen in glimpses as she is in constant reflection of her experiences. She describes her reflections and how retelling her experiences allowed her to reform her way of reliving and of understanding the role of personal experience in education:

> I don't think there was one specific experience that made me feel like my teacher identity and other facets of my identity should be connected. It is many of my life experiences combined that have brought me to that understanding. I learned, valued, and remembered more from my own educational experiences with teachers [to whom] I felt close connections. Those teachers tended to be people whose lives I knew more about. My high school drama teacher was very invested in students' lives; she took the time to get to know who we were not just as students but as people. She discussed her family—even her struggles with divorce and raising a daughter as a single mother. She even brought her daughter to work

sometimes, which probably wouldn't be allowed now. Teachers that I felt a real life connection to tied me to where I was and emphasized to me that this wasn't "just their job." I was a part of their life experience and they were part of mine. I think developing genuine relationships with students based on truth made me trust and respect my teachers. As I have remembered the most from what I learned from these types of teachers, I feel like it is important for me to strive to achieve the same kind of trust-based relationships with my students. This was mirrored in my university experience. Those classes where I was asked to reflect on my personal views in connection with course material were very valuable to me. I learn best through sharing in a trusted community. I appreciated professors who were honest with me, expected that I would be able to come to understand challenging concepts, and developed personal connections amongst and with students. I respected professors who shared personal experiences with me because it gave me an example of how to use my experiences for critical reflection and [for] the benefit of others. (Letter correspondence)

In retelling her storied experiences of her teacher education program and field placements, Norah is able to fully articulate her own beliefs and feelings about meaningful teaching as it is related to personal identity. As she reflects deeply, she illustrates the importance of teachers who were meaningful in her life, and who lived alongside their students. In this narrative, Norah admits that "developing genuine relationships with students based on truth made me trust and respect my teachers." Here she recognizes that she learned the most in instances where her teachers created a trusting community and developed personal connections with their students. Norah's storied

revelations have transformed into a new way of living, a narrative reformation, as she understands that what is important to her is not only the ability to share personal experience with students but the ability to understand that teachers and students become a part of a shared experience, and that this is what needs to be valued in schools. Norah explains how reflecting on her own storied experience with life-changing teachers has helped her to come to this conclusion. She explains, "I respected professors who shared personal experiences with me because it gave me an example of how to use my experiences for critical reflection and [for] the benefit of others." For Norah, this is the true value in teaching and a new way of living her teaching life.

During the summers, Norah helps to run a camp program for elementary school children. Norah explains that choosing to live authentically alongside her students allows her to relate on a different level, despite their age. She feels that having made the choice not to sensor herself and share her feelings and experiences has given her credibility among the children. Norah shared how she feels choosing not to sensor herself has allowed her to have fruitful discussions with the kindergarten-aged children with whom she works:

> One example of such a discussion was that it was, indeed, possible to play
> families with two daddies, because I knew a family that had two mommies.
> Sharing personal details and examples takes concepts out of the abstract for
> people, emphasizing the necessity of compassion. People see the necessity of
> equitable treatment a lot faster when it moves away from a concept and becomes
> someone's life. (Letter correspondence)

Norah's example of choosing to tell the children that she knew a family with two mommies shows Norah's ability to ease the tensions she once felt and that we read in her opening narrative above. During her Initial Teacher Education Program, Norah was so focused on putting on that professional mask and that sharing with her students about the family she knew with two mommies was not something she would have been likely to do. Now, having chosen to live her life authentically, Norah makes a profound statement about who she is as a queer educator. She writes, "People see the necessity of equitable treatment a lot faster when it moves away from a concept and becomes someone's life." This is the essence of Norah's reformation as an educator.

In exploring Norah's story using Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013, 2014) 3R framework, a greater understanding of the Norah's shift in beliefs was achieved. As she retells her experience, we begin to understand the difficulty she faces in trying to separate her personal and professional identity, in order, to wear this professional mask. In exploring Norah's narrative using the elements of narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation, the struggle she feels to remain true to herself is palpable. Through Norah's narrative, we follow her journey of self-reflection. We are able to see how she is able to come to a narrative reformation, recognizing that the teachers who had the greatest impact on her life were the ones that developed genuine relationships with their students and were not afraid to share aspects of their life. The deconstruction of this narrative uncovers a significant theme of the separation of personal and professional identity.

Silence: Marcus's Dilemma

I initially met Marcus through a mutual acquaintance. The acquaintance knew I was looking for queer teacher candidates for this study and she suggested that her friend,

Marcus, might be interested. Marcus attended a concurrent education program at a mid-size university in South Western Ontario. He is currently working as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) in a kindergarten classroom while applying for teaching positions with various school boards. As Marcus's story is presented below, it will be deconstructed using Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional commonplaces of narrative inquiry: *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place*.

In Marcus's narrative, temporality, sociality, and place are all key components in unpacking his story. Events with peers in past educational settings profoundly impacted decisions he made as a teacher candidate. Marcus's story begins during his time in high school where he is learning about himself and exploring his sexuality. Negative reactions from his peers hurt him and silence him. However, over time and in different settings, Marcus learns to feel comfortable and confident being his authentic self. When Marcus enters his Initial Teacher Education Program he continues to live his truth, yet, when he enters his practicum setting, Marcus's narrative demonstrates a regression of sorts, which silences him again.

My initial communication with Marcus was online and the first time we met in person was for our first interview/conversation before we began the email/lettered correspondence portion of this study. My initial impression of Marcus was that he has a calm and confident demeanor. He describes himself as "out" and not concerned with what others think. We sipped on hot apple cider as Marcus explained how being queer impacted his experiences as a teacher candidate during his Initial Teacher Education Program. Marcus shared that he first began a relationship with another male when he was in high school. He described his first experiences coming out as a high school student

further in one of our letters. He wrote:

> Since I was feeling such strong feelings for this guy, I felt like I just had to share
> it with someone. If I remember correctly, I came out to three of my close friends
> at the time. They were all supportive and it felt amazing to finally have friends
> [with whom] I could be honest. I think I was a little bit naive when I thought that
> they wouldn't tell anyone, but I'm sure each of them told maybe only one other
> person, but that person tells another and so on. But, in my mind, I believed that
> those were the only people who knew at the time and it was not at all [about
> which] something I was open. Years later though, I learned that my relationship
> with that guy had me at the centre of the rumour mill—a fact that upset me very
> much at the time. (Letter correspondence)

Marcus continues and retells how these events had an effect on his high school
experience and how he subsequently came out to his family and friends. He shares that,
after his relationship ended, he was confused. For Marcus, however, the involvement in
the arts via a Drama festival, became a positive outlet. It was an environment where he
felt supported and accepted:

> After I started to feel more anxious about having this secret part of my life (my
> sexuality and my boyfriend), and we were also in very different places in our
> lives—myself in high school and him in university. After that relationship, my
> sexuality was something that sort of was on the back burner. It was something I
> always thought about, but the idea of a relationship or having a boyfriend wasn't
> something I was particularly pursuing, I thought it was something that I would
> find later in a few years. But once I signed up for the SEARS Drama Festival, I

was immersed in an environment and surrounded by people who were accepting, liberal, and supportive in so many ways. Feeling comfortable with my friends in this environment, I started to be more open about my sexuality. Boys were something that we started to talk about more, and once we started seeing the other school's plays, it never felt better to be able to lean over to a friend and comment on a cute boy or strikingly handsome face. I was having so much fun! It is under these circumstances that I came to meet my current boyfriend of more than 6½ years. Like I explained in our interview earlier, it was once we were dating that we felt we just had to come out. Not being able to share what we had together and the happiness we were feeling felt like a crime. By the end of grade 11, I was out to my family, friends, and essentially anyone who cared to overhear from someone or ask about me. The feelings of relief are almost indescribable. (Letter correspondence)

Marcus expressed his feelings of relief after disclosing his sexual identity as a critical decision in his life. He had felt that, as a young high school student, he needed to keep his sexuality a secret from others. It was once he began dating that he felt immense joy that he expressed a need to declare this experience to family and friends. He explains, "it was once we were dating that we felt we just had to come out. Not being able to share what we had together and the happiness we were feeling felt like a crime." The theme of silence is prevalent in this portion of Marcus's narrative above. In the next sub-section, I unpack the theme of silence further by using the commonplaces of narrative inquiry—place, sociality, and temporality.

Silence in the Initial Teacher Education Program: Place

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) acknowledge the importance of *place* and the impact of places on narrative inquiry studies. For Marcus, his level of comfort changes based on the various settings in which he has experiences.

When Marcus first entered his Initial Teacher Education Program, he no longer had to hide his sexuality. He began his teacher education program by being open about his sexuality. He felt his peers were not only respectful but welcoming. He explains:

> My peers in my program, as far as I know, knew I was gay from the early onset of our courses and experiences together (either from Facebook, or a personal conversation with me). From what I can remember, I never heard any negative comments, or slurs (besides "That's so gay" which isn't a problem specific to teacher education programs, but with society, in general), and if people were ignorant, at least they weren't voicing their ignorance out loud. I can say I did feel comfortable among my peers. I felt like I was a part of the group and, at the same time, I feel like my peers respected me. (Letter correspondence)

Marcus shares above that he felt comfortable in his curriculum classes in the teacher education program as he says, "I can say I did feel comfortable among my peers. I felt like I was a part of the group and, at the same time, I feel like my peers respected me." However, Marcus's comfort with revealing his sexuality began to falter when he began his practicum, when his place of experiencing the teacher education program shifted from academic study at the university during his teacher education courses, to field experience in his teaching practicum. While Marcus sensed that his sexuality was not an issue to his peers or professors, he became increasingly concerned about how it

would impact his placements. He writes:

> My most conflicting feelings relate to revealing my sexuality to my associate
> teachers or other staff at schools while on placement. This is something I never
> did, and also something I had to decide not to do each time I started a new
> placement, or [when] the conversation steered in the direction of dating. The
> feelings I associate with that time aren't overtly angry, but rather confusing and
> anxious. And those feelings continue now even working in a school environment
> and classroom. While I'm comfortable and open revealing my sexuality to my co-
> workers, I still debate internally how open to be with the students (and, therefore,
> parents). (Letter correspondence)

During our initial conversation, Marcus disclosed that he only told another student teacher at his placement that he was gay. This was because he was the only person who asked if he had a girlfriend or a boyfriend. Choosing to ask this way instead of assuming his sexuality made Marcus feel comfortable enough to reveal that he was in a homosexual relationship. The discomfort felt by Marcus in this setting shows how the level of comfort for teacher candidates can differ from place to place. Place is important to Marcus as he felt comfortable being himself with his peers in his place of his academic program, but not in the place of school, in his practicum placement. Marcus describes his feelings as "confusing and anxious." Marcus's story shows a tension of whether to disclose or not disclose his sexuality depending on his place. In the traditional mainstream place of schools, Marcus does not see queer teachers represented so he is unsure of how others will react to his sexuality. Marcus places pressure on himself to silence his sexuality in this setting because of what he perceives in schools to be an enactment of traditional norms.

Silence in the Initial Teacher Education Program: Sociality

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that understanding *sociality* means understanding that both personal and social conditions impact the social context of experience. Sexuality and one's sexual orientation are very deep and personal components of our human identity. Marcus explains how the confusion he felt came from a constant internal battle within himself that he called an internal debate:

I think the whole internal debate I've alluded to comes from my perceptions and experiences with society. My past experiences of being in the closet, as well as how others have treated me negatively always linger with me and, in the end, sometimes make me question some of the decisions I make (e.g., revealing my sexuality to students and parents). I don't want to be in a situation where I feel judged, or criticized, or attacked. I consciously made the effort to come out, to surround myself with open-minded, accepting people, and to avoid situations where I could possibly feel uncomfortable with my sexuality. Now working in the teaching field, I interact (not by choice, of course) with a variety of people who I may not ever really associate with outside of work. For example, parents in a classroom come from multiple backgrounds, religions, and experiences, which have all shaped their world views. I'm sure there would be parents on a personal level that [with whom] I would connect and [with whom I could] get along, and if we were friends, they knowing my sexuality wouldn't be a big deal. But then there are other parents, who, in all honesty, seem like the type of people I wouldn't want to run into late on the street after coming out of a gay bar. But in the work and classroom setting, I see it as either everyone knows, or no one

knows. A weird mix of in between where I get to choose doesn't exist. So I guess [the] long story short is: I'm worried about the parents who would possibly be judgmental or vocally critical. (Letter correspondence)

Using the sociality commonplace to deconstruct the crux of his narrative above offers insight into the dilemma and his silence as a strategy to cope with his feelings and reactions from others. Negative reactions from peers during a crucial period in his self-discovery had lasting effects for Marcus. For example, in high school, Marcus became involved in the arts and the SEARS drama festival as a way to solve his dilemma of silence. In exploring creative arts, he found like-minded people with whom to socialize and build emotional ties. As an adult in a position of responsibility in schools, the sociality of the situation is much different because his internal debate—the dilemma of silence—reappears. Marcus confirms his tension of keeping silent with trying to be his authentic self and have professional relationships with parents is not either-or, saying, "a weird mix of in between where I get to choose doesn't exist." This stresses that he once again is experiencing this tension of silencing himself or choosing to be transparent. For Marcus, there should not be an in between but in trying to find his place within societal norms he finds himself stuck in the middle. Marcus's narrative provides some insight into the internal debate he feels in choosing to come out. He shares, "I consciously made the effort to come out, to surround myself with open-minded, accepting people, and to avoid situations where I could possibly feel uncomfortable with my sexuality." Marcus's deliberate choice to surround himself with open-minded people and avoid uncomfortable situations helps us to understand his internal dialogue.

Like Norah, Marcus struggles with his own "professional mask." He explains that

in the "classroom setting, I see it as either everyone knows, or no one knows." Marcus's bias and assumptions about parents and their backgrounds contribute to his decision to keep his sexuality quiet. He recognizes that "parents in a classroom come from multiple backgrounds, religions, and experiences which have all shaped their world views." While he expresses that he would not be opposed to being "out" to some parents, there are others who "seem like the type of people I wouldn't want to run into late on the street after coming out of a gay bar." This statement shows how Marcus's social bias and assumptions have contributed to his fear of removing his professional mask.

Marcus's silence also attends to the language of Connelly and Clandinin and their various works on "secret stories" and "cover stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Clandinin et al., 2006).

> Clandinin et al. (2006) . . . explain that "teachers' stories, their personal practical knowledge, are the stories teachers live and tell of who they are and what they know. Some teachers' stories are 'secret stories,' stories told only to others in safe places both on and off the school landscape" (p. 7). Other teacher stories are "cover stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 15), "stories told to maintain a sense of continuity with the dominant stories of school shaping a professional knowledge landscape" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 7). (As cited in Griffin & Beatty, 2012, p. 255)

Marcus recognizes that in his professional environment he maintains his "cover story" by choosing not to be open about his sexuality with parents. He also acknowledges that there are some parents with whom he may feel comfortable to share these "secret stories," but as Griffin and Beatty (2012) explain this can only be done when you have built trust.

Silence in the Initial Teacher Education Program: Temporality

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) remind us of the importance of not studying lived experiences in isolation but understanding the importance of taking into account what comes before and after every studied event. For Marcus, negative social reactions from peers during secondary school were an attack on his identity. When Marcus was in high school, he disclosed his sexual identity to a few close friends. Not long after, he found out that he was at the centre of the rumour mill, "a fact that upset [him] very much at the time." Not only was he struggling with a confusing time in his life, he had to cope with negative reactions from his peers as well. These feelings of non-acceptance remained with Marcus despite the many years that passed. He discloses, "My past experiences of being in the closet, as well as how others have treated me negatively, always linger with me and, in the end, sometimes, make me question some of the decisions I make." Understandably, these fears have left Marcus with concern that his sexuality will not be well received in other situations as well. He writes, "I don't want to be in a situation where I feel judged, or criticized, or attacked." This translated into the tension of silencing which Marcus felt during his practicum field experience and with potential professional relationships that he might have had or not with parents, students, and staff. Equally important for Marcus is what his previous experience has illustrated about teachers. During our initial interview, Marcus disclosed that growing up he did not have any teachers who were openly gay. Marcus indicated that having an openly gay teacher as a role model would have helped him a great deal during his own youth. This is an important disclosure for Marcus. While it may have helped Marcus to have an openly gay role model during his high school years, having an openly gay teacher might have had an

even greater impact on Marcus's perception of teachers and lives of teachers. When Marcus entered his Initial Teacher Education Program, he had preconceived ideas and biases of what it meant to be a teacher. His previous experience had left him with the idea that teachers are meant to present their students with mainstream heterosexual values. This created a conflict for Marcus in choosing to reveal his own sexuality. Marcus, once again, felt the tension of silence because he had never experienced a teacher who did not present mainstream heterosexual values. In looking at the past, present, and tension of his future experiences within Marcus's narrative, the theme of silence is a thread that runs through his schooling experience from his formative, adolescent, and now young-adult postsecondary years as he interns as a practicing teacher.

Silencing

In this inquiry, a deeper understanding of silencing is developed by exploring the three commonplaces as seen in Marcus's story. As we lived alongside Marcus's narrative, we experience the tension and anxiety of his silence. Place, sociality, and temporality all offer equally important understanding of how Marcus becomes silenced through the tensions he lives throughout his schooling and ultimate experience as a practicing student teacher. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that it is the exploration of all three of the commonplaces that makes a narrative inquiry study. For Marcus, his past and present experiences in education and the meaning he draws from them now have a profound impact on his identity as a beginning teacher who is queer. Negative reactions from others in high school stuck with Marcus and contributed to his silence. As Marcus begins his career as a queer teacher, we are left to wonder whether he will continue to feel tension in his silence and what supports will be offered to him should the tension continue.

Shame: Elisabeth's Discomfort

In this section I will present and deconstruct Elisabeth's narrative using Ciuffetelli

Parker's (2013) 3R narrative inquiry framework. Elisabeth is a peer I have known for a

few years. She expressed interest in participating in the study after hearing about my

work. Elisabeth attended her Initial Teacher Education Program at a large university in

South Central Ontario. She is certified to teach intermediate/senior music and history.

She currently works as a high school occasional teacher.

I take up Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013) notions of *narrative reveal*, *narrative

revelation*, and *narrative reformation* to examine Elisabeth's story. Elisabeth's story

illuminates one pre-service teacher's growing understanding of identity and the theme of

shame. As explained by Ciuffetelli Parker (2013), narrative reveal helps "excavate

unconscious assumptions that surface in stories" (p. 245). Narrative revelation shows

how experiences can be interrogated further to lead to an awakened perspective

(Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013). In order for a narrative reformation to occur, "we must live on

edge amidst intersecting narrative threads" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013, p. 246). In the

following section, Elisabeth's story will only be deconstructed using the elements of

narrative reveal and narrative revelation. I will not be analyzing using the element of

narrative reformation for Elisabeth's narrative because her story did not have within it an

aspect of reformed thinking, action, or awakening as of yet. Like so many of us,

Elisabeth's life's work and experience is still in progress and her story is still ongoing.

Early Feelings of Shame: Narrative Reveal

Elisabeth's interpretation of how she experienced people of the same sex began at

an early age. During our first letter correspondence, I shared some of my own story with

Elisabeth. I disclosed that,

> Growing up in a small town and attending Catholic school, I had few examples of
> anyone outside the "norm." All of my friends wanted to grow up, get a job, find a
> man, get married, and start a family. I never felt the same but I wasn't sure why.
> Now it is easy for me to look back and see all the reasons but then I didn't know.
> As young as 8 years old, I can remember goofing around with my best friend in
> my basement and knowing I wanted to kiss her. As fast as the feeling had come, it
> was squashed with the thought that kissing her was not okay. Girls couldn't kiss
> girls! (Letter correspondence)

In response, Elisabeth describes her early feelings towards other women and how
she struggled with similar feelings:

> When I was younger I expressed some of the same feelings you did. Sometimes I
> would have feelings towards boys and sometimes feelings towards girls. The
> feelings towards girls needed to be ignored because it was "not right" to feel that
> way. I had boyfriends throughout high school but I did also feel [that] something
> [was] missing. I think I knew as a teenager that I was able to have feelings
> towards someone of the same sex. I did not want to think like that, I felt shameful
> so I pushed it aside for many years. (Letter correspondence)

At an early age, Elisabeth had a sense that there was something that was not right
about having feelings for the same sex. In retelling her story she deepens her awareness,
uncovering that she was able to have feelings for members of both sexes but ignored her
feelings for those of the same sex because she felt ashamed. In later correspondence,
Elisabeth went on to further describe her confusion with these feelings of shame:

The feelings of shame were always around because acting like that wasn't

"normal." It was never addressed in our school and in my home life. It [was] a

taboo subject that should be avoided at all times. I am not sure if it is the fear of

the unknown or actually being against that type of lifestyle is the reason why it

was non-existent in conversations with family, friends, and in school. (Letter

correspondence)

Elisabeth's choice to place the word normal in quotations is important to note. Elisabeth

states that she felt shame "because acting like that wasn't 'normal.'" Her choice to place

the word in quotations may suggest that her definition of normal has shifted, even

changed somewhat from what it once was interpreted by her in her past. Elisabeth's

storied account also reveals that homosexuality was never something discussed among

her family, friends, and in school. She writes, "I am not sure if it is the fear of the

unknown or actually being against that type of lifestyle is the reason why it was non-

existent in conversations with family, friends and in school." The avoidance of this topic

made her believe that her family and friends either feared homosexuality or were against

it. This illustrates Elisabeth's perception of those around her in tension with what she was

feeling, which ultimately caused shame to surface.

One of the aspects which Elisabeth appreciated about her Initial Teacher

Education Program included training for teacher candidates on creating inclusive

environments for queer students. She shared how her university did this:

My university prepared us through a couple lessons. I don't remember much but

from what I do, in our Philosophy of Education class, we watched an old movie

from the 1980s about queer students in school and how they were dealing. It was

really dated but sent a message of what kind of hardships the people in the movie were going through. I remember us having a discussion and that was about it. The discussion was in a room full of artsy creative minds. And not to stereotype, but we were all preaching to our own choir in discussion. (Letter correspondence)

Elisabeth's choice of words here are particularly telling. She writes that the discussion of the film took place "in a room full of artsy creative minds" and that she does not want to stereotype but "they were preaching to their own choir." Here, Elisabeth reveals an assumption that the people in her class were supportive of queer students in the movie because they were queer themselves, or "artsy" at best. Elisabeth seems to rely on her own stereotypical biases of students' dispositions (i.e., artsy, creative, etc.), as indication that these students would likely be more accepting of queer students themselves. In effect, Elisabeth's interpretation of her classmates may have helped her to feel more comfortable being a member of that class, an interesting revelation given that she has admitted feeling shame throughout her narrative account of being queer in school.

Elisabeth continues her narrative by describing her impressions of an outdated film they viewed in her Philosophy of Education class:

The video from the 80s was pretty dated but I believe it channeled the feelings that some people still feel today. Now, there are many queer icons in the media that are making it easier for people to come out because they are normal people. I don't think there is as much homophobia as there was in the 80s except it has seemed to become more acceptable using the derogatory terms more. Not that I know what the 80s was like but I feel that it was such a taboo subject that it was just never discussed or mentioned as much. I don't know [laughter]. I remember

seeing young teenagers in the movie. They were all being interviewed about their life and coming out story. How their family has rejected or sometimes accepted them and how hard it is to be a teenager in the community with that secret. It was also a Canadian movie and I am pretty sure it was shot in Toronto. [I] can't remember how the video made me feel. It probably gave me a little bit of nerves because it was sad to see these students suffer so much. (Letter correspondence)

In this narrative bit, Elisabeth uncovers the ways in which she believes this video to be both relevant and irrelevant, despite the age of the film. It is noteworthy that Elisabeth describes the film as giving her "a little bit of nerves" as well as seeing "these students suffer so much." Elisabeth's nerves reveal the dilemma in which she herself is caught. Elisabeth watched the students in the video struggle with their own secret identity and choosing to come out. For Elisabeth, there is a similar struggle and suffering in her own story, and this is felt as she struggles even in her communication and description of what she feels and how she recounts it, years later. She is caught in a predicament where she feels ashamed of her sexual identity, as she relayed earlier, and also feels compelled to keep it a secret, bringing more shame to the layers of tension she holds. While Elisabeth recognizes that many of the issues in the film are outdated, she explains that she feels much of it is still relevant today. Perhaps, for Elisabeth, having the video shown was more important than not showing it at all because it "channeled the feelings that some people still feel today."

Elisabeth continued to unpack her feelings of shame during our letter correspondences and discussion. Feelings of shame were carried through to her Initial

Teacher Education Program, in particular, as it was juxtaposed between her academic studies and her practicum experiences. She revealed how she still felt she could not share with her peers that she was in a relationship with another woman. She writes:

> I do feel that there was a large sense of acceptance in my Initial Teacher [Education] Program because I feel it was in a large urban area. Even though there was that sense of comfort, I still did not feel right about expressing my relationship to my new friends because I was still ashamed. (Letter correspondence)

Elisabeth discloses that she felt acceptance in her program and that it may have had something to do with the location of her program "in a large urban area." Despite feeling comfortable with those around her, she still never divulged with her peers that she was in a same sex relationship because "I was still ashamed." Elisabeth's feelings of comfort with her peers is in contrast to how she feels outside of her academic studies when she is in practicum. Much like Marcus, she describes her apprehension during one of her placements. Elisabeth tells the story of how a school board where she was in placement made the news for attempting to ban gay/straight alliances:

> Learning about the motive to get rid of gay/straight alliances bugged me quite a bit. I would hope that it would bug most people gay or straight. I read first about it on Perez Hilton's celebrity blog which was a startling way to see it knowing that this blog is written on the other side of the continent and it represents our community in such a negative way, to me anyway. As much as I never intended to say anything about my personal life, it made me feel more pushed into a corner about saying anything. How can I say something that makes me very happy when

there are people in my community that are against supporting the students who

need that outlet and safe space to communicate their emotions and concerns? I

know that I went into this profession to educate and shape our youth into good

citizens of the world. How can a student learn and grow when their emotional

outlet has been taken away from them? I feel it would be hard to sit still and

attempt to learn if there is much more going on in their life [about which] they

need to talk. (Letter correspondence)

For Elisabeth, finding out that she had been placed in a board that was at the

centre of an international news story was devastating. Elisabeth's reaction to finding out

that the school board was in the news was to fall silent, much like Marcus did in his own

experience in practicum. She questions, "How can I say something that makes me very

happy when there are people in my community that are against supporting the students

who need that outlet and safe space to communicate their emotions and concerns." Like

Norah and Marcus, some of the academic university courses offered refuge to claim

authenticity of self with respect to sexual orientation/identity. But in her placement,

Elisabeth felt that, if schools were publicly against allowing students to have a safe space,

then the school board certainly would not be a safe space for her. The school board's

aggressive push to ensure that issues of sexual diversity among students were not

discussed, sent an implicit message to people like Elisabeth that such topics are not to be

explored in schools. Once again, like Marcus's story to remain silent, this story created a

space where Elisabeth felt "pushed into a corner" and ashamed of her truth and identity.

Reflections: Narrative Revelation

Elisabeth's retelling of her story shows she has gained a deeper awareness of her

own experience. Following her Initial Teacher Education Program, Elisabeth began working occasional and contract teaching positions in Ontario. As time passed, Elisabeth has come to a new understanding of her sexuality. "I think the atmospheres of the schools I am at make me feel more comfortable that if that were to arise in my life again, I could be comfortable telling some teachers [with whom] I have become friends." In her previous narrative, Elisabeth writes, "The feelings of shame were always around because acting like that wasn't 'normal.'" Elisabeth's decision to place the word normal in quotations reveals, after we see her layered narrative above, suggests that she may no longer believe that having feelings for members of the same sex is not normal. Elisabeth entered into her Initial Teacher Education Program with assumptions and beliefs formed throughout her early life, of what it meant to be normal. Homosexual feelings were not part of the mainstream values with which Elisabeth had been brought up. She writes that sexuality "was never addressed in our school and in my home life." Growing up with sexuality as a "taboo" subject left Elisabeth with the assumption that homosexual feelings were not normal. Her choice to place the word "normal" in quotation marks shows that Elisabeth recognized the unconscious assumption she had made. The narrative revelation here is profound. She was able to understand the root of her shame and begin to let go of those feelings of judgment.

Elisabeth shares her narrative of experience during one of her long-term occasional positions in terms of her revelation as a beginning teacher who is queer:

> As much as I have not expressed to any teacher colleagues at the schools I have been at [about] my previous relationship, I think the atmosphere of the schools I am at makes me feel more comfortable. If that were to arise in my life again, I

could be comfortable telling some teachers [with whom] I have become friends. My class specifically has a couple posters on the wall that state "Positive Space" with the rainbow triangle on it. Not sure when they were put up but they seem to send a message. I see some students reading them and they may ask questions about what it means. I just mention to them that regardless of our background, race, sexual orientation, creed, we should all be kind to each other. The poster focuses on the queer community but I like to mention other things since my school is very diverse. Not really sure on other teachers' openness. The only teachers who have been open about their relationships or marriages have been straight. There is a Gay/Straight Alliance here that seems to meet once every one or two weeks. (Letter correspondence)

As Elisabeth discusses her openness to sharing a possible future same-sex relationship with her school community, she makes visible a newly formed belief and understanding. She shares, "I think the atmosphere of the schools I am at makes me feel more comfortable. If that were to arise in my life again, I could be comfortable telling some teachers [with whom] I have become friends." The revelation here is that she understands that it is the atmosphere in schools she has been at that has made a difference in making her feel comfortable to consider being open about her sexual orientation/identity. She describes how her school has made her feel more comfortable by showing support for the queer community. "My class specifically has a couple posters on the wall that state 'Positive Space' with the rainbow triangle on it." Through a positive school climate and culture of the school, as evidenced by such things as posters and school gay/straight

alliance clubs, Elisabeth's tension with shame eases, which perhaps can lead to her enacting an authentic self.

In Elisabeth's narrative, a deeper understanding of shame felt by queer teacher candidates was explored by deconstructing her story using narrative reveal and narrative revelation. Through Elisabeth's narrative, we see how the 3R framework is a process, too. Elisabeth's narrative illustrates that she continues to face dilemmas in the teaching world, much like Marcus does, like I do, and like Norah does. Elisabeth still feels the tug and pull and tension of shame. Elisabeth's story is important because it highlights that many queer teachers continue to struggle and work through extremely complex issues in the teaching spaces of school and academia.

In chapter 5, I will discuss the findings and provide recommendations for Initial Teacher Education Programs. I will also explore how my findings can contribute to future research on queer studies in education.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter provides a summary of the study and outlines recommendations and implications for Initial Teacher Education Programs. Before the study, I had already begun a process of personal reflection. This narrative inquiry research has allowed me to further reflect on my own personal lived experience and has given me a greater understanding of the experiences of other queer teacher candidates and queer beginning teachers. I have developed a deeper awareness through my contribution as participant but also through my interactions with participants as a researcher. This thesis has brought to light the experiences of queer teacher candidates in the hopes that their stories can inspire change within Ontario's teacher education landscape. During the process of this research project, much has transpired and, in part, I am humbled and proud that my work contributes, even in a small way, to the recommendation that Initial Teacher Education Programs provide compulsory courses and sensitivity training for the candidates on queer issues in education (Fleet, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015).

Summary of the Study

Participants for this study were chosen because they had heard about my study and expressed interest in being involved. Each participant had graduated within the last 5 years from a different Initial Teacher Education Program in Ontario. The participants consisted of one male (Marcus) and three females—Norah, Elisabeth, and Courtenay. Participants were recruited with a Letter of Invitation (Appendix A). Participants were then asked to review, sign, and return the Informed Consent Letter (Appendix B). Once consent was obtained, I contacted the participant to arrange a meeting for our interview. To open our meeting I shared my diversity narrative (see Prologue) with the participant,

after which the participant was given the freedom to direct the conversation in the manner he or she felt most comfortable. Following our meeting, participants were asked to partake in 3 to 6 weeks of letter writing with me via email. Once again I shared a narrative with participants and they were given the freedom to share stories and direct our letters, however they wished. Throughout the process, I wrote field notes about my interactions and experiences with participants.

During our discussion and the time we spent letter writing, I asked participants various open-ended questions and to elaborate on their responses. Throughout the data collection process, I was guided by my three research questions: (a) What stories do teacher candidates and I tell about being queer in Initial Teacher Education Programs?; (b) How do queer teacher candidates respond to social bias and stereotypes in the learning community?; and (c) Can queer teacher candidates' narratives inform teacher education reform?

Once the conversations were transcribed and the letter writing was completed, I coded the data. I read and reread the data looking for meaning. First, I coded for a framework. I reviewed each of the participants' stories and underlined the data using different colours. Each colour represented a different element of a framework. It quickly became apparent that the different participants' stories were more closely aligned with one framework over the others. Once a framework was chosen, I re-read the data again, making notes and labels in the margins. After the coding was complete, I looked for themes and patterns.

My role in this study, as both researcher and participant, has allowed me to delve deeply into my experiences as a teacher candidate. I was able to revisit my experiences,

some painful, and re-live them through the lens of a researcher. I used narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of former queer teacher candidates during their time in teacher education. Participants' narratives were analyzed using Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional commonplaces of narrative inquiry (*temporality, sociality, and place)* and Ciuffetelli Parker's (2013, 2014) 3R narrative inquiry framework of narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reformation. Together these served as my theoretical framework, guiding my analysis of participants' narratives collected from our conversations, letter correspondences, and field notes.

Four themes emerged from this study: the complexity of the queer teacher candidate's experience; the separation of personal and professional identities; silence; and shame. Although, I presented one theme per participant, elements of each of the themes that were uncovered can be seen running through all participants' stories.

My narrative explored the complexity of the queer teacher candidates' experience, however, the other themes ran deep through my story, too. Like Elisabeth, in my Initial Teacher Education Program, I struggled with feelings of shame as I hid my sexuality from the others in my Catholic cohort. When my colleagues did nothing while another teacher candidate made a homophobic remark in class, I withdrew from class. I lost my voice and was silenced, like Marcus. Like Norah, I wrestled with separating my personal and professional identity. I wrote, "I was trapped in the middle of who I wanted to be and who I thought others wanted me to be." This shows the tension I felt trying to separate my identity.

Norah's storied narrative explores the theme of personal versus professional identity. Professors in Norah's Initial Teacher Education Program made her feel that she

had to remove herself from her teaching. As a result, Norah felt compelled to silence herself. Shame also makes an appearance in Norah's story as she describes how she noticed that it was socially acceptable to share more traditional values. She shared that, "Permanent teachers seemed to not have to think twice about sharing their experiences with heterosexual spouses and children as part of a family unit." For Norah this implies that there is something of which to be ashamed in mainstream society if you do not share similar values. Throughout Norah's narrative, it is clear that she grapples with the confusion during her experience as a queer teacher candidate. For example, she wrote, "I feel as though I second-guessed all of the personal details I shared." Norah struggles continually to position herself in a confusing reality. She spends a great deal of time breaking down her thoughts and interrogating her story, indicating that she, too, is affected by the complexity of the queer experience in her teacher education program.

Marcus's narrative uncovered a theme of silence. Marcus's silence in his practicum setting created a situation where he felt compelled to separate his personal and professional identities. During our letter writing, he disclosed, "my most conflicting feelings relate to revealing my sexuality to my associate teachers or other staff at schools while on placement. This is something I never did, and also something I had to decide not to do each time I started a new placement, or [when] conversation steered in the direction of dating." Marcus's story shows that he, too, struggled with the decision to hide his sexual identity. In addition, the tension of silence Marcus experiences, and his internal debate about revealing his sexual identity to others in his practicum setting, exposes the variety of emotions that impacted his experience as a queer teacher candidate.

As Elisabeth's storied experience unfolded, so did her theme of shame. Elisabeth's

story, like Marcus's, is also one of silencing. Throughout the duration of her entire program, Elisabeth never revealed her sexuality to another person. After the school board she was doing her placement in made international news for presenting its views on banning gay–straight alliances, Elisabeth wrote "As much as I never intended to say anything about my personal life, it made me feel more pushed into a corner about saying anything." The views presented in the media of her school board cemented her views that she could not reveal her sexuality to others in her program. As a result, Elisabeth chose to wear a professional mask, like Marcus. In Elisabeth's mind, there was no other option during this time that she could employ to protect herself. What is interesting in Elisabeth's narrative is a stream of consciousness writing and speaking, where she goes from one thought to the next, perhaps symbolic of her inner struggle and the turbulence she continues to feel as a queer teacher candidate.

Discussion

When I entered the graduate program, I had no intention of pursuing a topic related to queer studies in education. Having recently graduated from my consecutive teacher education program, I wanted nothing more than to fly under the radar with a non-controversial thesis topic. During my first semester as a Master of Education student, I took courses that opened my eyes to various issues in education. I felt compelled to reflect on my own privilege, revisit ways I had experienced oppression, and had begun to position myself within education, as I had experienced it. As the semester progressed, my papers increasingly became focused on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Through my research papers, I began to see that there were many LGBTQ people in various positions living in silence. I began to see that I did not fit into the lesbian

stereotypes held by my colleagues. As a result, I came to realize that I was able to exercise my privilege during my teacher education and silently pass through my Initial Teacher Education Program allowing others to assume I was straight. It was not long before I had developed a passion for the topic I feared the most. By winter break I changed my thesis topic to explore the narrative of queer teacher candidates.

Before I began this study, I had already begun a process of self-reflection. I spent months replaying in my mind, moments of my teacher education experience. I wondered about whether there were queer teacher candidates at different universities in the province with similar experiences. I knew that there would be differences based on previous experiences in education and on location, but I was surprised to find that each story shared similarities. Beyond the themes discussed in chapter four, analysis of participants' narratives also revealed the influence religion had on their experience and finding their own narrative authority (Olson, 1995).

Impact of Religion

In exploring my *first day* narrative, I share the confusion I felt, trying to reposition myself within the Catholic education system in which I had been raised. Although I had a wonderful experience as a student in the Catholic school system, I wrestled with positioning my now queer self within the beliefs of the Catholic board. Recall from the story that Professor Justin, "told us that, if we did not feel that we live our life according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, to let one of the instructors know and they would gladly move us to another cohort." As Justin made this comment, I instantly felt that I did not belong. This narrative snippet draws attention to the issue of publicly funded Catholic schools in Ontario. Since the 19th century, Ontario has received funding for Roman

Catholic schools and it continues to provide funding to Roman Catholics in Ontario under Canada's (1982) *Constitution Act*. Despite the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Catholic school system reserves the right to hire teachers who are practicing Catholics and uphold Catholic values. Callaghan (2007) found that when it pertains to LGBTQ issues, Catholic schools are subtly and overtly violating Canadian human rights. As a result, queer teachers who are also Roman Catholic, like myself, must make a difficult decision when entering the teaching profession; choose to live in hiding within a Catholic board; or pursue a career in the public school system. It is clear through my *first day* narrative that this is a dilemma with which I wrestled.

During our interview, Norah disclosed that she had grown up in a home with strong Christian family values. These values impacted Norah's early perspectives on homosexuality. Recall how she describes her understanding of being a lesbian:

My understanding of being a lesbian as a high school student was very rudimentary in that I really only thought of it within the realm of *butch* and *femme* stereotypes, or kissing other girls as a show for men. My knowledge was found mostly from media representations in regards to daily life as a lesbian—teacher and family influence discussed it on a basic anatomical level or centered around "sin." I very much desired a traditional family because that is what I had been taught was the definition of stability and happiness. (Letter correspondence)

In this excerpt, Norah draws attention to the bias and stereotypes she held as a teenager. She explains that her only frame of reference were the representations of lesbians she had seen in the media. Understandably, Norah's comprehension of real world lesbian's behavior became skewed. Norah's admission that she had only ever discussed

homosexuality on an anatomic level or as sin is an important one. For Norah, having only discussed homosexuality in a negative light left her believing she could not have a happy life as a gay woman. As a high school student who would eventually come out as a queer woman, this belief is a very heavy weight to carry.

Marcus's narrative snippet exposes the fear of fundamentalist parents felt by queer educators. He recognizes that parents of his students hold varying world views, some of which may not be supportive of his sexual orientation. As Marcus explains,

> parents in a classroom come from multiple backgrounds, religions, and experiences, which have all shaped their world views. I'm sure there would be parents on a personal level with whom I could get along and if we were friends, they knowing my sexuality wouldn't be a big deal. But then there are other parents, who, in all honesty, seem like the type of people I wouldn't want to run into late on the street after coming out of a gay bar. (Letter correspondence)

Although Marcus makes assumptions about some parents, what he reveals is significant. Choosing to be a queer educator comes with certain fears. When he makes the comment about not wanting to run into some parents late coming out of a gay bar, he is implying that some parents will not be okay with his sexuality, which for him comes with an amount of risk. With recent controversies, Marcus's fears do not seem quite so far-fetched. In 2008, a lesbian couple was attacked by a male parent while picking up his small son from school in Oshawa (Welsh, 2008). Therefore, fundamentalist values are still a very real concern for queer people entering the teaching profession.

Narrative Authority

Recently, I sat in my thesis advisor's office discussing edits to my almost-

completed thesis. As we spoke about my experience during my Initial Teacher Education

Program, I was reminded of one moment, in particular, and I wrote about it:

> During my first few weeks as a teacher candidate, I had a great deal of difficulty
>
> envisioning myself as a queer educator. Comments from other teacher candidates
>
> and a teacher had made me second-guess my future as a queer teacher. Although I
>
> had worked so hard to get into my teacher education program, I had begun to
>
> think that there was no way I could ever be a classroom teacher. I still enjoyed the
>
> field of education but I wanted a more accepting environment. By the time I
>
> showed up at Darlene's door, I had only been in the program about 3 weeks.
>
> Darlene was one of my cohort leaders and I knew she was a professor at
>
> the university. She had shared her narrative with us and I felt that she would be an
>
> open and understanding person to ask for academic advice. One Tuesday after
>
> class, I sat in the hall outside Darlene's office and waited for her to return. When
>
> she got there, she was kind enough to see me right away. I sat in her office and
>
> explained how I was not sure I was meant to be a teacher and that I wanted to
>
> know more about the Master of Education (MEd) program. As I spoke I began to
>
> cry. I sat there unable to admit the true nature of my confusion and reason for my
>
> unhappiness; I was struggling being queer in the teacher education program.
>
> Darlene was lovely and referred me to the right people to talk to for more
>
> information on the MEd program, yet, I will never forget the vulnerability I felt
>
> during that meeting. (C. Fleet, personal reflection, November 5, 2015)

As I sat in Darlene's office remembering that moment almost 5 years later, I

could not help but to tear up. I feel so lucky for the opportunities I have been given and

how far I have come. Conducting and participating in this research project has afforded

me the opportunity to revisit my narrative and develop a newer, fresher, hopeful narrative

that I can continue to live. Through this thesis work, I have developed the *narrative*

authority needed to present my work at international and national conferences (Fleet,

2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015).

Similarly, this research has provided the avenue for participants' narrative

authority (Olson, 1995; Olson & Craig, 2001) to grow through experience:

> Individuals' narrative authority form, is informed, and reforms through the
>
> continuous and interactive nature of experience. Thus, a person's narrative
>
> authority grows through experience where "the principle of continuity of
>
> experience means that every experience both takes up something from those
>
> which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which
>
> come after." (Dewey, 1938, p. 35, as cited in Olson, 1995, p. 123)

When Norah's story began, she struggled with separating her personal and professional

identity. The development of Norah's narrative authority is evidenced through the

comfort she now feels in removing her professional mask. She describes her ability to

explain to her students "it was indeed possible to play families with two daddies, because

I knew a family that had two mommies" (Letter correspondence). Through this example,

Norah's growth is obvious. She finally has begun to find her queer teacher identity.

Marcus's narrative shared the difficulties he had while coming out in high school.

He described how those negative experiences have made him avoid environments where

he may feel judged now. Despite not coming out during his practicum, Marcus

demonstrates his growth in his ability to consider coming out as a teacher. He writes,

"But in the work and classroom setting, I see it as either everyone knows, or no one knows. A weird mix of in between where I get to choose doesn't exist" (Letter correspondence). Through this statement, Marcus shows his narrative authority continues to grow as his role changes from queer teacher candidate to queer teacher.

Elizabeth's narrative of discomfort shows her struggle to disclose her sexuality during her Initial Teacher Education Program. Through her continued experience as an occasional teacher, she is able to develop her narrative authority and finally begin to consider sharing her sexuality as a queer teacher. She writes,

> As much as I have not expressed to any teacher colleagues at the schools I have been at [about] my previous relationship, I think the atmosphere of the schools I am at makes me feel more comfortable. If that were to arise in my life again, I could be comfortable telling some teachers [with whom] I have become friends. (Letter correspondence).

Before I began this research I was upset and angry. Through my interactions with participants, my own reflections, and my presentations at conferences, I began to develop a new voice. I started to feel a new sense of ownership over my experience and could recognize the truth of my story. This change allowed me to feel empowered and highlights the growth of my narrative authority through experience. Not only can I now refer to myself as a queer educator, I am proud to say I am a queer educator. I have finally found my ire and have legitimized my anger by turning it into this thesis.

The Queer Teacher Education Landscape

The narratives presented in this thesis suggest that we have a problem in education and in teacher education. Research has suggested that schools are not always

welcoming environments and often lack resources for queer students (Taylor & Peter, 2011). The Ontario Ministry of Education has offered a great deal of support by creating queer positive legislation and the Ontario College of Teachers [OCT] has been working on resources for educators. However, much of the focus remains on the students, with little attention given to the queer teacher experience. While a variety of campaigns share queer narratives for youth to show them *it gets better*, there is a lack of exposure for adults within the teaching profession. It is even more difficult to find resources that share narratives of queer teacher candidates and beginning teachers who are queer. As far as I am aware, this may be the only study that narratively explores the experiences of queer teacher candidates. Many queer teacher candidates have had few, if any, queer teacher role models to look to within their teaching community. As both Marcus's and Courtenay's narratives note, they had no examples of open teachers. The narratives of Norah, Marcus, Elisabeth, and Courtenay remind us that conversations and resources need to be available for beginning teachers and queer teachers as well.

The four themes of the complexity of the queer experience—separation of the personal and professional identity, silencing, and shame—all show that we have a profound issue in teacher education. If future educators and role models for our queer students are afraid to show and live their truth, we need to re-evaluate our support for the queer teaching community. With the recent shift to a four-semester Initial Teacher Education Program in Ontario, there is an increased amount of space made available to provide mandatory courses related to queer studies in education that should be included in Initial Teacher Education Programs. Creating conversations in mandatory courses can help to create awareness and environments where queer teacher candidates feel

recognized and respected as members of the profession.

Situating the Findings in the Ontario Education Landscape

In 2012, the *Education Act* was amended to include *Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. Section 303.1* that makes it mandatory for all school administrators to allow Gay-Straight Alliances in their schools should a pupil want to have one (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). This also shows the mounting shifts in our education system and highlights the growing acceptance for these types of discussions to take place in Ontario schools. The focus, however, remains on students. Despite these new regulations, are our Ontario educators prepared for such discussions?

The education landscape in Ontario has begun to shift on issues of sexuality. In September 2015, a new health and physical education curriculum has been regulated across Ontario schools; the previous policy document had not been revised since 1998 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). The new health and physical education curriculum now requires teachers to discuss the term "sexual orientation" beginning in grade 3 by talking about respecting our differences (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Allowing discussions of sexual orientation to take place early, helps to normalize differences in sexual orientation for children. Children who are beginning to question their sexual orientation or their gender identity, are able to have a better, clearer understanding of what they are experiencing. Similarly, the new curriculum places a great deal of focus on children learning the correct terminology (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Providing youth with the appropriate language to use can help to diminish the use of slang and slurs during what can be a vulnerable period for many young people.

It is important to recognize that the new health and physical education curriculum

is not without controversy. Over the last several months, the health and physical education curriculum has been a hot topic in education and it has been heavily protested across the province. Only days into the new school year, parents and communities have staged walkouts and protests (Rushowy, 2015). In one instance, a Toronto school was vandalized after someone had spray-painted the words "shame on you" on the school wall (Rushowy, 2015). A parent protesting outside Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne's office told reporters, "We have our system that if she's a girl, then she is proud of being a girl, and if he's a boy, he's proud of being a boy," she said, adding she is worried the gender identity section could lead to "confusion" (Hall & Bateman, 2015, para. 17). Similarly, a retired Toronto teacher protested saying the new curriculum is "indoctrination of children and it's corrupt. It shouldn't be imposing those values on our children—let them be children" (Hall & Bateman, 2015, para. 18). Comments from protesters like these highlight the critical importance, albeit complex and controversial, of the new health and physical education curriculum. The transphobic comment from the parent protester and narrow-minded remark from the retired teacher only serve to emphasize the necessity of new curriculum guidelines in schools.

A recent article in the *Toronto Star* explains how queer teachers at a Thornhill school felt vulnerable after protests and the school was vandalized because of the new health and physical education curriculum. Although the new health and physical education curriculum has nothing to do with the hiring of homosexual teachers or promoting homosexuality, it certainly became a hot topic for protesters. Four weeks into the new school year, an article was published in the *Toronto Star* in which a teacher in the TDSB, Susan Mabey, shared her thoughts on the controversy in her school. She explained:

When parents refused to send their kids to school on "Pink Day"—thinking it was

promoting homosexuality, rather than anti-bullying—Thorncliffe teacher, Susan

Mabey, got her first inkling that the controversy about the new health curriculum

wasn't just about sex. It was also about homophobia. (Rushowy, 2015, paras. 1-2)

This is a sentiment that was echoed by the school principal who "said he believes the

opposition now is more about a fear of homosexuality than the sex-ed curriculum itself,

all of two lessons a year, for which kids can be removed from school" (Rushowy, 2015,

para. 11).

Situations in communities, such as this one in Toronto, further highlight the

importance of sensitivity training for teachers on queer issues. With changes in classroom

content, it becomes increasingly important that teachers are well-prepared and versed in

how to respond to questions from the community. The *Toronto Star* article further

explains that:

With a vocal parent group in the neighbourhood now openly stating their worries

about gay teachers in the school or even "homosexuality books"—and after

seeing gay colleagues leave the school in recent years because of an atmosphere

in which they felt vulnerable—Mabey decided someone needed to be the

"lightning rod," to speak openly about what's going on. (Rushowy, 2015, para. 3).

The teacher and principal at this school need to be commended for their willingness to

address the issue and their refusal to accept homophobia in their school. However, I

question what support there is for queer teachers in communities like this? What happens

after those teachers transfer to other schools? Does the situation continue for other queer

teachers who enter that environment? These questions show that while there have been

many political advancements since the Ontario Human Rights Code was amended to include sexual orientation, queer teachers continue to face adversity. As this article speaks of the teachers who transferred schools because they felt vulnerable, there is a need now, more than ever, for similar research projects as this one, which highlight the experiences of queer educators.

The OCT is currently developing an Additional Qualifications (AQ) course, entitled Teaching LGBTQ Students. The goal of the course is to provide teachers with the necessary background and tools to create safe and welcoming environments for their students (OCT, 2010). While the development of this AQ course offers a much-needed resource for teachers, there needs to be a mandatory component for Initial Teacher Education in Ontario. In chapter 2, I referred to Taylor and Peter's (2011) national survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia for EGALE Canada. The document uncovered astonishing results—most notably that 75% of LGBTQ students reported that school staff did not intervene when they heard students making homophobic comments (Taylor & Peter, 2011). The document prompted the authors to recommend that teacher education programs offer LGBTQ-inclusive components into their mandatory courses. Although this study was published in 2011, Ontario faculties of education and the OCT have been slow to react. Ontario teachers must receive adequate training in response to this study and to new curriculum changes. Sensitivity training on queer issues in education must be a mandatory component for all pre-service teachers.

Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Education

Narrative inquiry was essential to this thesis as it allowed the participants to share the truth of their experience through stories (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014). How they told

their stories and the stories on which they focused was impacted by their own values and the factors that were important to them in sharing their truth. They were also impacted by factors affecting their lives at the time they chose to share their story. For example, Elisabeth had more difficulty sharing her story than did the other participants because she was still having difficulty sharing her sexual orientation with people in her life.

Ciuffetelli Parker's (2014) "Literacy Narratives for 21st Century Curriculum Making: The 3Rs to Excavate Diverse Issues in Education" demonstrates how a teacher candidate is given the opportunity to express his feelings of gender identity, in a formal way, through a teacher education course in narrative inquiry. The teacher candidate says, "the process of this narrative inquiry is not just relating to personal experience, but developing these situations into a richer truth" (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014, p. 249). As this teacher candidate demonstrates, narrative inquiry has a powerful ability to delve deeply into stories and uncover truths. For the participants in this study, sharing their stories has allowed their experiences to develop into a richer truth, as well.

Narrative inquiry has also allowed the opportunity to challenge bias and the assumptions of beginning teachers. Through the narratives of Norah, Marcus, Elisabeth, and Courtenay, stories have been revealed that often go unheard in education. These stories allowed for the unique opportunity to gain insight into the complexity of queer issues in teacher education. It becomes apparent through these narratives that the queer teacher candidates experience is impacted by a variety of factors. For example, Norah's struggles were heavily impacted by previous experiences in education, how she understood her identity, her values, the beliefs of her professors, and the standards of her institution.

Mainstream values often dictate policy and dominate conversations in Initial

Teacher Education Programs. Because sexual orientation and gender identity are not considered visible minorities they often go overlooked or get lumped in with other issues under the broad term of diversity. Allowing the narratives of queer teacher candidates to be part of the conversation provides opportunity for valuable and thought-provoking discussions to take place. Narratives awaken a different kind of understanding. They allow others to feel the truth of the participants' experience through their storied account of events. The themes deconstructed from the narratives of these queer teacher candidates transcend beyond their Initial Teacher Education Programs, their location, and their gender. Narrative inquiry allows the voices of these four beginning teachers to be heard and unified in the truth of their experience and the message that change needs to occur within the teaching profession.

Possibilities for Future Research

The findings of this thesis suggest that teacher education may be a site for political and social transformation. Norah, Marcus, Elisabeth, and I engaged in conversations and letter correspondence and through this process began to transgress against sexual boundaries in our own way. It is clear that this experience has called each of us, as participants, to review, question, and analyze our own experiences, which can only serve to make us better teachers. This process of self-actualization that promotes our own well-being as teachers and helps to better inform our practice is what bell hooks (1994) terms "engaged pedagogy" (p. 15). She maintains that we must actively work to achieve our full potential and only when we feel empowered will we be able to empower our students (hooks, 1994). I believe that what is apparent from this study is the need to empower queer teacher candidates. I believe that the findings of this study offer future

research possibilities, including a longitudinal study that follows queer teacher candidates through their Initial Teacher Education Programs and on through their careers as beginning teachers. This would allow for a more in-depth process as it would allow the exploration of the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of their experiences.

This research could also be adapted to include issues of intersectionality, perhaps a study exploring issues affecting queer teacher candidates with reference as well to race, class, and gender, among others. This type of study would allow for a variety of factors that are at play in our everyday lives to be taken into account.

Also, this research could be adapted to follow queer teacher candidates through a mandatory positive space course, as part of an Initial Teacher Education Program. In doing so, the researcher would be able to explore the effectiveness of a mandatory course on helping to create a welcoming environment and a sense of comfort for teacher candidates within the Initial Teacher Education Program. Reflecting on experiences in all classes and practica with both peers and instructors will help to offer insight into whether experiences are different, where there is ample discussion and examination of queer stories in education. Through discussion with peers and professors on the topic of sexuality, teacher candidates may feel empowered and supported. Additionally, researchers may be offered the opportunity to greater understand the impact of resources and supportive environments on the queer teacher candidate's experience.

Much of society has the notion that sexual minorities have been liberated but the issue of freedom is problematic. Society is not always as quick to adapt. As we are currently at a timely moment in the history of queer rights movement, it would be fascinating to explore the narratives of queer teachers in the classroom. Exploring the

perspectives of teachers in permanent positions would allow alternate perspectives to be represented. Exploring how teachers of different levels respond to their students' questions and queer issues in the media would help to understand deeply the educational landscape for queer educators. Do they perceive themselves as having greater confidence and support or do their narratives parallel those of the participants in this study? The OCT already relies heavily on storied accounts, as narrative cases for curriculum reform, in areas such as Aboriginal education (Smith, 2012). Thus, exploring more participants through a narrative approach would offer a greater understanding and new knowledge of the queer teacher experience and could have the ability to further inform policy.

Concluding Thoughts

In the Prologue to this thesis, I told the story of my diversity narrative. In the time following my teacher education program, I desperately tried to move past that incident, yet, as I began my studies in the graduate program, it haunted me. This incident propelled me to pursue this topic, in the hope to bring greater awareness to the queer teacher candidate's experience in education. Through this thesis, I have used narrative inquiry to contribute to the literature by exploring the experiences of queer teacher candidates during their time in Initial Teacher Education Programs in Ontario. By analyzing the participants' stories using the three-dimensional commonplaces (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and the 3R framework (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2013, 2014), I have shed light on the often unheard stories of the queer experience in teacher education. The participants and I shared stories that have offered a window into the lives of teacher candidates who are queer. Now that the research is complete, the participants' narratives continue as they continue their stories as queer teachers. I consider it the greatest

privilege that I have had the opportunity to work through this experience alongside my participants and I have truly gained a greater understanding of myself through my interactions with them and my own reflections. This study has allowed me to become confident in my ability to be a successful queer educator and truly has empowered me to become an agent of change.

For me this process has been one of growth. When I began this thesis 5 years ago, I was terrified. I was unsure of how this research would be perceived. I was nervous knowing I would have to be very open and vulnerable in sharing my experience. Despite my reluctance, I sought to bring light to an issue that had significantly impacted my life experience and I sincerely intended to do the topic justice. Although I was initially hesitant to pursue this topic, I have been awe-inspired by how positive the response has been to this research. I have had the privilege of taking part in numerous national and international conferences, I received an invitation to a reception hosted by the Lieutenant Governor, with the Premier of Ontario, and I am a member of a working committee on LGBTQ issues at the OCT for the work in which I have engaged. Five years ago, I never would have believed this to be possible. It is my greatest hope that one day, my children will be raised in an education system that is sensitive to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, where teachers and students may feel comfortable being their authentic selves.

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Appendix A

Letter of Invitation

[insert date]

Title of Study: Becoming a Queer Teacher: Perceptions of Queer Teacher Candidates
Principal Investigator: Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker, Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Brock University
Student Principal Investigator: Courtenay Fleet, M.Ed Student, Department of Education, Brock University

I, Courtenay Fleet from the Department Education, Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled Becoming a Queer Teacher.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the conceptions and experiences of queer teacher candidates throughout Ontario. This study intends to explore the ways they respond to social bias and stereotypes, which are heavily present in the learning community. It aims to address how participants perceive attitudes towards sexual minorities from colleagues, instructors, and the professional institution they attend. It will draw attention to participants' decision of whether to disclose their sexual orientation within the university community and the emotional and social ramifications of their choice. It will investigate the willingness of queer candidates to seek support and use the university resources available to them.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in two interviews; One 1-2 hour audiotaped interview at the beginning of the study, and one 45 minute follow up interview at the end. You will also be asked to take part in email correspondence with myself, the researcher. The approximate duration of email correspondence is 4 weeks. During this time you will be asked to reflect, answer questions, and share stories and experiences with the researcher. You will be encouraged to respond as often you are able, however there is no obligation to respond a certain amount.

The intent of this study is to expose the narratives of queer teacher candidates in the hopes that teacher education programs can be improved for future generations. This study aims to create more inclusive learning environments where educators are more aware of existing social bias and the prevalence of hetero-normativity in the field of education.

If you wish to participate in this study please contact myself, Courtenay Fleet, by email at cf10ge@brocku.ca. Should you choose to decline the invitation or wish to withdraw at a later date, please be aware that it will in no way adversely affect our relationship or my ability to complete the requirements of my degree.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

[Insert Principal Investigator's Signature]
Thank you,
[Insert Principal Investigator's Signature]
Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker   Courtenay Fleet
Associate Professor   M.Ed Student
905-547-3555 x3605   289-339-3170
darlene.ciuffetelliparker@brocku.ca   cf10ge@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board **[**12-023 - CIUFFETELLI PARKER**].**

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Date:
Project Title: Becoming a Queer Teacher: Perceptions of Queer Teacher Candidates

Principal Investigator (PI):
Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker, Associate Professor
Department of Teacher Education
Department of Education
Brock University
905-547-3555 x3605
darlene.ciuffetelliparker@brocku.ca

Principal Investigator (SPI)
Courtenay Fleet, M.Ed student
Department of Education
Brock University
(289-339-3170
cf10ge@brocku.ca

INVITATION
You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to examine the conceptions and experiences of queer teacher candidates throughout Ontario.

WHAT'S INVOLVED
As a participant, you will be asked to take part in an initial audiotaped interview lasting approximately 1-2 hours, and a 45 minute follow up interview. Potential questions may include asking you to describe yourself as a teacher candidate, how your sexual identity impacted your experience, and to share stories from your time in the teacher education program. You will also be asked to take part in email correspondence with the researcher for a period of 4 weeks. During this time you will be asked to share storied experiences with the research. You may be asked to answer questions or to clarify thoughts. There is no obligation to respond a certain number of times but you are encouraged to respond as often as possible. At the completion of data collection you will be given the opportunity to review any and all data collected from you, at which time you may make any clarifications.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Participants may benefit from the opportunity to explore their identity as a queer educator. Participants may also, benefit from discussing their experiences with the researcher who was a former queer teacher candidate as well.
There also may be risks associated with participation. There is the possibility of participants feeling upset or uncomfortable. Participants will be asked to explore

experiences, which at times may have been negative and upsetting. Also, there is the possibility that some of the participants may not be open about their sexuality in their workplace or in the community and may feel anxious as a result. Participants will be given contact information for support services that are freely accessible should they feel upset. Similarly, participation is voluntary and participants should feel free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should they wish to withdraw all of the data collected from them will not be used and destroyed.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All participants will be given a pseudonym, which they will be referred to as in all discussion and documents related to the study. All identifying information will be kept in a locked box at my home or in password protected files on my computer. Similarly, all data collected during this study will be stored in the same locked box in my home. Data will be kept for 5 years, after which time all files will be destroyed.

Access to this data will be restricted to Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker, Courtenay Fleet, and a data transcriber who has signed a confidentiality form.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available from Courtenay Fleet, who can be contacted at cf10ge@brocku.ca or 289-339-3170. You will be contacted immediately if the results of this study are to be published or presented in any way.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Courtenay Fleet using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University **[**12-023 - CIUFFETELLI PARKER**].** If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity

to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Email Correspondence

Overview:

The participants and researcher will also engage in personal correspondence. Through email the researcher and participants will share narratives and discuss the experience of being queer and becoming a teacher.

I will use my Brock email (cf10ge@brocku.ca) for correspondence. Participants are free to use the email address of their choice. All documents pertaining to the research will be password protected to ensure the privacy of the participants is protected. The password will be discussed following the initial interview with participants. Correspondence will take place over a period of 4 weeks. Participants are free to respond as much or as little as they would like during this time.

Initial Email:

Dear (name),

I would like to begin by thanking you for participating in the personal correspondence portion of this study, Becoming a Queer Teacher: Perceptions of Queer Teacher Candidates in Teacher Education. The intent is to engage in discussion about the experiences of queer teacher candidates through email correspondence. I look forward to working with you over the next 4 weeks.

As previously discussed, I have chosen the term queer to be used in this project in reference to sexual minorities. The term queer will be used to refer to all sexual minorities, as it is considered an all-encompassing term referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, and intersex peoples. You do not have to use the term queer in your own discussion of your experiences. You are encouraged to use any terminology, which is meaningful for you.

I want to reiterate that all personal identifiers will be kept confidential and will be kept in a locked and secure location. Throughout the research you will be referred to only as your pseudonym. Similarly, should you feel at any point you wish to withdraw from the study, there will be no personal consequence and all data will be destroyed.

I intend for correspondence to take place over the next 4 weeks, from (date) to (date). Correspondence should be treated like easy conversation back and forth. You should feel free to direct the conversation in any way you wish. At times I may ask you questions but you should feel free to decline from answering them.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Please respond to this email indicating whether you wish to participate in the personal correspondence. If you wish to participate you will receive your first email from me.

Thank you,

Courtenay Fleet
cf10ge@brocku.ca
289-339-3170

Appendix D

Research Ethics Certificate

Brock University
Research Ethics Office
Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 9/7/2012

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CIUFFETELLI PARKER, Darlene
Teacher Education

FILE: 12-023 - CIUFFETELLI PARKER

TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Courtenay Fleet
SUPERVISOR: Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker

TITLE: Becoming a Queer Teacher: Perceptions of Queer Teacher Candidates in Teacher Education

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW   Expiry Date: 9/30/2013

The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 9/7/2012 to 9/30/2013.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 9/30/2013. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at
http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:
  a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
  b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
  c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
  d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Jan Frijters, Chair
Social Sciences Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.