AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT TEACHER PREPARATION
IN RELATION TO HOMOPHOBIA

by

Nora Wynne

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Approved by the Master’s Project Committee:

__________________________  _______________________
Ann Diver-Stamnes, Major Professor                  Date

__________________________  _______________________
Keri Gelenian, Committee Member                  Date

__________________________  _______________________
Eric Van Duzer, Graduate Coordinator             Date

__________________________  _______________________
Chris Hopper, Interim Dean for Research and Graduate Studies Date
ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT TEACHER PREPARATION IN RELATION TO HOMOPHOBIA

NORA WYNNE

The literature reveals that teacher education programs are not adequately reducing bias and prejudice in relation to sexual orientation in preservice teachers. Many factors influence the lack of adequate preparation. Preservice teachers hold homophobic attitudes, exhibit unwillingness to address gay and lesbian issues, and show a general lack of knowledge about homosexuality. Preservice teachers indicate that their preservice programs failed to address issues of sexual orientation, exhibited more bias in relation to sexual orientation than to race and gender issues, and failed to prepare them to meet the needs of lesbian and gay students. Preservice teachers also show higher bias in relation to sexual orientation than race, gender, social class, ability and language/immigration.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) teachers have seen incremental advances in their struggle for equality in the schools. Teachers who identify as LGBTQ continue to hide their identity due to fear of loss of employment. Teachers attempt to pass as heterosexual and self-distance from sexuality as strategies to hide their identities. Queer teacher candidates express significant fears about teaching anti-homophobia content or coming out in their schools.

I interviewed nine secondary education credential candidates over the course of the year in the teacher preparation program. This study examines their responses to homophobia encountered in their schools. I focused on their understandings of the school
climate, school policies, and support provided by the school to protect and support
LGBTQ students. Candidates responded in proactive and reactive ways to homophobia
and other forms of oppression. While some mentor teachers both supported and
encouraged candidates’ efforts, others made homophobic comments themselves, or did
little to model intervention.

This study also examines how queer identified teacher candidates understood
LGBTQ issues in their schools and how they navigated their own safety and security in the
homophobic environments in which they were teaching. They struggled in their attempts
to address heterosexism and homophobia while simultaneously being victims of both.

This study asks the question: How does an intensive course in multicultural
education affect teacher candidates’ practice and attitudes in relation to homophobia in a
small northern California credential program?
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This year, while the California State Supreme Court deliberates the constitutionality of denying queer people the right to marriage, another teenager was killed at school for his sexual orientation. In more than forty years since the civil rights struggle sought to gain equal rights for all people in the United States, much has been gained. However, not all people have gained equally from that struggle and there is still much work to do to secure equal opportunity and rights for all. While public schools are mandated to provide a free and fair education for all students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students still do not have equal access to education. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, and queer students are still physically and verbally harassed due to their sexual or gender identity (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005), and queer teachers still find the need to hide their sexual identity in order to be free from threats to their reputations and their jobs (Griffen, 1992; Harbeck & Woods, 1992).

The state of California produces 12% of the nation’s teachers, and the CSU system issues 55% of California’s credentialed teachers (CCTC, 2008c). The CCTC’s SB2402 program gives a broad mandate for pre-service teachers to engage in multicultural study and experience (CCTC, 2001). Multicultural Education attempts to address the diversity in this multicultural society and include many of the perspectives lacking in textbooks and standards. Multicultural education includes
race and ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, exceptionality, language, gender, and social class. It often includes critical pedagogy as its method and equity and social reform as its goals.

Trillium State University (TSU) uses a frontloaded, concentrated, weeklong seminar format for its Multicultural Issues in Education course (SED 715), the week before the credential year begins. It is an intensive seminar course that utilizes small discussion groups facilitated by former or current high school teachers. The course includes issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and ability and attempts to expose students to diverse issues of inequity. Students reflect on their experiences through journal writings throughout the semester, small group discussions during the weeklong course, and a multicultural multimedia piece at the end of the semester. Despite that many teacher preparation programs require a similar course, students at public schools still face incidents of homophobic and racist behaviors and speech by their peers, teachers, and administrators.

A 2005 study by Gay Lesbian and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) documented that 89% of LGBT students and those perceived to belong to these groups hear anti-gay epithets frequently in schools. They also report that teachers, if present when homophobic remarks were made, often failed to intervene. Students surveyed reported that their teachers intervened less frequently regarding homophobic language than in incidents of racist remarks. Students also reported that they heard their teachers and other school staff making homophobic remarks themselves.
Almost three quarters of students surveyed by GLSEN reported not feeling safe at school due to their actual or perceived sexual or gender identity. These conditions lead LGBT to higher rates of skipping school, missing class, and dropping-out of school. LGBT students also had lower grade point averages and were less likely to report planning to go to college. Conversely, students who reported having support at school had more positive association with school. LGBT students reported that having policies that were enforced that explicitly named harassment due to sexual identity, support clubs for LGBT such as a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), supportive teachers or queer teachers, also reported being more likely to come to school, feel like they belonged at school, and were more likely to plan on attending college.

The research in this thesis examines the experiences of teacher credential candidates as they made sense of the multicultural content in their student teaching placement. I focused on their understandings of the school climate, school policies, and support provided by the school to protect and support LGBTQ students. Because I used a phenomenological approach, I did not research the public schools’ policies or programs or investigate the TSU’s courses. While it may be important in another study to ask for official school policy or to find out what schools claim to have in place for their LGBTQ students, or to ask TSU how its course, SED 715, is connected to other teacher preparation courses, that is not the focus of this research. In this study, I was more interested to find out what candidates understood from their
experiences, from the implicit and explicit messages that they received, and how they made decisions based upon that information.

I was especially interested in how queer identified teacher candidates understood LGBTQ issues in their schools and how they navigated their own safety and security in the homophobic environments in which they were teaching. The candidates who participated in interviews all claimed to have an interest in making conditions more equitable for their LGBTQ students. For queer identified teacher candidates, this was not only a professional interest, but deeply personal as well.

*Operational Definitions*

*Queer.*

While no term remains uncontested in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer community, for the purposes of this thesis I will use the word queer to include all of the members of these groups. Queer attempts to be inclusive of all sexualities but often is contested by older members of the LGBTQ community who suffered the use of it as an epithet that was often accompanied by violence. This is in fact why some members of this community have begun to use the term queer again, as an attempt to reclaim the term, to claim agency over the terminology used to define them. I will use it interchangeably with the letters LGBTQ when speaking about communities or individuals who are marginalized due to their non-heterosexual identity.
Non-queer.

Non-queer is the term I use in this study when discussing those candidates who have identified as other than queer as their primary identification. Some candidates did not identify as straight, but rather defined themselves in the following ways: “straight-ish;” “mostly straight;” “open but married to a man;” “heterosexual but it wasn’t always that way;” “heterosexual and married to a woman, but in another situation could identify as bisexual, asexual or homosexual;” and “straight but at times have questioned that category.” Even though the candidates did not identify simply as straight, they were perceived by others as straight and thus benefited from all of the privileges accorded to straight people.

By using non-queer, I realize that I am still defining people’s sexuality as if it were a binary, and defining someone’s identity by what they are not, and I recognize that both of these practices are problematic. However, without naming all the ways that people have identified their sexuality, I wanted a grouping that did not have a simple binary option, such as straight, when they themselves did not use that as an unproblematic term. For the purposes of the study, I used the singular term, non-queer to identify the whole range of expressions that the candidates had used. I felt that this term more accurately represented their careful word choice than to call them straight or heterosexual.

Homophobia.

Homophobia is the fear or dislike of LGBTQ people and those perceived to be in those groups. It is based upon the assumption that heterosexuality is the natural
and innate state of sexuality, and any deviation from that is abnormal. Homophobia
is used in schools to maintain rigid gender roles and often results in bullying,
taunting, and physical violence for those students who express themselves outside of
those roles.

_Heterosexism._

Heterosexism works with homophobia to create the climate and the institutional support that enforce heterosexuality. Heterosexism is the belief that everyone is and should be heterosexual. School practices and policies uphold this belief and lead to prejudice in schools. Heterosexism is demonstrated in schools by the common assumptions made by teachers and administration that all students’ parents are heterosexual, or that the explanation of how a baby is made will include a (married) heterosexual couple.

_Heteronormativity._

Heteronormativity describes the expectations and demands that heterosexuality be understood as natural and therefore as the societal norm. This is upheld by privileging those who comply with the heterosexual norm and ignoring or punishing those who do not. Schools provide many examples of the privileging of heteronormative behavior. Many school sanctioned events in fact demand the performance of heterosexuality, such as coupling for school dances, voting for heterosexual pairings for yearbook, such as Homecoming King and Queen, or contests such as Senior bests, (best smile, best looking, best couple, etc.).
Overview of the Thesis

The remaining chapters of the literature review are as follows. Chapter Two is the Literature Review which gives an overview of the published literature on ethnic and cultural diversity in California, multicultural education, teacher education, and LGBTQ issues in education.

Chapter Three, Methodology, gives a detailed account of the research process, including data collection, data management, and analysis. This chapter describes the selection of participants and the participants themselves, the interview process, the transcription of the interviews, the coding of the data, and the analysis. It also describes the quantitative data gathering process and data analysis of the quantitative data.

Chapter Four, Results, includes the quantitative results and the excerpts from the interviews that express salient themes of the qualitative results, such as the willingness to respond, the barriers to intervention, and the strategies used by candidates.

Chapter Five, Analysis, discusses the meaning of some of the results. Due to the amount of data gathered, I selected six themes to analyze: 1) the barriers in schools that prevented the candidate from intervening on behalf of their targeted students; 2) the effect of time, practice, and mentorship on candidates process of becoming a social justice advocate; 3) the candidates’ understanding of multicultural education as an integral component of their practice; 4) the effect of strategies used on students understanding of living in a multicultural society; and 6) the ways in
which the experiences of queer identified teacher candidates differed from their non-queer colleagues.

Finally, in Chapter Six, Conclusion, I will offer recommendations and consider the limitations of the study. The candidates interviewed offered insight into many of the barriers to creating equitable classrooms. The recommendations attempt to consider changes to the teacher preparation program in order to give all students equal access to education.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, all measures point to an ethnically and culturally diverse society within the United States (NCES, 2004; Hobbs, F. & Stoops, N. 2000). The public school system, which educates the citizens of the nation, mirrors this diversity (NCES, 2004). Educational institutions are faced with the challenge of how to become more inclusive and how to promote democratic schooling within this diversity.

This review of the literature will begin by looking at the diversity in the year 2008 within the United States and more specifically within California. Subsequently, some of the many definitions by major scholars in the field of multicultural education will be examined. Next an examination of the state of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people in the last half of the past century will give context for the situation LGBTQ students and teachers face today. I will then review how LGBTQ issues are included in, or more often, excluded from the field of multicultural education. Following that review, I will look at teachers, teacher educators, and students and consider the risks that both queer identified students and teachers face in the school setting. I will then examine multicultural education within teacher education and the wide diversity of implementation of diversity training for preservice teachers. This will lead to the question: How does an
intensive course in multicultural education affect teacher candidates’ practice and attitudes in relation to homophobia in a small northern California credential program?

This study will use the term *queer* to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people for three reasons: 1) to be inclusive of all of the sexual orientations; 2) to borrow from queer theorists and avoid the “perceived classism, racism and Eurocentrism of the terms *gay* and *lesbian*” (Pinar, 1998, p. 3); and 3) because “Queerness proudly and defiantly asserted the right and even importance of being different,” and that the use of queer “is a bold assertion from the margins, a declaration that we do not want to be normalized” (Carlson, 1998, p. 110).

*Diversity in the United States and California*

“The United States is made up of at least 276 ethnic groups including 170 Native American groups” (Gollnick and Chinn 1998, p. 78). The 2000 Census showed that by 2050, European-Americans will represent about half of the total U.S. population (Hobbs, F. Stoops, N., 2000), and that California’s ethnic minorities are going to experience a major demographic shift (Hobbs, F. Stoops, N., 2000). California has been an ethnically and linguistically diverse population since it became a state in 1848 (Takaki, 1993). This diversity increases every year, and with it, the needs within public schools change. In 2004, California public school enrollment was 46.7% Latino, 32.9% European-American, 8.2% African-American, 11.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .8% American Indian/Alaskan Native (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2004b). One fourth of California’s students
were classified as limited-English proficient, and almost half of its students qualified for free/reduced lunch (NCES, 2004b).

No federal agency keeps statistics on sexual identity; however, the figure that is most often used in relation to homosexuality is 10% (Kinsey, 1948, 1953). Recent research recognizes the difficulty in obtaining accurate estimates due to the various ways that sexual orientation is defined (i.e., sexual practices, desire, self identification, etc.), measurement error, and the difficulty in data collection from this group (Black, Gates, Sanders & Taylor, 2000). Education has resisted dealing with sexual minority youth due to the perception that sexual orientation is developed late in adolescence and therefore sees youth as sexually neutral (Rofes, 1989). Further, the topics of children and sexuality are rarely mixed without people feeling discomfort or panic (Rofes, 2005).

California’s rapidly increasing diversity might suggest that the diversity of its teachers is also on the rise. This is not the case for most of the state. The majority of teacher candidates are European-American, middle class, monolingual, and female (NCES, 2004b; Zeichner, 1993). In contrast to the diversity of California’s student population, who are 31% European American, (CTCC, 2008b) its teachers are 72% European-American (CCTC, 2008a). This may leave a wide cultural disparity between students and teachers in California’s public schools. Over the past two decades this discrepancy has grown between preservice teacher education and the diverse students they will serve (Delpit, 1995; Gay & Howard 2000; Zeichner, 1993). The future teaching force will need to be prepared to teach a student
population that is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of race, class, language, and sexuality, which is a considerable task from a profession that is taught by schools of education dominated by European-American males (Grant & Secada, 1990, p. 404). Given the demographics of the state, teacher education programs offering multicultural education as a means of preparing beginning teachers to teach ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and sexually diverse populations may better prepare them for the realities that they will likely face in the classroom.

**Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education today is a “philosophical concept and an educational process built upon the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity and human dignity,” which “acknowledges and affirms the belief that strength and richness of the United States is in its human diversity” (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, pp. xxvi-xxvii). Multicultural education can be considered as being comprised of five dimensions: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 2004). Multicultural education is a reform movement that is trying to ensure that students from all social classes, as well as gender, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal opportunity to learn (Banks, 2004).

No consistent agreement exists about exactly which socially constructed identities fit under the umbrella of multicultural education. This lack of definition for multicultural education has been problematic since its inception (Banks, 2004). While many studies in multicultural education contain only race and ethnicity,
recently sexuality, gender, class, religion, language and ability are included by some scholars (Banks, 2004; Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004). Nieto defines multicultural education as “antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process, and critical pedagogy” (Nieto, 2000, p. 305). The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) suggests that curriculum “directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ablism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance and xenophobia” (NAME, 2003). Gollnick and Chinn (1998) include class, ethnicity and race, gender, exceptionality, religion, language and age under the umbrella of multicultural education. Sleeter and Grant (1986) use “education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist” to stress the emphasis on social action. Grant and Ladson-Billings’ Dictionary of Multicultural Education defined multicultural education as confronting “social issues involving race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability” (1997, p. 172). Of these, sexuality and religion seem to be the most controversial elements of the debate (Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004).

All of these social constructs can and do overlap, as each person is often a member of multiple cultural groups (Thomas, 1999). Sexual orientation is not free of the influences of ethnicity, culture, class, ability, religion, or gender. For example, an African-American, Jewish Lesbian experiences oppression differently than a European-American, Christian, gay man. Looking at the intersections between these social constructs can allow a deeper look at oppression. These intersections are described as the “borderlands” (Anzaldua, 1987, preface), explaining that wherever
there is a meeting of two or more cultures, there are psychological, sexual and
spiritual borderlands present. It is problematic to look at a singular issue such as
sexuality alone. “Our efforts to challenge one form of oppression often
unintentionally contribute to other forms of oppression, and our efforts to embrace
one form of difference often exclude and silence others” (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 1)
“The dynamics of including homosexuality in teacher education are perhaps the most
delicate,” when surrounded by the rest of the content in multicultural contexts, but “it
is imperative to link sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, and heterosexism in our anti-
oppression courses” (Lipkin, 2002, p. 22).

While there is a large body of research about the experiences of lesbian, gay,
bisexual, transgendered, queer (LGBTQ) youth, very few studies focus on
classrooms. A review of the last decade of multicultural education research found
that “in comparison to other groups, queer research in education is minimal,
appearing primarily in the form of books or in journals not associated with
education” and cite that possible reasons for this gap are the risks that both
researcher and participant face by being visible in this way (Grant, Elsbrie, &
Fondrie 2004, p. 197). “Recognition of ‘queer’ aspects of multiculturalism, when it
does exist, rarely extends beyond adding a placeholder (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual,
and transgendered [lgbt] students, gays and lesbians, queers) to a list of diversity
categories” (Letts, 2002, p. 119). The relative lack of literature on the inclusion of
queer issues in teacher education programs has been described as “the failure of
multicultural education to include sexual orientation” (King & Brindley, 2002, p. 201).

In a study of six texts on multicultural education, only one discussed gay and lesbian issues with any detail (Mathison, 1998). In reviewing the multicultural texts for this study, the words *gay* and *lesbian* were included in some of the introductions of the texts or in the definition of who fits under the multicultural education umbrella, but content was scarce in the chapters that followed.

*Society, Education, and Sexual Orientation*

From early in the twentieth century, there has been discrimination against homosexual students and teachers in society and within schools (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Homosexuality has been viewed as a sin, a sickness, a genetic disorder, a crime, and a mental disorder (Harbeck, 1992). *The Sociology of Teaching* stated its purpose was to “give insight to concrete situations typical of the typical school” (Waller, 1932, p. vi) and encouraged principals to fire homosexuals due to the fact that “nothing seems more certain than that homosexuality is contagious” (Waller, 1932, pp. 147-148). The Briggs amendment, which proposed that schools “fire or refuse to hire…any teacher, counselor, aide, or administrator in the public school system” that promoted or encouraged “homosexual activity” failed to pass in California in 1978 (Faderman, 1991, p. 200).

Small advances were made over the second half of the past century. In the post WWII era, Harry Hay established the first gay group called the Matachine Society, and Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin formed the first lesbian group called the
Daughters of Bilitis (Faderman, 1991), both of which were secret societies despite the persecution of homosexuals in the McCarthy era of the 1950s (Faderman, 1991). Alfred Kinsey’s landmark study on human sexuality found that far more men and women engaged in same sex behavior than ever imagined, coining the often quoted 10% figure (Kinsey, 1948, 1953). The 1960s brought about the sexual liberation movement that laid the framework for the 1969 Stonewall Inn rebellion and riots in New York City, during which gays and lesbians protested the police raids of a popular gay bar in Greenwich Village marking the first gay riots in history (Faderman, 1991). In 1973 the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality as a form of mental disorder (Tierney and Dilley, 1998) which marked gay and lesbian people’s advance toward equality.

While some advances were being made in civil rights for gays and lesbians, and visibility was increasing with gay pride parades and rock and movie stars coming out of the closet, there were many efforts to counter any advances including policy, laws, and violent crimes against gays and lesbians. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, several states (Arizona, Minnesota, and Connecticut) passed “no promo homo” legislation. These laws restricted any neutral or positive mention of homosexuality which was termed the “promotion of homosexuality” (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p. 119). The Boy Scouts of America won the ability to maintain its discriminatory policy against gays (Lambda Legal, 2000). The “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy of the Clinton administration in relation to gays in the military implied that the government would look the other way to permit gays to serve in the armed
forces but has ended the careers of more than 12,000 servicemen since 1993 (Lambda Legal, 2007). Since 1995, gay marriage continues to be contested across the country. Same-sex civil marriage became legal in 2004 in Massachusetts (Gay Lesbian Task Force, 2003), but 26 states have constitutional amendments banning marriage. “Forty nine states and the District of Columbia and all states except Massachusetts have statutes or interpret their statutes to bar marriages of same-sex couples,” yet 10 states offer some benefits to same sex partners (Lambda Legal, 2007).

Teachers and Teacher Education

LGBTQ teachers have persisted in their struggle for equality in the schools but have only seen incremental advances. Teachers who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender continue to hide their identity on a variety of levels due to fear of loss of employment (Griffen, 1992). Passing as heterosexual and self-distancing from homosexual issues are two strategies some teachers use to hide their identities (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Queer teachers continue to fight to come out of the closet in their schools which often results in lawsuits to keep their jobs (Egan, 1997; Walsh, 2002). Queer teacher candidates express significant fears about teaching anti-homophobia content or coming out in their schools (Jimenéz, 2002; Mathison, 1998; Rofes, 2002).

Teacher education programs are not adequately reducing bias and prejudice in relation to sexual orientation in preservice teachers (Butler, 1994; Jimenéz, 2002; Page & Liston, 2002; Sears, 1992). Many factors influence the lack of adequate
preparation. Preservice teachers hold homophobic attitudes, exhibit unwillingness to address gay and lesbian issues, and show a general lack of knowledge about homosexuality (Butler, 1994). Preservice teachers indicate that their preservice programs failed to address issues of sexual orientation, exhibited more bias in relation to sexual orientation than to race and gender issues, and failed to prepare them to meet the needs of lesbian and gay students (Miller, Miller & Scroth, 1997). Preservice teachers also show higher bias in relation to sexual orientation than race, gender, social class, ability, and language/immigration (Taylor, 2000). Only 9% of preservice high school teachers report receiving preparation to deal with homophobia (Page & Liston, 2002). Teachers report not learning to disrupt homophobia in their preservice training (Elsbrie, 2002). Very few schools of education offer courses dealing with exclusively with queer issues (Rofes, 2005), and some universities depend upon one faculty member, usually gay or lesbian, to bring up LGBTQ issues (De Jean & Elsbree, 2008; Young & Middleton, 1999).

**LGBTQ Students**

Both high school and college students who are or who are perceived to be queer are at far greater risk than their heterosexual peers of harassment, threats, feelings of isolation, verbal and physical violence, dropping out of school, drug abuse, and suicide (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Massachusetts Department of Education 2003).

LGBT teens are significantly more likely than their heterosexual peers to have carried a weapon, been in a physical fight, skipped school because they felt
unsafe, or been threatened or injured with a weapon at school (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003). Forty percent of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed and over a third of the queer youth reported having been physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation (Kosciw, 2004). LGBT youth were significantly more likely than their heterosexual peers to have experienced dating violence or sexual contact against their will (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003).

Ninety-one percent of LGBT students reported hearing homophobic remarks often or frequently from other students, and 20% reported hearing these same remarks from school faculty or staff some of the time (Kosciw, 2004). Homophobic language is commonly used to enforce gender roles and define masculinity (Pascoe, 2007). LGBT youth were over three times more likely to report a suicide attempt in the previous year, and 49% reported that they had considered suicide during the previous year (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1999).

Eighty one percent of LGBT students reported never being taught about LGBTQ people in school, and almost three quarters of students surveyed reported not feeling safe at school due to their actual or perceived sexual or gender identity. These conditions lead LGBT youth to higher rates of skipping school, skipping class, and dropping-out (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005). Teachers and preservice teachers who identify as queer are often closeted due to fear of losing their jobs or their reputations, leaving LGBTQ students further at risk without positive role models (Woods & Harbeck, 1992).
Because there is no federal law that prohibits the exclusion of any group from the classroom, the extent to which LGBTQ issues are included or excluded in the classroom is left up to individual schools (Macgillivray, 2000). The opponents of LGBTQ inclusion are often vocal about their opposition (Pharr, 1997; Rofes, 2005); thus administrators often respond by not making a decision to include LGBTQ lives in the curriculum. While administrators may perceive this as neutral or as fair, by not allowing LGBTQ students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum they may further enforce the heterosexist culture in high schools.

Moraga warns of the dangers of “ranking the oppressions,” and she further reminds us that “the danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression” (Moraga, 2002, p. 26). One of the specificities of the LGBTQ student experience that differs from other oppressed groups of youth is that LGBTQ youth are often living without positive role models in their homes (Friend, 1993). Smith says, “Lesbians and gays are the only oppressed group that was born and raised by our oppressors” as quoted in Friend (1993, p. 212). Furthermore, LGBTQ adolescents have higher rates of homelessness due to the negative reactions from their parents if they come out (Cochran, B., Stewart, A. & Cauce, 2002). The invisibility of role models may be further carried out by schools due to the lack of images of and content about LGBTQ people or denying the presence of LGBTQ students and staff (Friend, 1993).

Recently, Assembly Bill AB537, the California Students Safe School and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, changed the Education Code to include sexual
orientation and gender identity into anti-discriminatory codes in public schools but did not go as far as mandating inclusion of LGBTQ issues into curriculum (California Department of Education, 2000). The murders of gay Mathew Shepard in Wyoming (Lambda Legal, 1998) and transgender Gwen (Eddie) Araujo (Guthrie, 2002) in the San Francisco Bay Area, and gay 8th grade student Lawrence King, in Orange County, California (Saillant & Covarrubias, 2008) have brought violence to the forefront of the attention of schools in relation to teen sexuality. Costly lawsuits brought by students George Loomis (Walsh, 2002a), and Jaime Nabozny (Cianciotto, & Cahill, 2003) against public high schools that failed to protect them from severe anti-gay harassment and assault have caused some administrators to pay more attention to AB 537.

Multicultural education in teacher education programs.

The reform movement towards multicultural teacher education has spread across the United States, yet there is still progress to be made. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires members to implement components, courses, and programs in multicultural education which affects 80% of teacher education programs in the United States (Banks, 2004). While it is difficult to assess the implementation of diversity training, studies suggest that there is wide variety in teacher education programs (Miller, Strosnider & Dooley, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). Nine states do not require any diversity preparation for teachers, and only 26 states stipulate that teacher preparation programs provide it (Miller, Strosnider & Dooley, 2000). This means that some states have no diversity
requirement. Some states leave diversity preparation to the individual, while others
leave it to the licensing institution (Miller, Strosnider & Dooley, 2000).

In California, this reform movement has lead institutions such as the
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) to mandate that preservice
teachers engage in self-examination and reflection about their “beliefs, attitudes and
expectations” related to gender, diverse students, and California’s “major cultural
and ethnic groups” such that they “identify, analyze and minimize personal and
institutional bias” (CCTC, 2001, p.36). The CCTC’s SB 2042 program Standard 5
gives a broad mandate for pre-service teachers to engage in multicultural study and
experience. It does not explicitly define diverse students, but it does state that
candidates should “know the protections afforded by Assembly Bill 537” (CTCC,
2001, p. 36) which added sexual orientation and gender identity to protections under
the California Education Code. AB 537, The California Student Safety and Violence
Prevention Act of 2000, defines discrimination in terms of individuals with no
mention of institutional discrimination. AB 537 does not require LGBTQ inclusion
into curriculum and does not make exclusion of LGBTQ issues a violation of the
law.

According to the CCTC, this experience should encourage candidates to
examine their attitudes toward California’s diverse student population. Many of the
California State Universities (CSU) offer a separate course called Multicultural
Education and incorporate diverse perspectives in the curriculum of their teacher
education programs. Each university has to meet this mandate by following
standards set by the CCTC. Although standards exist, each CSU has freedom to meet them through a variety of models. This leads to wide diversity in the implementation of the course. “In the field of education, only five universities have offered courses specifically focused on gay and lesbian issues,” three of which are in California, and “most teacher education programs include either brief, superficial content on gay issues in schools or remain silent on the topic,” (Rofes, 2005, p. 70).

Summary

Sexual orientation remains relatively invisible in multicultural education and teacher education. Preservice teachers receive little information in regards to queer issues, thus excluding queer students from the right to an equal and inclusive education. Teachers may not acknowledge the oppression that LGBTQ students face in the way that they acknowledge other forms of oppression. Teacher education programs need to prepare teachers to acknowledge, prevent, and impede all forms of oppression. For example, the words queer, fag, and homo and the phrase that’s so gay remain the most common insults used by students within public K-12 schools, and continue to go uninterrupted by teachers, staff, and administrators. Teachers need to identify their own hidden filters in regard to the existence of societal oppression so that they are well able to recognize the oppression their students experience. “We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different…Indeed many of us don’t even realize our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions that we have built to support them” (Delpit, 1995, p. xiv)
If multicultural education is to meet its goals of being 1) education for social justice (Nieto, 2000, p. 305); 2) having an equity pedagogy (Banks, 2004); and 3) being built upon the ideals of justice and equity (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997), teacher education programs need to consider placing sexual orientation squarely within content of multicultural education. Teacher education programs must ask themselves honest questions about why teachers leave their programs unprepared to deal with homophobia and what they are doing to awaken this sense of social justice within their candidates.

This thesis asks the question: How does an intensive course in multicultural education affect teacher candidates’ practice and attitudes in relation to homophobia in a small northern California credential program? Freire (1970) described critical consciousness, conscientização, as not only an awareness of social and political situations of oppression but also reflection and action to change these conditions. This thesis pays close attention to the critical consciousness and to participants’ actions in relation to equity for gay and lesbian students and teachers. It only examines multicultural education and teacher preparation through the lens of queer issues but also contains an awareness of those intersections of race, class, gender, age, ability, religion, culture, and ethnicity as they arise in the participants.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used to gather and process the data, as well as the recruitment of and an introduction to the participants.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research on teacher preparation in relation to homophobia is based on the interviews of nine secondary education credential candidates over the course of one academic year at a rural northern California State University. Their experiences were gathered through oral and email interviews, and other quantitative data from the rest of the cohort in the credential program were gathered via a questionnaire.

I focused on a qualitative research approach because of the complexity of response that is permissible in open-ended questions. While issues involving homosexuality are often portrayed in black and white terms—gay or straight, right or wrong, genetic or environmental, homophobic or pushing an agenda, my experience tells me that it is a much more complicated set of issues. People who identify their sexuality as queer have a whole range of complex human experiences that rarely fall into a simple binary. Identities are complicated, porous, contradictory, strategic, and variable.

A small sample of credential candidates’ voices can provide rich detail and a deeper appreciation of student teaching experiences. This detail is central to understanding reasons behind the actions or inactions of the participants when faced with homophobic and racist situations in their first teaching experiences. While the sample size is too small to make generalizations to the larger context of teacher preparation, it does allow the research participants to think and speak deeply about
the concerns that affect their decisions in relation to issues of social justice in the secondary classroom. It may allow the reader to have some insight into the complexities involved in the student teachers’ understanding of and response to harassment.

One goal of this research was to take a closer look at the experiences that LGBTQ students report being harassed by and in the presence of teachers. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer students, as well students perceived as such and students who are gender non-conforming report that they receive homophobic comments from and in the presence of their teachers, and often with no intervention from their teachers. LGBTQ and gender non-conforming students are at greater risk for being targets of verbal and physical harassment and violence while at school than are their heterosexual and gender conforming peers.

One of the assumptions that guided my research was that teachers are not being adequately prepared to deal with the homophobic harassment that happens in the secondary classroom. This led me to question the effectiveness of the only course candidates take that deals directly with discrimination and inequity in the secondary classroom: SED 715 Multicultural Issues in Education. My assumption was that SED 715 was not effective in its attempt to educate future teachers about their responsibility in creating safe learning environment for every student, including LGBTQ students. After four years of involvement with that course as a group leader, I felt that since it was the only required course in the SED program that deals with issues of social justice, the course must be failing. The California Commission on
Teacher Credentialing (CTCC) requires that all credential programs in California include content that focuses on diversity issues as well. Despite the requirements for all future teachers to identify and reflect on their biases through courses like this one, high school students were still reporting that they were being harassed at their schools due to their perceived or actual sexual identity by and in the presence of teachers. Over the course of the year, listening to candidates talk about their experiences and their desire to make safer classrooms, I realized that there were a wide variety of reasons that would inhibit a new teacher from acting; many more than one university course could ever tackle.

Another goal of my research was to look at how queer identified student teachers make sense of and navigate the overt homophobic environment that they find themselves in during their first teaching experience. In what ways do queer teachers have to sacrifice their sexual identities to conform to the heteronormative ideals of schoolteacher, and in what ways do they resist that conformity? While I did not seek out queer identified candidates, I suspected that some might volunteer to participate. The numerous ways queer identified candidates responded to homophobia was especially interesting to me because of my own position as a queer identified high school teacher. I position myself not as an objective researcher but rather as an active agent in my research. “Both researcher and the people involved are subjects, active agents with their own emotions and agendas. Moreover, all knowledge is gained at the intersections of race, gender, class and sexual locations” (Wekker, 2006, p. 4). I position myself as a high school teacher who identifies as
white, middle class, queer, and I am doing research directly relating to my own lack of training in navigating the overwhelming amount of homophobia that faced me when I began teaching.

In addition to the qualitative interviews with nine participants, I also conducted a quantitative survey of the whole cohort. I wanted to compare the attitudes of my small sample of participants with the larger group. I assumed that my participants were not representative of the whole cohort, but rather a progressive, social justice minded subset of the larger group.

Participants

The university has approximately 7,000 students and is located in a rural, coastal setting in northern California. Fifty three percent of the student population is European American. Over 80% of the faculty is European American.

The Secondary Education Program (SED) had 44 secondary candidates in the 2006-2007 school year, placing candidates to student teach in approximately 14 local secondary and middle schools in 9 subject areas. The Secondary Education Program did not have demographic data for the year 2006-2007 due to a change in personnel, but according to the data collected in the quantitative survey of 95.6% of the cohort, 80% identified as European American, White, or Caucasian; 3% identified as Native American; 10% identified as Mexican, or Hispanic; 3% as Filipino; and 3% as Middle Eastern-American. Eighty-eight percent of candidates identified as straight or heterosexual, and 12% identified as queer or bisexual.
Participants were contacted through Secondary Education community meetings. Candidates were familiar with me due to my involvement in SED 715 as both a facilitator of a small section and as a presenter on LGBTQ students’ experiences. I described the research, explained my interest in the topic, and asked for volunteers to sign up if they were interested in participating. Thirteen candidates volunteered initially, and of those, five men and four women came to the first group interview and continued to participate for the remainder of the school year. Of the nine participants, three had been in my section of the SED 715 course.

Because candidates who were likely to volunteer were also likely to share an interest in the topic, I was interested in reaching out to candidates who might not share this interest. I asked two additional students to participate specifically due to their perceived attitudes and beliefs in relation to homophobia and racism, in an attempt to gather a more diverse set of perspectives; they declined.

Among the factors that inhibited candidates response to homophobic events, was the vulnerability that queer identified teachers felt. While acknowledging that sexuality is neither static nor fixed, and recognizing that candidates may not have shared parts of their sexuality with me for multiple reasons, I only used the term “queer identified” for those who identified themselves to me as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or fluid as their primary identification. I used “non-queer” for people who’s lives are organized around heterosexuality and who are not targets of homophobia; they neither identify as queer nor are they identified by society as queer.
Of the nine candidates, four were student teaching in Social Sciences, two in Math, one in Sciences, one in Language Arts/English, and one in Art. The candidates were placed at 4 mainstream local high schools, two alternative high schools (one charter and one continuation), and one middle school. All participants identified as European American, white, or Caucasian, except for one student who identified himself ethnically as a “cracker.”

Participants identified themselves with a pseudonym at the first focus group style interview.

Art was a 25-year-old male who identified his sexuality as queer and fluid. He taught Social Studies at Hilltop High. He double majored in Ethnic Studies and Women’s’ studies, and was involved locally in several activist movements. He identified with his “whiteness not ethnicity,” but wrote that he was “dedicated to unlearning whiteness as a possessive investment, or set of privileges to whatever degree that is possible.”

Dot was a 24-year-old white female and who identified her sexuality as open but was married to a man. She taught Math at Widow White Creek Middle School.

Elizabeth was a heterosexual who said that she had questioned that category at times, and was married to a man and had a child. She was 28 years old and taught Art at Cooper High. She identified as Caucasian but also identified with the Mexican roots of her grandfather.
Forest was a 32-year-old male who identified as White and taught Social Sciences at Widow White High. He identified as heterosexual and was married to a woman, but he wrote that he “could identify as other than that in another situation.”

Kalvin was a 27-year-old male who identified as heterosexual, who wrote that he “at times questions that category,” and who taught Social Sciences at Cooper High. He identified ethnically as “a cracker.”

Sebastian identified as a 24-year-old Caucasian heterosexual male and taught Math at Forestview High and Creekview High. He also identified as Christian.

Shelly was an open or bisexual white, female, 27-year-old who taught Social Sciences at Widow White High. She had extensive coursework in Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies and also identified as an activist.

Theo was a 27-year-old heterosexual male of European descent who taught Biological Sciences at Forestview High.

Wendy identified as a 24-year-old, European-American, queer female who taught Language Arts at Eel High. She double majored in Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies, was active in the feminist movement, and was bilingual (Spanish and English).

Interviews

Three oral interviews were conducted with each candidate in a quiet room at the university. The initial interview was conducted in a focus group, and the final two were conducted individually. During the first focus group interview, I read the agreement to participate form, explained the potential risks and benefits, and asked
the candidates to select pseudonyms. I explained that in a small cohort of credential candidates and in a small rural university town, it might be possible to identify their words or the names of their school sites, which could facilitate knowing their true identities, and that this could impact their local job prospects. No candidate expressed concern in this area.

Interviews were taped with a handheld audiotape recorder, a microphone, and a list of questions to serve as a guide. Audiotapes and transcribed interviews were kept in a locked file cabinet, along with participants’ names, consent forms, email addresses, and phone numbers.

*Interview protocol.*

Participants were asked 18 semi-structured questions over the course of three oral interviews and approximately 12 questions via three email interviews. These interviews began in the fall semester and ended near the end of the spring semester as candidates were finishing their student teaching. The questions solicited information about the students’ experiences in the *Multicultural Issues in Education* course and its materials, their experiences at the school site where they were student teaching, their feelings about events that happened on their campus in relation to homophobia and racism, and their feelings about their abilities to respond appropriately. Participants were also asked how they felt about the support they received in relation to these issues from their mentor teachers, other school staff, and the TSU SED program.
A total of nine secondary education credential candidates were interviewed orally three times, with the exception of one student who did not respond to several attempts to schedule the final interview. Each candidate also responded to three email interviews. Due to microphone failure, three candidates participated in one additional interview to complete their second interview, resulting in a total of 22 oral interviews and 27 email interviews. Each interview was roughly one hour in length, with 6 interviews lasting 1.5 hours.

All oral and email interviews were conducted between December, 2006, and June, 2007. Every oral interview was recorded with a handheld standard size cassette tape recorder. I transcribed the interviews verbatim using a transcription machine. I transcribed the interviews personally because I felt that I would understand the information on a deeper level as I listened to and wrote the words of the participants. Due to the emotional nature of some of the questions, several times participants spoke so quietly that their responses were inaudible. If I had notes that allowed me to understand what they said, I wrote that. If I did not have notes or if my notes were not complete, I wrote “inaudible” in the transcriptions. If only one or two words in the middle of a thought were inaudible, and the thought was comprehensible without the missing words, I completed the sentence. If there were so many words missing that I could not understand the thought, I wrote “inaudible” for that sentence, but filled in the words I could make out so that I would not lose the context.

The email interview responses were transferred from the email format into a Word format. When spelling was incorrect, I corrected the word if it was obvious to
me what word the participant was attempting to write. I did this to reduce the
distraction and to allow the meaning to be more salient for the reader. When using
actual quotes from interviews I deleted all of the words that filled space but did not
add to the thought, such as “um”, “you know,” and “like.” When quoting from the
interviews, I also deleted incomplete thoughts when they were in the middle of a
sentence for reader clarity.

Every email interview always included a question about any oppressive
events that they had witnessed at their school sites and was not limited to LGBTQ
issues. This question asked about the event, the response to it, and their feelings
about it. Other questions asked about school policies, programs, and mentor support.
For all questions, email and oral, see Appendix B.

*Interview assessment methods.*

After each interview, I listened to the tape and took notes. After all interviews
were complete, and notes were finished, I began transcribing. I transcribed all
interviews verbatim and highlighted sections that seemed important or noteworthy. I
coded the transcriptions by making tables with two columns, with the transcribed
text on the left and then short notes in the right column to identify key points of the
participant. I used the search and replace function to color code words that frequently
came up in the transcriptions.

As themes emerged from the data, I also highlighted whole quotes that would
represent these themes. I put all quotes into a table of categories by theme. The three
themes that emerged as most salient were 1) the willingness and ability to respond to
oppressive events in their presence, 2) the factors that inhibited student teachers from intervening on behalf of harassed students or oppressive behaviors, and 3) strategies they tried to use and their perceived effectiveness.

*Questionnaire*

In addition to the interviews, all secondary candidates were invited to complete a questionnaire in the second semester at a Secondary Education community meeting. The questionnaire was completely voluntary and anonymous. Seventy-seven percent of the cohort filled out the questionnaire. The instrument was a 39 item self-administered survey which measured the four following areas: 1) the course effectiveness, including content, small group discussions, facilitators, resources and prior knowledge; 2) candidates’ self-assessment of what they understood due to the course; 3) the climate of the student teaching site, including mentor teacher, colleagues, students, and administration; and 4) candidates’ feelings eight months after the course and after 4 months of solo teaching. The instrument included 31 quantitative items, three open-ended items, and five demographic items including age, sex, sexual identity, ethnic identity, and subject(s) taught. The instrument followed a Likert-type format. The data were coded when questions were open-ended. Results for the 31 Likert scale questions were tabulated, and the top two and bottom two responses were collapsed to provide a clearer picture of positive and negative trends. See appendix A for the complete questionnaire.
Conclusion

The interviews provided much insight into candidates’ understanding of class, ability, racial, gender, religious and sexual identity in schools. In an attempt to understand the factors that inhibit teachers from intervening on behalf of LGBTQ students or creating learning environments that are proactively addressing inequities, I conducted interviews with nine credential candidates over the course of their student teaching year and surveyed other candidates in the cohort with a questionnaire. The next chapter provides results specifically in: 1) how they made sense of the material presented in the course *Multicultural Issues in Education* and how they integrated it into their student teaching, 2) what their experiences were when they attempted to disrupt harassment, 3) what models or strategies they used, and 4) the overall campus climate for LGBTQ students as well as students of other target groups including ethnic, language, or religious minorities, and students of working class families.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

“If we are trying to shift our system of public education away from its role as a reproducer of social inequities, then we need teachers who are willing to challenge the status quo” (Rofes, 2005, p. 18).

Introduction

This research sought to understand how student teachers negotiated the multiple challenges that faced them in their first teaching experience. I specifically focused on the ways candidates responded to homophobic comments and other oppressive behaviors by their students. The persistent use of homophobic language and associated violence in the secondary schools impede many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) and gender non-conforming students from having equal opportunity to education (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005). A central theme of the research was to bring to light the reasons LGBTQ students consistently experience homophobic harassment by, in the presence of, and often with no response from their teachers.

In the field of multicultural education, LGBTQ issues have yet to secure a firm place among other areas of discrimination or prejudice. Many universities attempt to reduce bias in their teacher candidates through multicultural or diversity courses. LGBTQ content is often taught in the context of tolerance within these courses. One rural northern California University, Trillium State University (TSU),
teaching program has the “promotion of social justice” in its mission statement and states its belief that teachers are “agents of social change” (TSU Mission Statement). While the Secondary Education (SED) program at TSU puts social justice in its mission statement, it, like most universities, has one class that focuses on diversity issues: Multicultural Issues in Education, SED 715. The only class in the teacher education program that attends to the needs of LGBTQ youth is the SED 715 course. The class does not attempt to address the needs of LGBTQ teachers. It is in this context that I interviewed candidates over the year of coursework and student teaching about their understanding of inclusion of LGBTQ issues in diversity and social justice in the classroom.

This chapter presents the results of qualitative interviews of nine secondary credential candidates in their student teaching placement, as well as quantitative results from the larger cohort of which they are a part. Quantitative data were collected to provide a more extensive array of student teachers’ experiences and beliefs regarding LGBTQ issues in schools. Quantitative data are separated into the following 4 sections: 1) experiences with the course, SED 714 Multicultural Issues in Education, 2) school site experiences, 3) willingness to respond to oppressive events, and 4) changes over time and barriers to responding to events. Qualitative data are divided into three major themes: 1) willingness and ability to respond to oppressive events, 2) barriers to responding to such events, and 3) strategies and tools used and their perceived effectiveness.
Quantitative Survey Results

I administered a 37-question survey to 34 candidates at a Secondary Education community meeting in May 2007, nine months after completing the SED 715 course. The survey questions related to beliefs and attitudes regarding LGBTQ issues and related material presented in SED 715. Several major themes emerged.

Multicultural Issues in Education (SED 715).

Sixty eight percent of respondents felt that content of the course helped them understand heterosexism as it relates to public schools, and 79% felt that LGBTQ content was relevant to their student teaching placement. Ninety four percent of candidates felt that small group discussions caused deep reflection on their beliefs around sexual identity. Forty seven percent of respondents reported that prior to participating in SED 715, they would have ignored or not noticed discriminatory language in relation to LGBTQ people, and 18% reported that prior to SED 715 they used derogatory language in relation to LGBTQ people rarely, sometimes or frequently.

Student teaching experiences.

Candidates reported an understanding of their legal responsibilities in regard to LGBTQ issues and the risks that face LGBTQ youth due to the course. Eighty five percent of candidates reported that they understood very well or somewhat understood their legal responsibility regarding discrimination due to sexual identity and gender expression. One hundred percent of respondents reported that they understood somewhat to very well the risks that face LGBTQ youth. No candidate
reported a poor or lack of understanding in relation to risks. However, in response to a question about overt support for LGBTQ youth at their school site, 71% of candidates described support as poor or non-existent. Fifty three percent of candidates described programs to support LGBTQ youth as poor or non-existent.

Participants reported the frequency of homophobic language by students, mentors and colleagues. Eighty five percent of respondents reported hearing derogatory remarks such as “that’s so gay,” “fag,” “queer,” or “dyke.” Ninety-two percent of candidates felt that they could respond somewhat appropriately to very well to students who made derogatory comments in relation to gender or sexuality. Forty-one percent of respondents reported that mentor teachers addressed homophobic comments frequently or often when they heard them, and 38% reported that their mentors rarely or never addressed comments when they heard them. Fifteen percent of candidates reported hearing their mentor make homophobic comments, and 53% reported hearing other teachers at the school make derogatory remarks about LGBTQ people.

Willingness to respond to homophobia.

Candidates reported their willingness to address homophobic language in different settings. Ninety one percent of candidates reported that they felt eager or willing to address homophobic comments in their classrooms by discussing why discrimination or bigotry is wrong, 8% reported that they felt hesitant to respond, and no candidate responded that they felt unwilling to do this. Candidates expressed less eagerness to address students’ comments outside of their own classrooms or to
address colleagues’ comments. Sixty-four percent of candidates reported that they felt eager or willing to address homophobic comments in hallways or other unsupervised areas, and 59% reported that they felt eager or willing to address a colleague who made homophobic comments.

While 97% of candidates reported that they felt eager or willing to support a student who came to them for support around LGBTQ issues, fewer—88%—reported that they would feel willing to or eager to talk about homosexuality in a positive manner, and even fewer—76%—would be willing or eager to incorporate LGBTQ content into their curriculum.

Qualitative Survey Results

The last three questions on the quantitative survey provided qualitative results. These questions were open-ended and allowed participants to respond in their own words about their experiences. Some participants left those questions blank, but many responded, and their answers provide insight to the whole cohort of credential candidates to compare with the nine candidates who participated in the oral and email interviews over the course of the academic year. Some of the data from the questionnaire supported the data collected from the nine interview participants, while other data seemed to show a difference between attitudes of the larger cohort and the nine interview candidates.

Mentors.

In response to a question about their willingness to handle LGBTQ issues differently than their mentors, many candidates wrote that they would like to have
deeper and more open discussions about language, and they would be more proactive rather than simply reacting. One wrote that she would say more than “that’s not okay,” while another wrote that he would “support more outsider/different queer youth.” Other candidates wrote they would “be more direct in naming homophobia,” and would not treat it like “bad language,” and two candidates noted that they were working to incorporate LGBTQ issues into their curriculum.

Changes over time.

When asked about the changes in their thoughts about LGBTQ issues over the course of their time in the program, candidates noticed in themselves a greater awareness of heterosexual privilege and of LGBTQ issues on campus. Some felt better prepared to handle situations at school, felt more sensitive to issues that LGBTQ students face, and had a greater awareness of the importance of anti-bigotry work. Some noted more confidence in a stepping forward and addressing LGBTQ discrimination, and one wrote that he now understood the need to “look out for students and stand up for them when others don’t.”

Better information in regards to LGBTQ youth.

In response to a question about situations in which they would have liked better information or more tools, candidates reported that they would have liked more administrative support in addressing discriminatory issues and knowing whether administration would support zero tolerance to homophobia. Some candidates noted that they would have benefited from having more role-playing to
gain more experience talking with students about language and from knowing how to talk to parents.

One heterosexual female candidate commented that her school site was “extremely homophobic and it is sad and difficult to be there in that environment daily,” while another asked for “words and tips to have safe open discussion in middle school and high school.”

A European American heterosexual, male math candidate expressed frustration that he should have to address inappropriate language during class, and that dialogues were not possible for each situation. He wrote that he would have “liked more information how to deal with these issues while not taking time away from class when there is not time to begin with. Dialogues are great but it is not possible to have a dialogue explaining why calling someone ‘gay’ is wrong and saying ‘stop’ isn’t really enough.”

Another European American, heterosexual, male, math candidate worried that he might be perceived as homophobic if he disciplined an out gay student. He wrote, “A gay student is a behavioral problem, and I’d like to know how to discipline him without looking homophobic since he is open about his sexuality.”

Still another European American, heterosexual, male, music candidate explained that he might help students better if he knew their sexual identity. He wrote, “I often wish I had the ability to recognize lgbtq youth rather than simply speculate. This would help me to know where they are coming from more quickly.”
Factors that inhibit addressing homophobia.

In the quantitative component of the survey, no candidates responded that they felt unwilling to address homophobic comments in the hallways, but 35% of candidates reported feeling hesitant about it, and 8% reported feeling hesitant to address these types of comments in the classroom. However, in the one of the open-ended questions on the survey, when asked about what makes them feel inhibited about addressing homophobia, 56% of candidates responded with 17 different answers. Their reasons included job loss, mentor teacher’s attitudes or practices, the attitude of the administration, and the lack of power or low status they felt as student teachers. Candidates also reported their need to stay on task, their feelings of being overwhelmed by teaching their content, and the fear that they would fail to do any good, and in fact make the situation worse by their lack of knowledge or inability. Some candidates cited religious beliefs of the student/staff/parent population, and the potential backlash from those groups, and one cited her own “Christian values” for why she would be inhibited to address homophobia. Others cited that their own queer sexuality was a factor, or colleagues’ comments or attitudes which made them feel inhibited. Fifteen percent of candidates reported hearing their mentor make derogatory remarks about LGBTQ people.

Interviews

During the oral interviews, I asked a series of questions designed to prompt the candidates to elaborate on their experiences in their school sites. Candidates responded with extensive detail and thought. From the oral interviews and the email
interviews, two major themes emerged, action and inaction. Some candidates felt inhibited to respond to homophobia due to personal reasons or due to the school context. When other candidates challenged homophobia, they did so using a variety of strategies in either a proactive way or in response to an event. There was tremendous variation among participants in their understandings, abilities and strategies.

When asked if they were willing to address homophobic language in their classroom, all candidates reported that they were willing to address it in the classroom. Being able to respond in the moment, however, proved much more difficult. Of the nine participants, three shared stories about homophobic or other harassing language that occurred in their presence when they did not act. Diverse reasons were given for their inaction, including lack of confidence, low status or being given little respect, being unknown to the students involved, and the uncertainty of knowing what to say in the moment.

*Silenced.*

One of the themes that became clear from the very first interview was that there were multiple barriers to attempting to disrupt the harassing language that students used on a daily basis. The qualitative data also revealed that there are many factors that may make the student teachers feel hesitant to address these issues. Twenty reasons were cited by participants; many of these reasons mirrored the responses from the open-ended quantitative survey questions, including a lack of
confidence, a sense of low status in the classroom as a student teacher, fear of reprimand by administration, and uncertainty in how to respond effectively.

However, in the interviews, candidates revealed a much deeper understanding of their attempts to challenge homophobic or derogatory language. All participants reported having experiences with discriminatory events. All candidates reported experiencing at least one homophobic incident in their presence.

In the presence of candidates, students called each other “nigger,” “Negro,” “beaner,” “Jew,” “bitch,” “whore,” “pimp,” “dirty Mexican,” “retard,” “lame,” “gay,” “fag,” “faggot,” and “lesbian.” They also referred to things or situations as “gay,” “lame,” and “retarded” to mean undesirable. Students referred to queer people as “sick,” “gross,” “disgusting,” “sickening,” and “the pollution of society.” Students drew swastikas and Jewish stars and made disparaging or violent comments about Japanese American, Arab, Iraqi and homeless people. All candidates struggled with the response that felt right for them.

Scope of understanding.

The level of understanding or familiarity with themes of oppression and discrimination varied greatly among participants. Some candidates were encountering information for the first time while others understood personal as well as academic discourse on these topics. Three candidates felt similar to Forest when he described the amount of material in the course was overwhelming and added, “I don’t think I can handle more than I am handling right now.”
Three candidates interviewed, Art, Shelly, and Wendy, demonstrated a developed understanding of the issues of privilege and power. They felt that SED 715 was too introductory in nature to cause any real social change. These three had taken courses in or had majored in Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies. During their college education, they were involved in a variety of social justice activism efforts including Take Back the Night, Acción Zapatista, and local efforts to address homelessness. All three seemed to understand systemic and institutional oppression, and they questioned their efforts to disrupt these structures as school-teachers.

Wendy described how she perceived a conflict between her activism identity and her schoolteacher identity this way: “I mean I feel like a sellout, and that I’ve been having a hard time with that this year. I’m in the biggest institution that perpetuates racism and violence in our culture, (laughs), it freaks me out.” She then added, “But I mean, I believe that it takes all types of things to change.”

Art also felt a conflict between his identities as activist identity and his teacher identity and expressed his uncertainty about his participation in anti-oppressive work in the role of schoolteacher. In interviews, he frequently expressed his belief that public schools are reproducers of inequalities that ultimately serve capitalism. He questioned “whether oppression can even be dismantled in the school” due to “the ways that the school system always produce and reproduce oppression very consciously and [the] kind of
strategies or techniques of domination happen in school, that are similar to
the prison system.” He worked to challenge students’ derogatory remarks
through discussion of the systemic nature of homophobia and racism rather
than focusing on the individual remark.

Wendy described her frustration with attempting to teach about
discrimination and prejudice when students do not understand the power of
their language. She felt overwhelmed with the homophobic climate on her
campus and felt that LGBTQ issues are left out of the larger understanding of
multiculturalism.

How do you teach about any –ism? But how do you teach about queer
issues when kids can hardly, when queer is a bad word, when lesbian
or gay is a bad word in high school? How do you teach that? Because
there’s so much more awareness relatively about racial
multiculturalism, and that’s in the curriculum, that’s in the standards,
it’s in most schools mission, to have some sort of tolerance there, but
there’s nothing about queer issues.

Art described this interaction outside his class, in which a student was called
“gay” as a derogatory term, and he was unsure how to respond due to his complex
understanding of internal homophobia, his understanding of the use of homophobia
in the construction of masculinity, and the fact that he did not assume the
heterosexuality of everyone involved.
I don’t even know, there’s no way of knowing… what people’s sexual identity is or was, in that scene, and a group of kids walking in together, I don’t know that they’re all straight. I don’t know whether the kid that they called to was straight or not. He participates in homophobia quite a bit. But any one of those kids could have been gay and participated in it to be under the radar, or to bond with those guys. So it’s weird, it’s so normalized that even gay kids will, can potentially participate in it.

In contrast, several candidates expressed their limited understanding or inexperience with the issues due to their upbringing. Many described childhood school experiences in which they had very little diversity, due to the isolated or rural areas in which they lived. They reflected upon race and class privileges and limited analysis of sexism or heterosexism. Disabilities and sexuality were the two topics that candidates had the least amount of experience with to prior to SED 715.

Sebastian remembered learning about inequities that still exist between men and women from the SED 715 class: “You know I thought we’d gotten over the whole like, women vs. men, you know, making the same wages, but apparently not.” He was raised in a conservative Christian household and went to a Christian K-8 school and cited these as reasons why he was unfamiliar with LGBTQ topics. “As a Christian youth, you’re not around LGBTQ, you’re not around it, especially if you go to a Christian private school.” He expressed frustration when he described learning that the use of words such as retarded, gay, or lame to mean undesirable was
hurtful. He said, “I’m sorry but, I feel like, wow, can you say anything anymore, without getting in trouble or without like being discriminating?” In addition, it was challenging for him to learn about white privilege.

In terms of thinking about white privilege, it was pretty apparent, yeah, I do have it, and I didn’t really think about it, as much until the class. Actually I had never thought about it until the class, let me correct myself there, I never thought about it! I do however kind of think that it was a little overwhelming and it made you feel really bad, for being white and being a guy, and being straight. It was really like, wham!

Dot described herself as “coming from that whole white, rich, world” and the ways in which the values her parents instilled in her conflicted with her education in relation to social justice. She explained how “growing up in a white neighborhood where everyone’s rich kind of put this false perception in my head about how all people who are black are bad,” came into conflict with her positive interaction with her section leader in SED 715 while discussing racism. “And then having my section leader, who is African American, not respond in a negative manner to me, that was really powerful, and really helped me feel like, ok I can deal with that, and move forward.”

Elizabeth described the cognitive dissonance presented to her by the discussion of the issues in SED 715. She referred to her rural Texan upbringing, as “things that were deep rooted inside of me that I knew were not okay.” She expressed hope that she would be able to adjust her perspective due to the course.
“Just because I used to feel that way doesn’t mean that it’s branded on me, as who I am now.”

Dot and Sebastian both told stories which revealed their understanding of the issues. Sebastian told a story at the end of the year in which a student started a petition protesting a homophobic letter in the school newspaper. He recounted his dismay at the fact that the student who started the petition “does not identify as homosexual” because he felt it was not her issue. Similarly, Dot told me about her reaction to a student calling another student a “Jew” by comparing a culture to a flavor preference.

He started drawing stars, six pointed stars, and she was like, “stop calling me Jewish, stop calling me Jewish,” and I was like, “Whoa, like, we’re supposed to be talking about math here, why are we are we talking about being Jewish?” And she started talking about how a lot of people aren’t talking to her anymore because they all think she’s Jewish, And so, one thing I just said to the student who was drawing the stars, was, “you know, we don’t make fun of people’s beliefs, bottom line, you hold your beliefs, that would be like me making fun of you for liking chocolate milk or something.” See that’s the thing, is she’s not even Jewish, but somehow, someone started this thing about her being Jewish. So I don’t know.

Salient to both of these incidents is the candidates’ difficulty in understanding the issues. Sebastian felt that it was important to point out that the student collecting
signatures was not a member of the targeted group and Dot also pointed out that the
student who was targeted was inaccurately being targeted.

_Uncertainty._

All candidates expressed some level of uncertainty in the moment that a
homophobic or racist comment took place. While some candidates were unsure
about what to say due to their own discomfort with either their role as a student
teacher or their emotional response to the comment made, others were hesitant
because of the location (the hallway), setting (group of unknown students) or timing
(end of period) or many other factors. Dot reflected on her own uncertainty, which
stemmed from her own doubt about why derogatory remarks were not acceptable in
her class.

I am still struggling with my approach. I feel that I really need to
explore within to answer the question of “why can’t my students
make derogatory remarks in my classroom towards gender or
sexuality?” I feel once I can fully answer that question, my responses
to these situations are going to come in the form of “I” statements and
that will assist in taking the pressure of the students that are being hurt
by those words.

Theo lamented his lack of confidence during an event early in the semester to
which he did not respond. One male student jokingly said that his male friend “loves
men” as they were working together in his class. Theo thought several students
nearby heard the comment.
Nobody responded in any way, including myself, to my disappointment and shame. Immediately after it happened, I began to respond but hesitated for a second. Then another second went by, and another, and another, etc., until the moment had passed without me saying a thing. That was a couple weeks ago. A day hasn't gone by without me playing that scenario over in my head, being angry/frustrated with myself for cowering/suppressing my feelings/words/emotions at a time when I desperately needed to speak.

Sebastian reported one homophobic comment that he responded to at the beginning of the year and then reported that he had not heard any discriminatory comment for the rest of the year. He responded to each email and in oral interviews that he had not heard any derogatory comments in his classes or in his mentors’ classes, but that he knew they were common among students. “I hear it, but not so much. In fact, to tell you the truth, in my classroom, while I’m teaching, I never caught any of my students saying anything racist or homophobic. I never caught them saying anything [derogatory] in my classes.”

It is noteworthy that in his final interview, I asked about an incident that I had read about in the local daily paper which took place on his campus. Sebastian had heard about the event, in which students walked off campus and passed petitions in response to a homophobic letter written in the school newspaper by a Christian youth. He did not think to report it when I asked about discriminatory events on campus, and when I asked why, he defended the author’s right to free speech.
Theo explained that he did not respond at times because of a lack of confidence due to his position as a student teacher. He also talked about a sense of imbalance that he felt throughout the year. He cited, “the kind of harassment that goes unaddressed for the most part, calling the words gay, retarded and fag,” as something he struggled with all year. He expressed frustration about his failure to address it effectively. “Most of the year, I didn’t, for whatever reason, out of just the stress of being a student teacher, I didn’t address that the way I wanted to, and in the way I could.” He felt certain that he would be able to with more practice, and confidence. Theo said, when he does have “that centered feeling, comfortable and confident,” he doesn’t need to think about what to say before it happens, but added, “if I am centered in myself, whatever it is, I will be able to address it.”

In our last meeting, Theo described a situation that demonstrated his evolution and increasing comfort confronting unacceptable language in the classroom. He told this story about a student calling something “retarded,” and how he “immediately addressed it in a very calm and non-threatening, fairly non-judgmental way.”

I described how people near him may know someone or have a relative who is retarded and that using it as a bad word is careless. He was a bit uncomfortable at being confronted about it but was willing to talk for a short time. Although it wasn’t a storybook interaction, I do feel like he got the message. I’m becoming much more accepting of the fact that interactions such as this will usually not go perfectly, and that doing my best in any given
circumstance is all I can do. Because of that growing acceptance lately, I've been immediately addressing derogatory language and behavior much more often than before. My confidence has increased dramatically since the beginning of the semester.

Art explored the multiple levels of uncertainty in the moment when a response is required. He considered more factors than what was actually happening in the present moment. In this incident when one student called another a “dirty Mexican,” he wrote:

It is difficult to feel out the culture in terms of how people talk about race, gender, etc; because my role as student teacher is very passive and unauthoritative (my mentor teacher has the floor, and for me to intervene would also be to insert myself into the class he was teaching), because it is difficult to know exactly what kind of interventions are most effective (e.g. to react to various comments that are tossed around or to engage proactively issues of race and gender in which we discuss these issues not simply when they come up through personal prejudices, but on a systemic level); it is difficult to negotiate how to establish a relationship with students and to judge when I have established a level of respect such that my interventions will be well received and not counterproductive; and lastly, I am not resolved on how exactly it is best to respond to such incidents, as I am weary of punitive responses that extend the very forms of systemic power that are a
key force in producing and reproducing race, class, gender, and sex
oppression.

In response to a homophobic event on his campus, Art described his
thought process and uncertainty by exploring the social positioning, gender
policing, and male bonding that comes in the form of homophobic comments and
put downs. He questioned his own inaction in settings such as this one but at the
same time felt that it would have little effect for him to remind the boys about
their choice of language. He wrote:

A group of ostensibly heterosexual boys called across the courtyard to
another ostensibly heterosexual boy—a friend of theirs—and something to
the effect of "[person's name] is gay." .... The person they called gay simply
reacted and kept on walking, and a group of boys said it a few times. I didn't
say anything. School was out, and they were all on their way out. We had
just finished playing basketball together. I simply tried to work out in my
own head what was going on in the situation. I thought that the boys were
bonding with each other and thought to myself that it is sad that male
bonding—to the exclusion of so many non-normative gendered and sexed
people—happens through homophobia. I wonder if any of the kids taking
part in the calling are starkly aware of themselves as being something other
than heterosexual? It is these sorts of moments, while seemingly facilitating a
bond between the members involved, hurt everyone involved by solidifying a
kind of prefigured heterosexual identity, an intolerance for difference, and an
identity constructed and maintained through violence both symbolic and material. Upon reflection, I myself, in doing nothing, after just playing basketball with them, participated in that "mode of relation" through which the bond was formed—which I think is a specifically male bond. But then again, I'm not really sure what I could have done other then to remind them that it is not ok to say that. Although there may not have been space to come to an understanding of why that is not acceptable, it does seem like I should have said something to make it socially unacceptable none the less... to sort of stigmatize homophobia so to speak.

Several candidates expressed that they simply did not know how to express their thoughts in a way that would be effective. Elizabeth explained that she felt unable to make clear the harm in calling something “gay” or “retarded.” She said, “I still don’t feel like I have the tools to have that conversation.” She described how her verbal abilities might betray her in the moment and that she would like more specific details in dealing with situations.

What I’m looking for from this program is how to teach certain things, how to say it, and what words to say and what words to use. Because I think that one of my weaknesses is that I can have these ideas, or this thing that I need to communicate but, and also just being a visual artist, that’s why I was drawn toward that field, because sometimes it’s hard for me to find the words to explain what I’m thinking or what’s important to communicate.
Significant in this comment is the desire for the uniform response to any number of greatly varied incidents. Many candidates asked during interviews if I could provide them with the correct response, stated in the singular, as if there were a one-size-fits-all response to every oppressive event.

_Fear._

Candidates shared a fear that they would be reprimanded if they discussed the issues on a deeper level. Some expressed that they felt it was acceptable to their mentors and the school if they responded to a homophobic comment but not acceptable to have a discussion about why the language was harmful. Early in the year, Shelly enthusiastically described a conversation in one of her classes.

Last week we had a really awesome discussion in one of my classes. The discussion was initiated by a positive and inquisitive question. A student asked me, “Why do you say queer instead of gay?” I exampled how the term queer, like the term nigger / nigga, has been reclaimed by folks that have been oppressed by these terms. I told my student that the term queer is more inclusive. We had an amazing discussion. Students were incredibly mature and open. They expressed their thoughts and ideas. We discussed the term[s] LGBTQ, the difference between transgendered and transsexual, and about bisexual and questioning. I was very proud of the students, and we made an agreement that our discussion was not enough. That the conservation had to be continued with family and friends, and that it is an on-going discussion.
Later in the semester, Shelly described that her mentor had a conversation with the principal in which the principal said that Shelly had made a student uncomfortable with the discussion. Shelly felt that the mentor supported her, and wanted to protect her.

He [mentor] said “be really careful about bringing sexuality into the classroom.” I said, “Well, I just feel like this language gets said all the time and it’s not just,” and he’s like, “Oh yeah, no, the principal, he absolutely advocates that you address when people make derogatory statements that might be homophobic, or might be racist, absolutely, but be really careful on how you do it.” And what I took was that, language is not acceptable in the classroom, but not the next step of really discussing what the language means or the impact language… Like the policy was we can’t talk about, and they say sexuality, but they mean homosexuality.

Elizabeth echoed this sentiment, “I don't feel supported to, for example, to explain why it is wrong to use gay as a derogatory comment.” She added, “This makes me feel a little powerless in the situation.”

Both Shelly and Wendy expressed fear that they would be perceived as gay themselves, pushing an agenda or be reprimanded by discussing homophobic language. Wendy worried that she would be identified as queer because of the social justice content in her language arts class. She described her discomfort with weekly meetings with a mother of one of her students.
I have this kid in my class, (the one who said that gay people are the pollution of society,) and his mom works in the, she’s the administrative assistant to the vice principal. And she wants me to check in with her every week now, about his progress, because he’s getting an F. And every time I’m nervous, because we talk about these issues in my class sometimes, so every time I go talk to this kid’s mom, I’m just like, ok, what’s she going to say?

Wendy felt uncomfortable not only with parents, students, and administration, but at times with her mentor who made several overtly homophobic comments to her regarding students. Wendy felt that not only was it inappropriate to speak of students in this manner, she also felt that the mentor was making up stories about at least one student. In one conversation, Wendy felt uneasy when her mentor told her “some pretty homophobic stuff” about some students that she perceived as gay. She says it in that way, like ‘Oh he has tendencies’, or she’ll say, like, ‘homosexual tendencies’ sometimes.” In another interview Wendy recalled the mentor telling her that an African American, gender non-conforming student was having trouble because he was raised in an unconventional family.

He is the way he is because he grew up with no mom and an aunt and a grandma, with two women and not the male influence and so he didn’t get a balanced parenting. And I’m sitting there, you know, as a child of a single mom, and she knows that, and I’m just sitting there, and I mean, I didn’t think people said things like that anymore, (laughs) utterly ridiculous. It drives me nuts, like he’s never seen a man before right, (laughs), yeah he
never, ever has seen a man. It’s such a bunk argument, and so she told me that and so I looked into his files, and he totally has a mom and a dad, that he lives with, and so I don’t know if she just made that up or what, and even if that was true, you know, to say, “he has tendencies”, you know, it’s so old fashioned.

It is important to note that Eel High has a small percentage of African American students, so the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality likely cause this student to experience multiple layers of oppression that his white, straight, gender conforming peers would not.

*Sexual identity.*

Many of the interviews revealed the complex ways that queer identified participants were oppressed by heterosexism in their school sites and the ways that they subversively supported their queer identified students. The interviews revealed the complicated ways in which the participants thought about the multiple forms of oppression that occurred in their classrooms. Interviews also illustrated how the non-queer identified participants did not suffer the added stress of heterosexism or hiding their identity.

Art, Wendy, and Shelly identified as bisexual or queer. Dot identified privately as “open” but because she also was married to a man and was guarded about being “open”, she was perceived as heterosexual. The three queer identified candidates shared insights into internalized homophobia, queer identified students, and the heterosexist structures that typify most secondary schools that were different than their non-queer identified peers. Dot
did not share these same insights in our interviews. Art, Shelly and Wendy described incidents in which their own sexual identity was an issue and Dot did not. All three had been asked directly about their sexuality by students and/or mentors, while none of the other candidates, including Dot, reported having their sexuality questioned.

*Questioned.*

The candidates who identified as other than queer, rarely considered having their sexuality come into the discussion if they addressed homophobic language, while two of the three of the queer identified participants felt that by contesting homophobic language, their (hetero) sexuality would be suspect. Kalvin expressed how his (hetero) sexuality allowed him to choose to engage in disrupting homophobia or not. “As someone who predominantly identifies as heterosexual, I don’t have as much at stake, in that if I don’t say something, it is my privilege to not be a part of that dialogue, and to not be personally effected.” Some participants could not imagine having their sexuality questioned if they chose to challenge homophobic comments.

No participant who identified as other than queer reported feeling conflicted about disclosing their sexual identity to students or colleagues, but all three queer identified candidates wrestled with this. They weighed the risk they perceived if faculty, staff, and/or students learned of their sexual identity versus the potential benefit to their queer students. Wendy described how she felt the desire to tell one of her students who she felt needed a role model. “He needs to know somebody who is gay, and so I was just thinking of telling him, and recognizing that, ok that could get out, people could probably find out.” Art also
shared this sense of inner conflict, not because of the fear of revealing his sexual identity, but rather because of his complex understanding of his fluid sexual identity.

I don’t know, on one hand I feel a responsibility to be out to them, or to be out in general, because there’s a lot of queer students who are out there, and I feel kind of weak if I’m not out there too. But also I don’t know, one reason I haven’t come out is that I don’t know, I think it’s important to challenge the way that identity is constructed as static. Sexual desire is made into something static, and leaves intact the idea that all these people are heterosexual, and I don’t think, I don’t know, I don’t think that. I think that’s a lie, like this totally coherent untainted heterosexuality.

One of Art’s students asked him if he was gay when he challenged her use of homophobic language, and he described a conversation with her that went beyond the gay/straight binary. He told her that he did not identify as straight or gay, and that “those conventional categories didn’t really resonate with me.” He explained further that he did not feel that sexual identity or “sexuality is something that is just a static identity, that desires, I don’t feel like it can be really predicted like that, or fully attached to a gender, that is also a social construction.” He felt that the structure of the conversation was such that the student could think about the categories as socially constructed rather than fixed. He also felt that he wanted to answer the question truthfully but didn’t feel it was possible without deconstructing the question. He went on to explain how those categories also “leave out transpeople,
and you know I have been with, or been attracted to transpeople,” and was left with the question, “so like, do I say I’m bisexual?” He felt that the conversation invited the student to think about sexuality in a different way.

Targeted for homophobic hostility.

No candidate who identified as other than queer reported being the victim of sexual harassment. However, Art, Shelly, and Wendy had all been the victims of sexual harassment through homophobic comments by students or mentors and from inaction by colleagues. Concurrently, all three also described their sexual identification as beneficial to their queer identified students, as well as to other students. All three described their presence as providing a level of safety for their queer identified students. Wendy did not face homophobic comments directed at her personally, but she did read a hateful journal reflection about gay people. In addition, she felt uncomfortable having to stay in the closet and “pass” in order for her to be able to continue in her position. Although she was passing for the most part, she felt that her sexuality was perceived by queer identified students at her school, and in at least one case, was providing some measure of security for such a student.

Shelly described three incidents at her school in which her sexuality was assumed. In one case, a student transferred out of her class after learning of the homosexuality of Leonardo da Vinci, whom he had chosen to study for History Day, another in which students used homophobic language directed at her in the hallway, and finally in which she was congratulated for coming out to her class.
In the first interview, she related that one day, after she had a class discussion about homophobic language, she was passing a group of students at lunch and “they intentionally used homophobic language as I walked by to incite anger or frustration in me. I came up to the group of students and spoke to them. It was not a very successful conversation.” She expressed some satisfaction at having attempted to address the language.

Shelly later described a situation in which a student congratulated her for coming out. The student was not a student in Shelly’s class and approached her in the hallway, “‘I just wanted to say congratulations, Shelly,’ and I was like, ‘Oh, for what?’ ‘I heard you came out and told the class you’re a lesbian.’” Shelly explained to the student, “I did not say I was a lesbian, I would never discuss my sexuality with any of the students.” Shelly felt concerned and confused by the situation. “I didn’t really know where it was coming from. But it was really interesting to feel kind of vulnerable and nervous for a second. I was like, oh, what does this mean? Where could this go?”

Shelly felt that students assumed her sexual identity as lesbian due to her open discussion of homophobic language. In another incident, a student transferred out of her class after a discussion about a History project he was going to do about Leonardo da Vinci. She said, “somehow his [da Vinci’s] sexuality came up in his research and [then] he refused to do it.” She described a moment when they were having a discussion in which she said da Vinci’s sexuality was not a problem, and he got very angry and yelled at her “Shut up, you’re making me sick.” She explained
that students assumed that she was queer because she was addressing homophobic comments as well as inserting queer issues into her curriculum. “I think it’s being read as oh, [you’re] gay, why else would you care?” She added emphatically, “I have never, never, discussed [my] sexuality, I have never referred to a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or spoken about anything romantically in my personal life, at all.” She felt that her mentor also assumed her sexual identity as lesbian, for similar reasons.

He had made some assumptions even before I started student teaching.

Because I brought up bringing in queer curriculum, when we had our interview, and I brought up *Teaching Tolerance* because I had just seen one of their developed lesson plans… that really stood out for him. And I think based on that he made kind of, that assumption, oh this is really important to her, she must be gay. But I’m pretty private with my intimate relationships; it’s not something that I bring up even with friends. I was kind of making it vague intentionally. I don’t really talk about my personal life that much. He actually straight out asked me, not straight out, but asked me in a really specific way. When I said my partner, he asked if it was a male or female.

Art described this incident where a student in the room next door yelled a homophobic remark at him, which itself was troubling, but further reflected upon the responsible teacher’s reaction to the student.

I was walking down the hall, and I passed this one teacher’s class, and one of her students yells out the door, “Art’s gay.” I just kept walking, and I heard her say something like, “Don’t yell at people out the door,” something like
that, something real brief, and then that was it. And so, I don’t know, I just thought that was interesting, that he could say that to a teacher, or in that case a student teacher, and not have much of anything happen, and particularly nothing addressing the homophobia.

Wendy also described feeling scared at times at her school because of the “bigot climate there, I get pretty freaked out sometimes, and so I tend to just kind of stay in my class, or in the library.”

She described an event called Day of Silence, in which students take a vow of silence to draw attention to the violence and silencing that LGBTQ students experience in schools. After feeling that the discussion went well, she read the journal reflections. She was the only one who read them and felt shocked by one response.

Two kids in my class were participating in the Day of Silence, no one bothered those kids at all. They didn’t harass them, so that was good. So we had this discussion, what does oppression with gay people look like, and we went into that and then we had [a] talk about silence and what does that mean and we finished the class with a journal reflection on what does it mean to be silenced, and we talked about empathy for a little while before that. And the journals were pretty horrendous. They were pretty awful. One student called gay people “the pollution of society”…Yeah, it was, it sounded so much like Nazi talk to me, it was shocking.
In addition, Art described a situation in which his sexuality, while not spoken, was clear to his queer identified students. He felt that this was why queer students gravitated toward him and why he felt he could support them differently from other staff. He described a time in his life when queer community surrounded him and that he “felt what it felt like to feel alive,” and felt affirmed by the presence of other queer people.

So those are certain ways that you can interact, when you’re around queer people, so I think that that shouldn’t be underestimated, you know. I think in that way, my identity helps me, in ways that I’ve been able to connect with queer students and you know, create a space for them to feel more comfortable, for them to have a space at school, you know, where they can be more themselves. That has a lot to do with the more kind of like, out there, queer, different students who have gravitated towards me and identify with me more, and a lot of stuff that they say that I don’t get uncomfortable with. And I feel it’s important for them to have a place where they can express themselves in that way and not be, I feel that has a lot to do with who they are and how they move through the world.

*Compulsive invisibility.*

Wendy described feeling conflicted at times in her school site. She described passing at times, when her mentor would address her as “Mrs.” and then say, “Oh, I’m marrying you off before you’re even ready.” She described her conflicted feelings at this misguided sense of privilege.
I feel some comfort in that I’m passing, I have longer hair than I’ve ever had, and I used to have hair your length, and I was really wow, if my hair was that length, I don’t know if I’d be passing with them. They really have no idea. Like that kid wrote that he thinks that gay people are the pollution of society, I mean he has no idea that he’s saying that to someone who’s gay. You know, he has no idea. My mentor teacher, no clue at all. So I’m passing pretty well, and that’s, that’s strange, because I feel like that has happened with me before, and so it’s a strange and kind of uncomfortable place to be. And I’m kind of, I’m passing and I think that’s what passing is about a lot of times, people kind of getting the benefits of this privilege and I’m also kind of assumed to be this other identity I’m not so I’m having to go along with this unless I you know, choose to speak out and, really put myself in a potentially dangerous situation, so I think that because I’m passing I’m able to talk about it a little bit more. But she knows I have a women’s studies background, she hasn’t asked if I’m a feminist or anything but, I think that I have to really walk that line pretty carefully, that if I start looking too liberal or something that that would start being a problem.

*School context: mentor models.*

Candidates felt that a response such as “that’s not appropriate” was inadequate. During the focus group interview, all candidates nodded when asked if their mentors used such an approach, yet none of them said that they wanted to use a similar approach. Kalvin reflected, “It seems that a quick, non-in depth response
doesn't really address the causes of these comments or get kids to really consider why they use this type of speech.” Some mentors modeled multiple approaches, which included a quick response, as well as other methods. Theo’s mentor seemed to model multiple responses to homophobic or harassing language. Few candidates reported having conversations about homophobic or racist incidents with their mentors. Forest said that while his mentor supported him, he didn’t mentor him.

Elizabeth responded with frustration to a conversation with her mentor about how to respond to derogatory language. She felt that his response did not help her explain beyond the school policy why these words are harmful.

Elizabeth: I’ve had that conversation with my mentor, “What do you say when, [someone says epithet]? And he’s just kind of like, “That’s just not appropriate, it’s just not appropriate, you just can’t say that in school,” or whatever.

Nora: How does that answer feel for you?

Elizabeth: No! That’s like, that’s not, that doesn’t help me. At all! Because I know that’s not appropriate, and I know that you’re not supposed to say that in school, so that doesn’t really help me deal with, how can you actually change so that it’s not just that the student is not saying that in your class because it’s against the rules, but so that they’re not saying that out in the community and in the world and growing up making comments like that and really letting them know why it’s not appropriate.
Kalvin felt that his mentor gave mixed models of how to respond. On one hand he actively responded to a swastika graffiti that was reported to him and would actively oppose sexist comments if they were violent, but then added, “He definitely, unconsciously maintains these ideas of gender roles.” Kalvin reported hearing his mentor “make generalizations about Latina women” and uphold models of traditional masculinity in his interactions with his male students through sports and competition.

_School context: campus climates._

Candidates had a range of knowledge about explicit support for LGBTQ students on their campuses. They also commented on the climate for different racial and ethnic groups on their campuses. I asked specifically about support programs for LGBTQ students on their campuses, their knowledge of school policy regarding discrimination and harassment, and the perceived climate for LGBTQ students. Most candidates felt that there was a zero tolerance policy regarding discrimination on their campus although some said they did not know what the official school policy was. Most candidates felt that homophobic comments went unnoticed and were not regularly treated in the same ways as other forms of harassment. Several candidates noted overt and underlying levels of racism on their campuses.

Sebastian and Theo reported that Forestview High had a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) that was experiencing declining participation and support. Theo said “other than the fine print buried in the student day planner which states that discrimination on the basis of …gender, sexuality, orientation, etc. is prohibited / not
tolerated and can result in suspension and/or expulsion,” he (and Sebastian) doubted
the school followed through on these matters. Theo reported that Forestview High
“would be not welcoming in the least” to LGBTQ students, and then told a story
about one of his peers asking an administrator about homosexual students to which
he replied, “We don’t have any,” to which Theo added, “which is highly unlikely.”
Sebastian thought queer identified students did not feel safe on Forestview campus
and was unaware of any support for LGBTQ students at Creekview High, the charter
school where he also taught.

Theo stated that he doesn’t hear “derogatory or hateful comments toward
Hispanic or Hmong students,” but that he does “sense the same institutionalized
racism that is pervasive throughout our entire society” at Forestview High.

Cooper High, the largest school in the county, with the most diverse student
body, had a multicultural club, but Kalvin and Elizabeth were unclear if LGBTQ
students were included in that club. Elizabeth thought there was a support group on
campus called STAR and said she thought there was a zero tolerance policy
regarding harassment. She commented that she views zero tolerance as “an easy way
out; you don’t have to address the issue, because you can just say “that’s against the
rules, that’s inappropriate, we don’t tolerate that.”

Kalvin noted the difference in treatment for English language learners (ELL)
from European American students. “A bunch of Hmong kids hanging out together,
that dress the same that are different than the rest of the kids, and so they’re assumed
to be a gang.” but if “a bunch of white jocks, standing together, all wearing their

football gear [in that case] they’re football players, you know, yeah I think there’s definitely a racial element there.”

Eel High had no support in place for LGBTQ students, and Wendy said there was an openly hostile environment on campus toward LGBTQ students. She described a student going through expulsion hearings at the time of our third interview, “I guess he said he’s going to shoot some kids, or shoot the school.” She went on to say, “He’s being called a nigger and a fag, what do you expect?” She had heard of some students wanting to form a Y.E.A.H.! (Youth Educating Against Homophobia) club on campus but did not receive enough support. She taught in the English Language Development (ELD) classroom and felt that racism took the form of low expectations for the Mexican and Mexican American students in the English learning classes.

Widow White High had no support for LGBTQ students. When asked about his perception of the climate for LGBTQ students, Forest said, “It’s hard to say, but it’s definitely homophobia, it’s definitely a hostile climate. And my feeling is that it’s not in any way exceptional. It’s just par for the course in our culture.” Shelly asked several people on campus about forming a queer/straight alliance and was met with a “totally silent response.” She said she knew one openly gay student who did not feel that there was support for him. Both Forest and Shelly believed that Widow White High had a no tolerance policy in regards to discrimination or harassment, but Shelly added, “That does not mean that the campus is a safe environment for queer students.” She went on to explain, “I believe that a majority of the harassment,
intimidation tactics, and homophobia goes under the radar. (I would also state that much of the staff chooses not to notice or care about the homophobia and heterosexism on the campus).” Later in the year, Shelly wrote that she felt that the lack of support was not due to a lack of concern, but instead staff “just don’t have the skills to work proactively nor are they fully aware of the level of violence, exclusion, and harassment on campus.”

Forest said that while teaching History, he experienced hostile and violent comments toward Japanese people, Arab people, Latino students, queer people, and English language learning students. When I asked how ELL students were perceived on campus, he responded, “Invisible. I’d say, less than invisible. They are totally invisible to the English as a first language students, to the administration, and to the staff” and told a story of shadowing a monolingual Spanish speaking student through her day in which she understood very little of what was going on. Forest expressed outrage and disbelief when he told me about following her to Spanish class that day: “I thought, well oh, maybe this will be the class that she (long pause). And that day they watched a video, and the video was in English, (laughs) about a Spanish speaking student, and it didn’t even have subtitles on!”

Dot said that other than a guidance counselor, there was no support for LGBTQ students at Widow White Creek Middle School. She added, “There is a no tolerance policy, but I have heard of parents pulling their children out of the school due to bullying and harassment.”
Art’s mentor was the advisor and creator of the Youth Educating Against Homophobia (Y.E.A.H.!) club at Hilltop High which was a support for LGBTQ students and their allies. This group also served to educate other schools, administrators, and teachers in the county, although Y.E.A.H.! was not currently active. Art felt that many queer students and students of color were being pushed out of mainstream high schools due to harassment, and as a result, the continuation and community schools had a higher percentage of queer yuth and youth of color.

School context: challenging homophobia.

In response to a question about actions that participants took during the school year to reduce oppression or marginalization and the perceived effectiveness of those actions, participants described a wide range of actions that fell into nine categories. Actions taken included: being proactive (active discussion about language and respect) (33%), integrating issues into curriculum (49%), creating community or developing empathy (22%), class discussion after an event (56%), discussing the event with the mentor before or after an event (56%), individual discussion with the student or students involved after an event (89%), no action (33%), language limits (22%), and zero tolerance (44%). Some candidates described specific incidents that they had responded to that they felt good about, while others felt that they had consistently responded all year to remarks, and that it had made little impact. Many students used a variety of approaches, and no candidate used a disciplinary action such as sending a student to the office or writing a referral.
Theo described defending a Native American girl who was being teased by some boys in one of his classes. “In my single stroke of brilliance this year, I immediately turned their poking and prodding back onto them exactly the way I would want to, just like in the movies. It was a rare moment of heightened clarity and confidence.”

Forest described his persistent efforts to deal directly with student and address their use of language. He used Non-Violent Communication (NVC) as his primary tool to educate students about their language.

The effectiveness of efforts is impossible to know. I must be content that my students know where I stand and that I will speak up against oppression. This has not seemed to reduce the frequency of oppression on campus nor (increased) the frequency of others standing up against it. What I did to let students know where I stand is to confront oppression reactively as described above but also proactively in my curriculum. In teaching government and history I focused on the role of ordinary people and the difference they make. I also focused on instances of oppression such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.

*Proactive approach: social justice integrated into curriculum.*

Four candidates felt that including issues of social justice in their content was more effective than reacting to incidents individually. Art, Shelly, Wendy, and Forest described their efforts to connect curriculum to real lives of their students or to
infuse the curriculum with material that would center social justice. Art, Shelly, and Forest taught social sciences, and Wendy taught Language Arts.

Art described that focusing on topics such as systemic oppression was important to give his students a perspective other than what they might encounter in the texts. He was aware that he could be perceived as biased and felt that no one is free of bias. “My perspective is that neutrality is condoning.” He also felt that he was “trying to be proactive instead of responsive, and centering these kinds of things in the curriculum, and engaging in thought processes and discussions and questions about these types of issues.”

Wendy described her proactive efforts to integrate issues of social justice into her Language Arts curriculum by using bilingual poetry and relating content to students’ lives.

I try to directly deal with issues of oppression when I see them come up in my class. I start a conversation and try to talk to students about their choice of language, try to create a dialogue on the issues, rather than just telling them it is wrong. I also try to teach about these issues in whatever I am doing. For the poetry unit we read a lot of poems about student's experiences, especially bilingual poems about different issues. In the *Romeo and Juliet* unit, we talked about what contemporary issues we see in the play (young people being disempowered, harassment of women, women's lack of power, class issues, etc.). I am teaching an American Indian Studies unit right now based on the play *Salmon is Everything*, and we are talking a lot about power,
privilege, ethnocentrism, dehumanization, genocide, native rights, etc. The play has been very conducive to talking about these issues, and we have had a lot of rich discussion.

Shelly described a variety of efforts she made over the course of the year, from befriending queer identified students to class discussions. She wrote:

I have made a point to get to know and connect with the two openly queer students on campus that I know of. We have lunch regularly. Initially our conversation was about the school environment and the ever present homophobia, but now we just hang out. I also regularly include news about queer issues, racism, classism, homelessness, sexism, in our new notes. We have also had discussions about prejudice, power, and human rights. I also will intervene when I hear derogatory language in halls or outside. I have been trying to model intervention for the students. I think they have been effective, but there’s always room for lots of improvement.

Kalvin expressed frustration when he described his perceptions of some students’ comments during a discussion on racism. He felt that it was a “good starting point for a few students, and a couple actually expressed changing views of racism as a result of the conversation,” but felt that in the end, “many stereotypes and prejudices were in some cases reinforced by class comments.”

Proactive approach: deconstructing sexuality.

Art used the deconstruction of sexuality and gender as a strategy for educating when homophobic or sexist comments were made. He challenged students’ ideas of gender and
sexuality rather than defending his sexuality or the sexuality of students who were being targeted. He described several events in which he had conversations with students using derogatory language. In one such interaction, students were using the word gay in a derogatory manner, and Art asked them not to use it that way. They continued so he went over to them and asked them what they were talking about. A discussion ensued and students asked several questions. One student asked why there were gay pride parades, and Art responded that “every day is a straight parade, which included objectifying women's bodies, and that every day is a war zone on gay people's bodies.” He added that, “gay pride parades are a way for people to assert their dignity to be who they are in the face of such violence.” He felt that the “three out of the four students had an ‘ah-hah moment’ and one verbally maintained that it's wrong to be gay.”

In another instance, Art described a situation in which one male student was ridiculing another male student “who says he identifies as straight, but he’s real gender queer looking,” for wearing a skirt. The two boys got into an argument, and Art watched and let the targeted student defend himself. At one point, Art entered the conversation and began asking the perpetrator questions about his performance of gender and sexuality. Art described a moment in which he told the student, “You’re not really committed to your desires, or your attractions, you’re committed to performing your heterosexuality,” and after that the perpetrator didn’t want to talk about it any more. Art described the conversation as “kind of transformative for a brief moment” and that the student who was originally targeted felt empowered by it. He explained his philosophy on these discussions.
I think I need space though to actually discuss the issues in class and introduce counter-hegemonic ways of looking at gender and sexuality. While I can challenge people's thinking when they express prejudiced comments, and I can have a "no-tolerance policy," I think I will remain ineffective fighting against the grain without space to introduce different ideas, since many students don't get this from other places.

_Proactive approach: creating community._

Another strategy that Art employed was to try to create empathy among his students so that they could see beyond stereotypes and “not just in a liberal framework of people being sensitive to other people, but people developing understanding, empathy for other people, but seeing how their lives are intertwined with that person’s life.” He used popular education activities in which students were able to identify stereotypes and then spent time helping students understand how those stereotypes kept students and communities from being able to reach their potential.

_Reactive approach: class discussion._

Several candidates voiced the desire to discuss issues in a way that their mentors had not. All candidates expressed hope that through discussion they could reach an understanding with their students about the power of language and thus discourage the use of harmful or harassing language. Most candidates agreed that students did not understand the power of their words and at times the meaning of words such as gay. Fifty six percent of candidates attempted to have class discussion in order to educate about the offensive
language. In two cases, candidates felt that in the end, after many attempts were made, if understanding could not be reached, then a simple zero tolerance policy was acceptable. There was a wide range of results from candidates’ efforts.

Forest described how he tried to integrate real life into his curriculum. He focused on the diversity within a group that may seem homogenous, such as a group of white students from working class families at Widow White High, and tried to apply that to events in History to make the lessons pertinent to the lives of his students.

History tends to be taught in a way that’s very disempowering which, I think it should be the opposite; history should be a very empowering thing. And you see again and again examples of small people not in positions of power making incredible differences in things; I like to try to emphasize those aspects. And also, on the dark side of it, how small people are also necessary for atrocities to happen. I always thought that way too much emphasis is put on Hitler for example in Nazi Germany. He personally, possibly never killed anybody except for himself, and yet ordinary people killed 12 million civilians and many soldiers as well. So I like to definitely highlight the role of ordinary people, both in the dark and the positive effects.

Shelly described the difficulty of navigating a conversation in which students are voicing ideas or opinions that are hurtful to others in the class. Her concern was to attempt to keep all students’ voices in the conversation without silencing anyone, including the perpetrator.
When a student voices a certain opinion, that maybe is derogatory or violent, or whatever, but including them in the discussion in a meaningful way, and then addressing the issue that they’re bringing up without dismissing them, without making them feel, you know, just figuring out how to do that without ostracizing that one person or silencing another person, or, and I still feel like I don’t have that figured out exactly.

Art reflected on the impact of a class discussion for the victim of the harassment representing a very different consideration than that of Shelly. “I don’t want it to be, people who are the targets of those stereotypes to be alienated in the classroom in the service of someone else learning about their own prejudices.” He discussed his desire to discuss situations as they arose, but noted all of the complexities in any given situation.

It is difficult on several levels to know how to respond. I think whether it is appropriate or not also depends on what the purpose is. There have been times where I have wanted to just send someone to the office so as not to jeopardize the safety of students in target groups, but have not known whether the administration would back me up or take the issue seriously. Also, I do not know our school's policy on these things. I have at least two goals in responding to these types of situations. One is for the student who demonstrates their prejudice to recognize, reflect on, and actively take responsibility for and work to alter that prejudice. The second and perhaps more important goal is for the student who is the target to feel supported. I think these two goals sometimes come into conflict, which is why I
sometimes feel as though I should send the person to the office. I feel this way because I don't think the person in the target group needs to sit through witnessing and assisting a person from the dominant group as they work through their prejudices. Why should the person from the target group have to go through yet another painful experience for the other person's benefit? However, sometimes this can be a necessary and profound moment, say, perhaps, if the two people are friends. I think how to respond depends on the context. While I think sending someone to the office removes them from the immediate situation, and sends a message that such things won’t be tolerated, it fails to deal with the issue, and really only removes the tension from the immediate situation on the surface. It doesn't really do much to help either person work through the conflict. So, I have ideas on how to work through some of these things, but ultimately I think there must be much more profound ways of dealing with these things that I do not have the skills for. Perhaps some kind of mediated restorative work where the person who was the target can heal and/or gets to be heard and the other person listens to how that person has experienced or been hurt by racism/sixism/homophobia, etc. Also, ultimately, I think teaching about these issues in the first place is critical.

*Reactive approach: individual discussion.*

All candidates reported using individual discussions as a means to educate a student who used offensive language. Many candidates described the
effectiveness in having individual discussions with these students. Several candidates agreed that most of the time, students did not mean to harm anyone by using “gay” or “retarded” to mean undesirable. Shelly described the most effective approach was “to speak directly with them and for the most part, just talking about, what do you really mean? And then it coming down to the words they’ve chosen aren’t really reflective of what they mean.”

Theo echoed this sentiment when he talked about his approach to talking with students who used the word retarded. He told of one conversation he had with a student who called something retarded saying, “I’m not mad at you or anything, you know I used to… I used to use that word all the time, until I learned how destructive it is, or why it’s destructive.”

Forest described a typical interaction with a student using gay to mean undesirable. He reported that he had a conversation similar to this one multiple times with students whom he perceived to be unaware of their language, rather than purposefully using gay in a harmful way.

In the U.S. history class I taught this year my students did a group project in place of a final exam. While my students were working on their projects, one of my students became frustrated with something and blurted out “that’s gay.” This student is typically respectful and considers himself very liberal and tolerant. I pulled him aside and told him that I consider him to be someone who values diversity and respects people. I asked him if I was correct
to think of him that way. He said I was. So I asked him if he understood why I would object to his language. He explained that by using gay in that way he seemed to be disrespecting homosexuals. He then assured me he would be more mindful of his speech.

Most candidates reported having individual conversations that were satisfying to them, although they could not always comment on their effectiveness. Some had difficulty knowing how to read each situation and know what would be appropriate for a given situation.

Many candidates reflected that students were possibly saying what they thought the candidate wanted them to say. Art felt that individual conversations were the most effective “or what feels the most productive conversations, those one on one conversations where we can be more honest with each other... And really have a conversation and not a lifetime of conditioning…I don’t know if it’s working.”

_Reactive approach: boundaries on speech._

Wendy and Art both shared the belief that at times there is an overemphasis on free speech in schools such that it creates an environment that is safe only for those in the dominant group. Both Wendy and Art described events that took place in their classroom in which they felt that they were limiting free speech by having boundaries. Wendy described several events like this one in which a student shouted out while looking in the newspaper during silent reading.
Really loudly he goes, “That’s disgusting, I cannot believe they put that on the front page,” and I kind of had an idea of what it was already. So I was like, “What is it, J?” And he goes, “Two girls kissing,” and it was really loud, it was during silent reading, I was like, “You might be entitled to that opinion, but you really need to keep that to yourself. That does not create the environment I want to create in here.” And I was just like, oh. I mean, we have talked about it so many times, I talk to him in private all the time, I try to have conversations instead of just shutting him down, but I have tried to shut him down a little more lately because I am just, no, you can’t just make these blanket homophobic remarks to everybody. That’s not ok in this class.

After responding to the student’s language, Wendy went to see the picture in the newspaper, which was a picture of a mother and a daughter, noted in the caption, in an embrace.

Art wondered if students who disagree with him are silent in front of him due to his position of power and his expression of his opinion. He wanted students to feel free to participate and lamented that they might feel inhibited, but added “But that also can be productive too because there’s a lot of white students or male students or heterosexual students feel that they can say anything that they want, at the expense of other people.” He went on to explain, “They feel entitled to say anything they want, and they’re not going to be challenged.” He felt that it was clear to his students that he would challenge their homophobic language “whether people are holding back or not, at least it seems like people are aware that it’s not a safe space for them to say whatever they want.”
Engagement with Multicultural Education course content.

Among the 9 candidates who participated in interviews, Kalvin, Art, Shelly, and Wendy felt that the course was too introductory and Elizabeth, Dot, Theo, Forest and Sebastian felt that it met them where they were and moved them forward in their attitudes about social justice in the classroom. All candidates had their individual understanding of how the class could be improved and simultaneously, how it served them. Suggestions included making the course a semester long course rather than frontloaded, having an advanced component for students with a more sophisticated understanding of the topics, teaching more resources specifically designed for educators, and putting less focus on individual acts of prejudice and more focus on the systemic and interconnected nature of oppression and privilege.

Overwhelmingly, candidates felt that the course was taught in isolation from other courses, and that after it completed, there was no connection to its content in their other courses. They agreed that beginning the program with that course, the SED program sent a strong message of its commitment to these issues, but that by the end of the year, they felt that there was no follow-up which caused them to doubt the message they had received initially. Unanimously candidates felt that the most helpful component of the course was role-playing using Agosto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed workshop.

While some, like Theo, felt the course “was exactly what I felt that I needed at the time,” others, like Art, felt that it was remedial and “tokenistic.” Sebastian felt that he was “digging deep” to understand the issues in his small section/discussion group, while Forest said of the course, “although wonderful, is
grossly inadequate.” While Dot and Elizabeth spoke of the safety they each felt to explore the topics in their section meetings and the bond that they formed with their peers, Wendy said she felt “more uncomfortable than I think I’ve ever been in a class,” due to peers’ comments and lack of facilitation in her small group.

Other suggestions for course improvement included resources specifically designed for educators or classroom teachers, other models of schools with strong social justice focus, and more information on body image and ageism.

Shelly lamented the lack of her peers’ ability to think about the content of the course and see its application to the classroom. She felt that many of her colleagues in her small section perceived the course as a pointless requirement. “Folks were like, ‘well just tell me how I cover this, I’m in a math class, this doesn’t apply.’” Wendy echoed this idea that her colleagues saw the course as nothing more than a requirement to check off from a list of meaningless requirements, “Give me the sheet, oh look, check, check, check, and now I’m a multicultural teacher.”

Sebastian confirmed Shelly’s feeling that candidates could not see the application when he said, “I think multicultural ed[ucation] was partially relevant. It was dealing …with situations that don’t really deal with the school.”

Shelly felt that one of the main benefits of the course was finding the language to talk about homophobia and racism with her colleagues who had less experience with the topics or did not find it compelling. She described her own process of trying to dialogue with those peers without getting into arguments or
having bad feelings between them. “It was really good for me to see my judgment…How do I actually engage in dialogue with someone about this, that is empowering to both them in the situation and [to] myself?” She continued, “I think that class really helped me with that because continually there was a lot of exercising patience and I made mistakes and I lived through it.”

Elizabeth explained that she understood the wide range of needs that a group of students would likely have. “I think it all was important, because everybody needs something different, we are all a different, you know, diverse group just coming into the program.” She mentioned some of the many factors that go into an anti-oppressive efforts with diverse students and noted the importance of practice.

I don’t even know how you can prepare totally to just even, I mean without talking to kids without just doing it, and seeing their faces and seeing how they react to what you say you know, what’s really going to work and every student is different and every student has a different background, and what kind of home they’ve been raised in and what their opinions are, and you just have to feel good about your knowledge of it and then just take it from there.

Kalvin, while maintaining that the course was introductory, also recognized the challenge of meeting a wide range of students’ needs with one class. “This isn’t multiculturalism in two weeks and then you’re done. And now you have a total understanding of queer, race, all these issues,” and then he turned to Art and Wendy and said, “I think it would be very hard for the class to
have been effective for you guys because there’s so many people at different levels and especially people at very introductory levels to this topic.”

Art felt that the course was doing little in terms of causing candidates to become agents of social change. He felt that by “focusing on individual reflection and personal transformation, it actually conceals the way that all of these oppressions are systematic and systemically linked,” and that by teaching the course over a week and a half, it was “already doing an injustice, it’s already not taking it seriously.” He said, “I just feel like these issues need this urgency, it’s a real urgent situation.”

Initially Dot said that she felt that there was too much focus on the personal and that it was “really irrelevant to how you approach that in the classroom,” but later felt that she could not move forward without accepting her “feelings about situations and realize that, there are prejudices that I have and there are things that I’ve done that have been inappropriate, and being able to say ok, I’m a different person and I can move forward.”

Wendy offered perhaps the strongest critique of the Secondary Education program and more specifically the SED 715 course. She felt that the course did not offer tools with which to discuss complex issues with her students. She noted that even with a degree in Women’s Studies and the complex understanding she has about the social construction of race and sexuality, she could not facilitate learning with her high school students without more tools. “I don’t feel that I learned a lot of how to actually teach about these issues…. I felt like most of the
class was ok, let’s get all of you white straight folks on the same page so you’re not going to be going out there saying horribly homophobic racist things to your students.” She noted, “Teaching [about] racism to 14 year olds is super challenging.” She went on to say that the class was remedial and only taught candidates “how to not be a horribly racist bigot teacher” than it taught about issues of social justice. “Any multicultural education I’m doing now is not based on that class and it’s based on my former experience.” She felt that the small group discussion format was confessional in nature, not well facilitated, not in depth or academic enough, and tokenistic.

*Course design: alienation or safety.*

The candidates were at odds about whether the design of SED 715 was a set up for alienation or a safe place in which to learn. Sebastian felt safe to express his thoughts while learning about prejudice and injustice, while Wendy felt that the course was geared “towards white folks … but kind of pretending like it’s toward everybody,” and that targeted groups were left out of consideration in the design.

Sebastian said that he made connections with his peers and with the content due to the design of the course, despite his emotional discomfort with complex topics. He explained: “Being vulnerable we all just created this unsaid connection between each other, and because of the issues we had talked about …as a [small discussion] group. [It] made it just so comfortable, even though we
were uncomfortable,” and he added that “we were willing to share things in our sections that we wouldn’t share with just anyone.”

Elizabeth said that she felt that SED 715 created an environment that she hoped to emulate in her classroom and that she felt that her colleagues were respectful of each other which allowed her to learn. Dot said that the agreements made at the beginning of the class were what allowed her and her peers to “dig deep into ourselves and discuss the issues and I think that’s what has made it so easy” to think about the concepts of prejudice and oppression.

**Discomfort by design.**

Art, Shelly, and Wendy felt that the “safe space” was flawed by design. They explained that the idea of safe spaces at TSU seems to imply that it is safe for people in the dominant group to share anything that they feel without regard to the pain they may be causing others.

Wendy felt that in her section, homophobia was left out unless she brought it up. This, among other factors, caused her to feel that it was not a safe learning environment. “In terms of homophobia [in] my section… I felt like I had to out myself as a queer person, in order to talk about these issues and that was uncomfortable for me.” She felt that there was “an assumed feeling that people feel safe or comfortable in that class and looking back on it that wasn’t really my experience.”
This sentiment of alienation was shared by Shelly and Art when they described an incident in their small section. Art recounted some of his peers taking turns talking in the small group discussion.

[They] were acknowledging previously unacknowledged prejudice … and then toward the end, some even said some extremely racist series of comments, where people weren’t even aware that’s what they were saying. And I was like, if I identified as Native American, or if those comments were to that same degree homophobic, like I don’t even know if I’d stay in this program, it’s that intense.

I was present for the discussion that Art was relating, and the comments in that discussion were made by three candidates, one after the other, about their surprising positive experiences with local Native American people that countered their stereotypical expectation that Native Americans were to be feared, were alcoholics, and were lazy.

Wendy echoed that sentiment when she said that the program was set up for white students: “Being a person of color in this program I imagine that that class could be frustrating, and talking about racism, in a way that like ‘oh I never knew’ and being really focused on educating white folks about racism.” She added, “I imagine that that could feel really unsafe and frustrating.” She felt that allowing people to feel a false sense of safety is harmful to those who suffer oppression and prejudice as a part of their daily experience.
I don’t know if I want to be in the space where people are confessing the awful things that they’ve thought about gay people or the awful things they’ve thought about women, I mean, I don’t know if I need to be in that space. I feel like I’ve been in that space, you know, our culture is that space, and I’m really familiar with that. I don’t feel like necessarily everyone needs to be in that space all the time, so we might need to be a little more careful what we push people to say and how we like, “Oh, you can say anything here, we’re all so bonded that everything is fine” you know, I don’t think that, I think, I can imagine people would be like, wow, this isn’t a safe space for me any more.

Wendy, Art, and Shelly all advocated an advanced class, where targeted people would not have to suffer from being present when members of the dominant group come to terms with their privilege. Wendy noted, “Maybe some things are private or maybe there are certain spaces where like you know if you really want to work on your white privilege issue, you can have a separate group for that.” The three of them thought that the course could be modeled after what Shelly described as “racism workshops for white folks or anti-sexism for men workshops.”

Course content: changes in attitudes and beliefs.

A majority of those interviewed expressed a change in their attitudes about creating safer classrooms for all students due to the Multicultural Issues in Education course, while
some felt that it did not go far enough. The small group discussions were the most often
cited element of the course that facilitated participants’ learning.

Theo felt that the small discussion groups allowed a forum for discussion that is not
common. “It seemed like a lot of people including myself definitely felt a lot of things
regarding multicultural issues but, there’s no forum for that, or… generally it’s just not
talked about.” Elizabeth felt that starting the year with the frontloaded class set the
foundation for her for the rest of the year.

I think that’s an amazing way to start the program because it
automatically gets you thinking, “these are things, that, this is what
this program, this is what educators should value, first.” You know,
because this is the first thing we are presenting to you. And so I’ve
carried all of those ideas with me, and those feelings I had there. You
know, beyond anything else that you’re going to do, you know this is
a priority when you’re in the classroom and you are dealing with
students. So that really made an impact on me.

Theo felt that it was important to be asked to think about the issues
discussed in the course because he felt that opportunity is lacking in society.
“I think that the Multicultural Ed class definitely re-ignited or ignited those,
invited me to start actively thinking about that again, about things that I’ve
definitely felt for a long time.”

Forest cited the format of the class, stating that the length and in-
depth nature were helpful for him. He mentioned that he had other trainings,
but the intensive quality of the course helped him to focus on the issues in a
deep way that he felt was essential. He also said that he recognized that this
one intensive course was just the beginning of his work on addressing
inequities in his classroom. He also cited the small group discussions as
important to his ability to process the material.

Dot described how the class helped her frame her positions and feel
comfortable talking about LGBTQ issues. She said, “That class for me really
just helped me get to the point where I can start talking about it objectively,
instead of being concerned about how I feel about it.” Elizabeth also cited the
mixed levels of understanding as a key element in her learning. She said that
talking about the material with peers in her small discussion groups was
effective.

*Participation in research.*

I asked candidates why they participated in my research, and how they
felt it affected their attitudes and practices in regard to racism and homophobia.
Participants cited three reasons for involvement: 1) they felt it was important
work to which they were personally and professionally committed, 2) they
wanted to help me or other students, or 3) they felt it would help them reflect
upon or make sense of their experiences in their school sites. The effects of
participation fell into three categories: 1) they felt supported in their struggle to
respond to homophobic and other derogatory comments, 2) it increased their
awareness of situations that were occurring on their campuses, and 3) they felt
more confident to respond when they witnessed oppressive events at their schools.

Forest said that he had an openly gay student in one of his classes who had to hear homophobic language everyday, though not necessarily directed at him. Forest cited this student as a reason that he felt committed to my study. He made connections between this student and the first African American students who were integrated into public schools during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. “By being open about his sexuality this student is doing a great, although painful work for our society. I am always mindful of his lonely struggle.”

Theo said, “This project has served as a desperately needed outlet with which to discuss and be supported about emotions/feelings/thoughts that I have long had but have suppressed for whatever reason(s).”

Several candidates mentioned that the interviews provided them with a continuous forum to continue thinking about the issues that began in SED 715. Forest said, “[SED 715] just didn’t have a sustaining kind of effect I don’t think, being that it’s so far removed at this point. Without this experience with you it would have even less.” He also compared the class to the standards movement, in which subjects are covered without the depth that students need. “I think every single piece is extremely valuable, but I feel like we’re just skimming the surface on everything. And we’re not getting into depth on anything.”
Art also felt that the frontloaded structure of the course and lack of follow-through made him feel disconnected to a community of people working on these issues.

I think the conversations added to my thinking on the subject by forcing me to reconcile with challenging questions and reflect on practical experiences I had in the classroom and how those experiences match up with the theoretical positions I claim. I think the project helped hold me responsible to thinking through these topics and considering how I could more effectively confront oppression and prejudice inside and outside the classroom.

While these experiences represented only a self-selected group of candidates, there was wide variability among the participants in their depth of understanding and their responses. The willingness to respond to homophobic comments is complicated by the numerous barriers teachers face in schools. TSU asked candidates to provide more just and equitable learning environments for all students. SED 715 provided the information and the framework, and student teaching provided the opportunity for candidates to recognize institutional heterosexism and homophobia in the schools, but candidates’ success was tempered by countless variables. In the next chapter, I offer an analysis of some of the results presented here.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

The voices in this study present a wide variety of understandings of oppression and discrimination and a multiplicity of efforts to reduce these in the secondary classroom. This research fits into a broader question in teacher education that asks: How do we create inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students, including those who have been traditionally marginalized? TSU offers teacher candidates the opportunity to reflect upon their beliefs and examine their biases, and asks them to be agents of social change. The Multicultural Issues in Education course at TSU (SED 715) utilized a model similar to Horton’s concept of “education that is yeasty” (Horton, 1998, p. 57); that is to teach to a small set of students who will multiply the effect by becoming teachers informed by the ideals of social justice, thus creating social change. There are a myriad of reasons that student teachers do not or cannot step into this role yet. As a beer maker and bread baker, I know it is not enough to simply add yeast. Yeast needs a warm and hospitable environment, a little sugar, and time to reach its full potential. Without all of the right conditions, the yeast sinks to the bottom of the bowl, and nothing changes.

Public schools can be sites of intellectual challenge, as well as places that invite students to be active citizens in a democracy and participants in the transformation of our society, rather than passive consumers of the status quo. While TSU asked their teacher candidates to be agents of social change, the public schools

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in which the candidates were placed did not necessarily have the same vision and did not encourage the candidates’ capacity to create change.

The results of this study yielded more information than the scope of this thesis allows, so I will analyze the following salient themes in this chapter:

1) Which elements in the public schools create barriers for candidates who leave SED 715 willing to intervene on the behalf of targeted students?

2) What effect do time, modeling, and practice have on the candidates’ process of becoming an advocate for social justice in their classrooms?

3) To what extent do candidates understand the multicultural issues in their classrooms as an integral and critical piece of their profession, rather than an optional addendum?

4) How do the strategies of intervention impact the students’ understanding of living in a multicultural society?

5) How do the experiences of queer teacher candidates differ from their non-queer identified colleagues?

The following is an analysis of these aspects of the results.

*Barriers to Intervention*

Interviews provided a complex picture of candidates’ experiences in local secondary schools and the multiple factors that impeded their efforts to create equitable classrooms. Candidates reported various reasons for inaction, including fear, lack of understanding, uncertainty, their own sexual identity, the campus
climate, and mentor attitude. Candidates reported being willing to respond to derogatory comments in their classrooms, to support LGBTQ students, and to challenge homophobic language outside of the classroom, including the language of their colleagues. However, when faced with the actuality of their student teaching placement, candidates were overwhelmed with a content that made queer people invisible, vocal parents who did not want class discussions to include queer people, administrators who did not support teachers to give voice to queer people, colleagues who made derogatory comments about queer people, students who equated the word gay with undesirable, and mentors who responded less than half of the time and made homophobic comments about their queer students. In short, these candidates found themselves facing systemic barriers that greatly reduced their willingness to respond to homophobic language.

*Mentor attitude.*

The mentor’s attitude was an important factor in the candidate’s success in creating an equitable learning environment. While some candidates reported hearing their mentor make homophobic comments, and a few had explicit conversations about how to handle oppressive events, most simply monitored how the mentor talked about issues to conclude how the mentor might feel about such issues. Beyond any conversations the mentor and candidate had about social justice issues, the candidate studied the mentor for many hours in the first semester.

This observational time was foundational in their understanding of what was and what was not acceptable in the mentor’s classroom. From this observation, many
candidates concluded that they should not bring up certain issues, that they should respond to derogatory comments in the prescribed ways of the mentor, and that they should not insert too much of themselves. Others concluded what language and behavior were acceptable, from what lens to deliver content, and which students were to be watched. Mentors gave few explicit messages but more often implicit messages about what makes a good teacher. The fact that they were selected to be a mentor itself implied that the SED program believed that they were a model teacher.

In most cases mentors did not provide a model of teaching with social justice at the center of their practice. Mentor teachers reinforced stereotypes, ignored harassing or derogatory comments, and gave little time to discuss the use of language in their classrooms. Furthermore, in some cases, the mentor teachers modeled disrespectful and homophobic language that at times served as a deterrent to the candidate from intervening in oppressive situations.

A majority of candidates who participated in this study asserted their commitment to the ideals of social justice, and thus they were not dissuaded from their ideals but rather at times from taking action in the moment of an individual situation. Those candidates who did not volunteer to participate in interviews were less likely to hold to strong principles of social justice, and thus might be more easily persuaded to ignore homophobic comments or to follow a model of inaction. As demonstrated by Art, Theo, Wendy, and Kalvin, even when candidates claimed strong ideological opposition to the use of homophobic epithets, they did not always intervene. Therefore, candidates who did not have a commitment to anti-oppressive
education would be more likely to follow the lead of a mentor who did not model intervention.

*Climate.*

Besides the study of the mentor, candidates also took in messages from all aspects of the campus. The curriculum, the clubs fair, the election of the Homecoming King and Queen, sporting events, school assemblies, the prom, holiday-themes, such as the Christmas songs at the Holiday Concert or the Easter decorations in the office, messages from the administration, and discussions in the teachers’ room all informed the candidates’ understanding of the campus climate. Most of this information carried gender, class, sexuality, social status, and religious messages embedded within it. Candidates also noticed events in the larger community such as school board elections, community reactions to protests, and the killing of a Cooper High School student by police. The candidates learned who and what were important in the school and conversely, who and what were insignificant.

Individual parents made the issue of the discussion of homophobic language very contentious. The Widow White High administration supported the desire of a parent who did not want Shelly to answer questions by the students about the meanings of the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, and transsexual in her class discussions. While the administrator may have perceived this as neutral or as fair, or felt that he was respecting the wishes of the parents, it simultaneously denied LGBTQ students from hearing about themselves or seeing themselves
reflected in the curriculum. This decision served to further marginalize LGBTQ youth and further reinforce the heterosexist culture in high schools.

The administrative decision in addition to the lack of representation of LGBTQ people in the curriculum resulted in the maintenance of silence around the lives of queer people. As a consequence, the implicit message that queer and non-queer students received was two-fold: 1) LGBTQ people and their experiences are not important enough to merit teaching about or including on campus, and 2) homophobic language will not be tolerated, but issues of LGBTQ people will not be discussed positively either. This furthers the sense of isolation of LGBTQ students. The implicit message that Shelly received was not to discuss the impact language has on targeted students, in essence imitating the no-promo-homo laws.

Fear of reprimand for inserting LGBTQ issues, being perceived as having an agenda, reproducing social hierarchies, job loss, and parental backlash were some of the reasons candidates cited for their inhibition to respond to homophobic language. The candidates perceived situations as dangerous, and this effected their decisions in different occasions. Fear seemed to paralyze candidates in the moment that a response was required.

It is significant that all candidates interviewed reported that they felt that their campus was not a safe place for LGBTQ students nor for their English Language learning students and students of non-European descent. Some candidates described the campus climate as outwardly hostile to LGBTQ students, and no one felt that homophobia was treated with the same degree of seriousness as other forms of
discrimination. All candidates felt that there was a zero tolerance policy in regards to discrimination and harassment, yet all were witness to both discrimination and harassment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students as well as gender non-conforming students. No campus had an active LGBTQ support group, such as a GSA or the Y.E.A.H. group.

Uncertainty.

The uncertainty expressed by candidates in moments when homophobic or other oppressive behaviors took place was not necessarily linked to a limited understanding of the issues. All candidates expressed a level of uncertainty in how to respond when students used homophobic language. Most candidates expressed more discomfort in the handling of oppressive behaviors than they did for delivery of their content. I believe this was due to two factors: 1) the desire to keep things comfortable for themselves and avoid conflict and 2) not knowing a single, precise way to handle such issues. Both of these factors run counter to Kumashiro’s claim that “anti-oppressive education necessarily involves crisis and getting stuck” (Kumashiro, 2000, ¶ 3).

This uncertainty is part of the crisis that the candidates themselves were in, as well as the crisis they thought they would cause if they addressed the issues. Some candidates also expressed the desire for “the words to say,” or the way to discipline “without looking homophobic” when responding to the derogatory comment. No candidate reported any event that was exactly like any other event reported by a candidate. This demonstrates that each oppressive event had a unique setting and
unique teachers and students involved. Each response must also take into account the unique nature of the situation. Any number of factors could cause an intervention to fall short. Therefore candidates should not expect what Theo described as “storybook,” or “just like in the movies.”

Real life interactions with students are not just like the movies; rather they are messy, complicated, and unknowable. Both teacher and student bring different understandings into every lesson. The teacher is not always in control of the lesson, and it may not always have the desired outcome. When candidates described addressing homophobic language or inclusion of LGBTQ people in curriculum, it felt risky. It was not possible to know exactly which students would be open to the lesson and in what ways, and which students would resist the information and in what ways. However, with this messiness in mind, candidates might have felt more inclined to make their attempts, as imperfect and problematic as these may have been.

All of these elements: mentor attitude, campus and community climate, and uncertainty had a great deal of influence on the candidates’ actions. Teacher credential candidates were fearful to take risks in their placement for a variety of reasons. Candidates cited fears that related to these three categories. It appears that they perceived addressing homophobic language as controversial and chose not to take the risk.
The effects of time, mentor modeling, and practice all impacted the candidates’ efforts on behalf of their targeted students. These three factors were at times entangled, making it difficult to see the individual effects. Theo, who had a supportive mentor, lacked confidence, while Wendy, whose mentor made homophobic comments, still persisted in addressing homophobia and integrating LGBTQ issues in her curriculum. Overall, candidates benefited from the effects of all three: mentor modeling, time, and practice.

Eighty-five percent of respondents reported hearing derogatory remarks such as “that’s so gay,” “fag,” “queer,” or “dyke” on regular basis, with their mentors addressing these comments only 41% of the time. Student teachers were therefore witnessing situations where homophobic comments went unaddressed a majority of the time. This modeling caused student teachers to feel inhibited in addressing the comments they heard. This failure to respond to these comments was an unspoken acceptance of homophobic language by mentor teachers.

Several candidates reported that they did not feel supported to address the comment, or if they did address it, they felt that they should not educate about the comment. Rather, candidates felt the need to either ignore comments or respond with a quick statement that would simply let the student know that the comment was unacceptable. Candidates interviewed generally felt that this method was inadequate and did nothing more than deter students from making comments in the presence of teachers. In this way, teachers were merely relocating the homophobic language to
the hallways, locker rooms, lunchrooms, playing fields, and parking lots. If student teachers do not have anti-oppressive teaching models as they begin their journey, it is less likely that they will encounter that model once they are in their own classroom. They must have support beyond the university classroom to become the teachers who will challenge these inequities rather than maintain them.

Most of the participants in the interviews noted that they did not have a model to address homophobic or racist comments that they wanted to emulate, with a majority stating that their well-meaning mentor said something like “that is inappropriate” or “don’t use that language in my classroom.” Candidates described these two responses as somewhat more acceptable than other responses but felt that these responses lacked a larger instructional objective. Most candidates reported that students often had no association with the word gay to mean homosexual. These responses did not educate about the power of language nor did they educate students about why this type of speech is destructive.

Other unsupportive approaches were used by mentors such as “Gay is a bad word, beamer is a bad word, don’t say that.” The damage of this type of comment landed squarely on the lap of the LGBTQ or questioning youth in the classroom where that comment was made. The word gay is simply a word until used in a derogatory manner. For those students in the school who were already at risk for depression, alienation, and suicide, this declaration affirmed the message that LGBTQ youth were already receiving from the dominant discourse and equated their sexual identification as undesirable.
Even when candidates had mentors who encouraged them to intervene, at times they lacked the confidence to do so. Many candidates expressed a growing sense of confidence over the year. This possibly confounds the effect of SED 715 because while many complained that it was too long ago to have any impact on their current responses, they cited articles required by the class, recalled discussions in their small groups, and commented on films and presentations viewed in the class. Nine months after the class, they also were trying new methods, gaining acceptance of and learning from their errors, and trusting that they would be able to respond to future events, however imperfectly.

Theo was an example of this process. In his case, he had the right environment, the right modeling from the mentor, and the time to improve. When I began interviewing Theo, he mentioned several occasions in which he did not respond to homophobic or sexist language. He seemed to be like a deer caught in the headlights: knowing he needed to act quickly, but frozen in indecision. Over the academic year, Theo became more confident and less critical of his abilities. Beyond believing that all students had a right to equal opportunity to learn, Theo’s growing confidence may have been due to three factors: 1) the SED 715 course which provided the impetus for Theo to begin to see himself as a social justice minded educator, 2) a mentor who modeled consistent attention to name calling and harassment and expected the same of Theo, and 3) time to settle into his newly acquired identity. Theo recognized that his actions, while not perfect, were going to get more effective with time and practice.
Theo’s mentor at Forestview High modeled a variety of approaches for Theo: quick responses, individual conversations, guidelines of respect from the first day of school, discussions with Theo about the importance of addressing harassment, and a visible “No Room for Homophobia” sign in her classroom. Because of her consistent responses to homophobic language in her classroom, she had a reputation at the school as an ally. Beyond this, she also taught in the Multicultural Issues in Education course as a section leader. He gave credit to her support, stating that his experience would have been dramatically different with another mentor because he would have felt like the only one at his school who was passionate about the issues. This modeling, on top of Theo’s deep concern for an equitable learning environment, played an important role in the emergence of Theo’s attempts to address derogatory language. However, Theo never observed efforts to integrate LGBTQ issues into the science curriculum. This is one possibility why his efforts remained reactive rather than proactive.

Other candidates also reported that over time and with practice, they began to feel like they could challenge students’ use of stereotypes or derogatory language in a way that felt right for them. Four of the nine candidates described interactions in which they had conversations with students that both valued the humanity of the perpetrator as well as the targeted students. Although it was difficult for candidates to assess the effectiveness of their efforts, the example they set by addressing destructive language was likely to have had a positive effect on their students.

Understanding of Multicultural Issues as Integral
The Secondary Education program course SED 715 covered multicultural issues that candidates would likely encounter in their classrooms, including gender and sexual identity. Overwhelmingly, candidates surveyed reported that the course was effective in developing their understandings of heterosexism and sexual identity in relation to public schools. Candidates felt they understood their legal responsibility regarding discrimination in relation to sexual orientation, felt that they understood risks facing LGBTQ youth, and noticed that their schools were doing little to support their LGBTQ students. However, many of the comments and actions by candidates revealed a disconnect between their self-perceptions and their demonstrated understanding of issues facing LGBTQ students.

With one exception, all candidates surveyed felt eager or willing to support an individual student who came to them explicitly for support around sexuality. However, they expressed much less eagerness or willingness to speak positively about homosexuality, incorporate LGBTQ content into their curriculum, and address a homophobic comment made in the hallway by students or made by a colleague. These responses demonstrate that while candidates wanted to see themselves as understanding heterosexism and did not want to see their own complicity in homophobia, they were not willing to take the next step to act to interrupt these structures or create the conditions that would likely prevent them from continuing.

The one candidate who reported that she would be hesitant to support a student who came to her for support may have possibly been the most honest, citing that her religious convictions would prevent her from providing that support. In
contrast, the candidate who wrote that he felt it impossible to have dialogues about homophobic language due to a lack of time also reported that he would be willing to support his LGBTQ students. It is likely that he views homophobia as the overt comments or actions, such as calling someone an epithet, rather than the less direct forms more commonly used such as using gay as an adjective meaning undesirable.

Responses in the interviews presented the possibility that some candidates underestimated their abilities and understandings. When asked if they thought they could effectively respond to homophobic comments, candidates who were addressing comments regularly through discussions reported that they doubted their abilities. Art, Forest, and Wendy all doubted the effectiveness of their responses, despite repeated and diverse efforts. It was not always possible to see the effects the discussions had. These candidates modeled a non-punitive intervention by an adult in a situation in which a student was being targeted. A careful, respectful, and well thought out response provided a model for students of how to have respectful dialogue about an issue. This approach possibly allowed students to lower their defenses, reflect upon their words, and consider their effects.

Interviews and responses on the open-ended questions in the survey presented the possibility that some candidates also overestimated their abilities to effectively respond to homophobia, their understanding of their legal responsibilities, and their understanding of the risks that LGBTQ students face in school. Candidates who reported that they had not heard derogatory language or had not responded when they had heard it also reported that they were confident in their abilities to
respond effectively. Sebastian’s confidence that he could respond effectively in fact convinced him that students in his class simply did not use that language around him. While it is possible that students were successful in their attempts not to get caught making derogatory remarks, it is more likely that the many layers of privilege that Sebastian was afforded obscured his ability to hear the comments made by students in his class. Sebastian claimed that he understood the privilege he was granted but also stated that there was nothing he could do about it. Sebastian appeared to experience guilt and cognitive dissonance as he questioned what he had been taught about equality. It seems likely that his claim that he did not hear these comments was an attempt to avoid the increase in cognitive dissonance.

Sebastian’s position as a Christian, European American, heterosexual male was possibly a reason why he did not mention a student walk-out over a letter to the school paper (which appeared in two local newspapers for its homophobic nature) when asked about discriminatory events on campus. When we talked about it, he felt that the freedom of speech for the author was important to protect and defended the author’s Christian viewpoint on homosexuality. The school newspaper and administration took the same position.

In this conversation, Sebastian revealed a limited understanding of heterosexism in several ways. First, he appeared to be unaware of the role that allies can play in the support of marginalized groups. He questioned the sincerity of the protesters’ allied behavior because he perceived some of them to be straight. Second, he demonstrated his inability to recognize homophobic incidents when they
occurred. Finally, he demonstrated a lack of understanding of the need for support by a publicly targeted group of students on his campus. He and the school upheld the dominant heteronormative discourse around sexuality and maintained the silence around queer issues in schools.

Given the upbringing Sebastian described, the fact that he believed that he was never around LGBTQ people due to his Christianity, and his discomfort with many of the issues presented in SED 715, it is possible that he was similar to many of the candidates who did not volunteer to participate in the interviews. A common experience of many candidates in SED 715 was to argue about the existence of racism, homophobia, or sexism or to feel guilty and hopeless. These feelings were not productive because they did not appear to lead to actions to reduce bigotry in their schools.

A majority of candidates reported an understanding of the risks facing LGBTQ youth. However, given this reported understanding of the risks, no corresponding actions were taken to counter them, such as being an ally. It would seem that if candidates truly understood the risks that face LGBTQ youth, they would be inclined to attempt to reduce the risks.

Candidates’ answers to the open-ended question about information or tools that would have been helpful also provided examples of the limits of understanding in regard to LGBTQ youth. One candidate felt that knowing the sexuality of his students would help him while another wanted to know how not to be perceived as homophobic when disciplining a gay student. While candidates may have felt that
knowing a student’s sexuality or knowing what to do so as to not be perceived as homophobic would be helpful, both of these comments expose an underlying homophobia. If these teachers were visibly supportive of queer people, regardless of the sexuality of their students, it would be unlikely that they would be perceived as homophobic.

The candidate who wanted to know the sexuality of his students implies discomfort with the topic as well as the assumption of heterosexuality of his students and demonstrates his belief that identity is static. The desire to know about student’s lives is not in and of itself problematic. Knowing that cultural, religious, sexual, socioeconomic status, and gender diversity exists in classrooms may help candidates feel compelled to include diverse perspectives in their curricula. However, if candidates believe that diversity does not exist in their classrooms, they may also feel that there is not a need to teach about societal inequities. By presenting multiple perspectives and asking students to question what is not being presented in the curriculum, they may learn to question the racist, classist, sexist, heterosexist, and nationalist structures by which they are surrounded. In this way, teachers can provide students with the abilities to view social inequities and help them to seek strategies to make their schools and communities more just.

The SED 715 course provided a starting point for four of the nine candidates from which to begin to see the ways in which power and privilege function in schools. The course, while criticized for being remedial, was necessary for Theo, Sebastian, Dot, and Elizabeth to see the ways in which they were granted unearned
privilege based on their color of their skin, their ability to speak English, their heterosexuality, and their middle class standing. It also served as the beginning of understanding how positions of power and privilege play out in schools. The starting point to social change may be simply understanding that public schools are not yet equitable for all students.

Impact of Intervention Strategies on Students’ Understanding

With very little mentor modeling, candidates attempted a surprising variety of methods to intervene in situations of oppressive behavior. This section will look at the effects of candidates’ efforts to reduce homophobic language or other forms of oppression on their students understanding. Since it is impossible to know exactly how students understood the teacher candidates’ efforts, I will look at the potential impact of such strategies.

Teachers used an array of tactics to intervene on behalf of their students that fell into two categories: proactive or reactive. The use of empathy or community building, the deconstruction of sexuality and gender, education about stereotypes, and integration of LGBTQ issues into the curriculum were all proactive efforts used to prevent homophobic harassment. They provided a counter hegemonic response to dominant discourse. Reactions to homophobic comments or harassment, such as class or individual discussions also provided an opportunity for critical inquiry of oppression. The quick intervention seemed to be the most popular and likely the least effective approach.
Quick intervention.

The model that candidates observed most often was the quick response that interrupted the harassing comment or responded to it immediately after it occurred. Most candidates reported that their mentor used, as at least one of their tactics, a response such as, “That’s not appropriate,” if they responded at all. While candidates were unanimous in their feeling that this was not sufficient, they also agreed that it was all they could manage at times. Many thought that it was better than a lack of response.

Elizabeth specifically asked her mentor about responding to homophobic epithets, and he told her to say something like, “You can’t say that at school.” She felt frustrated, believing that students already knew that they should not use such language at school and that they needed more of an explanation. Since every candidate reported witnessing this response, it is likely that this was the main response teachers were using when they responded. It appeared to have little effect since 85% of candidates reported hearing homophobic comments frequently or often from their students.

Class discussions.

While some candidates feared addressing issues of homophobia or sexism because they worried the discussion would get out of control, they did not have time, or it would further harm the victim of the verbal attack, others used class discussions as opportunities to hear how their students thought about their world.
Art reflected upon the complexity involved in situations in which students who already experienced marginalization witnessed a conversation about why it was problematic to use homophobic or racist language. He illustrated the complexities when he described the paradoxical situation of facilitating the perpetrators’ reflection and perhaps their understanding, while simultaneously supporting the student who was the target. He wanted to be careful that the victim did not have to suffer further while the perpetrators worked on their prejudice. Saying “that’s not appropriate” in such an event does little to educate the perpetrator and even less to support the victim. Art’s thoughtful response to a homophobic comment presents the multilayered complexity involved in working with students.

Shelly and Wendy also led class discussions in which stereotypes were the focus of the discussion. Both described the discussions as productive because many students voiced their diverse opinions about the topics, which led to further dialogue and understanding. Shelly shared discussions about homeless people and Wendy about stereotypes about Native American people. In both classes, students held very strong opinions that were based on inaccurate information. In this way, class discussions served to educate all students, including those who did not enter the discussion. Students who might not voice racist or homophobic comments but may share opinions with others who do benefit from a class discussion in which diverse perspectives are shared.

The candidate who wrote that having a dialogue every time a homophobic comment happened was not possible demonstrated the disconnect between his
content area and homophobia. According to this logic, Math was not related to the homophobic comments made by students in his class. This implies that if the two are not connected, and there is not enough time, he must choose which to teach. It also implies that Math is more important than confronting the homophobic comment. He does not imagine his complicity in the marginalization of his LGBTQ students by not addressing the comments. By not seeing the connections between the students’ lives and the content areas, this candidate likely maintains the status quo rather than acting as an agent of change.

*Individual discussion.*

The attempt to interact with individual students is valuable because it provides the teacher a way to hear the students in a more intimate setting and to challenge their language without the shame that public interventions can cause. Forest, Art, Wendy, Theo, Kalvin, Dot, and Shelly all used this method, and with one exception, they felt satisfied with their efforts. Forest often felt that the student who had used the language understood his message and felt respected and cared for in the interaction. In contrast, Shelly had a student yell at her when she attempted to dialogue with him. Shelly also described positive individual conversations she had with students in which they seemed to understand why homophobic language was destructive. While some students might feel respected and cared for, others might feel threatened to be confronted individually. This demonstrates that there is not a single response that will be effective in every situation with every student.
Dot attempted discussions with two students about the Jewish star and concluded by comparing being Jewish to liking chocolate milk. This attempt, while problematic in its comparison of one student’s presumed faith or culture to another students’ flavor preference, did interrupt the harassing student without demonizing him. She tried to explain that it was not appropriate to make fun of beliefs and tried to take care of the student who was the target. However, she missed the mark later by adding the fact that the female student was not even Jewish, as if to establish her innocence. The implication is that if a student is Jewish, then it would be acceptable to be ridiculed for that. This situation represents the disconnect between candidates’ understanding that harassment is unacceptable and their ability to explain it to students. In this way, SED could do more to broaden candidates’ understanding of the issues and work to develop their responses to common occurrences in schools.

Silence.

The lack of response can be read by students as tacit acceptance of language and may have further reinforced the normalized homophobic language on campus. The difference in each of the 17 reasons that candidates gave for their lack of response to homophobic comments can be analyzed from the positions of each of the candidates. While the silence that the victim experienced was the same, the positions of power and privilege of each candidate were different. It was different for a Christian, European American, heterosexual, able-bodied male to fail to respond to homophobia, racism, ablism or religious oppression than it was for any member of these targeted groups to fail to respond. However, even those candidates who
brought a sophisticated theoretical understanding of gender and sexuality failed to respond in certain instances. This depth of knowledge presented moments in which the analysis was at least one factor in the candidates’ inability or unwillingness to respond to a homophobic comment. The result of this silence was equal to any other silence on any other campus by any other teacher.

There were moments when not responding was a conscious choice. Candidates who identified as queer and were themselves targets of homophobic language or those who were perceived as pushing a political agenda held back to protect themselves. Candidates who responded on a daily basis to these comments might have simply tired or become discouraged and felt that their efforts were worthless.

Creating Community and Empathy

The attempt to create community and build empathy connects to Friere’s pedagogy and allows students to see each other and relate to a common struggle against the forces of oppression (Freire, 1970). Forest used this strategy in an attempt to demonstrate the diversity in his History class which might have appeared to lack overt diversity. Both Forest and Art used students’ experiences of economic hardship and substance abuse to draw on their empathy for one another. In the context of schools in impoverished communities, this strategy seems to do more than simply deter harassing language.

Naming those social and economic factors that effect students’ lives, particularly the inequitable distribution of economic resources and power, provided
them with the ability to recognize their situation. Examining the stereotypes that were used on the students helped them to see the forces that were working against them, and it seemed to help them recognize each others’ struggle as similar to their own. Both Forest and Art recounted that many of the students had never realized that their classmate shared similar issues of family members in jail, parents who struggled with addiction, and families in poverty. This strategy worked to go beyond the oppressive words students used on each other, and towards the creation of a more democratic, social engagement. This strategy potentially had an empowering effect on students’ understanding of their situation.

*Deconstruction of sexuality.*

Rather than defending homosexuality, the deconstruction of sexuality and gender can allow students to look at homophobia as a weapon of sexism and as the regulator of masculinity and enforcer of gender roles. Art’s attempts at discussing sexuality and gender when they came up provided students the chance to think about how social relationships are manipulated by relations of power and privilege. When students become aware of these relations, they can begin to attempt to resist the divisive use of language. Furthermore, students can use this analysis on other oppressive forces in their community and work toward changing them.

Art described diverse impacts that his conversations had on students. He engaged one group of students in a discussion about the fluid nature of gender and sexual identity, rather than answering the question, “Are you gay?” This might be seen as avoidance, but Art did not change the subject; rather he delved further into it.
By not perceiving the question in a simple binary—gay or straight, Art explored the complicated nature of identity. This approach potentially allowed students to think beyond binary categories of gender and sexuality and showed that Art was comfortable with their questions about such topics. This strategy can be a powerful model for gender non-conforming and queer or questioning youth.

Queer identified teachers’ experiences.

Queer identified participants in this study cited many examples from their experiences that demonstrated that the preparation they received from the SED program was not sufficient for the hostile environment and lack of support in their school sites. The experiences of Shelly, Wendy, and Art clearly showed that the preparation they received was not adequate, nor was it equal to that of their non-queer identified peers. Their experiences varied greatly from their non-queer identified peers, even when it was at the same school site. The paradoxical positions they found themselves in between invisibility to the larger population and visibility to their LGBTQ students exacted a heavy psychological toll. Their sexual identity was one factor that made their position as student teachers greatly different from their colleagues in the program.

Beyond the institutional heterosexism and homophobic comments their LGBTQ students’ experienced, queer identified candidates also read and heard homophobia that was without a target. While all of them described a zero tolerance policy on their campus regarding harassment, none of them witnessed any punitive consequence for homophobic language. This confirmed their fear that they would not
be protected when their own sexuality came into question, or when they were targets of homophobia.

All queer identified teachers were either the recipients of homophobia or targets of it. All candidates reported that often students used homophobic language in relation to assignments, school policy, and in expressions of general dislike such as, “This class is so gay.” Students also used “gay” and “fag” to belittle each other and used hate speech about all homosexuals. Art and Shelly were the direct targets of homophobic comments, while Wendy received a journal entry calling gays “the pollution of society.” Presumably, the student did not have Wendy in mind when he wrote this, but she suffered damage nonetheless. It is significant that none of the non-queer identified candidates reported feeling personally attacked by the widespread use of homophobic language.

When these incidents occurred, neither Art nor Shelly shared with their mentors what had transpired. In Wendy’s case, her mentor had made several overtly homophobic comments about students. Thus, she also avoided telling her mentor her personal pain over the journal entry. The protection that a mentor would likely provide in a parallel harassing situation, but did not in this case provides another example in which the queer identified candidates were at a disadvantage due to their sexuality.

Queer identified teacher candidates in this study felt the need to manage their identity and be careful with personal information that might reveal their sexual identity. Art, Shelly, and Wendy found no support on campus for their LGBTQ
students or for themselves. While Art’s campus had formerly had an active anti-homophobia student group and faculty advisor, it was not functioning during his credential year. When the student yelled, “Art’s gay!” and the responsible teacher only responded to the outburst but not the homophobic content, Art was not only the target of the student but also suffered from the complicity of the neighboring teacher.

Shelly was asked directly by her mentor if she was dating a male or female, and she felt relieved at the time that she could answer male. She did not know if it would have made a difference to her mentor but felt uncomfortable to be asked. Wendy was called Mrs. as a reinforcement of the compulsory heterosexuality of her mentor teacher and felt that she needed to hide her queer identity because of her practice of infusing social justice issues into her curriculum.

In keeping with heteronormative framework of the schools, non-queer identified teacher candidates were never under scrutiny in their interactions with students using homophobic language, were never asked about their sexuality, and when asked about their romantic relationship, did not feel uncomfortable with their answers, never feeling the need to be discrete about the gender of their primary relationship. Non-queer identified candidates did not have any fear or discomfort regarding their sexual identity. In addition, none of their mentors identified as queer. These are the components that make up the heteronormative arrangement of schools and society. All of these factors went unnoticed by the non-queer candidates unless I asked specifically about these experiences.
Queer identified candidates’ methods of dealing with homophobic language differed from their non-queer counterparts. All three had deep concern for the safety of the victim when considering how to deal with a homophobic incident. All three were attempting to integrate queer issues into their curriculum, and all three were visible as queer in certain ways, without saying so, to at least some of their LGBTQ students. All three also made efforts to be allies to their LGBTQ students, and in this way, they provided some safety for those students, all of whom were being targeted by their classmates.

All three described themselves as private about their personal lives and somewhat guarded about romantic relationships, and they cited theoretical reasons for keeping work and personal lives separate. Yet all three were very active politically and did not hide this part of themselves from their students or mentors. While Shelly, Wendy, and Art demonstrated a comfort with their identity and an understanding of the fluid nature of identity, it is possible that they internalized some of the homophobia displayed in their schools. This may have played a role in their decision to defend their personal lives as private. It is impossible to know if they would be equally private about their sexuality if they were not queer identified. They had to juggle their public identities in ways that their non-queer teacher colleagues did not.

Queer identified candidates also engaged in resistance to the institutionalized heterosexism and curricular silence around LGBTQ issues. Candidates included in their activities and materials images, content, and references to gay people and the
issues that affect them. In this way, their students were allowed to engage with queer issues in a non-dramatic, normalizing way that did not merit a response from students. This integration defied the strict heterosexist narrative provided in textbooks and other scholastic material. Access to information about queer people offered their queer or questioning students, as well as their straight students, a view of the sexual diversity that exists. This access in and of itself was a form of resistance to the otherwise invisibility of queer people in schools.

Another form of resistance that Art, Shelly, and Wendy participated in was befriend ing queer identified students. Having a positive role model from a group that was most often represented in negative or stereotypical ways likely had a positive impact on the development of the students’ self esteem. As research shows, the more exposure people have to gay people, generally the more likely they are to be accepting (Sears, 1992). Interaction with queer teacher candidates allowed students—queer and non-queer—to counter of the stereotypes and media images of queer people. These candidates also offered safety to and provided a model for at least three students who were likely living without positive role models in their communities. While the candidates felt this visibility was important for their LGBTQ students, they felt insecure at being easily visible to all students.

The SED program offered no support for queer candidates that would prepare them in advance for the onslaught of homophobia they were about to step into nor did TSU have any support in place for them to process it once underway. Other than
conversations with friends and with me, they had not shared their stories of the hostile environments in which they were teaching.

*Multicultural issues as an additive model.*

It is tempting to question the effectiveness of SED 715 as I did when I began this research due to the attitudes and beliefs expressed by some candidates in this study. It might be argued that the course was not adequate to produce teachers with social justice centered in their practice. However, this argument fails to look at the whole teacher preparation program and instead would imply that the responsibility falls wholly on the SED 715 course.

It appears that SED 715 was somewhat effective at helping students examine their beliefs and attitudes and to make connections to their marginalized students’ lives. However, the course seemed to result in simply teaching tolerance to some candidates. While not sufficient, it is important to remember that for some candidates, tolerance was a big shift. Not every candidate was ready to embrace a philosophy of social change, and this was especially true when they had benefitted from the existing structures of privilege.

Many candidates would likely benefit from more work on these issues. The follow up to move candidates from crisis to action seemed to be missing in the teacher preparation program. While some candidates overtly resisted the information, denying that racism exists, for example, others were simply left with guilt. With three candidates reporting that they were attempting to integrate LGBTQ content into
their curricula, the connections between issues of homophobia, access to education and their content seemed to be less than evident to many of the candidates.

The pedagogy used by the SED program to teach about multicultural issues is often described as additive, meaning that it is not integrated across the curricula of the teacher education program. The frontloaded course models for the candidates exactly what pedagogy not to use, according to the SED program. Some of the definitions of multicultural education include content integration and critical pedagogy. These ideals attempt to go beyond the “Heroes and Holidays” (Nieto, 2002) approach and attempt to make meaningful connections across all courses. Most of the candidates interviewed failed to see the connections between SED 715 and other courses in the teacher preparation program. These connections if made evident to candidates, would likely cause more reflection on issues taught in SED 715 and would likely be more easily applied to their content area.

The small discussion groups in SED 715 were based upon the idea that all students had different life experiences that resulted in different knowledge, and that we were all simultaneously teachers and students. The idea proposed by Art, Shelly, and Wendy of having advanced and beginning levels of SED 715 is an interesting one, and I have tried to imagine how that would work. While it could be helpful in some ways to those who would fall into the advanced category, there are two issues that I find problematic about this approach: 1) how to distinguish advanced from beginning students and 2) the loss of the knowledge that is gained when people come together as a learning community.
To determine that certain candidates would be grouped together due to their lack of knowledge is problematic. Such an approach could serve to further alienate those candidates who were grouped in the beginning level class. Candidates who had the least exposure to the issues of power and privilege and systematic oppressions experienced high levels of guilt and shame. These candidates reported that they benefited greatly from having mixed level peers in their small discussion groups.

The other problematic piece about this idea is that it discounts the knowledge that can be achieved when people come together from different lived experiences and share their understandings. The day that a European American, heterosexual, middle class male, Jon, came to class wearing a diving t-shirt that had an artistic depiction of a female wearing a thong and showing only the bottom half of her backside was possibly the most difficult and powerful learning that I have ever facilitated. Both women and men shared how that shirt made them feel, in a respectful and thoughtful way. Jon said that he wore it because he “appreciated the female form,” that it was “just a dive shirt,” and maintained that he was not sexist. Members of our group continued to express themselves, and a powerful transformation took place. Jon came to class the next day with another shirt on to ask the group if it was sexist also; he was truly concerned and sought his peers’ help. This could not have happened in segregated groups, and while it is not the responsibility of the rest of the class to help Jon identify his issues, he was not alone in his belief that the shirt was innocuous. Knowledge was gained by working to communicate across the differences in the room.
One could argue – as Art, Shelly, and Wendy might – that the women present had to suffer two days of sexist shirts that were reinforced by the objectification of women. However, if only the people who had given little thought to sexism or the objectification of women were in the group, it would have been solely up to the facilitator to educate the whole group about the shirt. A single voice in opposition is easily dismissed. Instead, Jon and those who saw nothing wrong with the shirt got to hear multiple perspectives as to why the shirt was toxic. Shelly expressed that she benefited from the opportunity to dialogue respectfully about this and other issues, with people who felt differently than she did. This kind of sensitization could have occurred only within that setting of mixed abilities and understandings.

The Secondary Education Multicultural Issues in Education course asked students to reflect upon the consequences of their beliefs around diversity as they relate to creating equitable learning environments. It also asked students to develop skills to recognize situations in schools in which diversity issues have created inequities for particular groups of students. With these goals in mind, it seems that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and teachers continued to be on the margins of those equitable learning environments, despite various efforts of teacher candidates in their school placements. In the following chapter, I offer recommendations for follow up and further research and identify the limitations of the study.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As I have been writing this thesis, another one of our students has been shot at school for his sexuality. Another gay student has been killed as a result of the overwhelming societal homophobia and heterosexism. Last month, Lawrence King, an eighth grade student in Orange County, California, paid the ultimate price for revealing his sexuality to his classmates. The first three media reports I read failed to name his sexuality as a possible cause; such is the silence surrounding queer sexuality in public schools. His classmate, a fellow eighth grade student, has already internalized and cemented the homophobic lessons from society; violence is an acceptable response to homosexuality. Two lives are lost due to the hegemonic discourse surrounding sexuality. My work feels important in light of this news. I wrote about the experiences of nine credential candidates in the hope that they might further the efforts of those who are working toward social change in public schools. The nine candidates shared rich detail of their experiences in local secondary schools. Their voices document the constant homophobic comments that went uncontested by school staff and were made by and in the presence of mentor teachers. In the pages of this thesis, the stories recounted represent those students whose voices are silenced by the institutional oppression that still exists for queer people.
Several themes emerged as candidates told their stories. The systemic barriers that faced candidates prevented them from intervening on behalf of their marginalized students. These barriers included fear of reprimand, fear of their own sexual identity being revealed, fear of parental backlash, a lack of programs to support LGBTQ students, uncertainty of how to confront homophobic comments without causing further harm, and a lack of administrative support. Beyond the climate of the school, candidates were also up against their own limited understanding of the issues and the lack of modeling from their mentor to intervene in a meaningful way. Queer identified teachers’ experiences differed greatly from their non-queer peers due to homophobia and heterosexism they experienced and the lack of support they received.

Limitations of the Research

Many limitations were encountered in this research, chief among them my imperfect and developing understanding. I understand that my knowledge is partial and situated (Haraway, 1988), and if I have learned nothing else, I have learned how much I still have to learn in the fields of education and social justice.

Life and death also limited my work. I began the MA program with full intention of finishing the coursework and research in a much shorter time; however, over the course my study, two miraculous children came into my life, and I became “mama.” Needless to say, I slowed down considerably and was only able to devote part time scholarship to a project that easily required a full time researcher. In addition, the death of my friend, colleague, and mentor Eric Rofes was a loss at a
moment when we were just beginning our conversations about my work in earnest. He had begun to mentor me, and I lost the wind in my sails after his death. This research was a part of a requirement for a Master’s of Art in Education degree but also served for me to carry on the important work that Eric had done and had inspired me to do.

TSU is a rural university in an isolated setting that lacks diversity in the student population which is represented by all nine of participants interviewed identifying as White or European American. While research shows that a majority of teachers are European American, the whole cohort of candidates exhibited more racial diversity than those who volunteered to participate in interviews. The overall number of participants was very small. Thus, the results can offer a small piece of information and cannot be generalized to a larger context of teachers or teacher education.

Besides being European American, participants had a particular bias which was evident simply by their decision to participate in the research: they were interested in LGBTQ students’ safety. Three of nine participants identified their own sexuality as queer which was not representative of the larger cohort, nor was it consistent with the statistic that a majority of teachers are white, heterosexual, middle class females. While this is may be seen as a limitation, it was beneficial to my study which sought to understand how queer identified teachers negotiated their identity in the school setting. I sought to give voice and agency to an often silenced and victimized group, and although I did not recruit queer identified candidates, they
were naturally those who were interested in talking about homophobia in the school setting. Anyone who has been marginalized due to their sexual identity likely has painful memories of high school.

I am also implicated in the lack of training secondary candidates receive, in that I am directly involved in the course that deals explicitly with homophobia in the credential program. My participants positioned me as white, female, queer, high school teacher, teacher educator, graduate student in education, and this knowledge influenced their answers to my questions. My participants were aware of my position, my interests, and the purpose of my research, and this influenced the ideas that they shared with me. I understand that my relationship with them was biased and that with a different interviewer, a different interview structure, or someone interested in another research topic, they would likely have shared different stories.

The quantitative study had several limitations. The nine candidates’ responses should have been separated out from the rest of the cohort so that they could have been compared more accurately. The questionnaire left several obvious questions unasked, such as how often did candidates themselves attempt to disrupt homophobic comments, in what ways did they do this, and in what ways did they see the heterosexist school structures playing a role in the inequity for their LGBTQ students. It should have also asked specific questions about connections they made between social justice and their specific content.

Furthermore, some of the questions were obviously difficult to answer truthfully because to do so would have likely caused emotional discomfort for the
candidates. One example of this was the question that asked how eager or willing candidates would be to support a student who came to them for support in relation to LGBTQ issues. It is unlikely that many candidates could freely admit that they would refuse to support a student and still maintain a positive sense of themselves as teachers.

**Recommendations**

Many possible efforts exist that might make the school setting more amenable to the work of teacher candidates who seek the creation of more equitable learning environments. Some of these involve mentor teacher and university supervisor education and the integration of multicultural issues into all of the teacher education courses in the SED program. Clearly, many systemic barriers are in place, and change does not usually come without resistance; I do not naively propose the following recommendations.

Student teachers are placed under the supervision of their mentor teacher and a university supervisor. They are often in their first teaching position and need considerable guidance to teach the content, manage a classroom effectively, write effective lesson plans, and reflect on their practice. The candidates in this study showed great variation in their understanding of the multicultural issues they faced in their classrooms. Many of the discriminatory events they reported involved homophobic language. Even those candidates who had a sophisticated understanding of the social construction of gender and sexual identity had a difficult time responding to oppressive language. Therefore, mentors and university supervisors
need to be actively engaged in the conversation with their candidates about the persistence of oppressive language that occurs in the classroom and possible strategies to prevent this from happening. By mentors and university supervisors actively discussing these issues, it models the importance of creating inclusive classrooms and may inspire confidence in the candidate to act.

To engage in dialogue about issues of injustice would possibly require more education for mentor teachers around issues of social justice, language, and privilege. This is no small task considering the low morale in the field of education today due to the financial state of education, the workload of teachers, and the movement towards standardization. Mentor teachers often feel that it is extra work to have a student teacher and would likely resist any extra education that TSU deemed necessary to be a mentor. However, if TSU hopes to create social change, it must attempt to eliminate some of the barriers that their credential candidates face.

Many candidates did not have models of what to do or say in the moment of the event. This suggests that perhaps the mentors themselves did not know what to say and demonstrates not only the need to have ongoing training for mentors, but in addition, schools need to have programs in place to support LGBTQ youth. These programs would serve three purposes; 1) they would serve as support for those LGBTQ youth who need it; 2) they would send a message to the whole campus about who needs support; and 3) they would serve as support for LGBTQ teachers, staff, and administration including beginning teachers on their journey to be advocates for their students.
Every candidate interviewed named the *Theater of the Oppressed* workshop as the most valuable piece of SED 715. Many candidates in the survey also mentioned the importance of the role-play provided by the Theater of the Oppressed. The impact of practice was significant on candidates’ ability to imagine themselves reacting to an oppressive act. More role-play could help candidates become familiar with responding in the moment and hear their peers’ ideas in how to respond. This type of practice might also be developed into discussion about the impact of their responses as well.

Furthermore, rather than pretending not to be aware of queer staff, administration might instead perceive them as valuable resources. The research shows that LGBTQ youth will be more likely to stay in school if they feel like they belong. This sense of belonging can come from seeing themselves reflected in the curriculum and having support on campus, such as GSAs (gay/straight alliances) or having other clubs that support diversity. It can also come from knowing queer identified teachers are valued members of the faculty. Schools could benefit from the abilities of queer teachers to provide support for those students who might not otherwise have it.

Queer identified teacher candidates would benefit from further support from the TSU teacher education program. This might include social gatherings or discussion groups that focus on the specific ways that heterosexism and homophobia works against them in their school sites. If there had been such a space to focus on the oppression that they faced, Wendy, Art, and Shelly, and other queer identified
candidates who did not participate in interviews might have learned from one another and might have been able to strategize around difficult situations. Queer identified teacher candidates might feel more supported if such an event was in place, even if they chose not to participate.

Rather than a segregated approach to discussion groups, as suggested by some candidates, SED 715 needs to do a better job at helping students to understand that racism, sexism, or heterosexism are not merely theoretical topics up for debate. The facilitators need to establish clearly that these issues directly affect people, and that there are people sitting in the room for whom the pain is present when such topics are discussed. Extreme care needs to be given to the environment in which these sensitive topics are discussed to ensure that further damage is not done to those who routinely experience marginalization. Furthermore, all topics need to be discussed as realities that their students will be experiencing, otherwise candidates may feel that multicultural issues are optional, and they might discuss them if there is time left after the content has been thoroughly covered.

Candidates felt overwhelmingly that Multicultural Issues in Education needed to be linked to other required courses. While there was evidence of some connections among the Classroom Management course and Educational Psychology and SED 715, the larger connections appeared to be missing to the candidates. One possibility is that other instructors were using multicultural examples that were not obvious to the candidates or that they were simply not inclusive of these themes.
For the program to be more effective in helping teachers to become agents of social change, there will need to be considerable follow up to SED 715. In all other courses in the teacher preparation program, the ideals of multicultural issues in education must be reinforced. These connections are reasonably present between SED 715 and all other courses. The intersections of race, class, sexuality, gender, and ability provide lenses with which to see the ways in which inequity limits access to education. Content Literacy, Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools, Special Methods courses, Classroom Management, Bilingual/ELD Theory and Methods, Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms, and Educational Psychology all provide rich opportunities for the incorporation of multicultural issues. Incorporating multicultural issues into all of these courses models a curriculum that is inclusive as well as demonstrates that multicultural issues are not simply added on or are additional tasks that teachers have to do. It reiterates the commitment to social justice by asking candidates to continue to think about the institutional nature of the interlocking oppressions that keep classism, racism, heterosexism, sexism, and ableism in place. All of these courses should include unmistakable examples of structural barriers that marginalized students must overcome in order to have equal access to education.

Furthermore, all of the credential programs at TSU need to examine their efforts to reduce personal and institutional bias and take seriously their efforts to make learning environments more inclusive for all students. Elementary teacher candidates, administrative candidates, and students in school counseling programs
would all benefit from more education around issues of social justice. Teachers in elementary schools send messages about what language and behavior is acceptable. Administrators set the climate in multiple ways that faculty, staff students, and parents understand. School counselors provide guidance to students about current and future academic and personal endeavors. All teachers and administrators are charged with creating a school environment that keeps the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual safety of their students at the center of their practice.

The TSU secondary education program must find ways to support its teacher candidates to overcome the many barriers to intervening on behalf of their students. This may involve finding ways to change the attitudes of the mentors and administrators, and the larger community as well. TSU should also find ways to help the credential candidates find the courage to see LGBTQ issues with the same level of commitment as any other civil rights issue. Society will only undergo significant change when all of its institutions become available equally to all of its people.
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Rofes, E. (2002) “I was Afraid He Would Label Me Gay if I Stood up for Gays:”


APPENDIX A

Open Interview Guide

At the beginning of the first interview, the PI will introduce the project again. Researcher: I want to briefly remind you of the nature of this research and the purpose of these interviews over the next 7 months. I am interested in the effects of the Multicultural Issues in Education course that you all took in August 2006. I am specifically interested in how the information presented on homophobia affected your thoughts, beliefs and practices as future teachers in the secondary classroom. These interviews will span the rest of your student teaching year so that I can follow your thoughts as they develop over time and with experiences on your campuses. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

1. Tell me about your thoughts in relation to sexual orientation as it relates to public schools prior to taking Multicultural issues in Education.
2. Think back to how you might have handled derogatory remarks about gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people (LGBTQ) prior to taking SED 715 and describe that to me. How does this differ, if at all, from how you might handle these kinds of comments now?
3. Please describe how the topics addressed in SED 715 affect your thoughts, beliefs and practices in your classroom.
4. Had you previously given thought to issues around the topics covered in SED 715? If so, which ones and why?
5. Did any one topic feel new to you?
6. Did you change your mind about any topic due to readings, videos, presentations, or discussions in SED 715? If so, describe the change.
7. Do you feel that SED 715 prepared you to disrupt homophobia and other forms of oppression on your campus or in your classroom? If so, how did that class do this, or if not, how do you feel it could have done this?
8. Tell me about any derogatory comment you have heard at your campus.
9. Describe a situation in relation to homophobia on your campus that you have witnessed or have been told about.
10. Describe how your mentor reacts when issues around homophobia or other forms of oppression occur.
11. Do you talk with your mentor about these issues?
12. Is your mentor explicit about social justice issues in the classroom and on campus?
13. Describe any factors that inhibit you from addressing homophobia in your school.
14. How might you explicitly support a student who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?
15. How would you describe your progression in dealing with these issues from the before SED 715 in August until now?
16. Describe the campus climate for a student who identifies as LGBTQ
17. Describe the campus climate for an English language learner.
18. Describe the campus climate for a student who has a religion, ethnicity, or culture that does not fit with the European American, Christian, mainstream culture that exists at your school.

Email Questions Guide
1. Tell me about any derogatory comment you have heard at your campus. Please describe the situation in detail. Please include, who was there, who said it, at whom it was directed at, who heard it, who responded, how they responded, how you responded, how you felt, and how you thought about it later.
2. Do you feel that you can appropriately respond to your students make derogatory remarks in relation to gender or sexuality in your classroom? Please explain.
3. Do you feel supported by your mentor to respond to homophobic remarks?
4. Please describe any programs that your school has that specifically support LGBTQ youth.
5. Please describe your understanding of the policy at your school site in relation to discrimination or harassment.
6. Please describe how you would identify yourself in terms of sexuality.
7. What is your age?
8. What is your ethnic identity?
9. Please think for a moment about LGBTQ (perceived or identified) students on your campus. Consider their peers, their teachers, the administration, counselors, services, programs and any school-sanctioned events. Describe how you perceive their school experiences.
10. Please reflect on any actions you may have taken this year to reduce oppression or marginalization of your students. Describe those actions and how effective they were.
11. Please describe how participating in this project (talking with me or writing responses to email questions) affected your thinking, attitudes or practices about homophobia or racism during your student teaching year.
12. Please describe factors that caused you to be interested in participating in this project.
APPENDIX B

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Nora Wynne tremor@humboldt1.com HSU Education Department

The topics covered in Multicultural Issues in Education (SED 715) are religious intolerance, exceptionality, cultural intolerance, homophobia, Native American education, racism, classism and sexism. The course asks students to reflect upon the consequences of their beliefs around diversity as they relate to creating equitable learning environments. It also asks students to develop skills to recognize situations in schools where diversity issues have created inequities for particular groups of students. This survey will help me identify how well this course is meeting its goals specifically relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Filling out this survey implies consent for the principal investigator to use this data in her research. It is completely anonymous and voluntary, and the data will be used for completing the requirements of a M.A.in Education. **Please do not put your name on this survey, and please do not participate if you are not 18 years old or older.**

Please circle the number that best represents your experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SED 715 experiences</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prior to taking Multicultural Issues in Education (SED 715), I had given critical thought to sexual orientation as it relates to public schools.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The readings, discussions, and presentations in SED 715 helped me to understand heterosexism as it relates to public schools.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My small group discussions in SED 715 caused me to reflect more deeply about my own personal beliefs around sexual identity.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. My facilitator in SED 715 modeled inclusive language around gender and sexuality (such as referring to her/his partner rather than boyfriend/husband/girlfriend/wife).

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<th>V.</th>
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5. The LGBTQ content in SED 715 is relevant to my current student teaching placement.

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6. I use the LGBTQ resources provided by SED 715 in my teaching.

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7. Prior to taking SED 715 I used derogatory language in relation to LGBTQ people.

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</table>

8. Before taking SED 715, I would have ignored/not noticed discriminatory language in relation to LGBTQ people.

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9. I understand my legal responsibilities regarding discrimination due to sexual identity and gender expression.

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10. I think that I can respond appropriately to students if they make derogatory comments relating to gender or sexuality.

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<th>Poorly</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

11. I think that I can respond appropriately to my friends/family if they make derogatory comments relating to gender or sexuality.

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</table>

12. I think that I can identify homophobia as it arises in my classroom.

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</table>

13. I understand the risks that face LGBTQ youth in public schools (for example: drop-out rates, physical and verbal harassment, drug abuse and suicide).

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<th>V.</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
14. My school has program(s) that support LGBTQ youth.

15. I think that I understand heterosexual privilege as it relates to public school.


Please circle the number that best represents your experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student teaching/ School site experiences</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. My mentor teacher addresses homophobic comments when s/he hears them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My mentor discusses social inequities, such as homophobia, with students and invites them to think critically about them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My mentor teacher makes derogatory comments about LGBTQ people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I assume my <strong>students are heterosexual.</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teachers at my school make derogatory comments about LGBTQ people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I assume that <strong>my students’ parents are heterosexual.</strong></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. My students say things like “that’s so gay”, when talking about something negative, or use names like “dyke”, “fag”, “faggot”, “queer”, in a derogatory manner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please circle the number that best represents your feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right now I am…</th>
<th>eager to</th>
<th>willing to</th>
<th>hesitant to</th>
<th>unwilling to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…address homophobic comments in my classroom by discussing why discrimination/bias is wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…address homophobic comments in the hallways or other areas that generally lack adult supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…address homophobic comments made by colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…take disciplinary action against a student who makes homophobic remarks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…integrate LGBTQ content into my curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…discuss homosexuality in a positive manner with my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…support a LGBTQ student who comes to me specifically for support around LGBTQ issues s/he was dealing with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…handle LGBTQ issues differently than my mentor does. Please briefly explain your answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions in a few sentences:

32. Think back to how you thought about LGBTQ issues in August before the credential program began with SED 715. Compare that with how you think about them today. What changes do you notice, if any?

33. Please describe a situation from your school site where you would have liked to have had better information or tools in regards to LGBTQ youth.
34. If you are interested in addressing homophobia in your school site but feel inhibited, please describe the factors that prevent you from doing so.

Please give the following demographic information
35. Your age
36. Your sex
37. Your sexual identity/orientation
38. Your ethnic identity/cultural identity
39. What subject(s) you teach
Thank you very much for your time!