“Misfits” and the Celebration of Queer Youth at one U.S. High School: Implications for Students, Educators, and Communities

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

This dissertation produces a reading of one U.S. high school’s approach to create an educational environment for its students that is inclusive and free of domination. This qualitative study, supported by queer theory and intersectionality, explores the pedagogical practices and school policies that the school uses to inform its model of inclusion. The study expands on the projects of queer theory and intersectionality by focusing on homonormativity, an appendage of heteronormativity, and the complication of identity categories and their usefulness in an educational setting.

Specifically, I sought to investigate how the school’s model of inclusion promotes an inclusive, safe space for its students. How the school’s strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this model of inclusion. And, how this model of inclusion acquiesce to and contests existing systems of oppression. The research occurred in a small charter school located in an urban, Midwestern city.

My research suggests that the high school adopted policies and practices that build on the students’ identities and challenges the normative and material gaze of the larger society. The school achieves this by utilizing such strategies as policing, resistance, and queering in non-traditional ways. These strategies appear in such practices and policies
as an enumerated no victimization policy, curricula inclusion, the promotion of self-expression, an “ethic of caring”, a narrative of social justice, and a critical worldview among others. While I have chosen to foreground LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, & queer) identities in this study, the school’s model of inclusion articulated in this study is translatable to groups not highlighted in this study.
Dedication

Dedicated to my mother and father
for their unconditional love and support
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An important note of thanks to my advisor Dr. Binaya Subedi, whose guidance and interests in all things theoretical, has opened me to seeing the world in a new, interesting, and complicated ways. Thank you.

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To my family and friends who have consistently stayed with me even as I have traveled the globe in search of new horizons. I thank you for the support you have given to me over the years. I could not have had the adventures I had without you.

Finally, to my partner Andrew, you have provided me with laughter and love; two qualities I would not want to do without. I am grateful to have you in my life.
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Chapter 1
Introducing the Study

Misits: 

1: something that fits badly
2: a person who is poorly adapted to a situation or environment <social misfits>

—Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2012

I think all of us have had at least one time in our lives where we didn’t feel like we fit in so we’re just a bunch of outcasts, and we all understand what it feels like to feel alone. I guess we never let someone here feel that way.

—Student Interview, Karen, 12/7/11

Grinning from ear to ear, a parent of a student that attends the high school where I conducted my study tells me that the school is made up of “a bunch of misfits,” and isn’t that great (Parent Interview, 3/1/12). A school of misfits?

I, too, was a misfit in elementary school and high school. In elementary school, long before I knew what the word gay meant, I knew to dress in my mom’s clothes behind a locked door. Yet, I was still naïve enough to appear in women’s clothing for a costume party at my elementary school for Halloween. I was naïve enough to go play hopscotch
and 4-square with the girls during recess; yet, it did not take long for the policing to begin. At recess, a teacher asked me, “don’t you want to go play baseball with the boys?” When I said no, they let me continue to play with the girls until other boys from the baseball field started wanting to play with the girls as well. Only then, did the physical education teacher and other teachers demand that all the boys, myself included; play baseball while the girls played hopscotch and 4-square — lesson learned. I did not notice if any of the girls wanted to play baseball.

In high school, I was able to “fit” in by being the class clown and appeasing others through various methods. Through this technique, my fellow students did not call me a faggot or shove me into a locker; though, I saw others experience these acts. But, mostly, I saw and experienced silence. I saw silence from the teachers, administrators, the curriculum, and my fellow students. Though, I came out, first, as bisexual then as a gay during my senior year, I was met with silence. The gay and lesbian teachers at my school were not out. The curriculum was silent on LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) historical figures, writers, and artists. In health classes, neither teachers nor students would discuss LGBTQ identities. At school dances, one would not even consider bringing a partner of the same sex to the dance. There was no Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), and other LGBTQ students dare not speak of their identity at school.

What was visible was the policing of gender and sexuality. In physical education classes, coaches separated girls and boys. If a boy acted out the coach would threaten to place
the boy with the girls group. I, personally, would have enjoyed that, but coaches did not give me that option as they saw it as a form of punishment. I was to become a man, or what they considered a man. Heterosexuality was the only acceptable sexuality.

Through dances, proms, homecomings, curricula, and other practices all I saw and heard was that heterosexuality was the norm, and “others” were not worthy of recognition or acknowledgement in elementary or high school. It is with this background that I sought to study the role of educational policies and pedagogical practices on various youth identities today.

In an era of high-stakes testing, accountability initiatives, and quantifiable educational research, a qualitative study concerned with “misfits” and “outcasts” may seem anachronistic at best and irrelevant at worst. However, at its heart, at its foundation, this study is concerned with students receiving a fair and equitable education; an education that ensures the safety and success of those that partake in it; presumably, the same concerns of school administrators, educational researchers, teachers, parents, and communities across the U.S.

The questions then become, what is the purpose of education? What is success, and how do educators, members of a community and students define that success? How I get at a successful educational experience will look very different from what many policy makers, researchers, and educators are debating in public institutions across the U.S. today. Education, I will argue, is not solely based on numbers, statistics, and outcomes, as measured through monolithic groups of students based on race, gender,
class, sexuality, ability, geography, and so forth. Rather, it is about schools’ inputs (i.e. practices and policies) and the diversity of students that comprise each of those aforementioned groups. In other words, in this study, I consider the type of educational policies and practices one U.S. high school uses to provide a more safe, and inclusive environment for their diverse student population as a (re) articulation of what success in education may look like for educators, students, communities, and activists. Through this qualitative study, I explore the school’s culture, or general ethos of caring, kindness, and celebration of diversity inter alia, and how it affects students’ high school experiences.

Finally, why should we care if a school allows subjugated identities to be expressed in a variety of ways? Why should we care if students are kind and not competitive with one another? And, why should we care if students have access to curricula and policies that represent a diversity of humankind rather than a univocal representation of society? While I will entertain these questions more in the final chapter of the study, I will say, first, in a pluralistic polyarchy cohesion through diversity seems more amenable to reaching a state of democracy than cohesion through conformity. Second, diversity matters insofar as it holds the potential to resist existing mandates of being in the world. That is, expression of one’s identity, potentially, can create gaps or fissures in hierarchical matrixes that marginalize various communities. Third, a non-competitive approach to education allows for the possibility of coalitions; coalitions that are needed to create a more equitable and just society (Ehrenreich, 2002/2003). In short, policies
and practices that promote inclusion, safety, and diversity create a stronger democracy and citizenry that is representative of more people rather than just a few — in a sense, justice for all.

To begin an examination these issues, I explore those subjugated knowledges and voices, those “misfits,” which often are silent in departments of education, legislative houses across the U.S., or in the nation’s capital. Since, and with a nod to Parker (1855), historically, it has been those subjugated voices that have risen from the lower strata of society to change the arc of moral history in a more just manner. With this assertion, in the remainder of this chapter I turn my research gaze to those students that the current K-12 U.S. education system often underserves or neglects. Next, I state the problem under investigation in this study and the research questions themselves. Then, I explain the methodology and research design, as well as the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and a definition for some key terms used in the study. I conclude, with a layout of the remaining chapters in this dissertation.

**The Need for Inclusion**

“‘Society expects girls to be girlie, nice and pretty and boys to be manly, rough and outgoing,’ says Jenny Johnsson, a 31-year-old teacher. ‘Egalia gives them a fantastic opportunity to be whoever they want to be’” (Jenny Soffel, 2011, Associated Press website). This quotation references how one gender-neutral preschool in Sweden is attempting to usurp cultural artifacts and practices that have historically privileged some groups over other groups. To do this, the preschool has muddied the socially
prescribed lines of sex, gender, and sexuality. Among other pedagogical practices, Egalia avoids the use of the words “boys” and “girls” in favor of the word “friends,” teachers create learning spaces that incorporate both “masculine” and “feminine” activities that all students are to engage with on a daily basis and “nearly all the children's books deal with homosexual couples, single parents, or adopted children. There are no ‘Snow White,’ ‘Cinderella’ or other classic fairy tales seen as cementing stereotypes” (Soffel, 2011, Associated Press website). According to the school’s director, the pedagogical choices should help create an environment that values democracy and human equality (Soffel, 2011).

I center this research project on these shared idea(l)s of equality and democratic practices particularly as it relates to various identities as exemplified within this preschool in Sweden. Specifically, this study examines how educators can thwart their roles as gatekeepers, or enablers, of inequitable societal norms and practices in favor of a transgressive role that favors resistance rather than subjugation and justice rather than injustice. While there are many ways to engage inequality in education, I will focus my research at a foundational level. That is, through my investigation of how one U.S. high school seeks to queer educational inequities by creating a space of safety, valuing of difference, and an appreciation of kindness. In short, this study provides one reading of the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of inequality and the practical pedagogical practices and school policies adopted to assuage these inequities.
To present one reading on how inequality materializes in the U.S., I highlight a few statistics that focus on youth across several identity markers. Concerning detention and incarceration,

Youth of color account for 65% of the juvenile detention population. Twenty-eight percent of gay and bisexual boys are detained for running away compared with 12% of straight boys, and 38% of lesbian and bisexual girls are detained for running away compared with 17% of straight girls (Angela Irvine, 2011, The Public Intellectual website).

Concerning wealth and health, 1 in 5 people under the age of 18 live in poverty. Additionally, 10.0% (7.5 million) of children under 18 were without health insurance in 2009 that increases to 15.1% for children in poverty (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor & Smith, 2009).

Concerning education and safety, the high school dropout rate along racial lines stands at 17.6% for Hispanic students, 13.2% for Native American students, 9.3% for Black students, 5.2% for White students, and 3.4 % for Asian/Pacific Islander students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Additionally, “...about 11 percent of students from low-income families dropped out of high school; by comparison, 5 percent of middle-income students and 2 percent of students from high-income families ...” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Finally, “nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced harassment at school in the past year and nearly two-thirds felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation. Nearly a third
of LGBT students skipped at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns” (GLSEN, 2009).

While not an exhaustive account of inequality in the daily lives of youth today, nor how inequality operates in its current iteration, it does demonstrate a systemic pattern of domination occurring along various axes of identity. It is the systemic corporeal and normative aspects of these “games of truth” (Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 289) that I seek to crystallize in this research project.

**Statement of the Problem**
While the field of education is replete with discussions concerning heteronormativity as it relates to gay-straight alliances (Griffin, Lee, Waugh, & Beyer, 2003; Lee, 2002), anti-bullying policies/homophobia (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Holmes & Cahill, 2004; Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008), curricula inclusion (Marchman, 2002; Sumara & Davis, 1999; Robinson & Davies, 2008), pedagogical practices/programs (Cotton-Huston & Waite, 2000; Franck, 2002; Kumashiro, 2009; Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002), as well as masculinity in boys lives (Martino, 2000; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; McCready, 2010; Pascoe, 2005) and resistance to heteronormative practices (Blackburn, 2002/2003; Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davidson, 2003; Macintosh, 2007), little work has been done specifically on homonormativity and education, a foundational aspect of my study. Therefore, my study not only examines the role of heteronormativity, heterosexism, and homophobia; it also seeks to explore this concept of homonormativity within education. Additionally, I explore the school’s model of
inclusion and how it addresses the needs of its students across multiple, interlocking identity markers. In short, I will build on the work of Kumashiro, McCready, and Macintosh among others to examine this concept of inclusion from a queer perspective.

In 2001, Kumashiro reflected on inclusion concerning the core disciplines of math, science, English, and social studies. Kumashiro addresses the tension often felt in the field of education between theory, particularly with the use of post theories, and pedagogical practices. His article examines ways to marry theoretical constructs, such as *unknowability* and multiplicity within a post-structural framework, with teaching methods that would promote an anti-oppressive educational experience in the core disciplines of mathematics, science, English and social studies. Kumashiro notes that knowledge is always partial. As such, educators that simply includes the voice/knowledge of “others” within their curriculum, without examining why the official curriculum privileges some voices/knowledges and marginalize others, may miss an opportunity to promote an anti-oppressive classroom experience. Moreover, Kumashiro suggests that educators should consider looking beyond the official knowledge of the curriculum, and seek to understand what their lessons make (im)possible for the student and what is (un)said in the lesson. Considering these ideas allows educators to render visible various systems of oppression (racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and so on) within education.

McCready (2010), based on ethnographic fieldwork at one California urban high school, investigates the diversity of masculinities through feminist theories of intersectionality
and queer theory. The book foregrounds the lives of four black male students that identify as gay and/or gender non-conforming, and the obstacles they face during their high school experiences based on their multiplicative, intersecting identities (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality). While the school tried to make spaces available for queer students through Project 10 (later becoming the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance) and black students through the African Dance Program, both proved problematic for these students due to their lack of attention to issues of race and gender expression.

McCready recommends that educators need to be conscientious, and create spaces within schools, to accommodate the diversity students that attend their schools.

Finally, in a similar vein, Macintosh (2007) problematizes this concept of inclusion. Macintosh questions the effectiveness of various school policies and practices that seek to create a more inclusive space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex youth. Specifically, Macintosh sees the one-off workshop for teachers and curricula inclusion of GLBTQI topics as superficial remedies to the greater problem of heteronormativity. Macintosh contends that these practices of inclusion maintain a discourse of otherness. Instead, Macintosh considers, through the adoption of queer theory, a way for educators to transcend the “us and them” trope. Rather than turning the educational gaze onto the queer body, and thereby maintaining the other, Macintosh contends, educators should focus on normative and regulating practices through the exploration of such projects as heteronormativity.
I build on these three researchers and others as a way to further the discussion of inclusion. I do this by not only addressing this issue of homonormativity and heteronormativity as a theoretical project, but also based on the actual experiences of what one school is doing to promote inclusion. By studying a school with a progressive agenda, I am able to build on work by other researchers, and tether the previously theorized construct of inclusion to the actual experiences of students with models of inclusion.

Homonormativity, heteronormativity, heterosexism, and homophobia
Though I define homonormativity later in this section and again later in the chapter, I posit that homonormativity does not solely affect sexual minorities even though many writers have explored the concept referencing this population (see Duggan, 2002; Rahman, 2010, Ward, 2008 among others). Instead, I expand the concept of homonormativity to include those that counter hegemonic practices of normalization, which can include counter normative heterosexuals. That is, writers concerned with homonormativity have highlighted the negative influence of incorporating some LGBTQ people into the a neoliberal fold of modern U.S. society (see Manalansan IV, 2006; Puar, 2005, 2006; Ward, 2008 among others), but have not considered broadened the concept to include non-sexual minorities that challenged the normalizing gaze of society.

Moreover, while theorists and researchers have engage the concept of homonormativity in such areas as race and class (Muñoz, 1999; Rahman, 2010; Ward,
migration (Manalansan IV, 2006), capital (Agathangelou, Bassichis & Spira, 2008; Jeppesen, 2010), nationalism (Puar, 2005, 2006; Puar & Rai, 2002) and geography (Manalansan IV, 2005; Oswin, 2008), education and homonormativity has been theoretically unattended by researchers and theorists. Due to this awkward gap in the field, in this study I render visible certain contours and fuzzy demarcations of the relationship between education and homonormativity along with how one U.S. high school engages issues of heteronormativity, heterosexism, and to a lesser extent homophobia.

To clarify some key concepts (see Figure 1.1), I posit heteronormativity as a particular episteme (normative, ideological, ontological) by which heterosexism, homophobia, and homonormativity operate through material and normative practices. Heteronormativity is the “heterosexual culture’s exclusive ability to interpret itself as society” (Warner, 1993, p. xxi) through “linguistic and/or cultural practices which construct and circulate heterosexual representations, practices, and identities as the natural or normal expression of humanity” (Dalley & Campbell, 2006, p. 13).

In turn, heterosexism is the technologies or practices that reify a heteronormative episteme. This may include such technologies or practices enacted in education, legal cases, legislative outcomes, and popular media to name a few. This allows societies to produces heteronormativity in
‘in almost every aspect of the forms of the arrangements of social life’
reproducing itself systemically in ‘nationality, the state, and the law; commerce;
medicine; and education as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity,
romance and other protected spaces of culture’ Warner and Berlant as quoted in
Jeppesen, 2010m 464).

Figure 1.1. Operationalizing heteronormativity

Homophobia is what many schools are actually engaging through such policies as anti-bullying campaigns. Homophobia, which is quite different from heterosexism, “as it
contains within it the suggestion that there are legitimate psychological grounds for individuals to fear or have a phobia of homosexuality” (Jeppesen, 2011, p. 464).

Homophobia does not address the structural inequities that heterosexism addresses in its calculation of domination and subordination. Instead, it seeks to fix the individual rather than the system that created the individual.

Much like heterosexism, homonormativity is another cultural practice that buttresses heteronormativity. However, whereas heterosexism works along the axes of sexuality, gender, and sex, homonormativity encapsulates other identity markers and systems of oppression as it mediates such societal discourses as neoliberalism. Influenced by Lisa Duggan, Manalansan IV (2005) states,

Homonormativity is a chameleon-like ideology that purports to push for progressive causes such as rights to gay marriage and other ‘activisms,’ but at the same time it creates a depoliticizing effect on queer communities as it rhetorically remaps and recodes freedom and liberation in terms of privacy, domesticity, and consumption” (p. 142).

As a result of gaining certain rights (e.g. right to marry, right to serve in the military, right to adopt and so on), certain segments of the LGBTQ communities are brought into the fold of a modern, neoliberal citizenry in exchange for “passively accepting alternative forms of inequality....” (Manalansan IV, 2005, p. 142). As mentioned earlier, homonormativity also may restrict a host of other non-normative identities such as
gender non-conforming heterosexuals or subversive individuals that challenge the ethos of U.S. consumerism and depoliticalization. Additionally, I highlight that homonormativity does not challenge various systems of oppression such as heterosexism, classism, racism, sexism, ableism, lookism, ageism, and geographical bias. Instead, homonormativity upholds systems of oppression as a method sort and privilege some at the expense of others—a process that works across multiple interlocking identities. This tacit agreement between homonormative subjects and privileged heterosexuals has dangerous implications. In short, by supporting existing systems of oppression in exchange for institutional recognition (e.g. legal-gay marriage/ adoption, military—right to serve in the military, education—curricula inclusion/anti-bullying campaigns), others across various queer communities are left behind (see Terms in the Study section for a definition of queer later in this chapter).

Due to the lack of research and theorization of homonormativity in education and the role of inclusion in combatting heteronormativity, I will problematize the previously opaque construct of heteronormativity through its deployment of homonormativity and heterosexism. Because of this deployment, this project will provide sharper, more nuanced tools for educators, theorists, activists, and researchers to use in their reading of heteronormativity in education.

**Research Questions**
To situate the research questions for this project I had to make a few assumptions, assumptions that I would later test through my analysis of data. Assumption #1-
Progressive educational polices and pedagogical practices that are inclusive of LGBTQ may be muted in their effectiveness due to a lack of research and theorizing by educators as it relates to heteronormativity. Assumption #2- A model of inclusion is multifaceted and works along different registers — sometimes supporting existing systems of oppression and sometimes contesting them. Assumption #3- By solely focusing on homophobia, educators, theorists, activists, and researchers are avoiding the intractable relationship between systems of oppression and identities, the interlocking aspects of both projects, as well as the socially constructed aspect of identities. These assumptions highlight the need for a more nuanced reading of heteronormativity, the impact models of inclusion have on identities and systems of oppression, and the misplaced focus on homophobia by some educators, researchers, theorists, and activists.

With these assumptions made, I now turn to the research questions themselves. My research questions are influenced by Bovè, Bovè asks “‘How does discourse function? Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social affects? How does it exist?’” (Bovè as quoted in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). Since my intent is to see inner workings of one model of inclusion at City High School (CHS)⁴, I seek to imagine its function, its location, its production, and its regulation, the impact it has on students and the larger society, and simply how it presents itself. As such, the study addresses the following questions:
1. How does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students?

2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion?

3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression?

The intent of these research questions works along four dimensions. First, by articulating the demarcations of this school’s model of inclusion, I am providing practical practices that other schools can adopt, as applicable, to create a safe, inclusive environment for all their students. Second, by delineating how policing, resistance, and queering works within this school’s model of inclusion, a deeper, more critical understanding of this model is available for the reader. That is to say, this school is not some utopic reality. The school uses practices of normalization and regulation like other schools. However, the goals of this regulation are arguably much different from most other schools. Third, by investigating how this school’s model of inclusion contests or acquiesce to systems of oppression, I problematize the concept of heteronormativity chiefly through the investigation of homonormativity within the project of heteronormativity. Finally, chiefly through the work of intersectionality and queer theory, I engage how this school’s model of inclusion informs students’ identities. That is, how do these identities work along McCall’s (2005) constructs of intra-, inter-, and anti-categorical complexity. In sum, these research questions seek to investigate how
one U.S. high school attempts to create a more safe and inclusive educational experience for its students.

**Methodology and Research Design**

I utilize a post-queer intersectionality as my methodology for this qualitative study — as discussed in depth in chapter 3. As such, my methodology has the following characteristics. 1) A post-queer, intersectional methodology renders visible those identities often erased though various regimes of practice especially in the areas of legal rights, political considerations, and educational equity. 2) A post-queer, intersectional methodology notes not only the material aspects of identity and their corresponding systems of oppression; it also considers the normative aspects of the two as well. 3) Identities and systems of oppression are interlocking and mutually constitutive. 4) Identities are socially constructed and shift dependent on the space and time they inhabit. 5) Post-queer intersectionality has a social justice directive. In the end, post-queer intersectionality work is “…charged with the responsibility of making the intersections between ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation (to name just a few) and the social inequality related to these identities explicit “(Bowleg, 2008, p. 322).

In an effort to ground these idea(l)s, I utilize McCall’s (2005) three levels of complexity — anti-, intra- and intercategorical. Anti-categorical complexity allows me to examine how identities are constructed and what work they do in the social body, particularly as it relates to systems of oppression. Anti-categorical complexity concedes there is a material aspect to identity, but critiques its normative construction (Butler, 1993b;
Oswin, 2008). Intracategorical complexity foregrounds the complexity of different identity formations. For example, as Kwan (2002/2003) states, “race is often gendered and ... gender is racialized’ (p. 1274). This idea references feminist of color and their concerns about erasure. Prior to these ideas on intragroup complexity, race was always male (ex. patriarchy in the Civil Rights Movement), gender was always White (ex. White feminism), and all identities were heterosexual and middle class.

Intercategorical analysis/complexity allows me, as the researcher, to explore how identity groups vary across various axes. This may include how some groups of students have access to cultural and material capital compared with other groups. Or, as more relevant to this project, how certain groups of students are more likely to enveloped in a discourse of homonormativity as compared to heterosexism. Both intra- and intercategorical complexity tend to focus more on the material aspects of identity and systems of oppression than its normative aspects. However, all three levels of analyses note identities social construction and have a critical eye towards their composition (McCall, 2005).

Participants and collecting data.
The process of selecting research participants, or co-researchers, chiefly aligned along two axes. First, to understand the different pedagogical practices and school policies adopted at CHS, I interviewed and observed various administrative personnel, teaching staff, a school visitor, and one parent. This included the school’s director, principal, safety coordinator, four teachers, and one artist in residence.
The second axis focused on the students. Since I am foregrounding LGBTQ students, my fliers and other recruitment materials and methods focused on students that would belong to this population. However, I would not deny entry into the research project based on some pre-determined assessment of one’s affiliation to a particular group. As Yuval-Davis (2009/2009) states:

> The point of intersectional analysis is not to find ‘several identities under one’....This would reinscribe the fragmented, additive model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities. Instead the point is to analyze the differential ways in which different social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities. (p. 57)

As such, the U.S. uses normative and material aspects of domination and subordination to marginalize and the privilege groups of people. Therefore, I interviewed nine students. Five of the students identified as gay, bisexual, or lesbian and three students identified as students of color. I give a more detailed description of the research subject in chapter 3.

In short, I utilize a purposeful sampling technique known as theory-based sampling in this project. Theory-based sampling allows me to sample “incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of
important theoretical constructs [such as heteronormativity]. The sample becomes, by
definition, representative of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 1990, p. 177).

I obtained data across three mediums: interviews, participant observation and
conversations where the outcome is a coproduction of the interviewer and the subject”
(p. xvii). With this in mind, I saw the interview as a four-dimensional process. First, “the
topic of qualitative interviews is the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or
her relation to it” (Kvale, 1996, p. 30). Second, “the interviewer exhibits an openness to
new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and
schemes for interpretation” (p. 31). Third, “the knowledge obtained is produced
through the interpersonal interaction in the interview” (p. 31). Fourth, there is a
performative aspect to the interview as well. These four steps nicely correspond to the
post-queer intersectional methodology that undergirds the interview as a method.

Participant observation was another method I used to gather data. Though there were
times when I would simply observe students and teachers performing their roles, I made
sure to engage the research participants on a regular basis. Of particular use, and in line
with Lather’s (1986) concept of catalytic validity, I would meet with students to discuss
various topics related to the research project including issues surrounding identity,
heteronormativity, and the school’s diversity initiatives. This not only allowed me to
build rapport with the students, if provided them with an opportunity to become co-
researchers in the research project, and express their understandings of identity and systems of oppression.

Finally, I analyzed various documents that related to my research topic. This would include posters, teaching materials, and students’ work among other documents. These documents, in tandem with a thematic networks analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001), provided material support for what was being observed and spoken about within the school itself.

**Data analyzed.**

As mentioned, I use catalytic validity to assess the validity of the data I analyze for this project. Additionally, member checks, triangulation, prolonged engagement, and rich and thick description were other techniques I adopted to further validate my analysis. Part of the analysis itself followed a more traditional qualitative approach. That is pieces of experiences that I observed and participated in were broken into clumps and coded using open and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, beyond this I adopted Attride-Stirling’s (2001) work on thematic networks analysis to analyze the data (see chapter 3). This allowed me to categorize and create basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes from collected data.

Finally, what made the analysis post-queer and intersectional is that I asked the following questions. “’How does [this] discourse function? [ex. heterosexism] Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social affects? How does it exist?’” (Bovè as quoted in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485) How does it fluctuate across
different identities? These types of questions assisted in deconstructing and analyzing various chunks of data. I adopted the following reading of deconstruction:

A deconstructive approach does not consist of reversing...or... attempting to somehow annihilate the concepts and/or relation between them altogether....Rather, a deconstructive analysis...would highlight the inherent instability of the terms, as well as enabling an analysis of the culturally and historically specific ways in which the terms and the relation between them have developed, and the effects they have produced (Sullivan, 2007, p. 51).

In sum, a post-queer, intersectional methodology and its corresponding methods allows me to explore the role of heteronormativity in City High School, how students from diverse LGBTQ backgrounds engaged these concepts, and what role the school plays in negotiating these discourses. A post-queer intersectional methodology usurps two usual dangers of multicultural research. First, this methodology disregards the segregated silo approach of diversity in favor of an approach that recognizes the interconnectedness and mutually constitutive aspects of identity and systems of oppression. Second, this methodology considers the normative and material aspects of identity and systems of oppression; thereby, thwarting the either/or approach of some multicultural research.

**Significance of the Study**
The importance of this work is three-fold. First, of theoretical concern, by adopting a post-queer, intersectional approach I am marrying two theoretical projects that have, until recently, been resistant to proffering a unified approach in theorizing difference
and inequality (see Cohen, 1997; Gamson and Moon, 2004; Rahman, 2010). As an example of this tension, Cohen (1997) suggests, “….queer activism… [i]n many instances, instead of destabilizing the assumed categories and binaries of sexual identity, queer politics has served to reinforce simple dichotomies between heterosexual and everything ‘queer’” (p. 438). For Cohen, queer theory runs the risk of subsuming various identity categories into a dichotomous hetero-homosexual binary. However, as Butler (2004) contends, “…more important that any presupposition about the plasticity of identity or indeed its retrograde status is queer theory’s claim to be opposed to the unwanted legislation of identity” (p. 7). That is, what is important is not to invalidate, or conflate, various identities into a queer post-identity, rather it is to address the regulating gaze of various normativities (Oswin, 2008).

Queer intersectionality obfuscates the material and normative tensions often associated with identity politics in favor of advancing a reading of identities and their operation in both the social and material worlds they inhabit. It accomplishes this by examining how identities are deployed in the social body, what work they do, how identities are normalized and regulated, how identities are interconnected with one another and to imagine their relationship with mutually constitutive, “interlocking” (Collins, 1990, p. 222) systems of oppression (see also Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Chang & Culp, 2002/2003; Ehrenreich, 2002/2003; Ken, 2008; Kwan, 1996/1997; Rosenblum, 1994; Ward, 2008 among others). By marrying queer theory and intersectionality, this research posits a more nuanced, holistic reading of inequities in the social body than is normally
understood by separately analyzing the segregated silos of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and so on.

I qualify this assertion by stating that I do foreground gender and sexuality within this study as a unit of analysis, though these are not my only units of analysis. The foregrounding of gender and sexuality is due to my own identity as a White, gay man and having access to students that connect with issues surrounding gender and sexuality. However, beyond simple issues of access, a theoretical and methodological incongruence would have occurred had I focused on certain identities rather than how identities and systems of oppression are interconnected. Therefore, rather than targeting different identities through interviews, participant observations, and document analysis, which could lead to an additive approach to intersectionality (see Bowleg, 2008; Shields, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006/2009 among others), I specifically sought out a diverse range of identities. This allowed me to see how identities and systems of oppression operated within this inclusive model of education as set forth by City High School. Moreover, due to a subject’s positionality and hir subjectivities, solely focusing on one, two, or even three identities (e.g. race, class, gender) would have left the research flat, one dimensional, and would not have comported with a queer intersectional methodology, since queer intersectionality seeks to provide a more holistic, yet nuanced, reading of identities and oppressions.

Second, of practitioner concern, the problematization of heteronormativity allows educators, educational researchers, and theorists, sharper tools by which to address the
needs of not only LGBTQ students of diverse backgrounds, but of all students within U.S. schools. Though a large part of the focus of this research is on LGBTQ students and their “interlocking,” mutually constitutive identities, the interpretations go to the deeper issues of inequality, injustice, and difference that resonate with all students, not just those that happen to identify as LGBTQ (see terms of the study #3 for a definition of queer and other). Therefore, I expound upon the educational policies and pedagogical practices at City High School as a way to ascertain how they have affected the students across various identities. Though education is not a panacea for all of society’s ills. However, by exploring this process the findings can provide a platform by which educators and others can adopt more equitable practices, which can create a more hospitable educational experience for all students.

Limitations of the Study
The first limitation of this study has to do with my identity. With a nod to Allen Young (1972/1992), I state because I am a White, middle-class, cisgender male, gay/queer, a Southerner, spiritual and agnostic, “most of what I say is from that perspective. There are other homosexuals —Third World People [sic], lesbians, transvestites—about whom I can say little. They speak for themselves” (p. 7). In short, my positionality greatly influences what I report and how I engage my fellow research participants. As Rhoads (1997) succinctly states, “the identity of the researcher —his or her positionality—contributes to the kind of findings and representations offered about the identity of the other” (p. 7), even if that “other” is closely aligned to that of the researcher.
Another limitation of this study relates to the time and breadth of this project. First, though a typical ethnographic study can continue for years, due to material resources my time in the field was limited to months rather than years. Second, I chose depth over breadth in my collecting of various data. That is, rather than conducting research at multiple schools in different parts of the U.S., I chose to invest my time and resources into one school. Since my time was limited, I wanted to delve deep into one research site, rather than superficially glean over multiple sites. Consequently, my research may not be applicable to all schools and situations in education. However, as Becker states, the point of research is to provide “useful or interesting way[s] of looking at things” (as quoted in Peshkin, 2000, p. 9).

Due to my lack of research experience, and the lack of research in this area, there will be gaps, fissures and breaks from research conventions and protocols. Coming from a post-structural, queer, intersectional perspective — I am fine with that possibility. I actually seek it out. After all, it is within these interstices where new knowledges, unfettered by disciplining regimes of practice, may spark new, innovative approaches in the seminal quest for social justice within U.S. education. What, concerns me though, is that due to my lack of research experience I may not be able to communicate those new knowledges in an acceptable manner that allows people to hear them, as such it may limit the impact of my research.
Terms in the Study
Throughout this dissertation, I spend considerable time elaborating on a host of different terms. Terms, like other constructs, bend to the will of those engaging them. As such, I will discuss a few terms here since I do not explicitly define them in other parts of the dissertation.

1. Homonormativity: There are other formulations of homonormativity including Atkinson and DePalma (2008) idea of homonormativity as an inverse of heteronormativity as the standard norm, and Stryker’s (2008) interpretation as it relates to “transgender political and cultural activism” (p. 145). My touchstone for homonormativity in this paper is through Lisa Duggan. Duggan (2002) defines homonormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (p. 179).

2. “Others” and Queer: Usually, by “others” and/or queer, I am referring to “dykes, fags, bisexuals, radical feminists, and other subversive heterosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, poor queers, Black queers, Asian-American queers, Latino queers, homos, drag queens, leather queens and dykes, muscle queens, lipstick lesbians, bull dykes, gay women” among other counter-normative individuals (Rosenblum, 1994, p. 91). Of note, first, I include subversive
heterosexuals within this definition. As I found in my research, due to issues of
gender non-conformity, style of dress, or non-assimilatory ideas, many
heterosexuals felt like outsiders in their dominant society. Therefore, I include
them as “others” and/or queer. Second, the use of queer is not to conflate
different identities. That is, “I use the term ‘queer’ not as a means of privileging
sexuality or sexual identity within multi-identity politics but as ‘a political
metaphor without a fixed referent’ — a metaphor that describes various modes
of challenge to the institutional and state forces that normalize and commodify
difference” (Ward, 2008, p. 143; see also Eng, Halberstam, & Muñoz, 2005).
Third, I use queer as an identity category, but I also use queer as a political
project. For example, to produce a queer reading does not have to do with a
subversive individual that does not comport with binary identities (e.g.
heterosexual/homosexual); instead, within this context it is a political project
that seeks to contort a discourse of normalization. Therefore, the reader should
understand the multiple uses of queer within this study, since queer may refer to
an identity (e.g. gender non-conforming lesbian or subversive heterosexual), or
as a political project to destabilize processes of normalization.

3. Discourse: In this project I see discourse “‘not a language or a text but a
historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms,
categories, and beliefs’” (Scott as quoted in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485) Additionally,
I nod to Foucault as well since his “theory of discourse illustrates how language
gathers itself together according to socially constructed rules and regularities that allow certain statements to be made and not others” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485).

4. Data: Though I use the term data throughout the study, I am aware that readers of this study may see the term as positivist, delimited, and staid. The experience that I communicate from my field research is not lifeless. Data represent a continual process of assembling dis/continuous parts that I bring together in an effort to create a picture —a picture influenced by, and can influence, societal discourses. A collage might be a helpful way of visualizing the process of data engagement within this study; that is, with the pieces of the collage being im/material in composition, and the researcher and research participants formatting the pieces of the collage collectively.

5. Diversity: By diversity, I do not posit a superficial, “window dressing” (Ward, 2008) deployment of the term; a deployment that would promote practices and policies of inclusion without a deeper reading of the historical nature of inequality, its relationship with identities, and its prevalence in current practices. Instead, I read the promotion of diversity practices and policies as a way to understand the structural, material, and normative practices that have historically, and continue to, privilege some at the expense of others.

insisted that only those acts performed out of duty (in conformity to principle) should be labeled moral, an ethic of caring prefers acts done out of love and natural inclination. Acting out of caring, one calls on a sense of duty or special obligation only when love or inclination fails (p. 219). As will be seen in later chapters, my research site paralleled Noddings’ ethic of caring. Rather than moral behavior being predicated on a call of duty, in a Kantian sense, the school expressed morality through its relations with the students and one another. Noddings goes on to state, “instead of striving away from affection and toward behaving always out of duty as Kant has prescribed, one acting from a perspective of caring moves consciously in the other direction; that is, he or she calls on a sense of obligation in order to stimulate natural caring. The superior state—one far more efficient because it energizes the giver as well as the receiver—is one of natural caring” (p. 219). As a counter balance to the individualism emphasized by Kant (as a reaction to entrepreneurship and Christianity), Noddings suggests that relational caring is better suited for an educational environment, since it energizes all parties involved within a given interaction. Since this is not a study on Noddings’ ethic of caring, I do not spend a great deal of time exploring her work. However, it would be disingenuous to say that my data collection and analysis has not been touched by her work.
Organization of the Remaining Chapters

The purpose of this study is to investigate the following questions: 1. How does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students? 2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion? 3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression? 4 To address these questions chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for my use of queer theory. Chapter 3 describes my use of intersectionality as a methodology, and includes the methods I adopted in this research project. Chapter 4 provides my interpretations from the study, and chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with implications for educational application and further research.
Endnotes:

1 First, LGBTQ is used most often in this study. I am cognizant of the issues surrounding categories, but considering the topic of this article, namely heteronormativity in education and its engagement with “other” identities, it seemed more applicable than perhaps the more politically expedient term queer. Moreover, LGBTQ is inclusive of people that may not self-identify as queer; whereas, queer may not resonate with, or accurately reflect, people that identify as LGBT. Second, I use queer as an identity category in this study, but I also use it as a political construct.

2 As Steinbugler et. al. (2006) suggests, I “capitalize ‘White’ ...to disrupt the use of Whiteness as an unmarked or normative category...” (822).

3 I use Manalansan’s description of neoliberalism as “policies [that] seek to delimit governmental intervention, increase privatization, and remove the safe guards of welfare services, creating a virtual free-for-all arena for economic market competition (Manalansan IV, 2005, p. 141).

4 Pseudonyms are used throughout the study to conceal the names, locations, and other identifying markers to maintain the research subjects confidentiality.

5 Though others may be enveloped within a discourse of homonormativity including LGBTQ people of color, working class queers, gender non-conforming queers and so forth, most of the research in this area focuses on White, middle-class, gender conforming gay and lesbian people due to their access to monetary and cultural power. However, there are White, middle-class, gender-conforming gay and lesbian people that do not follow the politics of homonormativity, just as there are working class and queers of color that due comport with a framework of homonormativity.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Framework: Queer Theory

The Contesting of Knowable Knowledge

The adoption of queer theory into educational research is a recent phenomenon. Researchers and theorists often articulate queer theory in tandem with feminist theory and critical race theory (see Kumashiro, 1999, 2001, 2009; McCready, 2010), though this is not always the case (see Macintosh, 2007). What these authors and many others have in common is an approach to education that usurps the traditional liberal notions of inclusion, particularly as it relates to LGBTQ students. Extending on the work that multicultural educators such as Banks (2004), Sleeter & Grant (1987), and others; queer theorists and researchers add to the conversation of multicultural researchers and theorists by examining the agential nature of students and educators even within an atmosphere of conformity and discipline. By reinscribing and queering existing discourses within education, these queer theorists and researchers not only note the historical legacy of oppression, its current iterations; they also consider how educational discourses of oppression shape and formulate identities. It is within these matrixes of power relations that students and educators can formulate gaps and fissures to reconfigure existing systems of oppression in a more equitable, fair manner.
While there is considerable overlap between multicultural educators and queer educators, their specters often highlight different aspects of oppression. For example, in Banks’ *Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education*, Banks spends considerable time on such topics as the content of curriculum, how culture is implicit in knowledge, the methods teachers can adopt to be culturally relevant to their students, the reduction of prejudice, and promoting a school climate that is equitable for all students.

Conversely, queer educators explore the impact of these practices (i.e. lack of content integration, the promotion of prejudice within education, etc.) on the identities of students and educators. For example, McCready (2010) shows how such inclusive practices such as having a Gay-Straight Alliance may not be advantageous for some students; in this case, African-American, gay students. By examining how policies and practices affects various intersectional identities, queer educators add to the conversation brought forth by multicultural educators. In other words, the policies and practices espoused by multicultural educators must be grounded in the lived experiences of those impacted the most. Knowing that systems of oppression operate is one step in removing those obstacles, but it must be married with knowledge on how marginalized populations inhabit a particular space. Since power is omnipresent, it is not enough to create a taxonomy for educators, researchers and educators must continually shift and alter their agenda based on the experiences in which they find themselves.

Fitch (2003), in his work on students receiving special education services, traverses the landscape of ideology and identity. Fitch (2003) notes that “ideology works in and
through individuals, that one acquires subject positions and constructs a sense of self through signifying practices and ideologically structured acts (p. 247). Fitch continues, identity is both ideological and yet rooted in the day-to-day dynamic process of language, within the speech act. Since personal identity is always constructed in conversation (dialogue), identity is understood to change from conversation to conversation, from speech act to speech act” (p. 247).

As such, changing practices, whether they be pedagogical or educational policy, is only part of the equation. To attain a reading on how these policies and practices interact with various identity formations, theorists and researchers need to take into account the lived experiences of those people impacted by those practices and policies as Blackburn (2002/2003), McCready (2010), and Kumashiro (1999, 2001, 2009) have done in their research utilizing queer theory.

All three of these researchers, as well as others, contend that it is not solely the world that makes the object, but the subject makes the world as well. Fitch (2003), as informed by Butler (1999) and Putman (1987), states, “This orientation is a rejection of the dichotomy between “objective” and “subjective” or the “mind/world” dualism. It is the metaphorical view that the self and the world are reciprocally constructed” (p. 248).

To reiterate, the multiculturalists attention to systems of oppression is paramount to understanding how those systems work. In conjunction with these readings, queer theorists consider how students are longer mere objects in a game of power, but also
how they can become subjects by creating new narratives of their lives by queering or reinscribing existing scripts; thereby, contorting existing forms of domination.

As an example, counter storytelling, a popular and useful tool among multiculturalists and critical race theorists (see Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), provides visibility and new spaces for diverse identities within education. It is reminiscent of Banks’ work on content integration. That is, counter storytelling allows voices of marginalized populations into the conversation of education—a powerful instrument in the fight for social justice. However, if not done properly, counter storytelling can reify an existing schema of “us and them.” Counter storytelling, if used properly, goes beyond that reification; insofar as, it can have a transformative effect for marginalized and non-marginalized populations. Therefore, what I attempt to discuss in this chapter, are the ways that queer theory can ensure multicultural tools are not overly simplified to create a false binary of “us and them.” Queering acknowledges the historical, material, and contemporary aspects of power, but it acknowledges the role of the “doer” as well. This acknowledgement allows for agency rather than determinism. For it is in the space of the “doer” that the object becomes the subject. Or, as Butler (1990) more eloquently states, “the doer is variably constructed in and through the deed” (p. 195), with the “deed” being informed by material and ideological constraints, but also by the subject being able to write a new scripts when given opportunity and training to read how social relations in(dis)inform bodies.
**Overview**
There are several ways of getting at theory. Researchers may use theory as an a priori instrument by which they deductively explain an empirically observed phenomenon, as seen often in positivist research (e.g. experimental research). Other researchers may use theory inductively to explain a phenomenon of interest as often seen in qualitative research (e.g. grounded theory). And, yet, still another more queer way to use theory, and the method by which I more closely align myself within this project, is to see the historical, political, and contested nature of knowing, and theorizing; thereby, inductively expanding a theoretical construct or way of knowing within a zeitgeist of deductive reasoning. Queer theory allows me to problematize taken-for-granted assumptions posited by inductive and deductive theoretical models. Additionally, and at a meta-level, by using queer theory I seek to define my use of theory, what work it does in the social body (in this case vis-à-vis social research), and under what regimes of practice regulates its use.

Borrowing from Foucault and his work on authorship, theory like authorship itself relies heavily on the context in which it is uttered. Foucault (1969/1994) notes, “discourses are objects of appropriation” (p. 382). That is, discourse, of which theory is dependent on, and subsumed under particular “games of truth” (Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 289). As such, theories are malleable constructs, (not)easily appropriated through various networks of power and knowledge.

Moreover, and again borrowing from Foucault’s work on authorship, like a theory,
[t]he author is not an indefinite source of significations that fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which impedes free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition decomposition, and recomposition of fiction” (p. 390).

A theory, too, does not deductively nor inductively explain a phenomenon through its process of signification. Rather a theory, like an author, is dis/informed by the scientific norms of a particular time and place. Theories regulate and create what people can as knowable knowledge. Moreover, the theory itself is but a vessel of the phenomenon it is seeking to explain. The theory is not solely explaining the phenomenon; the phenomenon is explaining and creating the theory. The phenomenon explains and creates the researcher as well. I explain this further in my discussion of queer theory’s work on the lack of a prediscursive “I” later in this chapter.

As I posit an interpretation of queer theory, not the interpretation of queer theory, it is with this understanding of theory itself and the work it does in a society. In short, my deployment of theory is not to elucidate some a priori assumptions about the workings of the social world. Rather, it is to use theory as a project by which to tease out different aspects of the social body in hopes of creating more socially just practices for educators, researchers, theorists, and activists.
Prior to delving into a theoretical framework, I should mention my use of intersectionality in this section. While I discuss intersectionality as a methodology in the following chapter of this dissertation, I briefly reference it in this chapter as well. Since “intersectionality is inevitably disruptively queer…queer must be analytically intersectional” (Rahman, 2010, p. 956). There is interconnectedness between theory and methodology, and though separated into two chapters in this dissertation, I make note of their interconnectedness in practice.

To proffer a queer theoretical framework, this chapter begins with a political consideration of queerness, which I then follow with a brief queer history. These first two sections of the chapter undergird my positioning of queer theory, the final section of this chapter. I precede that final section on queer theory with a short review of its epistemological underpinnings — constructionism.

**Queer Political Attributes**

The fight for gay equality has taken different routes in its demand for social change. But, according to Duggan (2002),

> Although the fight for gay equality has since the emergence of the homophile movement in the 1950s been rocked by internal conflict over assimilationists versus confrontational tactics, the overall goals and directions of change have been relatively consistent: the expansion of a right to sexual privacy against the intrusive, investigatory labeling powers of the state, and the simultaneous expansion of gay public life through institution building and publicity (p. 180).
In conjunction with Duggan’s comments, my study paradoxically attempts to problematize the labeling power of the state, in this case through schools, while at the same time provide greater access to citizenry through public institutions and discourse.

With this premise set, at one end of the spectrum are the assimilationists; those homonormative subjects such as Andrew Sullivan who posit an agenda that supports norms of Western society, without challenging racism, classism, and sexism among other systems of oppression (Duggan, 2002). In exchange for their tacit agreement to a neoliberal ideology, lesbians, and gays are able to assimilate into larger society through such institutions as marriage, adoption rights, and the military, while the state provides protection for some through political and legal measures (e.g. hate crime laws).

Queers residing within the middle of the spectrum can lean towards a gay perspective or a post-queer perspective. Kenji Yoshino (2006) provides a queer voice for this point of view. While he favors gay marriage and the right for lesbians and gays to openly serve in the military, Yoshino contends that these acts are in themselves ways to queer heterosexist institutions and practices. Moreover, queer activists (e.g. Queer Nation, ACT UP) have utilized an oppositional strategy as a way to create change in institutions, but they do not challenge the existence of the institutions themselves, since as Heckert (2010) contends, “[o]ppositional politics is based upon the same terms as that which it opposes. Thus it serves to maintain the definition of the situation imposed by its opposition” (as quoted in Jeppesen, 2010, p. 475).
To clarify, assimilationists seek legal and institutional recognition for lesbians and gays as a way to bring some into the larger, neoliberal fold and work within existing legal and political structures. Conversely, queers see legal and institutional recognition as a way to change prohibitive structures in society. Queer activists may work in opposition to legal and political structures; but, in their actions, may inadvertently maintain those structures.

There is a third position, what I call a post-queer position. This position includes such authors as José Esteban Muñoz, Jane Ward, Michael Warner, Martin Manalansan IV, and Jasbir Puar among others. Here there is a demand to queer all practices of normalization including marriage, military service, state sanctioned kinships, heterosexuality, capital, racism, sexism, and other systems of oppression. Post-queers see the abolition, or at least the radical transformation, of these institutions and practices as the only way to eliminate the normalizing gaze and the inevitable inequitable practices of a capitalist society.

To explain these three spectral points further, I examine each of their political and tactical attributes. I note that there is considerable overlap and intermingling among these three positions though there are some very real distinctions as well. Table 2.1 is a guide rather than an unmoving demarcation of political constituencies and practices.

Assimilationists, or “gays,” focus on assimilation into the dominant society. That is, they seek to be part of the social body as it stands now without altering it, with the exception
of their inclusion into it. There is a binary worldview emphasizing “us and them.” Society positions “us and them” as a construct through the deployment of other binaries such as Black/White, gender conforming/gender non-conforming, private/public, straight/gay, male/female, or a host of other normative and corporeal binaries that regulate bodies into unequal discourses throughout the social body. “Gays”

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<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
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<td>Assimilation/Transformation</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
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<td>**Epistemology/</td>
<td>Humanist/biological</td>
<td>Humanist/post-modern bio/social</td>
<td>Post-modern/social construction</td>
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<td><strong>Tactic</strong></td>
<td>Within existing structures</td>
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<td><strong>Area of interest</strong></td>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Sexuality, gender, sex</td>
<td>All forms of domination</td>
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<td><strong>Area of critique</strong></td>
<td>Heteronormativity/homophobia</td>
<td>Heteronormativity</td>
<td>Homo-normativity (heteronormativity)</td>
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<td><strong>Locus of control</strong></td>
<td>Legal and political</td>
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Table 2.1. LGBTQ engagement with inequality

normally work within the existing legal and political structures to deal with issues of representation in the dominant society. One concern over this approach is that it does not acknowledge other systems of oppression. Moreover, it portends that the gay movement is a monolithic entity; as a result, this point of view negates the inherent
diversity of queer communities leading its power base in the hands most like the dominant society (e.g. gay, White, gender conforming, middle-class men).

The next queer spectral point also adopts a binary worldview, but assimilation is not on the agenda. Instead, there is a demand for public acknowledgement of queer existence and the social body must change to allow for queer spaces. An example of this confrontational tactic can be seen in the “‘Kiss-ins where groups of gay couples invade straight bars or other public spaces and scandalously make out’” (Hennessy as quoted in Jeppesen, 2010, p. 464). Kiss-ins is an attempt to make public spaces “counterpublic by their conflict with the norms and conflicts of their cultural environment” (Warner, as quoted in Jeppesen, p. 465). One of the dangers of this approach is that it can reify existing stereotypes or appear as though queers simply want a “gay” version of heteronormative lifestyle (e.g. to hold hands while shopping in a suburban shopping mall). Queers “counter” approach works from the outside and focuses on normative projects in addition to legal and political projects as previously seen with “gays.” Queers challenge the composition of existing structures, but they do not challenge their very existence. A concern with a queer approach is that it favors a single-issue approach to equality, and sees heteronormativity as “temporally and spatially stable, uninflccted, and transparent” (Puar, 2006, p. 71).

Post-queers seek to disrupt both heteronormativity and homonormativity by queering normative and material spaces beyond those that revolve around issues of sexuality.
The post-queer approach represents multiple identities (e.g. race, class, gender, ability, among others), often overlooked by large national gay and lesbian organizations (Richardson, 2005; Ward, 2008). Post-queers also acknowledge the “interlocking” nature of systems of oppression, and its dispersal throughout the entire social body beyond areas of sexuality. One concern theorists have with the practices in the post-queer camp is that its resources can diffuse as they work across multiple axes, increasing the likelihood of intragroup conflict (Chang & Culp, 2002/2003). To further explore these three spectral points in the LGBTQ community I turn to “mainstream” historical moments that helped create them.

**Historical Moments**
LGBTQ people have been engaging heterosexism even before Carl Westphal deployed homosexuality as a medical term in the middle part of the 19th (Foucault, 1978/1990).¹ For example, the Molly Houses in 18th century England provided a bar-like space for gay men and cross-dressers to socialize with one another (Jagose, 1996; Williams, 1986). These seemingly benign spaces, sometimes seen as nothing more than a place to “hook up,” can be seen as the beginnings of a modern LGBTQ community. Though not explicitly political, these forerunners of the modern day gay bar provided spaces for those with similar identities to come together, which signified the beginning of group affiliation.

It would not be until the 1950s, that “the political strategies of a minority group seeking tolerance from the heterosexual majority” would be undertaken by the Daughters of
Bilitis and the Mantachie Society among other “homophile” and lesbian organizations (Richardson, 2005, p. 515; see also Rosenfeld, 2009). It was during this period that activists engaged heterosexism, though not even a concept yet, through a practice of normalization. Their concern was not over marriage rights, legal protection, military service, or any other modern day homonormative concern. Instead, early activists sought to eliminate homosexuality as a psychological pathology so others would see them as “normal people” (Richardson, 2005, p. 516).

Epistemologically, it was a tacit acknowledgement of the “heterosexual/homosexual binary” (Rosenfeld, 2009). It was a binary that demanded a “normal and abnormal, secrecy and disclosure, [and a] public and private” (Valocchi, 2005) worldview within the social body. It was this use of binaries that situated the queer community as a marginalized, “other” community; ironically, it was the use of this binary tactic that created space for political action to take place as a way to resist its marginalized status.

In contrast, from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, LGBTQ activists utilized a liberation model to engage heterosexism. Though still embroiled within a binary worldview, these activists were no longer concerned about acquiescing to the demands of the larger society; they sought societal, normative, and political change (Warner, 1993). As the riots at Stonewall Inn demonstrated, and people like the “‘Grand Dame” of transgender activism Sylvia Rivera demanded, harassment and erasure were no longer an accepted form of living (Sheppard, 2008). One way to usurp the national heterosexist agenda was by “coming out.” Rather than appeasing societal demands for “passing or covering”
(Yoshino, 2006) one’s sexuality, queers during this period “outed” themselves and sometimes others if politically expedient. This practice not only sought to give voice to the voiceless, it demanded that queer bodies be part of the political conversation.

In a devolutionary shift, the 1990s brought with it a return to assimilatory politics within the “mainstream” LGBTQ community. Though different from its 1950s counterpart, this iteration focused on a politics of normalization as did its homophile predecessors, but it also focused on individual rights “rather than ‘gay rights’ and ...[sought] ‘equality’ with rather than tolerance from, the mainstream” (Richardson, 2005, p. 516). It is within this milieu that the homonormative subject was born.

Overall, since the 1950s LGBTQ movements have shifted their focus from a politics of de-pathologization and tolerance from dominant society to a focus on liberation, group rights and societal transformation; and, more recently, to a demand for equal rights, individual rights, and assimilation. While each period addresses heterosexism in its own particular way; significantly, LGBTQ movements have failed to alter heterosexism as a whole. This is not to say researchers, activists, and others have not made significant changes in U.S. society; benefits have been bestowed upon certain LGBTQ people usually those that are White, middle-class, gender conforming. Unfortunately, “other” queers (i.e. gender non-conforming queers, queers of color, and queers with disabilities, etc.) have remained in the shadows of these so-called advancements. In other words, as the U.S. has begun to assimilate some LGBTQ people into its system of capital, war, consumerism, privacy, and individuality in exchange for institutional and legal rights and
protections, the vast majority of LGBTQ people have remained on the margins of society. With this reading of the political and historical context of LGBTQ personhood, I turn now to the epistemological aspects of queer theory.

**Epistemological Underpinnings of Queer Theory**

Queer theory, as I anchor it in intersectionality, not only examines the interlocking nature of identity categories (e.g. race, class, sexuality, gender, sex, ability, etc.), their engagement with co-constitutive systems of oppression (e.g. racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism, ableism, lookism, lookism, ageism, etc.), but, and with a nod to Bovè (see St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485), it also seeks to imagine how those identities function, how they get produced and regulated, and what their effects are in the social body.

Additionally, post-queer intersectionality is not concerned with creating an oppositional narrative to dominant discourse, though it is anti-assimilationist in scope, post-queer intersectionality research concerns itself with working in, through, and around existing societal discourse to create a more socially just world (Muñoz, 1999). This working in, through, and around societal discourses may take the form of critique, deconstruction, parody, carnival, or the transgression of normalizing regulatory practices within the social body (Agathangelou, A., Bassichis, D., & Spira, T., 2008; Butler, 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Jagose, 1996; Jeppesen, 2010; Manalsan IV, 2005; Puar, 2005, 2006; Rahman, 2010; Sullivan, 2007; Ward, 2006).

With this in mind, I examine the epistemological underpinnings of queer theory and provide a reading of queer theory itself as I understand it through the projects of
performativity, intersectionality, and resistance. These three projects help anchor my use of queer theory in this study. Though I anchor queer theory in this manner, readers should not see this as a holistic, exhaustive account of queer theory. Instead, I provide one perspective in a vast field. With this caveat noted, I begin with a brief examination of queer theory’s epistemological underpinnings — constructionism.

**Constructionism.**
Epistemology “deals with ‘the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis’” (Hamlyn as quoted in Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Just as there are theories on the workings of the natural and social world(s), there are theories on the workings of knowledge. In this section, I explore constructionism as one such epistemology. The focus on constructionism is due to its relevance in qualitative research and as its influence on post-structuralism, queer theory, and intersectionality — three projects I use in this project.

Constructionism, and its theoretical descendent post-structuralism, is a reaction to, and an engagement of, humanism. For constructionists, Crotty (1998) states:

> There is no objective truth...Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world....Meaning is not discovered, but constructed...different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon...subject and object emerges as partners in the generation of meanings (p. 9; see also Sullivan, 2007).
This is quite different from the claims of humanists. Humanists see “‘a stable, coherent self’; that ‘reason and its science’ — philosophy — can provide an objective, reliable, and universal foundation of knowledge” (Flax as quoted in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 480). These epistemological differences are critical in imagining the subject (identity), power, and inequities among many other projects. These topics not only highlight some of the interests of qualitative researchers they provide a vehicle by which to further articulate the fuzzy relationships between humanism and constructionism.

**The subject.**

For constructionist, the subject is not a predetermined, prediscursive “I” unfettered by the social world (Butler, 1990; St. Pierre, 2000; Sullivan, 2007). Instead, constructivists see the subject simultaneously constructing, and being constructed by, the object (Crotty, 1998). This co-constitutive process leaves the subject in a constant state of flux; though it may appear stable. If the subject is in constant flux then there can be no essentialized project for social researchers to get at in their research. Instead, the researchers, particularly from a post-structural, queer, or a post-intersectional position will instead seek to examine the processes that inform the subject and their identities. This stands in contrast to the humanist pursuit of unearthing some hidden essence or “truth.”

To highlight this idea, Foucault (1984/1997) suggests that a “game of truth” (p. 289) provides an illusion of stability and concreteness through different epistemes that produce historically and spatially contingent discourses and subjects. Therefore, a
“game of truth” from a humanist inspired episteme falsely renders a natural, predictable, scientifically knowable subject; a subject that scientists can measure and evaluate, and control chiefly through positivist practices.

A comingling of subject and object informs the subject’s subjectivities as well. By subjectivity, I continue with a Foucauldian frame, which posits that a host of multifarious power relations, as negotiated through institutions (e.g. schools, military, prisons, hospitals, etc.) and their regimes of practices, discourses (social sciences, natural sciences, medicine, psychotherapy, etc.), communities, and so forth inscribes a subject’s body and provides an overall sense of self. This leaves the subject bounded, yet paradoxically agential, in their lived experiences (Foucault, 1970, 1977/1995, 1978/1990, 1983/1991). As Foucault (1976/1980) states, “the individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, …it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle” (p. 98).

If a subject is separate from their social world, à la humanist thinking, the subject controls and dominates their natural and social worlds in an effort to evolve to a definitive end. Constructionists, on the other hand, noting the interconnectedness of the external and internal spheres see a subject that is bounded by social forces, yet agential (see Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1978/2007; Muñoz, 1999, among others).

Constructionists provide an alternative to a humanist view, which centers on their claim that there is an essentialized “I” separate from the body and the outside world.
Humanism, through this conceptualization of the subject, demands researchers to “observe it, study it, [and] make predictions” about the external world (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 500). As a result, humanism negates the comingling of the subject and the object, and ignores the circuitous project of power, the topic I turn to next.

**Power.**

For humanists power is top-down, hierarchical, and exercised by human subjects onto disparate objects, and other, lesser subjects. As an example of this configuration, theorists see power in the colonizing pursuits of Western Europe from the 1500s onward. Under the guise of a “civilizing” discourse, Westerners used their physical, technological, cultural, and epistemological force to exploit large chunks of the world (see Mbembe, 2001; Said, 1978; Thiong’o, 1993; Willinsky, J. 1998). Cartesian dualism, and its advancement of binaries, provided the intellectual and “ethical” justification for its use of power not only against those outside the Western world, but for those “others” inside the Western walls as well. I delve deeper into this matter in the next section on inequities. For now, it is important to see that humanists’ view of power substantially differs from constructionists’ view of power. For a constructionist view, I turn once more to Foucault.

First, Foucault historically sets power as a relational construct dependent on “an entire series of discursive and political strategies” (Halperin, 1995, p. 40). It is within these strategies that various attributes of power emerge. First, in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault (1978/1990) states, “power is not something that is acquired,
seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points” (p. 94). Foucault insists power, though omnipresent, is not necessarily hierarchical, although sometimes it can appear in that form.

For example, in Foucault’s explanation of biopower, he notes (1978/1990) that biopower “focus[es] on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of biological processes: propagation, births and morality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions than can cause these to vary” (p. 139). Medicine, prisons, science, and schools play into the management of a population with each project having particular power relationships with subjects, none of which is solely hierarchical. Rather, power/knowledge discourses influence these power relations.

Second, Foucault (1978/1990) explains that “relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relations (e.g. economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter; they are the internal conditions of these differentiations” (p. 94). Here Foucault considers the productive nature of power. Power is not imposed on processes as an external force; rather processes (e.g. economics, education, sexuality) themselves produce power.

In Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison Foucault (1977/1995) explains how Bentham’s panopticon created a relationship by which the guards were not exercising
power over the prison inmates; instead, the panopticon itself provided a disciplinary technique of power in which prisoners were the ones regulating themselves. By not knowing whether the guards in the panopticon were surveiling them or not, the prisoners would theoretically, through a process of self-regulation, alter their behaviors in an attempt to avoid punishment. Bentham’s panopticon demonstrates a vengeful despot was not the one exercising power onto the prisoners; rather the process of incarceration created the power dynamic of self-regulation. A power/knowledge couplet, rendered visible through a binary episteme created the process of incarceration, and, subsequently, the panopticon itself.

Third, “power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 94). This does not mean that hierarchical power does not exist; but rather top-down practices are a result of different discourses and epistemes, which the social body creates from various points of power within the social body.

For example, when security forces removed queers of color and working-class queers from the Christopher Street Piers in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Manalansan IV, 2005) the power used by security forces may have seen hierarchical, or top-down, but rather the expression of power was from a variety of discourses, in this case heteronormativity and homonormativity. That is, the gentrification of the area by homonormative subjects, as rendered visible via a heteronormative discourse, overtook the area by building new condominiums, raising rents, and creating a well-manicured
space. These processes of power were much more subtle than overt security forces, but just as effective in ridding the area of the unwanted vogueing queers. Consequently, if researchers solely investigated the removal of queers of color by security forces they would miss the underlying systems of oppression (e.g. heteronormativity and homonormativity) that allowed that more explicit expulsion to take place. The security forces were an afterthought. That is, the systems of oppression (i.e. hetero- and homonormativity) anteriorly displaced the youth from the Christopher Street Piers long before security forces ever arrived. This is just one example of how a society can use non-hierarchical forms of power on “others.”

While there are many other aspects to power these points highlight some key attributes associated with constructionists and humanists. This will have a powerful impact on how to deal with inequalities within the social body.

**Inequality.**

Inequality from a humanist project situates itself through a lens of “us and them,” the dominator and the dominated, the marked and the unmarked, the majority and the minority, and the privileged and the marginalized as is often seen in discussions of racism, heterosexism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, and so forth. As Halperin (1995) notes,

The heterosexual/homosexual binarism is itself a homophobic production, just as the man/woman binarism is a sexist production [same can be said for
Black/White, able-bodied/disable bodied, rich/poor, masculine/feminine, etc.). Each consists of two terms, the first of which is unmarked and unproblematized—it designates “the categories to which everyone is assumed to belong” (unless someone is specifically marked as different)—whereas the second term is marked and problematized: it designates a category of persons whom *something differentiates* from normal, unmarked people. The marked (or queer) term ultimately functions not as a means of denoting a real or determinate class of persons but as a means of delimiting and defining—by negation and opposition—the unmarked term. (p. 44).

Therefore, the work of *binarism* is to buttress and sustain the unmarked norm. Without the homosexual there would be no heterosexual. It is out of this project of *binarisms* that a humanist imagining of systems of oppression arose in the West.

Looking back, it was Descartes ideas on Cartesian dualism that posited a break between the mind and the body, with the former being the controller of the latter. This resulted in “Descartes defin[ing] everything that is not subject as object” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 500). This break between the subject and object situated a modern day duality in which societies normalized binaries. The ramifications of which are still felt to this day.

It was during this classical period in the 17th century that scientists also began to classify things/objects based on representation rather than similarities (Foucault, 1970.) That is, scientists started using the abstractions of identity and difference to place various
objects into categories resulting in a universalizing science of ordering. What started out in the natural sciences quickly entered the social sciences through such technologies as statistics, census data, and demographics, inter alia leading to different discourses (e.g. medical, education, psychoanalysis, and juridical) being executed through institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools, courts) resulting in a promulgation of the Cartesian dualism throughout the entire social body (Foucault, 1978/1994).

To deal with the issue of inequities within the social body one post-structuralist move is to deconstruct categories of difference in an effort to ameliorate their deleterious effects on the social body. According Derrida, by way of St. Pierre (2000), “Deconstruction is a critical practice that aims to ‘dismantle the metaphysical and theoretical structures which are at work, not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way’” (p. 482). What may get overlooked is the affirmative practice of deconstruction. That is, to deconstruct a project is not to eliminate its existence, or deny the materiality of its importance, rather it is to reconfigure those structures as a way to de/(re)emphasize those differences that lead to inequities throughout the social body (Sullivan, 2007). Other queer projects of dismantling the work of binarism and by default inequality include parody (e.g. Fusco & Gómez-Peña’s performance piece Two Undiscovered Amerindians), carnival (e.g. Folsom Street Fair), and transgression (e.g. body modification), with each of these projects having their own elaborations within the literature, but these elaborations are beyond the scope of this study.
This brief overview of humanism in relation to constructionism, as seen through a post-structuralism perspective, highlights the fuzzy relationship between the two projects. Concerning the human subject, humanists see the subject as ahistorical, permanent and seeking to control the external world in which they find themselves. In contrast, constructionists see the subject as a continual process of construction across and through the external world. Referencing power, humanists see the human mind exercising a hierarchical power onto objects and lesser subjects. Post-structuralist see power emanating from innumerable points within the social body. Power may appear top-down when in fact it informs, and is informed by, discourses throughout the social body. Finally, humanism has played a critical role in the development of identity and difference through the work of Cartesian dualism. Humanists, by separating the mind from the body, the subject from the object, allowed for the promulgation of an “other” —an “other” that is inferior, marginalized and subordinated through different technologies in the social body (Butler, 1990). Constructionists seek to expose this project through such practices as deconstruction inter alia. Finally, noting that post-structuralism is a part of a constructionist project it cannot escape humanism since it is a response to, and implicated in, a humanist discourse (St Pierre, 2000). Therefore, to situate these two projects solely in opposition to each other would be a misnomer. Next, I turn to queer theory as a theoretical construct emanating from its epistemological underpinnings of constructionism.
**Queer Theory**
As an offshoot of post-structuralism, theorists note the difficulty in defining queer theory. According to Jagose (1996), “...part of queer’s semantic clout, part of its political efficacy, depends on its resistance to definition...” (p. 1). Despite this issue of definability, I begin by quoting at length some attributes of queer theory. Following this definitional exploration, I interrogate three projects as they relate to queer theory as a way to ground queer theory in its practice and its potential. The three projects are performativity, post-queer intersectionality, and resistance.

“Queer theory is a plea for massive transgression of all conventional categorizations and analyses...breaking the boundaries around gender/the erotic/the interpersonal, and a plea for dissidence” (Stein & Plummer, 1994, p. 182). Concomitantly, queer theory is about queering all regimes of practice that seek to normalize binary practices and the inequities that follow that practice. This may include queering such projects as race and class (Muñoz, 1999; Rahman, 2010; Ward, 2006), migration (Manalansan IV, 2006), consumerism (Agathangelou, A., Bassichis, D., & Spira, T., 2008; Jeppesen, 2010), nationalism (Puar, 2002, 2005 & 2006), and geography (Manalansan IV, 2005; Oswin, 2008) among many others. In short, queer theory, though often situated within the context of sexuality, gender, and sex, seeks to problematize all practices of normalization (Sullivan, 2007).

Stein and Plummer (1994) highlight four “hallmarks” of queer theory:
1) [It is the] conceptualization of sexuality which sees sexual power embodied in
different levels of social life, expressed discursively and enforced through
boundaries and binary divides... 2) [It is] the problematization of sexual and
gender categories, and of identities in general...3) [It is] a rejection of civil rights
strategies in favor of a politics of carnival, transgression, and parody which leads
to deconstruction, decentering revisionist readings, and an anti-assimilationist
politics; 4) [It is] a willingness to interrogate areas which normally would be seen
as the terrain of sexuality, and to produce queer “readings” of ostensibly
heterosexual or nonsexualized text (p. 182).

Each hallmark is not without its detractors, nor do these hallmarks suggest a cohesive,
stable definition of queer theory. To co-opt a line from LaMiranda in the film Stonewall,
there are as many stories about queer theory “as there are gay queens in New York, and
that’s a shitload of stories, baby” (as quoted in Sullivan, 2007, p. 26).

To give one such example, one of these “hallmarks” gives the appearance of a complete
annihilation of identity categories as a strategy for queer theorists. No doubt, this
utopian view may be a way to circumvent the inequities that exist due to socially
constructed identities, but queer theorists are aware of the necessity of identities in our
current political and social world.

As Butler (1993b) notes concerning the identity category of queer, “If identity is a
necessary error, then the assertion of ‘queer’ will be incontrovertibly necessary, but that
assertion will constitute only one part of ‘politics’. ... It is equally necessary ... to affirm the contingency of the term” (p. 21). That is, queer theorists can deconstruct and historicize identity categories as a way to ascertain their normalizing work within the social body. It must not be an unexamined term. For Butler what is important is not to debate the merits of identity categories, rather it is to imagine the processes that went into creating the categories themselves (Oswin 2008). This is quite different from the categorical claims made by Green (2007) that the goal of queer theory is “dismantle” identities of their meaning. To buttress these opening remarks on defining a queer theory I turn to three key projects of queer theory — performativity, queer intersectionality and resistance.

**Performativity.**
Performativity, as Butler posits, “is the pre-condition of the subject, the discursive vehicle through which ontological effects are produced. There is not first an ‘I’ who performs, rather, the ‘I’ is constituted in and through performative process” (Sullivan, 2007, p. 89). Identity is a reiteration of norms discursively produced through matrixes of power within the social body producing a naturalized state where in fact there is none (Butler, 1990, 1993a, 1993b).

Butler (1993b) writes:

Where there is an “I” who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that “I” and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will. Thus, there is no “I” who
stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will through discourse. On the contrary, the “I” only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated...and this discursive constitution takes place prior to the “I” (p. 18).

As demonstrated in this quote from Butler there is no prediscursive “I;” furthermore, that “I” is an engagement of a reiteration of norms. For example,

...gay is to straight not as a copy to the original, but, rather as copy is to copy.
The parodic repetition of ‘the original,’ ...reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original” (Butler, 1990, p. 43).

Therefore, even the unmarked heterosexual is not an original by which homosexuality is marked as an aberration. No, instead, heterosexuality itself is an aberration; an aberration naturalized through the reiteration of an idea via matrixes of power as fueled by discourse, which constitutes the original idea.

This, then, proves problematic for those researchers who see the subject as ahistorical and removed from the social context of their environment. Butler and queer theorists in general, argue just the opposite; that in fact, the subject is but a reiteration of societal norms wholly contingent on a particular space, time, episteme, and matrixes of power relations within the social body.

To look at performativity from another angle Butler (1990) writes about a “heterosexual matrix” (later reworked as “heterosexual hegemony,”1993a; see also Rich, 1980). The
heterosexual matrix is “the institution of a compulsory and a naturalized heterosexuality [which] requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire” (Butler, 1990, p.31). The heterosexual and homosexual subjects are not naturalized entities; rather they are a discursive result of the “heterosexual matrix.” A “heterosexual matrix,” is due to a particular configuration of norms and practices that society subsequently inscribes upon bodies. These normative practices regulate bodies to perform in ways that parallel that matrix. Under this articulation of performativity, one would say “I am doing gayness,” rather than “I am gay.” The ontological consequences of this shift are substantial for researchers concerned with issues of identity and equality. If subjects performatively produce their identities, albeit under regulatory regimes of practice, then there are also gaps and fissures within the preceding matrix of power, which one can usurp, negotiate, or queer to alter performativity, identities, and systems of oppression.

**Post-queer Intersectionality.**
Though issues of identity, particularly from 1st and 2nd wave feminists, seems to run counter to a queer reading of identity, most feminist theorists today note the social construction of identities, their malleability, fluidness and instability (Ehrenreich, 2002/2003; Ken, 2008; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006/2009, among others). This results in a retiring of the politics of identity debates of the 1980s and 1990s in favor of targeting researchers’ attention onto other topics including how identities and systems
of oppression inform and engage one another. It is within this area that real differences continue to play out from the halls of the academy to activists on the streets.

Queer theorists, rightfully so, have been accused of not considering the voices of working-class queers and queers of color among others (Butler, 1993b; Cohen, 1997; Sullivan, 2007; Warner, 1993). Queer theory has been seen as a vehicle for middle-class, gay, White men. Critics suggest queer theorists only problematize identity categories without consideration of their diversity, or their political and legal value across various groups. As Cohen (1997) writes:

...I am still not interested in disassociating from those [marginalized] communities, for queerness, as it is currently constructed, [queerness] offers no viable political alternative, since it invites us to put forth a political agenda that makes invisible the prominence of race, class, and to varying degrees gender in determining the life changes of those on both sides of the hetero/queer divide. (p. 450).

Conversely, queer theorists argue that by deconstructing identity categories, queer theorists are able to further complicate identity categories, the power relations that embolden them and what work they do, or do not do, in reifying systems of oppression. Butler (1993b) states:

[A]s it is necessary to assert political demands through recourse to identity categories, and to lay claim to the power to name oneself and determine the
conditions under which that name is used, it is also impossible to sustain that
type of mastery over the trajectory of those categories within discourse...[this] is a reminder of the risk that attends every such use. The expectation of self-determination that self-naming arouses, is paradoxically contested by the historicity of the name itself (p. 19).

As a consequence of these concerns presented here by Butler and Cohen, post-queer, intersectionality scholars try to avoid the deterministic qualities of identity categories while simultaneously investigating power relations among marginalized groups not formerly considered within queer theory (Agathangelou, Bassichis, & Spira, 2008; Eng, Halberstam, & Muñoz, 2005; Jeppesen, 2010; Manalansan IV, 2005, 2006; Muñoz, 1999; Puar, 205, 2006; Puar & Rai, 2002; Rahman, 2010; Ward, 2008). These queer intersectionality scholars not only acknowledge the importance of studying the experiences of marginalized communities, they look beyond the politics of identity to imagine how interlocking systems of oppression interact with identities.

In sum, post-queer, intersectionality scholars usurp the binary tensions between intersectionality scholars that see value in identities and queer theorists who seek to deconstruct their edifices. They do so by acknowledging the role of identities in the social body; both as a tool for social justice, especially as seen in coalition activism, and a tool for the investigation of systems of oppression. It is with this reading of post-queer intersectionality that informs resistance.
Resistance.
For post-queer, intersectional scholars, there is a greater purpose to research — that being social justice. For intersectionality scholars, resistance is rooted in the promotion of voice for the voiceless, and eliminating the practice of erasure that is part of the project of subordination in various institutions (e.g. law, education, media, etc.). For queer scholars, social justice is seen using deconstruction, parody, carnival, and transgression as practices that can help ameliorate the harmful effects of categories themselves. These two practices of resistance, perhaps seemingly at odds with one another, provide a nice tension for deeper exploration.

For scholars of intersectionality the underlying premise of intersectionality is to achieve social justice for those subordinated by different systems of oppression (e.g. racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, lookism, etc.). To make this explicit King (1988) eloquently makes the following points about social justice and intersectionality vis-à-vis black women: 1) There must be “visibility for black women” (p. 312). 2) Self-determination is essential. “Black women are empowered with the right to interpret our reality and defined our objectives” (p. 312). 3) We challenge “the interstructure of the oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism both in dominant society and within movements for liberation” (p. 312). 4) Black women are “powerful and independent subjects” (p.312). Or, as The Combahee River Collective (1977/1982) state,
Above all else, our politics initially sprang from the share belief that black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else’s but because of our need as human persons for autonomy” (p. 234).

It is within each of these points that intersectionality explicates a social justice imperative.

Facially, it would appear that intersectionality concerns itself with the promulgation of a voice, particularly within legal and political context. No doubt, this is true and Butler (1993b) has even conceded that there is a “necessary error” of identity (p. 21). But, The Combahee River Collective also states that there is a need for “autonomy.” This fight for autonomy, I argue, takes place along multiple axes for it is not only the political and legal axes of greatest concern to some scholars of intersectionality, this fight for autonomy also has to occur along a normative axis as well. It is along the normative axis that queer theorists spend much of their time.

For example, Butler (1993a) suggests that “performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance”, it is the “forced reiteration of norms”...in which constraints on performativity should be recast “as the very conditions of performativity” (94-95). It would seem then that the agential quality of social existence is no more for Butler, but this is not the case. Instead, Butler
and other queer theorists posit various strategies on how to thwart normalizing regimes of practice within the social body including deconstruction and parody.

Seidman (1995) writes:

Queer theory is less a matter of explaining the repression or expression of a homosexual minority, than an analysis of the hetero/homosexual figure as a power/knowledge regime that shapes the ordering of desires, behaviors, social institutions and social relations — in a word, the constitution of the self and society (as quoted in Sullivan, 2007, p. 51)

Therefore, to deconstruct a term, a sign, a text, a symbol or a practice is not to empty it of its value rather it is to acknowledge its existence, how it came into being, and how theorists and activists can resignify these terms to enact a more just practice in an effort towards greater autonomy.

For example, and with a nod to Derrida, Sullivan (2007) suggests that deconstruction is “a critical response to the humanist belief in absolute essences and oppositions. The idea that heterosexuality is a naturally occurring and fundamental aspect of one’s identity, and moreover, that it is the polar opposite of homosexuality” would be one area in which queer theorists would deconstruct this “humanist ontology” (p. 50). Additionally, as Butler (1993b) states, to deconstruct a term is “to make us consider at what expense and for what purposes the terms are used, and through what relations of power such categories have been wrought” (p. 20). In the end, it is not about
annihilating an identity; it is about imagining their epistemological and ontological existences to ascertain what work they do in the social body. This work is to bring about greater liberation and autonomy of individuals and communities.

Deconstructing a discursive term or practice is but one part of queer theory’s approach to resistance. Theorists, activists and researchers should marry action with a project of deconstruction. Remembering Foucault, Butler (1993b) writes, that “there is no subject who is ‘free’ to stand outside of these norms...What we might call ‘agency’...is produced by the gaps opened up in regulatory norms...[it is] negotiated within a matrix of power” (p. 22). With this reading, activists, radicals, and subversives may use parody as an actionable strategy “to demonstrate the plasticity and groundlessness of identity” (Sullivan, 2007, p. 86), as well as to show gaps within certain matrixes of power relations (Butler, 1993b). Butler cautions that being aware of these regulations is not enough to change or subvert them. Addressing her critics on the role of drag in paroding gender (1993a) writes:

The resignification of norms is thus a function of their inefficacy, and so the question of subversion, of working the weakness in the norm, becomes a matter of inhabiting the practices of its rearticulation. The critical promise of drag does not have to do with the proliferation of genders, as if a sheer increase in numbers would do the job, but rather with the exposure or the failure of heterosexual regimes ever fully to legislate or contain their own ideals...drag
brings into relief...the understanding, taken-for-granted quality of heterosexual performativity (p. 237).

Parody, then, seeks to expose the inner-workings of normalizing regimes of practice that usually go unnoticed by people as normal practices within the material and social world. That is, society situates heterosexuality as a natural state, a biological occurrence unfettered by social practices; parody, through its illumination of the inner-workings of normalizing regimes of practice, reveals this ruse.

In sum, queer theory investigates the normative practices of regulation within the social body. As a critique of humanism, queer theory considers the constructivist nature of subjects. And, that the socially constructed bodies are naturalized through a performative reiteration of societal norms. Norms circulate throughout the social body as a reaction to matrixes of power as fueled by discourse. Within this context, post-queer intersectionality acknowledges the diversity of identities by exploring systems of subordination through the lenses of marginalized communities. Through a practice of deconstruction among others, post-queer, intersectionality theorists, researchers, and activists problematize and investigate the work identity categories do in the social body without eliminating identity categories themselves since that would be an impossibility to begin with. Finally, it takes the marrying of political, legal, and normative resistance to alter the configuration of domination. Therefore, intersectionality and queer theory should not be seen as oppositional forces; rather, the two must work together to
contort the insidiousness of systems of domination and subordination as promulgated within a humanist episteme.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have articulated a queer theory and its usefulness within this study. I began by situating the politics behind queer theory. Since queer theory is difficult to define, its political aspects are important in understanding my use of queer theory. As such, I focus on a post-queer, intersectional perspective in this study. A post-queer intersectional project has the following characteristics among others. 1) Both, identities and systems of oppression are interlocking and mutually constitutive. 2) Societal discourses contribute to the deployment of categories. 3) Normative and material projects inform, and are informed by, identities and systems of oppression. 4) As such, resistance to domination must occur along normative and material axes. 5) Resistance is not in opposition to something, rather resistances must work within and through current power relations; thereby, deconstructing and queering current regimes of domination.

These characteristics align with queer theory’s connectedness to a constructionism epistemological underpinning. That is, queer theory posits a constructivist worldview. It sees value in particularities. Queer theory avoids grand narratives and a overreliance on deductive reasoning.

In the end, what makes queer theory useful in this study is that it works along two levels of interest in this project. First, queer theory allows me as the researcher to highlight
the networks of power that operate in various regimes of practice, or surface activities. This is not to say that there is some hidden essence behind these practices; rather, queer theory puts into relief those normative and material practices that render certain identities hyper-(in)visible. Second, queer theory, using deconstruction, parody, carnival, transgression, and other techniques of resistance provides opportunities for resistance that do not simply reifying existing systems of oppression. The next chapter helps ground these idea(l)s in the realities of research.

Endnotes:
1 See D’Emilio (1992) for a Marxist view of homosexuality; Foucault (1978/90) and Weeks (1977) for a medical interpretation of homosexuality; Williams (1986) for a cultural interpretation of homosexuality.

2 Amid protest, the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 voted to remove homosexuality as a mental disorder from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
Chapter 3

Methodology and Methods: Post-queer Intersectionality

Surfaces and Interstices

Often theorists produce metaphoric renderings of concepts; even though, metaphors often delimit concepts that should remain hazy, mobile, and malleable (Kwan 2002/2003). Crossroads (Crenshaw, 1989), axes (Yuval-Davis, 2006/2009) and a house of cards (Ehrenreich, 2002/2003) are just a few of the metaphors floating along the landscape of intersectionality. Rather than becoming a prisoner of metaphors as I seek to posit a post-queer, intersectional methodology within this study, I deploy post-queer intersectionality as a methodology that works in the spaces between various metaphors and concepts most notably in the function and use of categories. Here are a few examples to help ground my approach to a post-queer intersectionality.

One, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2010) speaks of la mestiza constantly having to shift out of “convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by a movement
away from set patterns and goals and toward[s]...one that includes rather than excludes” (P.255). Anzaldúa continues,

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality...healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives....[it is] a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, on our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war (p. 256).

The post-queer, intersectionality methodology that I set forth in this writing seeks to do the same. That is, by exploring the surfaces (i.e. lived experiences and regimes of practice), as “there are no hidden powers or entities” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 156), I can begin to read the spaces between those surfaces; particularly, as those surfaces engage such projects as categories and their binary attributes of determinism and agency, essentialism and relativism, normativities and materialities, and identities and systems of oppression to name just a few. These readings, grounded in intersectionality and influenced by queer theory, can provide richer interpretations of the practices and policies schools enact to support their students across multiple identity markers including race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and so forth.

Two, a particular methodology serves as a bridge between the theoretical framework and the methods adopted in a research project. According to Crotty (1998), a methodology is a “strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and
use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (p. 3). As such, by reading the spaces in between the surfaces I can begin to address 1. How does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students? 2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion? 3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression?

Three, since post-structuralism, and by default my use of post-queer intersectionality, tends to be anti-methodological (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 156), the positing of intersectionality set forth here is intended as to be seen as faces on a multi-faceted crystal. One that is constantly shifting dependent on the light it encounters, or the reader that engages this study. While I do ground my research on the material aspects of intersectionality, I do this out of the demand of empirical research. Though qualitative in scope, this research project falls within the purview of a positivist regime of scientific norms. As such, I use empirical data as a way to acquiesce to the demands of modern science. But, the materiality of my data should be understood within its own social construction.

Four, as an anchor for this chapter, Bowleg (2008) succinctly states, “…intersectionality researchers are charged with the responsibility of making the intersections between ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation (to name just a few) and the social inequality related to these identities explicit “(p. 322). As I discuss intersectionality as a methodology, Bowleg provides a nice reminder of what intersectionality is and what
intersectionality is not. In this paper, I will articulate how various intersectionality theorists theorize identity, social inequality, and how the two interact through norms, culture, institutions and a host of other regulatory regimes of practice.

I divide this chapter into two main sections to address the methodology and methods I adopted in this study. The first section of this chapter posits a reading of the origins of intersectionality. This will not only reveal how early theorists conceptualized intersectionality and social differences, but also provide a reading of how theorists connect intersectionality to frameworks of social justice. I continue with some general concepts in the field of intersectionality, and I highlight two seminal works as anchor points in my rendering of intersectionality. I conclude this first section with an analysis of the deployment and construction of identity categories and systems of oppression.

In the second section, I ground these idea(l)s by looking at their use in the field. This includes my use of anti-, intra- and intercategorical complexities and the methods I use in this research project including participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis. I follow this with my use of data analysis within this study, and how a post-queer, intersectionality approach informs such research concerns as participant and site selection. I follow this with a discussion of representation, ethics, trustworthiness, and validity when working with diverse populations. Finally, I conclude by highlighting the limitations of this study, as well as issues and problems that emerged during the research process.
**Origin Stories**

While there are many origin stories of how intersectionality came to be, even if not named as such, my focus here is on the experience of African-American women and their origin stories. This is not to dismiss those that have sought to bring awareness to their own identities and cultures including, but not limited to, Gloria Anzaldúa, Homi Bhabha, James Baldwin, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, Frantz Fanon, Jonathan Katz, Uma Narayan, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o among many others. Instead, it is recognition that to articulate a field as vast as intersectionality I need a particular point of entry. Due to the expansive work done by women of color, particularly African-American women, I begin through their lens. Specifically, I will examine the initial need for intersectionality and how, much later during the late second and early third wave of feminism, feminists of color articulated this need for political, social, and legal change in the U.S. I end with a brief overview of intersectionality’s evolution over time.

**The need for intersectionality.**

The initial need for intersectionality came as a response to the lack of African-American women’s involvement in the Seneca Falls Anti-Slavery Convention of 1848, and more generally, to the lack of concern White women aligned with the suffrage movement had about issues of racial justice. Sojourner Truth (1851) presented a speech at the Women’s Rights convention in Akron, Ohio and stated the following:

> Well, children, where there is so much racket, there must be something out of kilter, I think between the Negroes of the South and the women of the
North...That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere/ nobody helps me any best place. And ain’t I a woman?...I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain’t I a woman?... (as quoted in Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 77; Crenshaw, 1989, p. 153).

Sojourner Truth’s statement makes clear that as early as the middle part of the 19th century African-American women were addressing issues of erasure in the political, social, legal, and economic spheres of life in the U.S. An issue the still persists today.

**Late second and early third-wave constructions of identity.**
White feminists saw African-American women as people of color first (i.e. not women), and a liability to their crusade for women’s rights. Around the same time, African-American men expected African-American women to put aside their concerns over gender issues and support The Civil Rights Movement despite its patriarchal nature (Crenshaw, 1989). As a result of this erasure by White women and African-American men “an emergent cohort of feminist in the late seventies and early eighties attempted to dislodge the universalizing tone of early ‘second wave feminism’ by arguing for the intersectionality of sexuality and gender...[and] race and class” (Manalansan IV, 2006, p. 227).

Though Kimberlè Crenshaw would not coin intersectionality until 1989, many other feminists of color used the concept in exploring their own identities (see Beale, 1970;
hooks, 1984; King, 1988; The Combahee River Collective, 1977/1982 among others). In its modern iteration, arising from The Civil Rights Movement, feminist of color have sought legal rights, political representation, and economic security, often from a Marxist perspective (see Beale, 1970; The Combahee River Collective, 1977/1982). However, initially, African-American women sought visibility. It was only through this visibility that legal, political, and economic advancements could begin for those erased in the U.S. Or, as The Combahee River Collective (1977/1982) stated, “Above all else, our politics initially sprang from the share belief that black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else’s but because of our need as human persons for autonomy” (p. 234).

African-American women from late second-wave and early third-wave feminism saw themselves as women but different from White women. African-American feminist also saw themselves as African-American but different from African-American men. African-American women were aware of “the fact that the experiences and struggles of women of colour fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse” (Davis, 2008, p. 68), thereby creating a need for a new, intersectional identity along the two axes of race and gender.

First, considering racial identity, hooks (1984) writes, ”middle-class white women were able to make their interest the primary focus of feminist movement and employ rhetoric of commonality that made either condition synonymous with ‘oppression’” (p. 274). hooks goes on to suggest, that because White women had access to “universities,
publishing houses, mass media, and money” (p. 274), they were able to control the discourse and effectively ignore issues that impacted women of color.

Second considering gender identity, African-American men were suppressing African-American women, as evidenced “in the rates of sexual abuse, physical violence; and in black men assuming the visible leadership positions in many Black social institutions, such as the church, intelligentsia, and political organizations (King, 1988, p. 301). For it was

[d]uring the Civil Rights and black nationalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, men quite effectively used the matriarchy issue to manipulate and coerce black women into maintaining exclusive interests and redefining and narrowing black women’s roles and images in ways to fit a more traditional Western view of women (King, 1988, p. 301-302; see also Ward, 2008, p. 32).

The lack of voice afforded African-American women by White feminist, African-American men, and the larger U.S. society resulted in the need for African-American women to advance intersectionality as a political, legal, and economic project.

**Evolution of intersectionality as a theoretical and political construct.** This new intersectional construct evolved over time. Originally, activists and theorists saw identity as being additive in nature (Beale, 1970), later it came to be understood as multiplicative in nature (King, 1988). Theorists first labeled the additive nature of identity “double jeopardy” (Beale, 1970, p. 146). That is, “to be black and female” (p.
146) places one at risk for subordination on two axes: race and gender. Later, theorists would add a third axis, class, and named it “triple jeopardy” (Lindsay as quoted in King 1988, p. 313). Neither additive concepts addressed how different axes of identity interacted, or what influences they simultaneously had on creating a new identity—an identity that was more than the sum of its parts.

Feminist of color constructed a new way of viewing identity. This new viewpoint called “multiple jeopardy[,]... refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well” (King, 1988, p. 297). To visualize this multiplicative relationship of identities, systems of oppression and their co-construction Ken (2008) uses the metaphor of sugar to explain “how race, class, gender, are produced, used, experienced, and processed...” (p. 152). Concerning identities, Ken suggests, that each ingredient that goes into baking a cookie (flour, sugar, water, butter, etc.) can be seen as a particular, discrete identity (i.e. race, class, gender etc.), with the baker creating a new identity/product once she combines the different identities/ingredients. The sugar that went into making a cookie is no longer sugar; it is something greater. The cookie is more than the sum of its parts. This is not to say the original ingredients are not important. To the contrary, the baker needed all those original ingredients (race, class, gender etc.) to create the final product.

In concert with this multiplicative reading of identity, The Combahee River Collective (1977/1982) notes from a political perspective that “the major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two,
but instead to address a whole range of oppressions” (p. 236). It is with this positioning of oppression and identity that Crenshaw coined the phrase intersectionality within a legal context in 1989.

In sum, and before dissecting the various dimensions and components of intersectionality, I should make explicitly clear one of the primary objectives of intersectionality. Throughout this explanation, the underlying premise of intersectionality was to achieve social justice for those subordinated by different systems of oppression (ex. racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, lookism etc.). To make this explicit King (1988) eloquently makes the following points about social justice and intersectionality: 1) There must be “visibility for black women.” 2) Self-determination is essential. “Black women are empowered with the right to interpret our reality and defined our objectives.” 3) We challenge “the interstructure of the oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism both in dominant society and within movements for liberation.” 4) Black women are “powerful and independent subjects” (p.312). It is within each of these points that intersectionality explicates a social justice imperative.

While King and other early intersectionality scholars focused on the plight of the African-American women, today’s scholars, coming from a diverse background of academic disciplines, social activisms, and marginalized groups, use this framework to advance their own social justice directives. All who fight for social justice stand on the
shoulders of people like Sojourner Truth, bell hooks, Francis Beale, Deborah King, among many others.

**Intersectionality: A Methodological Framework**

Intersectionality, at its heart, seeks to engage and ameliorate the processes of subordination as they interact with various identity categories. Knapp (2005) writes,

> I tend towards a decisively deconstructive view in reflecting on the homogenizing and totalize presuppositions of feminism, but I also find it indispensable to neither lose interest in the diversity of women’s experiences nor to lose sight of the homogenizing and totalizing dimensions ingrained in the material and symbolic conditions of women’s lives within and across sociocultural contexts (p. 253).

Knapp, while personally noting the impermanence of feminist ideas of identity, paradoxically also honors the diversity of womanhood and its material and symbolic reality. Knapp’s work on intersectionality undergirds the following discussions on what encompasses my reading of intersectionality.

Many different interpretations of intersectionality exist in the literature, many replete with metaphors to explain their interpretations. Some intersectional scholars use crossroads (Crenshaw, 1989), axes (Yuval-Davis, 2006/2009), cosynthesis of categories (Kwan, 1996/1997), a house of cards (Ehrenreich, 2002/2003) among many others. To anchor the state of the field today I will highlight Crenshaw’s (1989) intersectionality as
a crossroad and Yuval-Davis’ axes of social division (2006/2009). Crenshaw, in addition to her seminal work in 1989, deals with the construction of structural, political and representational intersectionalities in her 1993 article *Mapping the Margins*. Crenshaw’s two works highlighted here provides the first anchor for positioning intersectionality in its modern iteration.

Yuval-Davis’ (2006/2009) view on axes of social divisions and levels of analysis provides a more recent view of the field. Her article complicates the concept of intersectionality by deconstructing previously taken for granted concepts in the field. Her post-modern writings on the subject provide a second anchor for intersectionality scholars.

Following these two scholars, I delve into greater detail into the topics of identity categories and systems of oppression. Explicitly, I look at how theorists engage identity categories, and what role they play in imagining intersectionality. I follow with an overview on how intersectionality theorists engage systems of oppression. I look at how theorists construct systems of oppression and what work they do for the field of intersectionality. To begin, I provide some general concepts used within the field of intersectionality.

**General concepts in intersectionality.** Though not an exhaustive list, the following concepts and idea(1)s do provide key guiding principles for a reading of intersectionality. First, identities are interdependent and mutually constitutive (Bowleg, 2008; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Nash, 2008; Shields, 2008). The idea that identities are complex constructs that form in relation to
one another negates the idea that identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality exist independent from one another. A Latina, working class lesbian is not just a Latina even if her work life, social life and family life is with those of Latin heritage. She still has cross-cutting identities (being a lesbian, working class, and a woman) within that Latina/o group. Moreover, because of this “cross-pollination” (Anzaldúa, 1987/2010, p. 254) a new form of identity takes hold within the social body. An intersectional identity that still may breathe in domination yet holds the potential to exhale liberation.

Second, and in a similar vein as identity categories, “all systems of domination shape and bolster on another...injustices cannot be separately analyzed or addressed” (Ward, 2008, p. 34; see also Collins, 1990; Ehrenreich, 2002/2003). This key concept becomes vital as well when examining types of actions theorists, activists, and researchers should undertake when tackling systems of oppression. If systems of oppression are “interlocking” (Collins, 1990, p. 222) and mutually constitutive, then addressing one or even two systems of oppression will not suffice. Instead, theorists, activists, and researchers should simultaneously engage all systems of oppressions.

Third, intersectionality “subverts race/gender binaries”, notes intra-group differences and acknowledges the erasure of multiple marginalized groups (Nash, 2008, pp. 3-4). The subversion of race/gender binary, as well as other binarisms, allows theorists to complicate previous activities that were seen as one-dimensional — that is, based on either racial or gender affiliation. Intersectionality also complicates group identity itself. Intersectionality notes the complex, fluid notion of identity. Therefore, intersectionality
does not situate African-American women as one, static entity. Instead, intersectionality recognizes that African-American women have multiple identities such as class, sexuality, ability, appearance, among others (King, 1988; Thorton Dill, 1983/2009; Ward, 2002). These socially defined identities materialize within a particular space and time (Stauntes, 2003; Steinbugler, Press, & Dias, 2006). While there is some debate as to whether or not theorists can use intersectionality to analyze those identities not erased or marginalized, (ex. White, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied men) in general, most work in intersectionality has been a clarion call for social justice for those marginalized and/or erased in society.

Finally, intersectionality refers to both a normative theoretical argument and an approach to conducting empirical research that emphasizes the interaction of categories of difference (Hancock, 2007). As theorists tether intersectionality to social justice projects it seeks to not only conduct research, or create activist driven change, but seeks to create theoretical models by which to center that research and activism.

Though not an exhaustive list of critical concepts in intersectionality, these concepts do provide an overview of the main concepts within the field laying the groundwork to address issues related to the use of identity categories and systems of oppression later in this chapter. These concepts and idea(l)s support the underlying purposes of intersectionality. That is, “Intersectionality researchers argue that simply measuring multiple demographic variables, such as, race, gender, and class is not intersectionality research; rather, it is the goal of the researcher to evaluate the processes involved in
intersecting identities especially as related to...social power and inequity” (Warner, 2008, p. 461 paraphrasing Bowleg, 2008).

Before concluding this section of the chapter, I pause to make a note about language used in intersectionality. As might be evidenced thus far some of the language in intersectionality can become nebulous while exploring key concepts and idea(l)s. In an attempt to clarify some of the confusion about the language used in intersectionality Dahmoon (2008), an intersectionality scholar succinctly points out the differences between identities, categories, processes, and systems.

[Dahmoon provides] a clear distinction among identities (South Asian woman), categories (race and gender), processes (racialization and gendering), and systems (racism and patriarchy) in a thorough review of “intersectionality-type analysis.” The term intersectionality is used in conjunction with identities and categories, whereas the term interlocking oppressions applies more to processes and systems (Dahmoon as quoted in Hulko, 2008, p. 47).

It is with this clarification by Dahmoon, and some of the key concepts and idea(l)s that I have articulated thus far, that I now turn to two seminal pieces written by intersectionality scholars in an attempt to further explain a methodological framework of intersectionality.
Two seminal works of intersectionality.
The choice of focusing on Crenshaw and Yuval-Davis’ work is not without its limits.

There are countless scholars in the field that have done pivotal work in intersectionality including Stauntes’ (2003) post-structural approach to intersectionality, McCall’s (2005) advancement of intersectionality as a methodology (as addressed later in this chapter), and Ehrenreich’s (2002/2003) work on systems of oppression among many others. However, since theorists in the field see Crenshaw’s work as foundational to the field (McCall, 2005), and Yuval-Davis provides a post-modern view of intersectionality I chose these two scholars to further my reading of intersectionality.

More specifically, as Crenshaw first coined the term intersectionality, though other theorists had use the concept before her, it is critical to consider her thoughts on intersectionality and the context (legal discourse) in which she constructed those thoughts. Second, Yuval-Davis’s provides a different way of engaging how identity categories exist and interact with systems of oppression. The post-modern move of deconstructing concepts allows Yuval-Davis to demonstrate the malleability and tension of formerly taken for granted concepts in the field of intersectionality. In short, Crenshaw planted the modern seeds of intersectionality and Yuval-Davis harvested those seeds to create a new, more nuanced project of intersectionality.

Crenshaw.
afforded legal scholars the language to discuss the vacuum in legal discourse as it relates to the intersections of race and sex. Crenshaw, through her discussion of various legal cases, demonstrates how groups, marginalized by more than one axis, failed to have a legal voice in the judicial system. In one such case, *DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors*, Crenshaw (1989) describes the legal case of five Black women who “brought suit against General Motors, alleging that the employer’s seniority system perpetuated the effects of past discrimination against Black women” (p. 141).

In this case, the court noted that General Motors had hired White women and therefore denied their claim of sex discrimination. The court suggested that the plaintiffs should join another case already in action based on racial discrimination. However, the plaintiffs said “such a consolidation would defeat the purpose of their suit since theirs was not a purely race claim” (p. 142). The court countered stating, “Title VII does not indicate the goal of the statute was to create a new classification of ‘black women’…” (p. 142).² Moreover, “Black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with either” (p. 143) African-American men or White women. Crenshaw goes on to discuss other legal cases that rejected the protection of African-American women as an identity category.

It is within this legal context that Crenshaw develops the metaphor of an intersection. Crenshaw (1989) states,
Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination” (p. 149).

This metaphor nicely explains the idea that intersectionality “is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). However, it is not without its problems as well. Metaphors in general ‘are extremely helpful in discussion about ideas at high levels of abstraction ... [however,] they should not be understood in place of the idea” (Kwan, 2002/2003, p. 327). Perhaps, as Crenshaw’s metaphor of an intersection has become synonymous with intersectionality, it does a disservice to the concept due to its perceived oversimplification of intersectionality itself. Crenshaw, in this article does little to complicate intersectionality as it relates to identity categories and systems of oppression, though she does attend to this in her later work.

As an example, in this article Crenshaw does not complicate the “Black woman” or the act of discrimination (traffic to use her analogy). Instead, Crenshaw posits her “Black woman” as a monolithic, static being. Crenshaw does not problematize the systems of oppression either. Crenshaw does not consider how identity categories can reify systems of oppression. Moreover, Crenshaw does not explore how there are multiple identities at play and/or how “hybrid identities” (Ehrenreich, 2002/2003), those identifies that are both privileged and subordinated simultaneously (e.g. heterosexual,
able-bodied, African-American women), come to shape experiences within systems of oppression. This, in addition to not exploring how systems of oppression are neither static nor independent of one another, suggests that this metaphor is at times only contextually useful.

By grounding her work in legal discourse, it binds Crenshaw in her reading and deployment of intersectionality. Within case law, monolithic, static structures and concepts are useful, and perhaps needed to some extent. However, the lived experiences of individuals do not always fit into these predetermined categories. Crenshaw herself points this out in the case of “Black women” not fitting into the predetermined legally protected categories of women or African-American. However, by not complicating the concepts of identity and discrimination more thoroughly, Crenshaw fails to create a space for systemic change, and is seemingly content for legal change, which is no small accomplishment.

In her 1993 article *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*, Crenshaw not only begins to complicate the idea of identity more aggressively, she begins to articulate the different analytic and operational dimensions of intersectionality itself. First, Crenshaw notes that “the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference,…but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” (p. 1242). Intersectionality, she argues, is dependent on being cognizant of intragroup differences.
Second, Crenshaw points to structural, political, and representational intersectionality as a way to further analyze and operationalize how intersectionality exists in today’s world. “Structural intersectionality [italics in original] occurs when inequalities and their intersections are directly relevant to the experiences of people in society” (Verloo, 2006, p. 213). In comparison, political intersectionality indicates, “how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to political strategies” (Verloo, 2006, p. 213).

In the case of structural inequality, Crenshaw gives an example of women’s shelters being unable to attend to the needs of battered women of color when tethered with multiple forms of domination (e.g. classism, racism, patriarchy). These forms of domination render themselves visible through such practices as lack of childcare options, lack of work, lack of education, and so forth. These structural impediments make it more difficult for some women to find a way out of an abusive relationship than say a middle-class, educated woman who can rely on friends, family, money, and educational experiences for support.

Political intersectionality examines how “women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1252). Not only do people with more than one subordinated identity status have to split their energies, but they also have to contend with different political agendas than their dominant members of the same subordinated group. For example, African-American women not only had to fight for racial and gender equality,
they had to ensure their needs were being met by the dominant members within each subordinated group (i.e. White feminists and African-American men).

Ehrenreich (2002/2003) suggests that a way to avoid intra-group conflict is to focus on systems of oppression themselves rather than focusing on group differences, since group differences as Ehrenreich argues, will bolster the opposition vis-à-vis employing a divide-and-conquer tactic. However, Ehrenreich’s proposal ignores the fact that there are real differences within groups, and by solely focusing on systems of oppressions, it does nothing to assuage those differences.

Finally, though not often referenced by scholars of intersectionality, representational intersectionality examines the way that “women of color are represented in cultural imagery” (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1282). Crenshaw suggests scholars of intersectionality need to acknowledge that these representations are often problematic and fail to address the concerns of those it purports to represent. For example, most movies and television shows have rendered visible a particular lesbian/gay subject, a subject that is White, middle-class, able-bodied, gender conforming, and assimilatory in nature; thereby, leaving behind the vast majority of LGBTQ people that do not fit this mold.

In sum, Crenshaw provides a clear way of imagining how intersectional identities have been absent in legal discourse for centuries. Crenshaw’s work is applicable and meaningful for other venues, including activism, theory, and research. However, for a deeper reading of concepts informing intersectionality I now turn to Yuval-Davis.
Yuval-Davis.
In her article *Intersectionality and Feminist Politics* first published in 2006, Nira Yuval-Davis, Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) at the University of East London, furthers a reading of intersectionality as a project by examining its political, legal, and policy dimensions and the methodology behind those applications. As her policy examinations may be context specific, scholars can still increase their imagining of intersectionality by engaging Yuval-Davis’ concepts about axes of social divisions and levels of analysis. As Yuval-Davis (2006/2009) states,

The point of intersectional analysis is not to find ‘several identities under one’….This would reinscribe the fragmented, additive model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities. Instead the point is to analyze the differential ways in which different social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities. (p. 57)

This definition by Yuval-Davis acknowledges that social divisions are not monolithic, static entities unworthy of exploration. Rather, it is critical to see how these social divisions influence one another, and how social divisions relate to identity categories at the political and subject level. In short, Yuval-Davis is interested in the kind of work social divisions do as they work through constructions of identity.

Though Yuval-Davis never directly lands on how many axes of social divisions there are, a critique of intersectionality by Butler (1990), she does state that “it is important to
note that there is often a conflation between vectors of discrimination and difference and identity groups” (p. 55). This is problematic for Yuval-Davis for the following reasons: 1) this conflation ignores the historical context of groups and their subsequent relations to power. 2) It fails to address the contested nature of identity groupings. 3) The conflation also fails to acknowledge that there is often political competition within groups for representation. Conflating vectors of discrimination, difference, and identity groups do a disservice to any type of political action intent on addressing forms of oppression (a critique of queer theory as discussed in chapter 2).

From a researcher point of view, that will later inform activists and political activities, social divisions should be seen as operating “in the communities where they work... institutionally, intersubjectively, representationally, as well as in the subjective construction of identities” (Yuval-Davis, 2006/2009, p. 57). To help ground this idea, I turn to Jean Anyon’s (1981) seminal piece that examined how schools, through their use of curriculum (“hidden” and otherwise) and pedagogical practices created different educational experiences for students based on their socio-economic status. That is, if a student was attending a working-class school (a school serving students whose parents/guardians were from the working class) they were more likely to receive less engaging classroom practices, in favor of rote memorization practices reminiscent of working in a factory. Whereas, those at the professional, elite schools (schools serving students whose parents/guardians were part of the elite class) enjoyed curricula that
Anyon (1981) characterizes as “academic, intellectual, and rigorous” (p. 31) stimulating higher thought processes, and preparing them for leadership roles in society.

However, in this example would intersectionality scholars consider Anyon’s analysis intersectional? Perhaps not. Chiefly, while Anyon does look at how social divisions do occur, in this case within institutions, she does not look at how people perform their identities (see Butler, 1990; Carbado & Gulati, 2000) or the interconnectedness of multiple systems of oppression. Moreover, Anyon fails to problematize either identity categories or systems of oppression. Instead, Anyon presents both concepts as one-dimensional constructs directed by a capitalist narrative. While capital, and its need to stratify its workforce, is one axis of social division at work within these educational experiences, it is not the only axis of social division. In short, Anyon’s analysis, while critically important, does not “attend to the differential positionings of power in which different identity groups can be located…” (Yuval-Davis, 2006/2009, p. 55).

Yuval-Davis brings complexity to the concept of intersectionality. With a nod to post-modernism, Yuval-Davis deconstructs ideas about identities, oppressions, and the analytical levels by which to investigate the relationship between the two. Yuval-Davis thereby complicates Crenshaw’s “Black woman.” No longer is Crenshaw’s “Black woman” a monolithic identity overlooked by social, political, and legal institutions. Now she is a “Black woman” contextualized by the time in which she exists, the power relations that surround her, and the various discourses that mobilizes and co-construct her identities. She has shifted from a one-dimensional being missing from the pages of
juridical law to a complicated being, simultaneously and paradoxically, rendered hyper-
(in)visible under the auspices of “interlocking” (Collins, 1990, p. 222) and mutually
constitutive systems of oppression.

**Identity categories and systems of oppressions.**
Thus far, I have articulated an origin story of intersectionality and its clarion call for
social justice. I have also anchored intersectionality within two seminal works in the
field that reflects a modern reading of intersectionality. I now turn to identity categories
and systems of oppression as a further reading of intersectionality as a methodology.

Kwan (1996/1997) notes, “Human thought and language is impossible without
generalizing at some level” (p. 1280). Identity categories and systems of oppressions are
eamples of such generalizations. What does it mean to be African-American, gay,
working-class, able-bodied? What does classism, racism, and heterosexism look like?
How does one’s positionality influence systems of oppression? Do they interact? These
are just a few of the questions that I will explore in this portion of my study.

**Identity categories.**
Though “deconstructive efforts of critical theorists have displaced deterministic and
essentialist notions” of identity (Kwan, 1996/1997, p. 1263), theorists still debate the
social construction of identities in accordance to different theoretical frameworks. As I
read intersectionality, two projects emerge when referencing identity categories.
Theorists often read identities as either status identities or performance (see Butler,
1993; Carbado & Gulati, 2000). These two projects are not mutually exclusive. The type
of category (status or performance) is dependent on its deployment and the context of that deployment. To be more explicit, its construction will depend on one’s social location (positionality) and/or the context for using a particular identity category (e.g. political, legal, theoretical, etc.).

Identity categories in intersectionality initially were a concern of legal and political discourse (see Crenshaw, 1989; King, 1988; The Combahee River Collective 1977/1982). Within this context, theorists constructed identity categories as status identities. That is, “particular social groups (e.g., black people) are constituted by multiple status identities (e.g., black lesbian, black heterosexual women, and black men)” (Carbado & Gulati, 2000, p. 702). This, delineation by intersectionality scholars, was to ameliorate the policy of erasure that had, and continues to, dominate legal and political discourse.

As intersectionality moved beyond legal and political arenas, particularly into the field of research and theory in academic programs other than law, theorists have posited new readings of identity categories. In a post-structural move, theorists have positioned identity categories as performative. It is within this move that confusion, contestation, and rupture have emerged in the field of intersectionality.

Not to delve too far into this debate, as this is not my focus here, but briefly those theorists concerned with status identities see the materiality of identity (though socially constructed), the historicity of identity and the political importance of identity categories. The Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1960s, utilizing a
broad coalition of African-Americans identities across class, gender, and geographical lines, would not had been possible without status identities.

In contrast, performance identity (discussed in chapter 2 under the heading Performativity) considers how people present their identities. For example, two gay men may perform their gay status identity differently. One may “cover” (to borrow a term from Yoshino, 2006) his identity to appear heterosexual; whereas, another gay man may act in a distinctly “feminine” manner, both with political consequences for the individual and the larger society.

Theorists more interested in the performative aspects of identity contend that identity categories themselves can reify systems of oppressions and contribute to the continual marginalization of groups based on socially constructed differences like race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. (see Gamson & Moon, 2004; Green, 2007; Kwan, 2002/2003; McCall, 2005; Warner, 1993). Rather than focus on identity categories some theorists, especially queer theorists, seek to challenge the normative aspects of identity constructions. Even Cathy Cohen (2007), a scholar who decidedly finds value in status identities writes, “I envision a politics where one’s relation to power, and not some homogenized identity, is privileged in determining one’s political comrades” (p. 438).

I suggest that identity as a status or performance is not an either or proposition. Both approaches may be useful and/or harmful in this engagement with systems of oppressions. As I discuss later, the creation of the “other,” does allow for the
propagation of oppression. However, in modern society, the reality of political life is that “others” must use the very identities that seek to oppress them in order to liberate themselves from a position of marginalization. However, the end goal should be a move beyond illusionary demarcations of difference as an enabler of oppression in favor of a humanity that considers the social project of categorization of difference.

Prior to moving onto examining systems of oppression, I offer two clarifying concepts as they relate to identity categories.

- Discourses produce socially constructed identities. For example, referencing how Mexican factories create workers, Salinger (as quoted in Ken, 2008) suggests, “‘Capital makes rather than finds such workers’” (p. 155). Meaning, through a system of disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1977/1995), factories that are unable to find bodies that fit their needs produce them. Factory supervisors can dismiss those that do not bend to the will of capital. Therefore, discourses and discursive practices produce “under particular social, historical, political, cultural, and economic conditions” particular identities (Ken, 2008, p. 155).

According to Ken (2008), theorists and researchers should look at the various discourses and techniques that produce identities, be cognizant that identities are more than the sum of its parts (non-additive), that there are structural influences (e.g. laws), contextual meaning (e.g. culture, community), and that those influences and contexts resonate differently for groups and individuals.
Identity is a mutually constitutive process (Warner, 2008). As Kwan (2002/2003) states, “race is often gendered and ... gender is racialized’ (p. 1274). This idea harkens back to feminist of color and their concerns about erasure. Prior to these ideas on the mutually constitutive nature of identity, race was always male (e.g. patriarchy in The Civil Rights Movement), gender was always White (e.g. White feminism), and all identities were heterosexual and middle class.

To highlight this important concept, Ehrenreich (2002/2003) provides an example referencing gay men. Activists have criticized gay men for “dominating the activist efforts on behalf of sexual minorities” (p. 308). Their male status provided them with a sense of “self-importance” and “entitlement.” However, this male status is intermeshed with gender expectations, including aggressiveness, strength, emotionless and other normative traits that seek to “stigmatize gay men as gender deviants” (p. 308). Therefore, not to challenge the gender axis of oppression, which privileges gay men, allows for the continuation of heterosexism, the axis that seeks to marginalize gay men.

These general concepts relating to identity categories, though not exhaustive, do provide a greater reading of identity categories and the role they play in intersectionality.

**Systems of oppression.**
Considering systems of oppression, though initially thought of as a single-strand construct, much like identity, systems of oppression are now seen as “interlocking” and mutually constitutive (see Collins, 1990; Ehrenreich, 2002/2003; Kwan 1996/1997).
Though I separate identity categories and systems of oppression in this study, individuals do not separate them in their lived experiences. To be clear, race, class, gender and other identity categories can be simultaneously identity categories and systems of oppression. To begin, I highlight the sociohistorical context of systems of oppressions and its modern operations. As a caveat, the origin(s) of oppression, inequality and marginalization is beyond the scope of this paper. Moreover, locating an origin(s) would be presumptuous and impossible (Ken, 2008).

Commenting on race as a system of oppression, Ivan Hannaford, according to Ken (2008) suggests, “while there have always been conflicts between groups, such conflicts only took on ‘racial dimensions once religious and political differences were churned through the mill of science and associated with somatic characteristics deemed ‘racial’ in the 19th century” (p. 157). That is, scientists using the specter of classification, formerly only used for plants and animals, turned their gaze towards human subjects during the 18th and 19th centuries (Foucault, 1970; Ken, 2008). New technologies deployed through the natural and social sciences (e.g. chemistry, biology, statistics, and psychology) rendered new bodies visible. Bodies became sexualized, racialized, and classed through the deployment of these scientific discourses. It is not that different sexualities, races, or classes did not exist prior to the emergence of positivist scientific discourses; rather, there were now names for those aberrations, those anomalies, those “others.” And, it was with this practice of naming, and its reliance on hegemonic powers,³ that helped reify systems of oppression. (see Said, 1978; Thiong’o, 1993;
Willinsky, 1998 concerning the process of naming and its connection to power and othering).

As an example, homosexuality in its modern Foucauldian/Western iteration, is generally thought of as a medical term created in the middle of the 19th century by Carl Westphal (Foucault, 1978/1990). Through this medical discourse the “homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 43). The homosexual was born through the deployment of certain techniques of power, in this case biopower⁴. “Through pedagogy, medicine, and economics, it made sex not only a secular concern but a concern of the state as well...sex become a matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 116). Clearly, according to Foucault, a particular sociohistorical context created the modern homosexual.

Most metaphorical renderings of systems of oppression tend to highlight the individual thereby overlooking the complexities of operationalizing systems of oppression themselves (e.g. Crenshaw’s individual at the intersection). In contrast, Ehrenreich’s (2002/2003) house of cards metaphor provides one of the more useful metaphors for systems of oppression. In this metaphor, a house of cards, like humans, are “similar, yet different...[and] they belong to groups....Most of the cards are positioned above some cards and below others in the structure” (p. 279). The cards cannot stand alone, and
together are greater than the sum of its parts. The cards representing individuals
“belong to a variety of different, overlapping groups...with hierarchical orderings among
and within identity groups” (p. 279). In short, the house of cards “represents the
complex structure of mutual support created by the different systems of subordination”
(p. 279). Therefore, attacking one system of oppression is “futile” (p.279) as all systems
of oppression are “interlocking”, or mutually supportive, according to Ehrenreich
(2002/2003). Ehrenreich goes on to say that systems of oppression support each other
through the following techniques:

1) Dominant group members may not include, or simply ignore, the interests of other
subordinate group members. For example, in the queer community Ehrenreich suggests
that gay, White men having more access to political power and financial resources
dictate the “gay” agenda. Those marginalized along additional axes beyond sexuality
(e.g. race, class, gender, ability, etc.) may not have their concerns heard by the
dominant members of the subordinated group, in this example gay, White men.

2) Systems of oppression increase an individual’s vulnerability to oppression.
Ehrenreich notes that those burdened, at least along one axis, may act in ways that
maintain the subordination of one of their other statuses. For example, “heterosexual
Asian Americans and Latinos and Latinas may conservatively police sexuality within their
communities...with a goal of being accepted by white American society” (Hutchinson as
3) Systems of oppression support one another by concealing the “nature and source of oppressive conditions” (p. 280). Naturalizing identities into binaries, as discussed earlier), allows for the acceptance of an “us and them” worldview. When societies construct Whiteness as the unmarked norm, nothing else by default is. Therefore, to ensure the stability and the privilege of Whiteness, societies must marginalize the “other.”

While Ehrenreich’s house of cards is a useful metaphor, it is not without its problems. Chiefly, Ehrenreich materializes those things (race, class, gender, sexuality) that often belong to systems of thought. “They are concepts used within systems of language and culture, to apportion and police regimes of power” (Kwan, 2002/2003, p. 329). Therefore, according to Kwan, Ehrenreich risks reifying oppression itself. One way to circumvent this dilemma, and still make these ideas accessible, is to establish the epistemological underpinnings of concepts such as race, class, and gender.

Finally, the operationalization of systems of oppression occurs at the individual, community and institutional level (Collins, 1990; see also Flax, 1995 and Ken, 2008). At the individual level, each individual has her/his own experience, their own positionality made from their experiences in the daily lives. The community operates as a site of oppression and a site of resistance as well. Communities are many and overlapping. They may be “defined [by] race, social class, age, gender, religion, and social orientation” (Collins, 1990, p. 228). Finally, institutions such as schools, churches, and the media, often controlled by dominant group members, is the third location where
systems of oppression operate in modern life. Foucault (1977/1995) notes that institutions, using disciplinary power, reduce the body to “a ‘political’ force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force” (p. 221). Despite the role of institutions in facilitating particular power relations, institutions within themselves do not create power; rather, they serve as an apparatus to disperse power (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Wright, 2004). In this study, I consider all three sites (individual, community and institutional) when analyzing how systems of oppression are negotiated within one U.S. high school.

**Intersectionality and Methods**

The first section of this chapter has shown the different faces of a multi-faceted crystal known as intersectionality. In this final section, I will ground those idea(l)s and marry them to the methods used in this study.

First, I will discuss McCall’s analysis of intersectionality as a methodology. I adopt her work with anticategorical, intracategorical and intercategorical complexity as a touchstone, though with a queer twist, for my own research. Second, I articulate the methods I employ in the research project, and how a post-queer intersectional perspective influences those methods. The main methods I adopt for this project are participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. Third, I discuss the role of participant and site selection, representation, ethics and working with diverse populations within this study. I conclude by highlighting some of the limitations of this study and issues and problems that emerged during the research process.
**Anti-, intra- and intercategorical complexity.**
Intersectionality theorists usually construct identities categories as anticategorical, intracategorical, and/or intercategorical, sometimes coexisting within the same research (McCall, 2005). Briefly, anticategorical complexity can, as an example, deconstruct the Asian, heterosexual, working-class women to see how social systems construct and deploy identities within a particular context. Anticategorical complexity foregrounds power relations to see how these relations inscribe bodies with the deployment of categories.

Also, if researching Korean, heterosexual, working-class women, researchers can also conduct intracategorical complexity. That is, the researcher is not looking at all Korean people. The researcher is problematizing a particular group, noting the different dimensions to Korean identity. Anticategorical theorists wish to see the construction of categories vis-à-vis deconstruction, whereas intracategorical theorists wish to complicate those identities within particular categories.

Researchers and theorists may also adopt an intercategorical approach in their analysis. As an example, the research may compare wages across different demographic variables. A research question may inquire into the disparities in income between Asian-American working-class women and White working-class women in the U.S.; providing an intercategorical level of analysis within the research. To explain these concepts in detail I address each one individually.
Anticategorical complexity seeks to deconstruct identity categories. For anticategorical analysts to produce categories is to oversimplify the complexity of life (McCall, 2005). This approach resides most commonly with post-modern intersectionality scholars. It is a way to imagine the epistemological undercurrents of identity without having to conform to humanist models. This is not to say that anticategorical theorists do not acknowledge the materiality of categories — they do. As Oswin (2008) suggests, while referencing whether or not queer identities supersede a normative construction, ‘queer identities’, even when oppositional or counter-identities, are identities too. So as is the case with any identity, they obscure particularities and cannot but work within the confines of power and normativity. The task of queer critique, then is simply to do the work of imagining how norms and categories are deployed” (p. 96).

Intracategorical complexity looks at the complexity of a particular category (McCall, 2005). Rather than looking at African-American adults in the U.S., intracategorical analysis would research the many identities within the African-American grouping; say different genders, sexualities, classes, physical abilities, locations, etc., and how those identities interact with each other and with various systems of oppression. In addition, “it acknowledges the stable and even durable relationship that social categories represent at any given point in time, though it also maintains a critical stance toward categories” (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). According to McCall, this is the most common type of analysis in intersectionality.
Intercategorical complexity “document[s] relationships of inequality among social
groups and changing configuration of inequality along multiple and conflicting
dimensions” (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). Like intracategorical theorists, intercategorical
theorists also see social categories as durable and stable while maintaining a critical
view of those categories. Specifically, they recognize the social construction, the
malleability, the historical contingency and power relations embedded within each
social category. This type of analysis is useful when comparing across groups, but it has
the potential to essentialize the categories themselves.

In addition to these three levels of analyses, theorists can deploy identity categories as
status identities and performance identities. Both are necessary to ameliorate the
effects of oppression, yet they can also cement the very systems of oppression they are
trying to ameliorate. As such, in this research project I avoid the false choice of either/or
and suggest a multidimensional approach to engage my research questions (see Figure
3.1.).
As seen in Figure 3.1, I use anti-, intra- and intercategorical complexity as a way to understand the complexity of identity categories in their present iteration. This allows me to facilitate a discussion of identity and their engagement of various pedagogical practices and schools policies that seek to promote a more hospitable atmosphere for students of diverse backgrounds. To engage these practices and policies I read their normative and material influences on identity construction. I subsume all of this analysis under a narrative of school culture, which contains within it status and performative identities. This positioning of the analysis connects my research practices with my
research questions. Specifically, I am able to engage moments of resistance, policing, and queering within the school’s curricula, pedagogical practices, policies, and values or norms. This level of analysis affords me the opportunity to address my research questions: 1. how does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students? 2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion? 3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression?

Specifically, Data¹ intracategorical complexity, allows me to read the material aspects of identity. However, this level of analysis usurps the essentializing potential of simply looking at the material aspects of identity by noting intragroup differences. Therefore, rather than seeing gay students as White, middle-class and male, I am able to analyze the diversity of LGBTQ students across multiple axes of identity markers (race, class, gender, ability, geography, age, appearance, gender conformity and so on).

Concomitantly, I am able to read how curricula, pedagogical practices, policies, and values or norms affect students from a host of backgrounds using this level of analysis.

Data², intercategorical complexity provides me the opportunity to see how LGBTQ identities operate within larger systems of domination —chiefly heteronormativity. This allows me to see what work marginalization does not only by those named within that project (i.e. LGBTQ students), but what work it does for, on, and against the dominant members of society as well. Again, as seen through the school’s curricula, pedagogical practices, policies, and values or norms.
Data\textsuperscript{3}, antategorical complexity, focuses on the reading of the normative aspects of identity. This allows me to speak to the power relations, discourses, and technologies of power that inform various identity categories within this study. This deconstructive move problematizes identity categories, as seen in the school’s curricula, pedagogical practices, policies, and values or norms, in an attempt to create post-queer moments within education.

These levels of analyses allow me to see how a school’s culture can attempt to ameliorate hostile environments for LGBTQ students of diverse backgrounds. Of course, there is considerable overlap in the analysis and the different levels of analysis engage one another as indicated with the red line in Figure 3.1.

In sum, the process of using anti-, intra- and intercategorical complexity is not about placing some predetermined, a priori categories of analyses onto the research participants. To the contrary, inductively, it is to see what aspects of identity affect, and is affected by, the normative and material deployment of identity categories. I render visible these aspects of identity and systems of oppression by using the various qualitative methods in the research process.

\textbf{Methods.}

I turn now to the various methods I use in this dissertation as gleaned through a post-queer, intersectional methodological lens. Specifically, I examine aspects of my research design including the reading and gathering of data, participant selection, and a
consideration of representation and ethics. Since intersectionality does not have methods that are distinctly its own, I co-opt common qualitative methods in this research project. As a caveat, this is not to say that researchers when conducting intersectionality research cannot use quantitative methods; however, due to my theoretical directive and my research questions I have chosen methods usually associated with qualitative research.

While the methods I adopt are commonplace in qualitative research, this should not take away their potential for innovative uses. I see methods much like tools to build a structure. Centuries later, builders still use hammers, nails and other common tools to build structures. However, and as can plainly be seen, the post-modern structures of today barely have any resemblance to structures built just 50 years ago. Therefore, while the tools are meaningful in the construction of a new structure, what is of interest to me is how those tools are used and what they create.

Post-queer intersectionality, as a critique of humanism, not only examines how identities (ex. race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) comingle and are deployed within and across different discourses, post-queer intersectionality also seeks to understand “at what expense and for what purposes the terms are used, and through what relations of power such categories have been wrought” (Butler, 1993b, p. 20).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I am looking at the spaces between and among the surfaces as a way to inform my research questions. I examine those black spaces of
normative and material activities through various methods (e.g. the interview, participant observation, document analysis). This process renders visible the networks of power relations that inform, and are informed by, the lived experiences of the research participants (see Figure 3.2). It is only then that I can get at the different dimensions of my research questions.

As a result of this process the subjectivities of the researcher and research participants, or co-researchers, are inscribed by certain networks of power relations that gives both parties a sense of self (Staunces, 2003), which influences the type of interpretations that come from this research project. As such, I do not posit an authoritative understanding of the issues at stake in this study. Instead, I posit my interpretation, based on my experiences; experiences that render patterns hyper-(in)visible. While I try to
foreground the participants’ experiences in this research project through such practices as member checks and catalytic validity (discussed later in this chapter), in the end, it is my (un)limited, (non)queer voice that comes through the pages of this dissertation.

Finally, because of this methodological framing, I am simultaneously seeking to expand and further theoretical frameworks (especially queer theory and intersectionality), and to advance a social justice narrative within education that will ensure educational benefits for all students across multiple, interlocking identities. With this noted, that I now turn to the construction of data via participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis. I follow this with an examination of data analysis, participant and site selection, issues of representation and ethics. I conclude the chapter with the limitations and emergent issues within this study.

**Participant observation.**
Participant observation is the first method I use in constructing data for this research project. Post-queer, intersectional research, deriving from a constructionism epistemology, emphasizes a “transactional nature of inquiry…requir[ing] a dialogue between the investigator and the subject of the inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110). As such, the process of co-constructing and reading data with my research participants must be transactional as well.

Glesne (2006) suggests that
Through participant observation—through being a part of a social setting—you learn firsthand how the actions of research participants correspond to their words; see patterns of behavior; experience the unexpected, as well as the expected; and develop a quality of trust, relationship, and obligation with others in the setting (p. 49).

As Glesne (2006) continues, “participant observation ranges across a continuum from mostly observation to mostly participation” (p. 49). A researcher, no matter where she falls on Glesne’s continuum, becomes involved in the lives of her research participants simply by inhabiting the same space as the research participant. If a researcher chooses not to participate, that is mainly observe, the researcher is still participating just along a different axis. Both ends of the continuum have their strengths and weaknesses.

However, for this project I leaned towards the observation end of the continuum. However, all participants within the classrooms I observed throughout the study knew my role as a researcher, and I did contribute to class discussions on occasion.

Since I see my research participants as co-researchers, or at the very least research participants, in the investigation of identities and school policies, it is important that I am engaged with my co-researchers in this pursuit. Therefore, while I did not participate very often in the classes themselves, I did speak with research participants informally before and after classes quite frequently.
Overall, I visited City High School an average of two times a week averaging two hours per visit over a six-month period. These visits included observing the following classes and activities: theatre class, U.S. history, language arts, dance, the Gay-Straight Alliance, as well as performance pieces including a social issues art performance performed for the entire high school, a drama performance given at a local middle school by students at City High, and a drag performance performed at City High School for students, teachers, and parents. In addition to these events, I observed informal times including students interacting between classes and during lunch periods. During classes and school-sponsored events, I usually sat off to the side not to interrupt the teaching or performance activities, since my focus was to observe the school culture within a natural setting.

The observations I made at City High School worked along the following dimensions. First, the observations allowed me to validate and add context to my analysis of the documents and interviews I analyzed for this study. Second, the observations informed my semi-structured interview questions. Third, interviews and document analysis foregrounded issues that research participants wished me to experience. Participant observations provided me with the opportunity to experience practices and norms that often go unsaid or unnoticed by people within the study.

The field notes were typed and stored to have a written record of what I observed at City High School. In brief, my notes included thick descriptions of the setting, people, activities, personal notes, and theoretical considerations (see Table 3.1). Additionally, I
used a data collect log to track my time and data collection at City High School (See Table 3.2).

10/18/11, Drama Class, (Kelly & Velma Teachers)

Field Notes
Kelly opens the class talking about Social Dominance Theory. The monologues should be connected to the large picture. Last year it was too personal. It should relate to racism, sexism, sexism, religious persecution, etc.

Theoretical Notes
Do the students consider the interconnectedness of these systems of oppression?

Personal Notes
Taking a lesson plan and turning it into theater for middle school students.

Table 3.1. Example of field notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Participant Type</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Teacher/Student</td>
<td>Kelly &amp; Velma + students</td>
<td>10/18/11</td>
<td>CHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Elgin</td>
<td>1/25/12</td>
<td>CHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Clarisa</td>
<td>1/26/12</td>
<td>CHS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Example of data collection log
Interviewing.

Interviewing is another method I utilized in my pursuit of co-constructing data in this study. "Interviews are conversations where the outcome is a coproduction of the interviewer and the subject" (Kvale, 1996, p. xvii). This stands in opposition to the more objectivist view that interviews should be "neutral, face-to-face ‘conversations with a purpose’ between strangers that ostensibly [produces] facts of experience...[that is] the interview [is] seen as a conduit for transporting experiential knowledge from the respondent...to the interviewer" (Gubrium & Holsten, 2003, p. 3). From a post-queer, intersectional context this means that I and my co-researchers "‘locate’ meaning rather than to ‘discover’ it....[we] offer ‘readings’ not ‘observations,’ ‘interpretations’ not ‘findings’” (Gubrium & Holsten, 2003, p. 4).

To explain the interview process I highlight a few key aspects of Kvale’s (1996) qualitative research interviews. First, “the topic of qualitative interviews is the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it” (p. 30). Therefore, borrowing from Foucault (1976/1980), I try to locate those subjugated knowledges that are “blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory” (p. 82). Moreover, it is within these lived experiences that I can highlight the “local, discontinuous, disqualified illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge” (p. 83). Interviews then illuminate certain surfaces by which the research participant and I can analyze power.
relations and their subsequent regimes of practice. Though the interviews themselves may be embroiled in certain “games of truth,” (Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 289) the research participants and I work together to deconstruct its contextually contrived edifice.

Second, “the interviewer exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes for interpretation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 31). As post-structuralism, and more specifically post-queer intersectionality, is a critique of humanism and the values it espouses (e.g. objectivity, a priori assumptions, essentialism, and certitude) the interviewer must be open to ambiguity and leave behind the a priori assumptions usually affiliated with objectivists’ interview schedules.

This does not mean that I do not attend an interview without some pre-set ideas of what I want to discuss in the interview. However, rather than having a structured interview schedule, I utilized a semi-structured interview format which can allow for an exploration of the interstices that a structured interview may prohibit. It is within these interstices where new knowledges, somewhat unfettered by disciplining regimes of practice, may spark new and useful ways of looking at things.

Third, “the knowledge obtained is produced through the interpersonal interaction in the interview” (Kvale, 1996, p. 31). This aspect of the qualitative research interview reverberates back to post-queer intersectionality, since post-queer intersectionality scholars understand the role of social constructionism in research. That is, when two
people engage in a conversation new dynamics occur, new ideas emerge, new actions
pervail that would not had otherwise occurred had the two not co-constructed a
conversation with one another. The language I use, the body movements, the ideas, the
location all influence what type of conversation I had with the research participant. In
this research project, it is critical to attend to the co-constitutive nature of these
conversations and acknowledge their existence during the analysis phase of research.

Fourth, there is a performative aspect to the interview as well. No matter how hard I
may try to disavow my role as a researcher and the research participant as a subject,
social forces have already defined those roles before the interview ever begins.
Therefore, I am cognizant of the performative aspect of the interview, and the power
embedded within each role assumed in the interview process. To a certain extent, the
interviewer and interviewee is simply playing a role dictated by their understanding of a
socially constructed script. Of course, there are many more aspects to the interview
process, but these few aspects tend to highlight how I engage interviewing throughout
the research process.

I conducted twenty rounds of interviews in person at CHS with 18 research participants.
I had follow up interviews with two teachers. I transcribed and coded close to 13 hours
of recorded interviews with the average interview lasting just over 38 minutes. Though
the interviews were semi-structured, I did have several key themes that I addressed
with each participant. They included:
1. Background information of the participant.

2. The role of diversity in City High School.

3. The culture of City High School including pedagogical practices and school policies inter alia.

4. Their roles and identities within City High School

These interviews were in addition to other informal conversations I had in person and via email with students and other study participants. After these informal conversations, I created interview notes for later analysis.

Since nine of the research participants were under 18 years of age, I ensured parents/guardians signed the appropriate consent forms and the students the appropriate assent forms in accordance to The Ohio State University's Office of Responsible Research Practices. For participants over the age of 18, they read and signed the required consent forms for their participation in the study. I met these requirements to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the research participants.

**Documents.**

Document analysis is the final method I adopted in this study. The documents, or artifacts, I analyzed included web pages from CHS’s website, fliers advertising upcoming events at CHS, art pieces throughout the school building, students’ work, photographs in the building and on their website, lesson pans, a newspaper advertisement, inter alia. I observed and gathered these documents by walking the hallways at CHS, visiting different classrooms, examining the CHS website, and scrounging a local LGBTQ magazine.
These documents not only triangulated my data; thereby assisting with the trustworthiness of my data, they also provided another source to enter into the lived experiences of the students, teachers, and administrators as it related to their identities, practices, and values while at CHS (see Glesne, 2006).

**Data analysis.**
The collection of data in this qualitative study brought a trove of documents in an attempt to gain thick descriptions of the identities, practices, and policies targeted in this study. The depth of discovery was critical to ensure the validity of the data and its trustworthiness, along with adding contextual meaning to the signs, symbols, and texts I encountered during the study.

In summary, I collected 347 pages of interviews. This consisted of 142 pages of students’ interviews, 81 pages of teachers’ interviews, 107 pages of administrators’ interviews, 6 pages from one parent I interviewed, and 11 pages from a school visitor, Grantham, who served as an artist in residence for one week at CHS. Additionally, I collected 78 pages of field notes, 136 pages of artifacts. Finally, I collected 10 pages of general and reflection note. These included my personal and theoretical observations made during the research process (see Table 3.3).
Data Collected Over a Six-Month Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Students: 142 pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: 81 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration: 107 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others: 17 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>CHS and off site school functions: 78 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents Analyzed</td>
<td>Web pages, photographs, lesson plans etc.: 136 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Reflection notes</td>
<td>Theoretical notes, personal notes, inter alia: 10 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Pages: 571</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3. Data collection summary

While I discuss in detail my analysis of the data in chapter 4, here I highlight a broad reading of my approach to my analysis of data. Jones (2002) writes, “Simply pulling out a few themes and ideas from data does not constitute analysis. Deriving meaning from ...transcribed interviews or field notes from observations requires the researcher to engage in an inductive analytic process...” (p. 468). In short, my use of thematic networks analysis (see Attridge-Stirling, 2001) includes an inductive process, or knowledges gained from subjugated sources (Foucault, 1976/1980), that seeks to organize and make sense of the data I experienced as a way to tell a story and broaden theoretical, methodological and practitioners’ meaning of education as it relates to
marginalized communities and identities. With this understanding, I have engaged interpreting my data along logistical and analytical fronts.

Logistically to analyze documents through thematic networks is to engage the data I collected in the field by which I could later interpret. The organization of data is not an apolitical act. How I organize information together influences the interpretation of that information. But, in the end, the data should serve to “convey a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and...[it should] relate to the theoretical perspective anchoring the research” (Jones, 2002, p. 468).

While exploring the data I am able to begin to see what illuminates, what stories the data tells, the interconnectedness of those stories, and what themes begin to emerge (Glesne, 2006). As bits of information begin to take hold, analytic coding including open, axial, and selective coding became necessary to classify and categorize the information (Glesne, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

As a caveat, this practice of classifying and categorizing may seem antithetical to a constructionist project; after all, queer theory critiques such humanist practices as categorizing and classifying (Butler, 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Oswin, 2008; Sullivan, 2007). Though there is real tension between the humanist demand for classifying and categorizing and a queer demand to deconstruct those very categories and systems of classification, there is a way to queer this practice. First, I note the social contingency of the categories and systems of classification in my analysis. That is, I render visible the
creation of themes, categories, and classifications as socially contrived constructs influenced by the subjectivities of all involved in the research process. I have attempted to make this transparent to the reader as well. Thusly, since a humanist episteme affects all projects (including post-structuralism and queer theory), post-queer, intersectional research may use humanist tools (e.g. categorizing and classifying) as long as I, as the researcher, make clear their ontological and epistemological underpinnings transparent to the reader, the researcher, and the research participant.

Once the categorization and classification processes are underway, it is important to code and subcode the information gathered in the field. Glesne (2006) suggests researchers should create “major code clumps by which to sort the data. Then ...code the contents of each major code clump, thereby breaking down the major code into numerous subcodes....[creating a] meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or sections of your manuscript” (p. 152). To help crystallize this process, I adopted Attride-Stirling’s (2001) work with thematic networks in my analysis of the data. In short, thematic networks,

...systematize the extraction of: (i) lowest-order premises evident in the text (Basic Themes): (ii) categories of basic themes group together to summarize more abstract principles (Organizing Themes): and (iii) super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principal metaphors in the text as a whole (Global Themes). These are then represented as web-like maps depicting the salient themes at each of the three levels and illustrating the relationships between them (p. 388).
In Figure 3.3, I have demonstrated how thematic networks work with an example from my own data concerning inter-, intra-, and anticategorical complexity. Not represented here are moments of intersection among the three complexities (see chapter 4, figure 4.1).

Figure 3.3. Representation of thematic networks
As the reader will note in Figure 3.3, I have labeled the organizing themes with “gay,” “queer,” and “post-queer.” This is a connection to the ways that sexual minority politics have engaged issues of inequality (see Table 2.1). Though I am not solely looking at sexual minorities, although I do foreground this group of identities within this study, I do use the language to provide continuity throughout the text. The reader should not read the use of “gay,” “queer,” and “post-queer,” as sexual identity markers, but rather as strategies adopted at CHS to create a model of inclusion (Global Theme). As a caveat, the direction of this process is not uni-directional. The model of inclusion (Global Themes) is influenced by and influences the strategies (Organizing Themes) and practices (Basic Themes). Moreover, these themes shift and transform dependent on the time and space they inhabit.

As explained in detail in chapters 4 and 5, policing strategies most closely relate to assimilationist or “gay” strategies for inclusion. Though assimilation practices do not necessarily have to adhere to dominant culture; instead, I use the term assimilation broadly to mean fitting in to a particular environment, in this case the inclusive environment at CHS. Resistance most closely aligns with “queer” strategies for inclusion, and queering most closely aligned with “post-queer” strategies as seen in Table 2.1. This is not to say that some resistance practices do not have “post-queer” tendencies, they do. These categories are not self-contained and leakage does occur as will be seen in chapter 4. However, for the purposes and requirements of this study, I aligned the
practices (e.g. resistance) with their most likely corresponding political strategy (e.g. queer) for inclusion.

The coding process and the subsequent creation of basic themes allows me to make sense of a seemingly disparate collection of experiences and data points, which then allows for organizing themes and global themes to emerge. After which, I can posit a particular story; one that researchers, educators, and activists can connect with other stories within their own fields of research and study.

Before beginning the first section, I need to spend some additional time articulating my use of intersectionality as my methodological approach in this study, since it directly affects this chapter on analysis.

First, as mentioned earlier in chapter 3, I am articulating three levels of analysis in this study — inter-, intra-, and anticategorical complexity. This is consistent with McCall’s (2005) reading of intersectionality. The three levels of analysis do overlap and correspond to the strategies adopted by CHS to promote an inclusive high school experience for its students. As noted in Figure 3.4, there is overlap across all three strategies and categories of complexity.
In brief, intercategorical complexity empirically compares social groups across various socially constructed demarcations (e.g. gender, race, class, etc.). McCall (2005) further contextualizes this comparative analysis by noting subgroups within and across the master categories (e.g. economic difference between men and women). This can become problematic due to issues of where to end this subdivision of groups. McCall notes, researchers must limit the dimensions of the analysis for comprehension’s sake. To engage this analysis, typically, researchers use an empirical comparative approach.

In contrast, anticategorical analysis seeks to deconstruct the category itself as a unit of analysis, since categories themselves can maintain existing forms of oppression. As McCall writes, “The methodological consequence is to render suspect both the process
of categorization itself and any research that is based on such categorizations, because it inevitably leads to demarcations, and demarcation to exclusion, and exclusion to inequality” (p. 1777). Unlike intercategorical analysis, anticategorical analysis, arguably, is mainly the province of theoretical concerns. Methods for anticategorical work include genealogies, ethnographies, and deconstruction.

Intracategorical analysis finds value in both the multiculturalists’ dependence on the materiality of categories and anticategoricalists’ dependence on the theoretical composition of categories. Intracategorical analysis has the longest history and is deeply rooted in feminists of color work in intersectionality (McCall 2005). As articulated earlier in this chapter, feminists of color see material (economic and political) value in categories, while at the same time feminists of color also note the oppression that goes along with the use of categories. Specifically, intracategorical analysis looks at the differences within a social group and the sites of oppression and liberation available to a particular sub-group. For this type of analysis case studies focusing on a single group, using narrative methods or (counter) storytelling, makes visible the larger societal influences on identities that may not be part of the larger discourse on oppression.

Crenshaw’s 1989 work with African American women who did not have legal standing based on their intersecting identities of gender and race provides such an example (see chapter 3).

As seen in Figure 3.5, I have adopted each level of analysis and elements of its corresponding approaches in this study to provide a more holistic reading of CHS’s
model of inclusion and its impact across multiple dimensions. As I have suggested thus far, CHS’s model of inclusion works along three axes — inter-, intra-, and anticausal complexity. This proves useful for two main reasons. First, by demarcating the fuzzy boundaries of these complexities, I am able to demonstrate a more holistic view of how a school’s model of inclusion operates in secondary education, which can provide educators with actionable steps to take in their own pedagogical practices and school policies. Second, from a researcher’s point of view, by investigating the various dimensions of CHS’s model of inclusion, researchers in the future will be better able to expand the project of inclusion to look at it from multiple perspectives.

From an analytical front, post-queer, intersectional analysis should always be cognizant of the humanist project implicated and all things social. As a result, a substantial part of my analysis is to deconstruct the various social practices that are under investigation while paying careful attention to issues of marginalization across intersecting categories of identity and oppression. Since queer theory has been criticized (see Cohen, 1997;
Warner, 1993) as a White, middle-class, gay male pursuit, the intersectional piece of this framework foregrounds identities, the work they do, and how they are constructed, so I can consider them in my interpretation of the experiences I had in the field.

Some questions I ask when analyzing different data include: “‘How does discourse function? Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social affects? How does it exist?’” (Bovè as quoted in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485) And, how does it fluctuate across different identities? These types of questions assists in deconstructing various data. In other words,

A deconstructive approach does not consist of reversing...or... attempting to somehow annihilate the concepts and/or relation between them altogether....Rather, a deconstructive analysis...would highlight the inherent instability of the terms, as well as enabling an analysis of the culturally and historically specific ways in which the terms and the relation between them have developed, and the effects they have produced (Sullivan, 2007, p. 51).

In sum, the logistical and analytical tactics I adopt in this dissertation seeks to honor my voice as the researcher and the research participants, while being cognizant of the social context of our work together. These concerns hold true for participant selection, representation and ethics as well, the next topics of this chapter.
Participant and site selection.
While there are different ways to select participants for a research project including random probability sampling usually found in many quantitative studies, I utilized purposeful sampling in this research project. Purposeful sampling seeks to find cases that are information-rich and available for in depth study (Patton, 1990; see also Glesne, 2006; Jones, 2002). Though there is a plethora of different types of purposeful sampling including typical case sampling, homogenous sampling, maximum variation sampling, snowball or chain sampling among others (Patton, 1990), for the purposes of this dissertation, I used theory-based and snowball sampling practices.

Theory-based sampling allows me to sample “incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs [such as heteronormativity]. The sample becomes, by definition, representative of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 1990, p. 177). Therefore, as I am interested in students and their engagement with heteronormativity across multiple identity markers, I chose students and educational practices that can inform those concepts. Not only will this automatically produce participants and practices that are relevant to the research topic, it has the potential to expand or elaborate theoretical constructs such as heteronormativity and intersectionality.

Snowball sampling “obtains knowledge of potential cases from people who know people who meet research interests” (Glesne, 2006, p. 35). As such, I was chiefly reliant on the school safety coordinator, who acted as my liaison at the school, to connect me with
students and staff members that would meet the requirements of my study. This proved critical for obtaining a diverse sample of students and establishing a connection with other administrators and teachers.

I should note that purposeful sampling is not about finding a subject that fits a category (e.g. a gay, Latino, gender non-conforming, working-class student), instead it is about finding participants that can provide rich-information that will best inform the research project. From a post-queer, intersectional aspect a White, middle-class, gender-conforming lesbian student has the potential to tell the researcher more about the subversive nature of a particular normalizing regimes of practice than a lesbian, Latina, gender non-conforming, working-class student, since all people are implicated in power’s inscription.

In total, 18 people participated in the study at CHS. This included nine students and nine non-student participants. Of the nine students, four students self-identified as female, four as heterosexual, and six students identified as White (see Table A.1). Of the nine non-student research participants, all nine self-identified as White, three identified as gay or queer, and five identified as female. These participants served various roles within CHS including: teaching, administration, parent, and artist in residence (see Table A.2).

I provide more details in chapter 4 concerning the identities and roles of the research participants, since these tables only provide a one-dimensional, flat interpretation of the
participants’ identities and roles. Nonetheless, the tables do highlight a few important aspects of the participants. First, concerning the student population, there are four students that self-identified as heterosexual, and six students that identified as White. On the surface, this may seem problematic as this study is concerned with, among other things, creating a safe, inclusive environment for students. Due to the intersectional approach to my study, I am able to get beyond the segregated silos of identity (e.g. race, class, gender, etc.), and see how identities are complicated, negotiated projects. That is, I do not reify the unmarked norm by singling out only marginalized identities, since all identities are implicated within systems of oppression. For example, Craig, a heterosexual, White, gender-conforming male through his experiences at CHS, has come to understand his position of power, and the ramifications of such power. When talking about the role of diversity at CHS, Craig said,

Yeh, its cause a lot of what I’ve seen [at my old school] is that when kids are bi, gay, lesbian, or anything people tend to pick on them. So, I like to see people being that comfortable expressing who they are, what they do, which then kind of takes away from them if they can’t be themselves. They can’t really do what they are interested in, which kind of affects them as a person (Student Interview, 2/16/12).

Though Craig was not victimized himself in school, he found value through CHS’s focus on diversity and inclusion as it relates to marginalized students. Later in the interview, he stated that he regretted not intervening on other incidences of victimization he saw
prior to coming to CHS. In fact, he said it made him mad and sad to see that type of victimization and he regretted not being able to do anything about it. At CHS, Craig says, “it’s kind of nice that I don’t have to worry about someone getting picked on” (Student Interview, 2/16/12).

This is one example of how a heterosexual, White, gender-conforming male student’s role at CHS is limited by its representation in Table 3.4. It also shows how a model of inclusion cannot only benefit those traditionally marginalized within the U.S., it can have a powerful effect on those that are most often privileged within a society. As one teacher noted, White, heterosexual, males are not the dominant group at this school (Interview with Kelly, 3/5/12). Since Craig’s identities are not the dominant identities at CHS, the school allows Craig to have other experiences that he may not had had at a school where he was in the dominant group.

In the case of Table 3.5, the table does not show how having a gay father affected CHS’s math teacher, Velma, and her work with the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance even though she identifies as heterosexual. Nor does Table 3.5 communicate the fact the school’s director had an ex-husband that identifies as gay, or has a daughter who was victimized in school, one of the main reasons she started this school. As chapter 4 will highlight, identities and systems of oppression are malleable, complicated projects, which tables and charts cannot accurately portray. This brings me to the next topic in this chapter, site selection.
I chose CHS as my research site due to its unrelenting demand for safety and inclusion, particularly as it related to LGBTQ students and staff. Since, I was interested in pedagogical practices and schools policies that promoted a safe, inclusive space, CHS was an appropriate site due to numerous factors including their enumerated non-bullying practices, openly gay administrators, the school’s connection with an LGBTQ youth center, and their stand on social justice and social action inter alia. The site was also amenable to my research, and logistically accessible due to its proximity to me. This allowed me to access the site when important events arose, or when research participants were available for an interview. For these reasons, the research site seemed agreeable to my research topic.

CHS is a charter school located in an urban, Midwestern city with a student population fluctuating between 250-260 students. According to the 2010-2011 State Report Card, CHS was designated as Excellence based on four criteria: State Indicators (e.g. graduation tests, attendance rates, graduation rates, etc.), Performance Index (e.g. achievement of all students enrolled for a complete year), Adequate Yearly Progress (includes reading and mathematics achievement as well as attendance and graduation rates inter alia), and Value-added Measures (i.e. progress the school has made with its students since last year), with Excellence with Distinction being the highest possible designation.

Of note, during the 2010-2011 school year the state’s Department of Education showed that over 40% of the student population identified as Black, non-Hispanic and close to
50% non-White, non-Hispanic. Fifty-five percent were of the student population were economically disadvantaged, and a little over 10% of students had a disability. For all students, the graduation rate was over 95%. This trend held true for minority students, students with disabilities, and students that were economically disadvantaged. Finally, 100% of teachers had at least a bachelor’s degree, with just over 20% of the teachers having at least a master’s degree.

In sum, CHS is composed of a racially, economically, ability, sexually, and gender diverse student population. The teachers and administrators are not as diverse as their students are, but diversity is present along gender, sexuality, and racial lines (racial minority teachers did not participate in this study). Finally, CHS scores high on state mandated requirements such as graduation rates, attendance, and graduation tests among other measurements.

**Representation.**

Throughout this study, I make assertions and interpretations, usually through the insertion of analytic narrative vignettes; that is, quotes from field notes, from interviews and other documents found in the field. I usually buttress these vignettes with interpretative commentary (Erickson, 1986). I insert these devices as warranted by the information gathered in the field, and I remain mindful of concerns over representation.

From a post-queer, intersectional perspective these devices (i.e. analytic narrative vignettes and interpretative commentary) provide an opportunity for me to discuss the ways in which the data presented are “valid,” intersectional in scope, and conducive
with my theoretical framework. I also insert these vignettes and supporting commentary as a way for the reader to see how power relations relate to the data presented in this dissertation. Of note, the intersectionality of data provides a method by which I am secure that I have taken different aspects of identity into account. It also prevents me from making generalized statements about a particular population (e.g. All Korean lesbians are...). Finally, the vignettes and commentary brings the reader back to the theoretical framework of the research project. Rather than displaying the data as being representative of some universal truth, I emphasize the malleability and social contingency of all data.

It is within these interpretative commentaries, as well as in the entire research process, that issues of representation present themselves. Though there are a host of tools within qualitative research that try to circumvent issues of representation as treated through validity measures such as member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) none can eliminate this crisis altogether. Instead of trying to circumvent issues of representation, I have tried to consider and reveal my own subjectivities in this research process. As Lather (1993) writes, “It is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing — spaces of constructed visibility and incitements to see which constitute power/knowledge” (p. 675). As stated in chapter 1, it is because I am a White, middle-class, male, gay, a Southerner, spiritual and agnostic, “most of what I say is from that perspective. There are other homosexuals —Third World People [sic], lesbians,
transvestites—about whom I can say little. They speak for themselves” (Young, 1972/1992, p. 7). Those experiences frame my seeing of the participants and the data.

For Lather (1986) and post-queer, intersectionality researchers, representation is an issue that must be dealt with through self-reflexivity, and the reflexive process should include the reader as well. Reflexively, I try to be cognizant of my own positionality in the research process. Reflexivity is not simply a way to see my role as researcher; rather, it is an analysis and partial understanding of the power relations, the historical landscape, and the innumerable ways that power overtly and covertly inscribes my knowledge of self and others.

To explain this a bit more, Foucault (1983/1991) describes a particular type of knowing—savior knowledge. Savior knowledge is a “process through which the subject finds himself modified by what he knows, or rather by the labor performed in order to know. It is what permits the modification of the subject and the construction of the object” (p. 70). In other words, knowledge (savior) can be transformational in that the researcher and the reader are no longer unaware of the web of discourses that influence their subjectivities.

Issues over representation greatly influence all aspects of the research process. As such, it is incumbent on me, as the researcher, to make visible the cacophony of voices, identities, and power relations that go into a research project such as this. This does not ameliorate issues of representation, but it does allow for a more transparent process.
Ethics, trustworthiness and validity.
In this section of this chapter, I examine the ethical and political issues I face when doing research with diverse populations. Various codes of ethics including the subjects’ choice to make informed decisions, the ability to withdraw from a study without penalty, unnecessary risk being eliminated, benefits should outweigh the risks, and experiment should only be conducted by qualified investigators (Glesne, 2006) are to be taken seriously by all researchers irrespective of the populations the researcher studies in the field.

Moreover, I specifically explore ethics and politics from two anchor points. First, I will discuss how working with diverse populations in an educational setting influences my research practice. Second, I look at the ethics, trustworthiness, and validity of research from a post-queer, intersectional perspective. Though this is not an exhaustive examination of ethics, it does highlight some issues particular to queer intersectionality and diverse populations.

Diverse populations.
Since I am engaging intersectionality from a post-queer perspective, and working with LGBTQ students of color, working-class backgrounds, and other positions of subordination, the right to privacy is an important part of the ethics I considered when starting this project.

“Participants have a right to expect that when they give you permission to observe and interview, you will protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity” (Glesne,
2006, p. 138). From a logistical point of view, I utilized pseudonyms for participants’ names, locations, and other research items that could identify a participant. I secured all research materials with identifying information in either a locked file cabinet or in a password protected computer. Protecting the participant’s privacy is one way I tried to help reduce unnecessary risk.

Ethics, trustworthiness, and validity with post-queer intersectionality. Ethics and the political implications for doing research with diverse populations within a post-queer, intersectional context presented many interesting issues for me as the researcher. These included how to honor the voice of the research participant and represent the power dynamics inherent in a researcher/participant relationship. Additionally, I adopted Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) techniques to promote trustworthiness, and, finally, I utilized “catalytic validity” (Lather, 1986) to validate my research.

The first approach I took concerning ethically honoring the voice of my research participants was to adopt Guba and Lincoln’s (1985) work on trustworthiness. The techniques I adopted included, but were not limited to prolonged engagement, triangulation, member-checking, and rich and thick description. Prolonged engagement allowed me the opportunity to read the culture of the school over an extended period time. This engagement included observing classes, periods in between classes, school events, interview time, and informal conversations with staff and students. This engagement not only allowed me the opportunity to observe formal and informal
context of schooling, it allowed me the opportunity to develop relationships with the research participants, which assisted in me placing the voices of research participants at the forefront of this study.

While triangulation (using multiple methods with a variety of data, methodologies, investigators, and theories), as Denzin originally thought of it, was a way to “raise sociologists above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies” (Dezin, 1971, p. 300). I, from a post-queer, intersectionality perspective, have come to understand the interconnectedness of subjectivities of the researcher and those of the research participants (see Foucualt 1969/1994 among others). Therefore, my approach to triangulation was to get at a more holistic reading of the research site and participants, rather than to eliminate bias in the interpretation of data, since, as the author, I am implicated with my own biases, or subjectivities, within the data I report in this study. As mentioned previously, I used document analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews as my approach to triangulation. These methods provide an ethical approach to research since it foregrounds contradictions in the data and the malleability of data. In short, using triangulation in this study afforded me the opportunity to place in relief inconsistencies, gaps, and fissures within the matrixes of power relations; resulting in a queer reading of the data that usurps normative logics that are implicated in particular regimes of practice — in this case educational practices and policies.
Member checking provides an opportunity to share “interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or the final report with research participants” to ensure I am representing their ideas in an accurate manner (Glesne, 2006, p. 38). Most of the member checking with research participants occurred on an informal basis. That is, I would communicate in person or via email with research participants to ensure I had an accurate reading of the data. This not only ensured the validity of the data, it also proved ethical in ensuring I represented the research site and participants in a manner that was conducive to their reading of their lived experiences at CHS.

The last approach I used in establishing trustworthiness was with rich and thick descriptions. Thick descriptions “goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act (thin description, but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action” (Denzin, 1989 as quoted in Glesne, 2006, p. 27). All three methods I employed (i.e. document analysis, participant observation, & interviews) provided rich and thick descriptions of the research participants and the research site. In short, prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, and rich and thick description all provide a way to promote trustworthiness.

Finally, my approach to validity was also through my use of Lather’s (1986) work on catalytic validity. My honoring of the research participant went beyond conducting member checks, triangulation, and foregrounding the research participants’ words and actions in this study. I tried to adopt Lather’s (1986) thoughts on catalytic validity within this study. “Catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process
reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire (1973) terms conscientization” (p. 272). Using catalytic validity during the research process protects the students from perceiving themselves as mere objects studied by researchers. It circumvents the exploitation narrative in favor of a narrative that empowers the participant to take action through self-actualization. Since, at the end of the day, the purpose of conducting post-queer, intersectionality research is to enhance the lives of those often marginalized by society; I used catalytic validity as an ethical tool to enhance the lives of their research participants.

My approach to catalytic validity was to have informal conversations with my co-researchers, often off the record, to discuss issues surrounding the research project. This included, discussing such topics as identity, heterosexism, homonormativity, and how the school did, or did not, engage those concepts. These conversations also focused on the role of families, media, religion, and even marginalized communities themselves (e.g. gay communities vis-à-vis intragroup conflict) in advancing systems of oppression. This allowed the research participants to become actively engaged in the research project via the participants creating new ways of thinking about their lives. I cannot say that I succeed in this regard; however, by having these informal discussions, it did provide the possibility for (re)imaginings of theirs and my lived experiences.

Using catalytic validity in addition to other tools such as member checks and triangulation, while securing the more well-known research code of ethics for the research participant, can help avoid some of the concerns associated with working
alongside diverse populations. While there is no way to guarantee harm will not come
to a research participant, I took every possible measure to decrease its likelihood.

**Limitations and emergent issues.**
As stated in chapter 1, the limitations of this study work along three axes. First,
implicated within this study is my identity as a gay, White, middle class, cisgender, able-
bodied male. One’s identity can prove problematic for any researcher. The privilege I
have along most of my identities (e.g. White, middle class, male, etc.) foregrounds the
necessity for me to be self-reflexive about my privilege. Moreover, I had to consider my
provisional privilege in being gay within a school that people consider “gay friendly.” My
gay identity or Whiteness may have proved problematic insofar as some staff members
and/or students may have not wanted to participate in this study due to my identity
and/or the topic of the study itself; therefore, limiting the voices of people within the
study.

A second limitation of the study centered on the breadth of the research. As mentioned
in chapter 1, I chose to delve deep into one school rather than examining multiple
schools in the U.S. that have inclusive models of education. By limiting my research to
one site, I prevent a fuller picture in an attempt to answer my research questions.

The third limitation of my study was the lack of research experience I have had in the
field. As noted earlier, besides the obvious problems with being a new researcher, it can
also provide new ways of seeing issues without being encumbered with norms of the
field. Nonetheless, my lack of research experience was something to consider during my study.

Beyond these limitations of the study, various issues emerged during the study as well. These included access to diverse populations among students and staff members at CHS and access to school-wide data.

Concerning access to diverse populations, I attempted to recruit non-White staff members and students to participate in the study. I did this through conversations with teachers and administrators as well as students. I was able to recruit students of diverse racial backgrounds more readily than staff members from racially diverse backgrounds. This may have to do with the larger representation of racially diverse students than racially diverse staff members within the school. Nonetheless, since my approach to this study is post-queer intersectionality, the lack of diversity within the study including racially and those marginalized along other axes such as (dis)ability proved problematic in my study.

Secondly, in the year prior to my research, the school conducted a survey, which had indicated that 30-40% of the student population identified as LGBTQ or questioning (Field notes, 11/9/2011). However, I did not have access to that material; instead, I relied on teachers and administrators to validate those numbers. In addition, I had hoped to survey the entire student body myself, but to do this I would have had to obtain parental permission from the entire student body. Due to time constraints and
the nature of my research, I chose to forgo this survey. I intended for the survey to give an overview of the environment of the school as well as its student population.

Despite the issues that emerged during the study, I was able to collect relevant and informative data to answer my research questions: 1. how does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students? 2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion? 3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression?

**Conclusion**
The first part of this chapter offered a reading of the formation of intersectionality as a theoretical, political, and legal construct. This reading providing an imagining of how intersectionality became a useful construct for those lives that had been erased by dominant members of society and of their own subordinated affiliations. In recent years, a post-intersectional narrative has taken hold in the literature. This post-intersectionality not only examines the materiality of identities, categories and systems of oppression as they relate to political and legal constructs, but it also examines the normative aspects of lives as well. Specifically, a post-queer, intersectionality, as I posit here, notes the materiality of identities and systems of oppression, their interconnectedness, the normative aspects of the two projects, and the networks of power relations embedded within the two projects.
In the second part of the chapter, I have suggested how a post-queer, intersectional perspective would influence the methods adopted for this project. By employing McCall’s (2005) work on anti-, intra- and intercategorical complexity, I am able to imagine a more nuanced reality as rendered visible through normative and material regimes of practice. Subsequently, the methods I adopted in this research project marries the idea(l)s demanded of a post-queer, intersectional perspective with the lived experiences of the (co)researchers. Of particular use, is Lather’s work on catalytic validity. This proves critical in approaching qualitative research in a way that provides agency for all involved, despite the exploitative potential of research. In the next chapter, I provide a reading of my analysis of the data. I follow this in chapter 5 by the implications for such a reading.
Endnotes:

1 I use African-American to denote persons in the U.S. of African ancestry. I use the term Black to denote persons of color not of Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern ancestries other than African, ex. Haitian, or when an author used the word Black to describe their subject.

2 Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination by employers on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin among other declarations.

3 Though I emphasize hegemonic power in a Gramscian sense (due to the intent of the authors I reference in that sentence), the process of naming is informed by multiple types of power and is not solely hegemonic. Power is “exercised from innumerable points” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 94).

4 Foucault (1978/1990) describes biopower, in part, as a focus “on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the bases of the biological processes: propagation, births, mortality, the level of healthy, life expectancy and longevity…Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population” (p. 139).

5 Sexist language is left in the quote for historical accuracy.

6 See Agathangelou, Bassichis, & Spira, 2008; Jeppesen, 2010; Manalansan IV, 2005, 2006; Puar, 2005, 2006; Puar & Rai, 2002; Rahman, 2010; & Ward, 2006 as queer scholars doing intersectional research in an effort to create a more just world for marginalized communities.
Chapter 4

An Analysis

In this chapter, I discuss the major findings of my study. I divide the chapter into four main sections. In its entirety, the four sections address the following research questions:

1. How does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students?

2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion?

3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression?

The first three sections of this chapter begins at the ground level with policies at CHS, the curriculum and pedagogical practices, and the normative attributes of CHS with each of these sections responding to the first two research questions. These three sections also highlight the strategies (policing, resistance, & queer) adopted at CHS to implement their model of inclusion. The final section, systems of oppression, investigates the third research question concerning how the school’s model of inclusion acquiesces to and contests existing systems of oppression. As a caveat, in an attempt to foreground the
research participants and their views on CHS’s model of inclusion, I have included, at
length, their own words in this chapter. This serves two purposes. One, I seek to make
valid assertions of their testimonies by providing long passages of the participants
words. This will provide context for the participants’ views on a particular topic, and
avoid extrapolating text without context. Two, the longer passages in this chapter is my
attempt to honor the voices of the research participants. This allows the reader to view
the research participant in a more holistic manner, more so than if I had simply provided
the reader with one or two sentences from each participant. With this caveat noted, I
now turn to the analysis itself beginning with the policies at Central High School.

Policies at Central High School

To answer my first research question, how does the school’s culture at one U.S. high
school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students, look to the policies at CHS. The
policies I address at CHS include the interview, addressing issues in a timely manner, the
promotion of self-expression, and diversity. Chiefly, I address classroom policies as seen
through pedagogical practices and curricula in the following section of this chapter. As
noted earlier in chapter 3, figure 3.4, there is leakage between strategies of policing,
resistance, and queer. In general, I align strategies of policing with policy matters,
strategies of resistance with curriculum and pedagogy, and queer strategies with school
norms due to the relevance of each strategy to their corresponding practice.
The interview.
Every student, before they enroll at CHS, goes through an interview process. The interview process begins with a phone interview telling the parent(s)/guardian(s) what they can expect at CHS with a large focus of the interview concerning diversity at CHS. An in-person interview with the school’s director, Lori, occurs after the phone interview, which is followed with a tour of the school itself. This section of the chapter explores the interview process.

The school started because Lori, the school’s director, daughter was bullied in school. Within this context, Lori explains what she tells the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) when they come in for an interview:

"It’s not right when a mother does everything to protect their child, to protect them and keep them safe, they don’t expect to send them to school in the morning and come back damaged. And I was told by [a local middle school], ‘[Lori], no one’s ever hurt your child.’ ‘Really? Because I can’t get her out of bed to go to school.’ My daughter enrolled herself when she was the age of twelve in the club in school for Japanese and she was in school every Saturday from 08:00 until 2:30. She’s a voracious learner and she doesn’t want to get out of bed now to go to your middle school. Don’t tell me someone hasn’t hurt my child. So you need to know where I’m coming from before your child comes here because we’ve only got three rules [kindness, respect for diversity, &
academic excellence] and that’s the hill I’ll die on (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

At the outset, Lori tells potential students and parent(s)/guardian(s) about her passion for establishing an educational environment that ensures the safety of the students at CHS. As such, the interview process works along two main lines of intent. The first is to demonstrate, in an enumerated way, that the school values diversity and safety, with the second intent focused on weeding out students that would not fit into the school’s ethos of caring and academic excellence.

As an example of the value placed on diversity, Lori reflects on what she discusses in the interview with parent(s)/guardian(s):

This is [shows a picture of a former student at CHS] because she has no legs and that's really [inaudible] to have no legs, because she had something that came out and turned around, there was a foot at her hip bone. Her arms are in that shape. Now what you can't see is from here to her hip bone, it is compressed, it is shrunken. It's like this big. So she wore special baby clothes. But she had a normal sized head. And the reason she fit in the school is because she has an above average brain ... And she dated this young man, six-foot six. What you can't tell about this young man, this is [shows picture of another student at CHS], is that he can't hold his body still. He has severe Tourette. And, what you really
can't tell by looking at this picture, under two feet tall. She can't move hers. So when a six-foot six boy takes a two-foot girl [and] he can’t hold his body still and she can’t move hers. I can’t imagine more diverse individuals and the fact that one’s black and one’s white is so not in this equation here. That’s what I mean by diversity. Any possible way two people could be different (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

Lori tells of another student as well when she interviews parent(s)/guardian(s):

He can’t remember a big chunk of 7th grade and you can imagine how miserable it was for a boy who once he began to have his ticks would go into a seizure, a seizure that he could not control, and often taken home from school because he had been throwing up all over himself, because of humiliation and getting sick, just horrendous. He wrote that only graffiti that we found at our old school and in half-inch red letters scrawled on the column, the white column in front of our building, “This school rocks .”

But now we go even further on the initial interview and we put the word in there and that is, I tell kids they must value diversity and then I explain everything and rule, and the last thing I say is, “I don’t know your ethnicity, I don’t know your sexuality, I don’t know your religion, I don’t know anything about your culture, but I know one thing, when you walk through that door you let your light shine
and be proud of every aspect of who you are” (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

This reflection by Lori is supported by an actual interview she had with a new student and his mother in my presence. Lori commented:

Because everything and anything is going to be sitting right next to you in class. The boy with Tourette’s, the child with no limb, the boy wearing a dress, whatever is comfortable being whoever they are here, the Muslim child. So, why do you want to come here? (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

Lori requires students to speak in the in-person interview. She wants to hear the words form their mouth. These few passages show the power of an enumerated policy of respect for diversity. An enumerated policy goes beyond simply saying “we don’t bully at X school.” Instead, it demonstrates to students and their guardians that CHS respects and values all classes of people, and that is a value that one must have to attend CHS.

What is of interest, is the power of giving a concrete example of what is meant by diversity, in this case men in dresses, a boy with Tourette’s and a girl with no limbs; as well as, having the students explain what inclusion means and why they want to go to CHS with this understanding of CHS. These additional steps, talking to the students and guardians, giving concrete examples of diversity, and having the students commit to this diversity magnifies the importance placed on inclusion at CHS.
In addition to the focus on diversity in the in-person interview, Lori also starts the weeding out process during the phone interview with the parent(s)/guardian(s). She comments:

So at the end of the one hour on the phone, and it’s usually about an hour, and I tell them, “I don’t know your child at all, I don’t need to. You do, so I’m going to tell you about the school and then after I’m all done, you talk about it with your family and then decide whether or not you’d like to call me back and have an appointment.” If I set up an appointment right then on the phone 50 percent will be a no-show for the appointment. If I say, “Call me back if you want an appointment,” those that do maybe one out of 20 won’t show (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

In the end, Lori notes:

Now keep in mind, we’re a free public school. Jack the Ripper’s dad comes in here with his son and if I’ve got an opening, by law I have to take him. And so what I try to do is make us look like we’re an exclusive school, look like you have to go through this interview and tour. It’s part of our enrollment process so you do, but by law, I never say no to a child. So, anyone can enroll, but the goal is – like the little girl who said with her eyes wide open, “You allow homosexuals to go here?” I know I’m never laying my eyes on her again. It’ll never happen. It’ll
never happen. So, the parent or the child will weed themselves out

(Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

This self-weeding out happens because Lori does not hide the type of norms and values espoused at CHS. Lori, places the school’s demand for inclusion, acceptance, and kindness at the forefront of all her interviews with both the parent/guardian and the student. This way, families can make their own decision as to whether or not the school is a good fit for them. While this may appear to be an advantage that charter schools have over traditional public schools, as a teacher explains later in this chapter, inclusion and safety does not have to be the province of charter schools only.

Along with the phone interview and in-person interview as forms of (self)weeding out, CHS, as a charter school, does not offer certain classes that might be available at a traditional public school. Lori notes when reflecting on a prior interview:

You can take it [a lower level class] again there, or you could take basic math or integrated math or math recovery.” I said we don’t have any classes like that. All the big high schools they have some lower level classes for kids who failed like English, maybe.

They have basic English. Basically, it’s like 8th grade English and so they have some lower level classes for kids who aren’t where they’re supposed to be coming into the high school level and do they count for high school classes? I
think they do. But what do you with the kids who’ve moved on and they don’t get it in 7th grade and they fail and they move them to 8th and they still don’t get it. You can only fail once in middle and once in elementary. They have to move you on.

They can’t have a 16 year-old kid in 8th grade and so the larger high schools have lower level classes. We aren’t coming in from the get-go. Our first couple years we had pre-algebra and then we thought, “What are we doing?” There are kids in here that don’t have 5th grade math level. You know, “What are we doing?” So we got rid of it. So now the children that need that coming in, we can’t service them, and as a small 260 charter school, it’s written in our charter we’re college prep and so we can’t take every facet of kids...(Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

This lack of lower level classes prohibits CHS from taking some students that other schools would have to accept into their school. This proves problematic insofar as CHS may not be as open to all students as other schools. However, as I noted in chapter 3, the school does represent a wide range of racial, economic, and ability students within its school. Nonetheless, the safety school coordinator/after-school coordinator, Alex, notes,

The leadership it starts at the very beginning. Lori is key to CHS’s environment. I have a hard time because I really love this school and I think it is fantastic but I
also see that tactics that we use to keep it safe and to me it doesn’t seem as public as it’s supposed to be. [Moreover,] other schools don’t have that ability most of the time, and they don’t have someone as convincing and persistent as Lori (Administration Interview, 3/1/2012).

This weeding out is not always accessible to other schools. But, the drama teacher, Kelly, thinks that misses the point. Kelly states:

No, no, no, I don’t buy that at all, I don’t buy that I think its. That is not at all true, it is a climate and a culture that is created by teachers and administrators and if you’ve got administrators who say NO we are NOT going to marginalize any of students every single one of our students is important. And every single one of you teachers is going to treat these students like they are important and you are going to foster an environment where other people treat each other like they are important. It will happen. But, everybody has to be on board and I don’t know if administrators don’t value all students maybe they don’t. maybe they have PTA issues but really all it needs all it takes and this sounds simplistic but I don’t think it is, all it takes is 1 or 2 administrators to say this is what are we are going to do here. If you want to continue to teach here, you do this. And, if you don’t, you should go somewhere else. I know there are unions to deal with that sort of thing, but still, even if there are 95% of teachers that teach one way and there are 5% that you can’t reach for whatever reason that is still, a much better
world for those kids to live in cause kids do live at school it is their whole world (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).

Therefore, according to Kelly, it’s not that CHS has special privileges that other high school’s do not have, though they appear to with regards to not offering lower level classes, the point is that CHS’s model of inclusion can work in any school as long as there is buy in from the administration and the teachers.

This interview practice at CHS also has a direct impact on the students. Throughout my time at CHS students consistently shared their stories about their time with Lori and the interview process. Here are a few excerpts from those conversations:

Basil: Oh, yeh, she [Lori] looked me right in the eye and said we don’t judge, I was like I’m the last person on earth to judge (Student Interview, 1/5/2012).

Karen: No bullying and that was like the main thing and she [Lori] was like because she started this school for her daughter because she had gotten bullied, so it’s Lori daughter had gotten bullied. So, she was ok I’m going to make a new school where that is not allowed, and she did it and so that’s like one of the big reasons I came here (Student Interview, 12/7/2011).

Clarisa: Yeh, she is in there too and tells you about the policies the acceptance the no bullying and then you know, but at the end of it you either really want to go or you really don’t want to go because of what she told you. You feel like that is a good fit or you feel like it oh that’s not a good fit for me
Nathan: What are some of things that would cause to think it a good fit or not?

Clarisa: She [Lori] talks about one of things with the no bullying its not just ahm inside school like if a teachers finds that you ahm like bullying someone over Facebook or a social network, then you can get in just as much trouble as if you were doing it in school. (Student Interview, 1/26/2012).

Renata: She was not playing... like like GPA, if you get below a C in most of classes you get academic probation and then ahm the whole no bullying policy even if you call someone out their name like cussing at them. ... and treat everyone equal respect your elders and if anything out of that order like three strikes and you are out. There is a lot people waiting for this (Student Interview, 1/12/2012).

Kevin: Yeh, when you have you have your interview with Lori she like drills those rules into you when I had my interviewed she drilled those rules into me. Ok, I got it. She like what I figured is that is how she rules people out if they are scared off by those four rules, or she is scared off or the person when drilling those rules into them, they are not fit to go to CHS, that is like what she does... that is how that works (Student Interview, 11/3/2011).

Elgin: It [the no bullying policy] basically says they like they kind of drill it into your brain when you are at your interview here... That the anti-bullying policy is basically that if you bully you are out of the school there is no second chance. Of
course, there is little bully things that people may take, and it’s misinterpreted and they’re completely understanding about that, but it meant that you literally start to harm someone or you are calling gay or something. You know, you are calling someone gay that isn’t really allowed here, like you can’t use a term gay to call something stupid, like just bullying in general there is going to be a major consequence if not expulsion (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

As highlighted in these quotes from the students, the interview process remains with the students long after the interview is over. Basically, it appears that Lori tells the story of CHS, what the students can expect, and whether or not the student would be a good fit based on these values expressed in the interview. The interview is the foundational piece of inclusive policy at CHS. Without this concentrated focus on diversity and inclusion, the other practices and policies expressed in this chapter may not be as effective.

It is also worth mentioning that structurally CHS is tantamount to a constitutional monarchy. That is Lori, as the school’s director, is the keeper of the ethos at CHS, much like a queen as a head of state. The principal, much like a prime minister, handles the day-to-day affairs of the school. This separation of power allows not only allows more time for a particular ethos of caring to be established within CHS, since Lori does not have to devote the entirety of her time to daily affairs of the school, it also does not conflate daily problems that arise within the purview of the principal.
While the interview process is critical to the policies of inclusion, it alone cannot maintain a model of inclusion without practical, everyday application; the topic of the next sections.

**Addressing Issues.**
Stemming from policies, the teachers and administrators actually address issues as they arise at CHS. This is in contrast to what other schools may do, as Marco, the school’s principal, comments:

> I don’t know if its actual policies, it’s the fact, I mean I guess they stem from policies but the teachers address the problems and I think that’s part of the problem at other high schools they don’t get addressed. So, they see somebody being mean to someone else or making fun of somebody else or bullying somebody else they just turn a blind eye. I guess it’s a policy. I expect the teachers not to do that [turn a blind eye] (Administration Interview, 3/15/2012).

Addressing inclusion at CHS operates at multiple levels, but here I focus on the use of language at CHS and the role of teachers. While some of the policies are direct and immediate for students that may have transgressed the school’s norms; such as can be seen in Kevin’s comments when asked about the use of “that’s so gay” at CHS, Kevin states, “it’s pretty much non-existent you might get a like a word what’s the word for it like a flash of it but then its shutdown instantly” (Student Interview, 11/3/2012). What Kevin does not mention is that teachers mainly police language through an approach of caring and critical reflection rather than confrontation. As Elgin notes,
The teachers, they care. The teachers are like if they hear something they automatically tell them this is something we don’t do at CHS. I’ve witnessed it ahm ahm in class if someone says that’s not really school appropriate like I can give you an example from Spanish class. We are basically saying how do you get to the city? Like...do you ride a bike? Do you go by train, car, whatever, bus? And, like some people come up with really really not appropriate answer. I know it’s bad to say because I go to CHS and I’m pretty accepting of everyone, the ironic thing is I love Snookie from Jersey Shore, but I say I basically said in Spanish that ride Snookie to go to the city and then one of the students said people ride her like a city bus, which I personally don’t agree with because Snookie has her values in life like the Jersey Shore. She shows that she actually cares about people and that she has her values but people don’t see that or think that

Nathan: So the teacher thought that was crossing the line

Yeh, that it was not school appropriate and everything. And, if Snookie was to hear that he [the student would] have to apologize for all that stuff, just simple things like that. If you are being disrespectful in front of a teacher they will say you know that is not really respectful. I basically told you this is our policy if you don’t agree I’m sorry, but I can’t allow you to sit here and like bully someone or say that stuff aloud in class. Like you have your own thoughts about your own things and situations and that is completely fine because we are all entitled to
our opinion. You can’t just sit and go on about it in class we have more important things to do (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

Elgin’s response to policing of language by students notes the caring ethic of CHS. The teacher did not try to humiliate the student, nor did they disavow what the student was saying. Instead, the teacher saw this as a form of bullying, and if Snookie had been in class, the student would need to apologize for his comments. This “ethic of caring” (Noddings, 1988, p. 215) within policing language allows for a teachable moment, rather than a classroom confrontation between student and instructor. Moreover, it supports the principles expressed in the interview process.

From a teacher’s perspective, Robby the language arts teacher at CHS, critically reflects on policing language in his classroom. Robby notes:

The fact that they [the administration] almost go overboard as far as caring and making sure that the students are taken care of. So what I’ve heard they all [teachers & administrators] step up in those situations to handle on a case by case basis. The phrase that’s so gay is pretty common with a lot of youth. It was common in my day too. You didn’t really even think about it, it was just a phrase that you just used. If that term or those phrases come up and it slips out I don’t think it’s a huge deal you just discuss it and confront it and explain why it’s not the best phrase to use, and how it impacts others, it’s a teachable moment (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).
As with the case that Elgin described, Robby too, sees the use of inappropriate language as a teachable moment rather than a moment to humiliate or dishonor a student. Moreover, teachers tend to use the language that is not disrespectful or overly authoritarian. Teachers will say “that is not appropriate or we don’t do that here,” instead of “don’t say that.” The former phrasing is less confrontational and more caring; whereas, the latter phrasing is more authoritarian and leaves little room for growth.

Robby not only follows an “ethic of caring,” he also seeks to critically analyze the use of language. As Foucault (1988) states:

Power is not an evil ... I don’t see where evil is in the practice of someone who, in a given game of truth, knowing more than another, tells him [sic] what he must do, transmits knowledge to him, communicates skills to him. The problem is rather to know how you are to avoid in these practices – where power cannot not play and where it is not an evil in itself – the effects of domination which will make a child subject to the arbitrary and useless authority of a teacher. (p. 18)

Robby, too, seeks to investigate spaces where power cannot play. He does this by critically examining the use of language in his classroom. Again, borrowing form Foucault and his work on critique, Foucault states (1978/2007):
[Critique is] the movement by which the subject gives himself [sic] the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth….critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject...(p. 47).

As an example of this use of critique, Robby states:

I always think of Huck Finn. I saw something about the teacher who makes everybody say the n word in class. It was really contested as to whether or not she should do that, I think it is better to confront what you are looking at rather than pretend that it is not there, hide from it. So, I think that from my perspective the author uses both racist and homophobic terms to characterize the people speaking, so it makes it more real world because there are people like that and the novel is a real world, piece of fiction in my opinion, so it shows us who those people are and separates the heroes from the villains in some sense (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).

This critical reflection by Robby notes the tension inherent in policing language within a classroom. During my classroom observation of Robby’s class, I had the opportunity to witness Robby walk the fine line between what is and is not acceptable within a classroom setting concerning language. The students were reading the graphic novel Marchmen by author Alan Moore and illustrator Dave Gibbons. In the book, the author uses homophobic language to characterize the people in the book. Robby, rather than
ignoring the homophobic language or censoring the book, chose to discuss the use of homophobic language. Robby points to certain panels within the graphic novel that uses harmful language such as faggot, noting that in this school or any school that is inappropriate language. Robby divides the class into collaborative groups of three to discuss the history of such words as fag, dyke, and gay, how the words meanings have changed over time, and how they can be hurtful to people. Robby also discusses the marginalization of LGBTQ people in history with a discussion of the Holocaust in World War II, and shows an episode of *South Park* which seeks to reappropriate harmful language. In the end, Robby reflects:

And, I think I was also curious as to what the students thought whether they were offended or did it help further the novel should I censor from them as an educator or should we keep it open, and those are questions that I don’t really know the answer to. So, I was really interested in what they had to say about it. Cause some would be upset by hearing those terms having themselves dealt with them in a negative way but I was pleasantly surprised most people in class seemed to think there was educational value in confronting the terms and discussing their use whether it merited its inclusion in class. I was curious really and I also wanted to make sure if there was an misunderstanding as to why they were being used, that it was clarified so it wasn’t seen as a negative thing designed to hurt anybody (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).
While Robby’s lesson was much more nuanced and multilayered than what I laid out here, the general idea is that Robby, rather than policing language, took an entire class period with his students to critically, and I would argue, queerly, examine the role of language in society. He did this by showing the historical context of words, its political implications, and how that has shifted over time. Robby set clear parameters on what is and is not acceptable language within the classroom, but this did not limit discussion; instead, it lead for a deeper evaluation of the role of language in society today.

As an aside, this seems to counter critics of multicultural education as a vehicle for political correctness. That is, simply curtailing harmful language is an oversimplification of multiculturalism in education. Instead, as seen with Robby, the exploration of language can be an impactful learning moment with deeper understanding of the issues that surround language.

Overall, in this example of addressing issues vis-à-vis the use of language two main themes are present. First, teachers police language using an “ethic of caring.” That is, the teachers do not simply shut down inappropriate comments by students; they allow the students to save face by explaining why certain language is not permissible at CHS. Second, the teacher, in this case Robby, uses the policing of language as a point of discussion. That is, why is some language permissible and other language not? What is the historical context of language and its association with marginalized communities? The “ethic of caring” and critical reflection maneuvers its way into self-expression as well.
Self-expression.

Being an arts school, the role of self-expression is critical in CHS’s policy of inclusion. As such, the school actively encourages self-expression, believing that one’s ability to express one’s self goes to the safety of the students themselves. Marco states:

I think the freedom goes to the safety thing and the comfort thing. You know what makes you comfortable. However, you are expressing yourself. Who are we to tell someone how to dress? But, on the same token, there is appropriate dress for different situations; [such as] a volunteer experience where there is a dress code (Administration Interview, 3/15/2012).

The work at CHS, as expressed here, is reminiscent of Kumashiro’s (2009) work on anti-oppressive education. Kumashiro writes, “The result was not a student who learned the right things, but a student who both learned what mattered in school and society and unlearned or critically examined what was being learned, how it was being learned, and why it was being learned” (p. 28). As such, the students at CHS have the right to express themselves, and the school encourages it as a way to counter normative aspects of dominant society; however, at the same time students learn what matters in the larger society, in this case how they are to present themselves in their volunteer experiences.

This stands in contrast to Robby’s experience at his previous job as a teacher at a Catholic school. Robby states:
You know Catholic [High School] was hung up on dress code; tucking your shirt, and wearing a uniform. It’s a daily thing that was important to them, where here you have free expression as long as you are not naked you can pretty much go with it

Nathan: how does that impact the students?

It’s a huge impact for them. I mean gosh every day at the Catholic school was a point of contention. Why do we have to tuck our shirts in? Personally, I didn’t have a reason. My reason was because I need to enforce the rule because it was my job quite frankly and I need to keep it, so that was my only explanation for them. Why can’t we have facial hair when the dean of students has facial hair? My explanation was well they are adults they are trying to civilize you apparently. I don’t know. You should talk to them

I want you to learn I don’t really care what you look like, so that was something that I had trouble justifying. They want to teach you to be ready for the corporate world. That was the mindset I think. Here they want to teach you to be comfortable with your identity and yourself, so I see the points of both sides. Maybe kind of a hybrid is best. You need to be able to express yourself, but some situations require certain attire so you can get the career you want, but some don’t too, so it just depends on what you want to do (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).
Robby, as with Marco, sees the value in self-expression, but also knows the value in learning what may be the expectations are from the larger society. Being able to express one’s self coincides with the school’s mantra of inclusion. Being able to identify one’s self with face piercings, purple hair, wearing cat ears, or wearing a tail (all that were observed at CHS), allows administrators and teachers more time to focus on educational missions rather than policing missions. It also promotes a counter normative moment within school itself, which, historically, schools have not always been concerned with. By allowing these counter normative moments within CHS, students have the potential of rewriting their narrative in a manner that fits their life experiences rather than having someone else, or an institution write that script for them. This self-expression also ties in with the school’s focus on diversity writ large.

Diversity. While I foreground issues of sexual identity and gender expression in this study, CHS frames its model of inclusion for the advancement of all of its students; even though, it may not always achieve this goal, as I discuss later in this chapter. CHS’s mission statement states:

Our Mission

We strive to create an environment safe for ALL students. Members of our school community demonstrate respect, intellectual rigor, and safety.

Non-Discrimination Policy
[CHS] thrives on the diversity of its members. An atmosphere of respect for all will be maintained at all times. To keep everyone emotionally and physically safe, we have a zero tolerance policy toward discriminatory or threatening language or behavior, as well as drug and alcohol use.

[CHS] is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We do not discriminate in our hiring practices or student admissions on the basis of race, ethnicity, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status, religion, class, or age.

The mission state at CHS foregrounds diversity in an enumerated fashion, and is inclusive of many groups not often spoken of in schools’ mission statements (i.e. sexual orientation & gender identity). Moreover, while the statement refers to a zero tolerance policy, the school appears to work with students in multiple ways to ensure the safety of all students. That is, there is no tolerance for discriminatory behaviors, but rather than immediate expulsion, teachers and administrators provide a more nuanced approach to those that discriminate or offend mainly through practices of caring and teachable moments as discussed in the previous section on addressing issues.

To marry the schools mission statement with its actual policies, I highlight three moments at CHS. First, I asked Elgin if there was a bigger focus on the no bullying policy against LGBTQ students rather than other students. He said:
No, it’s targeted towards everyone. People think that’s mostly in enacted for gay people. It’s really not. Like minor flaws in people... but that person can have as many, like we are not completely perfect none of us are. You may think you are, but another person may disagree. So, when like if you bully someone about the stuff they are wearing, or like a guy that’s here at the school that’s in women’s clothing dressed up, .... but if you see a guy cross dressing and you make something about it there is going to be an issue cause it could be part of someone’s daily life. There is also like hair color and like some people don’t like it, but here is the thing, if you go to CHS and you don’t like it just keep your mouth closed about it...if you have a problem with it if you say something there is going to be a consequence (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

Karen, another student at CHS, echoed Elgin’s comments. She said, “no it was everybody, just any kind of bullying or not being tolerant towards anybody for any reason is not acceptable” (Student Interview, 12/7/2011).

While the students speak about the no bullying policy being for all students, there was little discussion about issues of race, class, and ability. This lack of discussion also resonated with some teachers at CHS as well. While the mathematics teacher, Velma, noted a racially diverse student population in her higher-level math classes (ex. calculus), Arlene was disappointed in the lack of racial diversity in her A.P. U.S. class;
this, despite her efforts to recruit diverse students into the class. Kelly, the drama teacher, notes:

Well I think this year it has come a little bit to my attention that, and maybe this has been a challenge as it has been for a while, but I feel like we still aren’t quite reaching our young Black men and women. In the way that is going to most help them. I don’t really know what to do.

Nathan: Why do say that? Is there a certain problem that you keep seeing coming up, or is there just not a connection with this population, or why do you see that as an issue?

Well let’s see we’ve had, I just feel like almost against our will, but knowing it and not being able to do anything about it. Those students are still falling into the like category of most discipline, the most to have the most struggles for whatever reason in school. I feel like we, it’s just like I don’t know what to do. I don’t know if it’s because we are doing something wrong, they are not able to identify with us, we can’t identify with them. We are not really meeting their needs, or its just plane have more challenges than perhaps some of our other students have, which is also a stereotype, I don’t know (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).
This concern over Black students demonstrates that the teacher wants to ensure the success of all her students, but at the same time is frustrated at her inability to reach some students, which may be related to the lack of racial diversity in the school’s teaching and administrative staff. Chiefly, Kelly sees this as an issue of connecting or identifying with the students.

Robby also noted that there may be a disconnect with some African American students. He reflected:

Maybe the African American student population left out sometimes, in fact I heard a few things during February about that month, Black History Month not being dealt with, not vocalized as much as some other issues at school are, and I did what I normally do and pretended not to hear them and then try to incorporate something in class so that they knew that they were respected that we were including their culture additionally, so I think that ...

Nathan: So why do think they would have that impression that there is a disconnect or their voices aren’t being heard as much as other groups

I don’t know and it was only two comments I heard and they wanted to hear something on the announcements is what they had said, so I thought I will just include something in class, which is normally what I would do, though I don’t normally do it in a specific month because it’s a personal theory of mine it should always be included; it shouldn’t be dedicated to one month, but because of that
thought maybe it’s best to include it as soon as possible so they know they are respected. I think they the African American students who were paying attention did appreciate it and were engaged and found it interesting so I think if you just make the attempt the effort that what you are doing is connected to their lives, you do care about their culture they will be glad about that. I shouldn’t say there is a general African American vibe where they felt left out, I just heard two comments that’s all (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).

As with Kelly, Robby wanted to make sure that the African American students felt heard and valued in his classroom whether the two comments were isolated cases or a wider issue. In the end, though there may be struggles with always addressing the needs of their diverse student population, the teachers through curricula inclusion, identity work and examining systems of oppression (see section on curricula and pedagogy later in this chapter), or adapting to the needs of the students, the teachers I spoke with try to find ways to connect and value their students across various identity markers.

With regards to academic issues at CHS, Lori stated that most of the students on academic probation were White male students, with more occurrences happening in the earlier grades. Lori states:

Out of 16 kids, who need help academically, we’re just talking academics, 12 of the 16 are male, so it would look like we are giving academic help to the females
a whole lot more than males, because females are doing great here, males not so much.

Nathan: And is it more White male students, Black male students, or just across the board.

White male, well, I will tell you there were, in the first couple of years we were open, our White children were working hard to catch up to our Black children on test scores and the reason is, let's say you're an affluent African-American family with an intelligent black boy, where do you put him, where he's going to be safe, where academic achievement is respected. Our kids with the highest GPAs were some of our Black males because parents were looking for charter schools because they know where to put the kid.

Out of nine are male, wait a minute, there's two more over here, nine out of 12 are male at 11th grade. Twelfth grade, there was an academic probation, two are girls, seven are boys (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

To add to the complexity of meeting the needs of a diverse student population, Lori notes that most of the academic issues were with White, male students (behavior issues were not addressed in the interviews with administrators). Lori indicates that in the past her African American students came from privilege backgrounds, implying this may not be the case now, suggesting class privilege trumps race. Nonetheless, though there is a mixed message about racial achievement at CHS, the general ethos of caring for all
students seems to be applicable across different identity markers. Though, there is real concern about connecting with some students at CHS by some teachers, and the limited numbers of racially diverse staff members that I observed, the teachers do try to ensure an excellent education for all their students. (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).

Second, despite the complex message on diversity, especially concerning racial diversity at CHS, Lori actively seeks out diversity for CHS.

And what they’re [parents] not going to tell you on the phone is, “You’re really trying to recruit equal number of white and non-white?” “Yes, I am.” “And religious?” “Yes, if I – the more Muslim I can get in here the happier I am. We have way too many Christians. I don’t like them, we have way too many.” I said, “We don’t have enough religious diversity.” I’m working hard, I’m bringing in ringers. They say, “What do you mean?” I said, “Our Asian, our Hispanic, our non-Christian groups are too low for a school that values diversity,” and I don’t believe in advertising, so how do I get them? I do what the basketball teams do. I bring them in from foreign countries. And so the exchange students we have are all Asian, Buddhist, anything other than Christian, or they’re Hispanic. They tend to be Christian, but just to get more Hispanic children in the school is valuable (Administration Interview, 3/19/2012).
Lori’s need to have a racially and religiously diverse student population parallels her commitment to diversity. Whether it was due to her daughter being victimized at school, her ex-husband having to stay in the closet to climb the corporate ladder, or the closeted life of students she went to school with, Lori finds value in making CHS as diverse as possible. This diversity initiative coupled with their non-discrimination policy that is practiced every day, allows for a model of inclusion that reaches beyond simple platitudes; it impacts the lives of the students and staff at CHS.

Third, diversity initiatives often fluctuate over time. Alex was initially brought into CHS to address the needs of the estimated 30-40% of CHS students that identify as LGBTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, & questioning) (Field Notes, 11/9/11; Teacher Interview, Kelly, 3/5/2012). Alex states:

...when I first started here as the safe school coordinator people understood I was mostly here for queer youth I was getting a lot of questions about what lines shouldn’t students be allowed to cross in the classroom when should things be shut down what pronouns during what times, whether or not people should get special treatment and things like that so I think that our staff is constantly thinking about those things constantly worrying that there are doing what they are supposed to do to make the students comfortable, that seems to be the utmost concern.
I think the most important thing to remember about CHS while it exists as a safe space for all and we end up talking about queer issues. Queer issues are very much not the biggest concern at CHS or not the most important that we talk about with our students because to them like I said it is secondary issue. We have a lot of drug and alcohol problems we have a lot of problems with parents not being available and things like that, as far as what you are saying I think that students who struggle are actively engage by staff and by the administration struggle anyway, struggle academically or struggle with the environment because we want to keep students and we want to help them realize their full potential as much as possible, we do a lot of emotional work and academic and cognitive work

...well I think anytime a student is having an issue that staff is very quick to recognize that they are emotionally unhappy that they are unbalanced that is something going on that is different that they are engaged consistently so they will be engaged by Lori or by the administration or by a teacher. Teachers always bring their concerns to either Marco, the assistant principal, or Lori.

(Administration Interview, 3/1/2012).

Despite the focus on providing a safe space for queer students, Alex notes that those have become secondary issues. As he said, “a lot of kids said every day is GSA at [CHS]. We don’t have to go to that sacred space because we have it all day long”

(Administration Interview, 3/1/2012). The success with queer students allows staff at
CHS to focus on other issues that develop during high school such as drug use, academic performance, and emotional concerns.

By adopting a model of inclusion, the staff at CHS does not have to spend time regulating what people wear or how they express themselves, staff members don’t have to deal with issues of non-conformity since self-expression is a high priority at CHS, and issues of unkindness become teachable moments at CHS rather than moments of authoritarian disciplining.

**Policing Strategies.**
To address my second research question, how do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion, I look at how these practices occur within the school’s policies. While policies at CHS have moments of resistance and queer strategies attached to them, policing strategies seem to be most prevalent. Policing strategies are strategies that regulate bodies to norms of a particular discourse, in this case a discourse of inclusion. As previously stated, policing, as a strategy, does not have to adhere to the dominant discourse (e.g. traditional education) that supports existing systems of oppression (e.g. racism, classism, heterosexism, among others). Instead, policing can regulate bodies in a manner that is resistant to dominant discourse and their correlating systems of oppression as is the case at CHS. However, policing does adhere to an imperative of “us and them,” which, at times, is necessary and warranted as seen in civil rights struggles in the past.
At CHS, policing strategies contests dominant forms of oppression through its model of inclusion. Though CHS uses traditional models of policing (e.g. zero tolerance for bullying in the school’s mission statement and in the interview process with Lori; CHS also complicates policing by promoting an “ethic of caring,” critical inquiry, and self-expression.

Concerning an “ethic of caring,” teachers and administrators perform emotional, academic, and social work with the students. They see moments of transgression by students against the dominant culture (“us vs. them”) as teachable moments rather than moments of disciplinary action — although there are limits.

Robby’s discussion of the language used the graphic novel *Marchmen* highlights the critical inquiry approach to policing. Though Robby outlined what is appropriate and not appropriate language in school (policing), most of his class time was focused on critically analyzing how society constructs language, how discourses of domination are inherent in language (“us and them”), what affect it has on members of society.

Finally, by not policing, for the most part, the self-expression of students in a counter move against dominant culture (“us vs. them”), teachers and administrators are able to spend more time on working with students on other issues that impact their lives. Moreover, the self-regulating, self-policing of self-expression allows students to explore new ways of viewing themselves in the world. In other words, they do not have to
conform to an ideal that may not represent who they are (e.g. the jock, the cheerleader, the geek, etc.).

In sum, policies at CHS work across multiple dimensions and the school implements them in a variety of ways. The policing strategies move beyond a one-dimensional viewe of “us and them” to include moments of caring, critique, and self-expression. In the next section, I look at curriculum and pedagogy, which are also influenced by these policies at CHS.

**Curriculum and Pedagogy**
Curriculum and pedagogy, I found, is the second way that CHS promotes a safe and inclusive space, the concern of my first research question. The curriculum at CHS is comparative to most high schools in the U.S. Students are required to take such courses as mathematics, science, English, and social studies among others (formal curriculum). In addition to the formal curriculum, there is an informal curriculum as well, which I will discuss later. At CHS, there is a decidedly inclusive tone to both their formal and informal curricula, which informs and, is informed by, the school’s model of inclusion.

In this section, I will discuss formal curricula vis-à-vis the drama class Equality Now (pseudonym) and Arlene’s U.S. History class. After which, I will discuss the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance as an example of informal curriculum. I follow this with some students’ reflections on the pedagogical practices at CHS. I conclude with a discussion on the strategy of resistance within curriculum and pedagogy. There are other moments within
the curriculum that adheres to a strategy of resistance including having same sex partners at the prom, workshops that address issues of identity, ballroom dancing, queer speakers, housing an LGBTQ youth center in their school as part of their after school program, and participating in the annual LGBTQ Pride Parade and Festival inter alia. However, I have chosen the aforementioned topics as examples of resistance within the curriculum and the teachers’ pedagogy, since they encompass the general themes of this section.

**Formal moments.**
Concerning formal curriculum, the most obvious example from the data concerns the drama class at CHS, which I will call Equality Now (See Appendix A.1 for a more detailed description of the program). Supported by a corporate grant, the drama teacher, with the assistance of the mathematics teacher, produce an anti-bullying theatrical program that a dozen students perform at various middle and elementary schools in the area. The intent is for the older students to have an impact on the younger students as it relates to bullying and abuse. Students produce their own monologues of their own experiences as part of the performance. The monologues address such issues as racial profiling, girl-on-girl bullying, religion, sexual identity, and issues of conformity.

At a local middle school the students performed at, one student speaks about having to conform to this ideal image of what a girl is, while another girl talks about needing a guy’s attention and getting in a fight over a guy. A student speaks about her old school being like a war zone and being nothing more than a weirdo resulting in not eating and
cutting herself because she was not perfect. Another female student talks about the need to see strong black women in the media. The male students talk about having to be tough to fit in, being an outsider, having to take medication, and being openly gay and not being able to marry (field notes, 1/18/12).

To get at why Equality Now was started in the first place I spoke with the drama teacher that created who saw it as a way to connect with her students. Kelly states:

It started out as I wanted to do something for Black History Month, and I had two acting classes one had like 20 kids and it was crazy and the other had 7 kids let’s do that class. And, then I knew I wanted to do this project and I planned to do it and then I like looked around the class and realized that we didn’t have any black students and was like oh, this is interesting. I can’t really tell the purpose was supposed to be on race issues and whatever, but I didn’t have those to share in that particular class. We did convince one black gentleman to come join us, but what I didn’t realize that even though there were no racial issues of inequality within that classroom, there were many other issues of inequality within that classroom, so, since I couldn’t focus on the racial inequality I focused on just anybody being treated less equal and of course everybody had a story. And so that’s how that concept came about....

I can’t claim that I had like forward knowledge of anything other than trying to be cognizant of whom my students are. All I was trying to do, our population at
the time was nearly 50/50 if not 60/40 of African American to whites students. So, I wanted to make sure acknowledging my students and that’s pretty much all there is to it … I just was trying to like connect with my students (Teacher interview, 3/5/2012).

As a need to do something for Black History Month, the teacher created the Equality Now project as a way to connect with her students. Having students share their stories for younger students may be the end result, but there is a transformation for the students as well. As Velma, the mathematics teacher that assists Kelly with Equality Now, notes:

I think the most profound effect that I’ve actually seen and there has certainly has been an effect on the people that we take the show to, but the most profound effect has been on the kids who are doing the show. The 12 kids who had to really tackle this idea of who are they are, and what is this idea of equality, and what is unequal about things. So, to watch her [Velma’s] students really identify who they are, I’m a Caucasian. I’m a Christian white male. I’m a Christian white female. To apply these labels that society has for them and sort of figure out what that implies. So, the story I’m thinking of is we have a young man who identifies as a white Christian male and he is sort of learned how that label has really sort of taken on a lot of negative connotations these days. I mean because they are looked at as powerful. Because they are they are looked at as
powerful there is very [indecipherable] in the religious organizations. He has sort of been able to voice the fact that he sometimes feels now that he is judged or he is missed identified because he is white, because he is Christian. He sees that people instantly judge him and think that he is going to be a hater, he thinks so. ... He implied something about the fact that he has to work harder to sort of to prove to the world that he is a nice guy in certain affects. And, he also says he said something the fact that he has not take what sort of societal capital he has for granted. I don’t remember his words, but he recognized his position in the world, it was really sort of a moment for me where I was like a 15 year old kid being able to see himself as a white Christian male recognize that he’s got more. He’s born with more sort of social authority, but that he is also ostracized and that was it was really neat.

We’ve had similar moments for each student recognizing who they are and the various issues that go along with their labels. I guess, so, that diversity piece been there, just a significant amount of maturity in those kids because they have had to do so much thinking about this issues (Teacher Interview, 3/5/12).

As Velma suggests, the students who perform in Equality Now may get more out of the work than those who they are performing for at local schools. Velma indicates that these performers understand the role of identity, labels, privilege and the subsequent
issues surrounding inequality. This may be due to the teaching philosophy held by Kelly.

Kelly states:

... it’s besides the fact we want students to live through their teenage years, you
know that’s seriously a problem we are having, massive problems. So, clearly
there is an issue. We want our students to LIVE and be grownups to begin with,
and then after that to live to be educated accepting grownups. Because that is
the world, we live in. It’s really citizenship at its basic, right? We live in a
country, we are surrounded by people from all over the world and who are very
different from us. There is no chance that our world is going to continue in a
positive way if we don’t focus on who people are. There is no point in ignoring
who people are and the fact that we are a democracy we should be able to look
around at the people around us and say ok these are the people who live in our
world, these are the people we need to serve, and we don’t we don’t do that as
a country. We still find a way to marginalize people and its all based on how
people are taught. Some people are raised from birth to believe in systems that
truly marginalize other people...

[Speaking of CHS] We have issues of bullying all the time, well maybe not, we
have issues of unkindness all the time or negativity. Bullying is a repetitive
pattern of continually attacking somebody in some way shape or form. So, but
we don’t have that much we have had some. But, we do have the unkindness,
the judging, the stereotyping.... Every student comes in with it. We try really hard
to break them of it their freshman year, but if we don’t have them their freshman year, or they come in half way through their freshman year, they aren’t broken of it quite as easily then. We have students who come in the upper grades and were it’s a real challenge to stay on top of because it’s really the dominate culture to be scared and judge other people and stick to yourself. [Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012].

For Kelly the mission of Equality Now is to ensure the survival of her students, and, then, create citizens that are kind to one another, since the world is so diverse and the nature of democracy demands it. In its entirety, Kelly’s curriculum takes a critical worldview, but does so through the eyes of her students. Moreover, the students begin to understand their own positions of power and marginalization, which causes them to have a more mature outlook due to the increase in critical knowledge. This process of resistance to apathy or acquiescing to dominant forms for subordination provides the beginnings of self and cultural awareness.

A similar effect takes hold in Arlene’s U.S. History class. Through curriculum inclusion, Arlene seeks to explore history from the ground up. Rather than solely examining history from the top down, from a White man’s perspective, Arlene strives to look at history from multiple points of view, of through the stories of those impacted by historical events. Arlene, who has taught at CHS for 5 years and teaches U.S. History to 9th and 10th graders and AP U.S. History to 11th and 12th graders, states:
For A.P. I have more leeway to focus on certain beings. So, we have themes of identity reform and rebellion. So what that means is that when we come to topic that meld with those major themes we slow down a little bit and spend more time with it. So we spend more talking about W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington and conversations those two men had. We spend, we actually do a project on era reformers we spend more time looking at the New left that came out of the Civil Rights Movement and looking at those stories that maybe weren’t valued until the 1970s, but I think are more valued today through works like Howard Zinn and *Peoples History*. I want to bring those histories that may have been hidden or devalued to the surface and I have more freedom to do that in A.P. [For] my regular U.S. History classes the curriculum is already laid out by the state ... What I think we all agree upon in the social studies department is, yes, we are going to teach the curriculum and more. So, I do a lot beyond the curriculum. Where I am talking about and highlighting peoples history, and it’s easy to do that through primary source documents I was telling you I will bring in a letter. And there is a letter that I have that I really love and I use it every year consistently. It’s so good. It’s from a WWII soldier who is serving in France. When we get to WWII, I bring the letter and that was written by an African American soldier to a newspaper talking about the experiences of discrimination on the base in North Carolina, and he is being very clear, and I make this connection to the Civil Rights Movement. (Teacher Interview, 3/21/2012).
In an attempt to bring stories out of the shadows, Arlene incorporates other readings and stories such as Nina Simone’s version of the song *Strange Fruit*, which tells of racism and lynching in the U.S.; as well as, Simone’s *Mississippi Goddamn*, which deals with atrocities in during the Civil Rights Movement. Arlene also includes conversations about Malcom X versus Martin Luther King Jr versus the Black Panthers, and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (Teacher Interview, 3/21/2012).

Beyond simply including stories of diversity within her classroom, Arlene encourages the students to discuss these stories and connect them to larger themes. Arlene comments:

> We talk about other complicated issues like the persecution, who were even suspected of being gay or lesbian especially during the 1950s and the Red Scare. So, drawing out those histories become teachable moments for values and ethics. Hopefully, get students that may have reservations about people being fully equal that identify as GLBTQ, maybe it makes them think more deeply like a shared experience (Teacher Interview, 3/21/2012).

Dealing with issues of ethics and values resembles Kelly’s thoughts on educating for citizenry. A model that may be anachronistic in today’s utilitarian model education system. Nonetheless, Arlene resists the pressure standards place on her teaching content and styles. She thwarts this pressure by including stories that may not be part of
the official curriculum. Of course, Arlene is well aware of the unique environment that she is in at CHS. She states:

...this is a little bit of an anomaly at this school. The students that come here aren’t all likeminded, but tend to be very open minded, very accepting. They are surrounded by people who think like that too. We are kind of in a bubble here. And I have to understand that and appreciate that. I think every day that I work, that some of the issues that I will raise in class, I would be getting phone calls. My 1st year when I would bring up anything controversial I would just be like waiting hey is a parent going to call. It never happened. And if it ever does the administration will be back me up, so I feel really really confident bringing up controversial issues talking about race, talking about sexuality (Teacher Interview, 3/21/2012).

What Arlene does not mention, which I think is critical here, is that this “bubble” did not happen by itself. Her ability to include “controversial” topics in her classroom room has to do with the policies set forth by the school, the implementation of those policies by teachers, the support of her administrators, and even the open-minded nature of her students. As a number of research participants noted, there is a strong need and desire for this type of education, an inclusive education that operates in formal and informal spaces. As in any school, formal education is not the only space where education occurs at school. In the next section, I turn to those informal moments of education.
Informal moments.
As I mentioned previously, CHS is replete with what I call informal moments of curriculum and teaching including after school workshops five days a week, guest speakers including transgender and queer artists, as well as the school’s collaboration with organizations within the community including the city’s museum and the local LGBTQ youth organization. For the purposes of this study, I reflect on the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance. Since “every day is GSA day” at CHS, the GSA had limited participation despite its 30-40% self-identified LGBTQ student population (Field notes, 11/9/2011). The once a week student-led meetings usually had between 8 and 13 students present, usually a couple more female students than male, and predominantly White. Velma the Mathematics teacher and Alex the safety coordinator were advisors for the club.

The students had different reasons for joining some stating that the named appealed to them, and they wanted to work on gay rights/equal rights, and be more open about being gay. Others joined to be with peers and be in a club that would accept them. Still others were in the GSA last year and wanted to work on a video project highlighting the need for gay equity (Field Notes, 12/1/2011).

The students developed their own ideas on what they wanted to do with the GSA. The topics included holding a flash mob and creating t-shirts and bracelets to raise awareness of gay issues. They ended up raising money for the GSA through candy grams, and the members decided to create a video that would highlight what it would be like for a straight person in a gay world. A student in the GSA created the manuscript,
which highlighted the negative experiences a straight person would have living in a gay world. This intent of the video was to show how difficult it was for gay people to live in a straight world (Field Notes, 1/5/2012, 1/12/2012).

Even though, a sacred space may not be needed at CHS, as Heidi reflects: “…and it’s not that I’m not interested in it [GSA]. It’s just like there is other things, and I don’t want to be like the cliché gay student I mean GSA. I’m all for whatever, I want to do other things too” (Student Interview, 2/16/2012), it did serve a purpose for other students. Clarisa stated, “I want to be in GSA because you know you get to do stuff, to change, like we are trying to do projects and things to make a difference and that’s much more impacting” (Student Interview, 1/26/2012). Or, as Basil considers:

...we [Basil’s friends] see that you are outgoing with us, cause I know you guys on a personal level. I can be outgoing with you guys, I’m pretty much friends with everyone in GSA, so I can be outgoing in there, but other classrooms I’m not really quiet but I’m more quiet.... if I don’t know the people I am talking to or anything like that, I mean it’s gotten so much better since [my previous school] (Student Interview, 1/5/2012).

The GSA provided an outlet for some students to connect with other LGBTQ students and work on issues to raise awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ student population. For example, the video “Straight in a Gay World,” is a queer reading of life for LGBTQ people. In the beginning of the video the lead character, a gay male student
is bullied by his teacher, his classmates, and not accepted by his parents when he
discloses he is in fact gay. Fellow students call him a fag and a fairy and push the young
man around. In a following scene, a heterosexual male student wakes up to find the
world including his parents are gay then he has to deal with the victimization that the
gay student had endured in the previous scene.

This inversion of societal norms and expectations works along two levels. First, it
explains how these students may view the world from a queer perspective. Society
critiques LGBTQ people for being abnormal, not right, and misfits. People use verbal and
physical violence to demonstrate their disdain for queer people. Conversely, in the
second part of the video, in a gay world, students talk about how limited straight boys
are in their inability to express themselves, their lack of emotions, and robotic nature
due to their own fear of expressing themselves.

While on the surface this may appear to be an over simplified characterture of straight
and gay people, the story does provide an opportunity for resistance that would not
normally be available to queer students in high school. That is, by this school providing a
space for exploration of topics such as victimization and marginalization, the school
empowers the students to address issues together, issues that may have gone
unaddressed in other schools.

Second, by coming together as a group, these GSA students usurp the practices of
marginalization historically enacted on LGBTQ people. Those practices often include
shaming LGBTQ people and ostracizing them to a point where LGBTQ people live in isolation afraid of themselves and of other people. By coming together and being visible, these students contort these practices of marginalization to such an extent that these disciplining mechanisms no longer work.

While I have outlined just one practice in CHS’s informal education for its students, it does demonstrate the importance of having a GSA within a school setting. Not only does it provide an avenue for companionship and comradery, it provides an avenue for critical reflection and resistance to various systems of oppression such as heterosexism.

Finally, I turn to the students themselves and how curriculum and pedagogy impacts their views on CHS’s model of inclusion.

Curriculum, pedagogy and students.
In conjunction with the views expressed by teachers in the previous sections concerning curriculum and pedagogy, from the student’s perspective a similar motif of caring and critical analysis occurs within the school helping further crystallize CHS’s model of inclusion. I divide this section into two parts. The first part looks at the curriculum and its impact on students. I follow this with the pedagogical practices at the school and their effect on students.

Curriculum and students.
The first example looks at a program created by CHS to marry art in a multimedia format with social issues. The school brought in a young, openly gay Hollywood actor who has
his own campaign that seeks to create possibilities for entertainers to be open about their sexual identity. Grantham states:

It’s [his campaign] not just about me. It’s about, there are a lots of kind of young men and women out there in LA who need that voice. This is also about getting closeted actors and actresses to come and serve as role models to the gay youth out there, like the youth at this school who need a voice, who need people to stand up for them.

In collaboration with the drama teacher and others, Grantham supported students, in his one-week tenure as artist in residence, at CHS. At the end of the week, students performed their pieces of art for the entire school, parents, and staff.

The program, which I will call Pioneer, had clear ideas for the program itself. Approximately 50 students completed an application and the school accepted twenty-five students for the “week-long, creative workshop” (Pioneer Student Application). The application states that students will explore and identify issues of social justice that are important to them and their community, and then create an artistic project that will bring attention to the issue, with the belief that awareness of an issue can be the start of necessary change (Pioneer Student Application).
Topics in the program including addressing issues of teen suicide, girl-on-girl bullying, lack of access to nutritious foods, and gay equality inter alia. Students echoed this type of critical reflection and need for social change when I interviewed them for this study. Karen states:

For me,... just making the art is a really good way of venting, but performing for people is like reassuring that other people, learning about the problem, and that you’re not the only one dealing with it because I know a lot of kids were crying. Well if I can affect you this way I can help you in other ways too.... It was important to me, because, I mean, I know that and I’ve seen the statistics before how many kids even like consider [suicide] and how many people it is affecting. Because it doesn’t just affect the person that commits suicide, it affects everyone that they know. It’s just really, it’s kind of close to home to me because I have friends that have committed suicide (Student Interview, 12/7/2012).

For Renata:

I was like ok, this works, using art to you know to give social issues that teachers or anything that really can’t see and a lot of people are going to be there.... People just using their art, using what they love to express, how they feel about social issues, and then even when I was up there dancing I almost cried. It’s just the whole feeling of it (Student Interview, 1/12/2012).
Both these students found value in addressing social issues through art. But not only did these students and others find value in communicating about social issues through art, students learned about the issue through collaboration with teachers and their fellow students. The performance affected the audience as well. Speaking to some members of the audience I discovered I was not the only one crying during the performance. The power of these students to communicate issues affecting their lives resonated across the school.

This type of curriculum, born from the ground up (the topics originated from the students themselves) allows students to take responsibility for their own education and connect their lives to larger social issues. In a way, for some students, this was their own conscientização (Freire, 1994).

**Pedagogy and students.**

In addition to the critical reflection offered through such curricula as the Pioneer project, the caring pedagogy of teachers at CHS resonated with the students. Inquiring as to whether or not teachers establish guidelines in classroom discussions, Elgin comments:

> We have in history because we debate a lot. We have basically set out a guideline for what you can say and what you can’t. And, when it becomes a point where you are affecting someone emotionally or physically that’s where you have to stop (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).
This “ethic of caring” not only avails itself in the classroom as seen here and in previous sections, it is present in developing relationships with the students. Renata states:

The teachers actually care, and then ahm it’s just they they’re strict but to an extent. It’s strict to where they train their students where they can trust them. I used to get in trouble for a lot of things like ahh sitting on my foot in a chair, or cause when I am rushing. It’s just a pet peeve of mine. I have to stand up and do it nice. And, [I would] get in trouble for that [at her old school] (Student Interview, 1/12/2012).

Craig continues this example when he comments:

Here the teachers I feel like I can go to any teacher even if I don’t have them as teachers to ask them questions on stuff. It’s kind of nice to know... even though I’m not one of their students, no matter where you are you can find someone that can help you (Student Interview, 2/16/2012).

Though caring is important for its own sake, it does have material consequences. Most of the student I spoke with said the atmosphere at CHS, including their caring teachers have helped improve their grades. Elgin reflected:

Considering that like the environment is different at [his old school]... being gay isn’t like something that is fully accepted there. You have people that are ok with it and people that it’s just there, and people that are completely against it. And, I
like coming to CHS, I can express myself. I can wear the clothes I want to wear and I can be the person I want to be. I don’t have to play like someone else for 8 hours a day and put on a show for everyone. Here I can I am myself. I’m happier here my grades are a lot better, me and my dad, like every since I started to come to CHS everything has gone better (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

In a similar vein, Basil states:

...if it wasn’t for the teachers being so accepting the kids wouldn’t feel comfortable. If it wasn’t for the rules if you harass someone you’re out. Like don’t bully or you will get kicked out of this school, that is a big big big different because at [his former school] yeh they had a bullying system but they never followed it (Student Interview, 1/5/2012).

This “ethic of caring” inside and outside of the classroom allows students to express themselves, build relationships with teachers, and have a safe space for them to focus on their studies. This, caring form of resistance, counters an approach that relies on fear tactics for its own sake. There is no arbitrariness to the schools rule and their implementation. Students see these rules and their implementation as a form of caring, since it provides them with an inclusive, safe space to focus on other matters rather than their own safety.
Strategies of Resistance.
Resistence, a concern of my second research question, seemed most prevalent within the curricula practices of CHS. Resistance, as explained earlier in this paper, is rooted in the promotion of voice for the voiceless, and eliminating the practice of erasure that is part of the project of subordination in various institutions. Moreover, resistance mainly operates as an opposition to something else. The practices enacted in the teachers’ curriculum and pedagogical practices use such strategies of resistance.

In formal curriculum, particularly concerning Equality Now, resistance works by providing students the opportunity to reflect on power relations in their own lives and the lives of their classmates. By deconstructing power relations within this class, students are better able to resist the material and normative regulations of their bodies.

Within Arlene’s social studies classroom, students become aware of the subjugation of subjects throughout history. She accomplishes this by included voices and stories which social studies curricula often underrepresents. As a result of this inclusion, “[agency] [for students]...is produced by the gaps opened up in regulatory norms...[it is] negotiated within a matrix of power” (Butler, 1993b, p. 22).

Informal curriculum plays just as an important role at CHS as formal curriculum. The school’s GSA allows students to resist their bodies from being regulated via of shame and secrecy. The GSA allows for visibility of students in the GSA, and the GSA’s visibility within the school circumvents this narrative of erasure. Some LGBTQ students at CHS do
not need this sacred space due to the pro-LGBTQ attitude of the entire school, but for some students it still plays an important role to resist domination.

Finally, resistance comes in the form of caring, artistic-expression, and a critical understanding of social issues. The relationships that teachers and administrators build with the students provide a space for students to resist a narrative of domination by adults. This, in coordination with the ability to explore social issues and express that investigation through artistic means, provides students a form of resistance that is married to a critical worldview. In the next section, I turn to the norms of the school and its relationship to queer strategies.

**Norms**

Norms, another method adopted at CHS to promote a safe and inclusive environment (see research question 1), plays a critical role in promoting a safe and inclusive space for CHS students. Norms at CHS vacillate differently depending on the space and time in which they inhabit. Here, I focus on three such moments. I begin with the normative values expressed through CHS’s drag show. Next, I look at an advertisement placed by the school in a local LGBTQ magazine. Then I provide the views of the students and their views concerning norms at CHS.

For this section of the chapter, I borrow from Butler’s view on normative practices. Butler sees normative practices as those practices that regulate action through the reiteration of societal norms (see Butler, 1990). While Butler sees the relationship with societal norms, I focus on the school’s norm of inclusion. However, I note that the larger
society does inform the school’s norms, no matter how *transgressive* the school’s practices may be.

**Drag.**
On the National Day of Silence, a day in which LGBTQ students and their allies do not speak in an attempt to shed light on LGBTQ issues such as bullying in schools, CHS held their first annual drag fashion show. After school about 22 students sat in a classroom listening to 3 drag queens and 1 drag king answer questions posited by a moderator from a local LGBTQ youth organization and members of the audience. Questions centered on how the performers began their lives as performers, the reactions from family and friends, and how it felt to perform. After the 45-minute discussion, about 12 students went with the performers into another room to prepare for their fashion show. The clothes were part of a clothing drive with a local drag king troupe donating many of the supplies (i.e. makeup, shoes, clothing, etc.).

Teachers helped set up the stage, the sound system, and lighting among other things in preparation for the event. There were approximately 40 people in attendance including parents, teachers, administrators, and local community members.

The school's safety coordinator/after school program coordinator, Alex, was the principle organizer of the event. When asked why he wanted to have the drag show, Alex responded:
Since taking this position in the fall, I have tried to foster conversations around
gender, expression, and sexuality to broaden the scope of the students'
understanding of what these concepts are, how they interact with other social
structures, and what the effects of those interactions are, both positive and
negative. Then, a student asked me about doing drag at school. He wanted to
feel comfortable and safe expressing himself, but he wasn't sure how to go
about it, and he didn't feel as if he'd be safe in drag on the school bus. After a
lengthy one-on-one conversation, we agreed to use CHS as his home base for
exploration, and Lori and I discussed the idea of a Drag Closet. The Closet got so
much positive attention that I began to want more; specifically, I thought about a
celebration of the students' bravery, of the donors’ charity, and of drag. I
support my local performers at so many of their shows and have come to know a
few, so I didn't think it would be difficult to get them in. After some light
research, I realized what a groundbreaking event this could be and kicked it into
hyperdrive. I called, emailed, visited, Facebook stalked, and everything else I
could do to garner the support of the community. I was met with way more
resistance than I expected, but it only made me want to succeed more. The
students had begun to ask me daily when the drag event was happening, and the
fear of disappointing them combined with the determination to prove that drag
could happen in a high school setting pushed it to the finish line. Considering my
high school experience, which could be likened to the polar opposite of CHS, I
went into the LGBTQ world with little knowledge or understanding for how it works, who it was comprised of, and what it meant. I felt like bringing drag out of the bars and shedding some overhead light on it might make it more accessible to the students as a positive exploration of gender and performance. Besides, if these kids are going to be painting their faces with mom's make-up, they should at least have some idea of how to go about it (Administration Interview, 5/3/2012).

Alex’s reflection on the drag fashion show centers on three main themes. First, Alex felt it was his responsibility to attend to the needs of his students; again, another moment of caring at CHS. Second, Alex wanted to assist students in exploring their identities and how those identities are interwoven with social structures; an example of critical inquiry. Finally, Alex relied on help from his colleagues in and outside of the school; thereby, developing a community in this effort. These norms of caring, critique, and community mirror the norms of the larger school.

In concert with Alex’s thoughtful words on why the drag fashion show was important to the students, the flyers that the school distributed also highlighted the need for a drag fashion show (See Appendices A.2, A.3, & A.4). “Break the Silence” flyer (Appendix A.2) speaks to a taboo that is broken by having this fashion show. By transgressing gender norms, CHS is actively asking students, teachers, and community members to challenge normative aspects of gender in today’s society. The other two flyers (Appendices A.3 &
A.4) echo this sentiment. In fact, these two flyers state, “The gender binary is out, and we know it.”

While Butler (1990) notes that drag in and of itself will not break down the gender norms embodied in a heterosexual matrix, she does suggest that drag and other gender non-confirmative acts can show the gaps and fissures within heterosexual matrix of power. That is, these acts can expose the instability of gender; thereby, displacing the power behind gender.

As an aside, Alex did note there were some members of the LGBTQ community who had concerns on a high school putting on a drag fashion show. There were concerns over what parents might say, the sexual nature of drag itself, and what the performers might say and do (Administration Interview, 3/1/2012). This self-policing by members within the LGBTQ community highlights the power normativities; in this case, gender normativities can have on a marginalized population. Foucault speaks of this self-policing in his work on discipline as well as biopower (See Foucault 1977/1995 & 1978/1990). Foucault’s work on discipline and biopower suggests that there are ways to create a more efficient system for disciplining bodies; where monarchs and armies no longer have to have direct control over a population. Instead, practices (e.g. education) informed by particular discourses (e.g. hierarchies) have the power to manage and discipline bodies in a much more efficient manner. Therefore, marginalized communities often police themselves in an effort to assimilate to the dominate culture (Ehrenreich, 2002/2003). Alex stated that it was his colleagues, mainly heterosexuals, at the school
that provided a lot of the support for his efforts (Administration Interview, 3/1/2012). Finally, Alex noted, that instead of complaints by parents, some parents asked him to make the show bigger next year.

**Advertising.**
I was able to see another expression of CHS’s norms in their advertisement for their school in a local publication. First, before even looking at the advertisement, the location of it is of value. The school placed the advertisement in an LGBTQ monthly magazine that addresses local and national issues of concern to the various LGBTQ communities. The magazine describes itself in the following manner:

> The magazine’s content is diverse as well, targeting a large cross section of the community while at the same time speaking to specific groups under the large GLBT umbrella. According to studies listed on their corporate website, [the magazine] is the number one media choice for the [local] GLBT and allied community, the number one media choice for newcomers to [the city] who have been in the city for 5 years or less, and the number two print choice for African Americans in [the city] (Magazine’s website, 7/2/2012).

By placing the school’s advertisement in an LGBTQ magazine the school is, perhaps, actively targeting a certain population; a population that is queer, or at least queer friendly, urban, and racially diverse. This would seem to parallel the existing population at CHS.
The advertisement (Appendix A.5) itself stresses four main ideas. First, it tells of CHS being a safe space for all, which includes diversity based on “race, sexuality, gender and whatever else makes us unique and different from each other” (CHS Advertisement, May 2012). Second, the advertisement notes its academic achievement and rigorous curriculum. Third, the advertisement focuses on the school’s critical thinking curriculum; taught by “progressive teachers.” Finally, the advertisement (though not displayed in the appendix in an effort to maintain confidentiality) speaks of its reliance on the community partnerships, which includes partnerships with museums, a LGBTQ youth organization, an arts group among others. In total, the advertisement expresses norms that center on inclusion, academic excellence, and community building; norms that are present in the school itself.

The queer step of advertising in an urban, LGBTQ magazine, coupled with its articulation of inclusion across different identity markers, counters a view that only White, heterosexual students can have value in an educational setting. The school seeks out support from, and seeks to build on, communities that society, historically, has marginalized. The demographics of the school as well, with a large percentage of the student body being non-white, non-heterosexual, and economically disadvantage supports this view. Moreover, it melds with the director’s vision for the school; a school of diversity, safety, and academic excellence.
Students and norms.
Students at CHS articulate norms along three interconnected domains: friendliness among fellow students, celebration of difference, and the caring nature of the staff at CHS.

In the study, students consistently spoke about the friendliness of their classmates at CHS. Though I don’t have room in this study to share all of the students comments concerning friendliness, here are a few examples that mirror the feelings of all the students I interviewed. Renata states:

...It’s like it’s like when I came here I didn’t notice until like a couple of weeks after I went here. Because, when, ahm you know, when you, when you, a first impression with someone, when you first see someone, oh she is fat or you know that kind of thing we don’t notice as humans that we are prejudice. So, like, after I started going here and like there is a guy [a student] with a cape and bell that walks around every single day and the 1st time I came here for orientation I was like eeeew where did he come from and then... I was locked out and he opened the door for me and I said thanks. He is like hi what’s your name, cause you know I wasn’t expecting him to talk to me you know we come from different groups, but it like its ok we are all humans. He was like what’s your name and we had a normal conversation. I’m like he is cool. You would had never guessed, but I was like you can’t judge a book by its cover, so I learned
that when I came here, so I don’t really judge people (Student Interview, 1/12/2012).

Heidi had a similar experience when she first came to CHS. Heidi commented:

It’s hard to explain, the first day I knew I didn’t want to leave. Like at orientation that this school is where I wanted to be when I graduate. Like everybody is so nice and even the drama that does happen here it lasts like 20 minutes and that’s it because they are like, other schools say they are anti-bullying, but they’re not at all. But, CHS is, like, will solve the issue if they are that much of a problem then they can leave because we don’t [want] you to be feeling threatened. And, I don’t know. I just, I love the environment at CHS cause everybody is so nice because they accept you there is no issues (Student Interview, 2/16/2012).

These sentiments echoed by other research participants focus on the importance CHS places on creating a caring atmosphere for students. While I did not attend the school’s Care to Hope day, many students mentioned it as an example of creating a caring, friendly atmosphere. Care to Hope was a day set aside for students to work in small groups with people that they may have not previously known. In each group, the students perform team-building exercises and discuss issues that they may have as teenagers. Elgin said:
It [Care to Hope day] brings people closer together. I was in a group of people that I didn’t know at all. Three of the people in the group are my closest friends now. Like it’s just I never thought that these people would be going through the same things that I went through, or things that I am going through, or that they could have this amazing advice that could help me. (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

By spending time with students and exploring their issues in a safe setting allows the students to develop friendships with other students in the school. Moreover, Care to Hope sets the tone for the upcoming school year. That is, the school values its students, will listen to their concerns, and be there for support as needed. The school not only speaks about friendliness, as an institutional norm, the school acts on it as well.

Besides the norm of friendliness, the school values diversity as well. As Basil explains when reflecting on differences between his old school compared to CHS:

... [I’ve] always been myself, never ever ever tried to fit in. I’ve always worn crazy colorful outfits, always worn weird hats things all over my wrists...I think the reason why I don’t get harassed here like I did at [his old school] is because, well, the first of all I mean being different here is what is expected. Like it’s not expected, but like you being different, it’s what makes the school. At [his old school] being different is what they didn’t want that, but here it is welcomed.
You are welcomed... You are different and everyone here is different (Student Interview, 1/5/2012).

Clarissa notes her ability to be open about her sexual identity as well as her ability to express herself at CHS.

Yeh, I definitely like I didn’t in middle, I am [bisexual]. Like, I never like told anyone that I liked you know girls cause everyone knew I liked boys. Then, here, I felt like it was I could just be open with people...[I] got these [face piercings] at the end of my 8th grade year because I wasn’t allow to have them at the middle school. But, at the school I was going to it was you couldn’t have facial piercings cause it was against the dress code. Once I knew I wasn’t going there, the summer before I came here, I got the piercings cause I always wanted them. [In] 8th grade, someone else had one single ahm nose ring and then they [the school staff] told the person to take it out. It was a big you know hassle for that person. They were like they called their parents and told them take it out right then and there in class. I don’t want that happen to me and so then I came here and they are like we don’t care and I was like whoa what you don’t care, you don’t care if my hair is blue, and I have tons of piercings that is crazy (Student Interview, 1/26/2012).

Heidi, too, found value in diversity at CHS with regards to sexual identity.
My 1st year of CHS I actually came out to my family and then two weeks after that me and my girlfriend started dating, and she told her family too like two weeks after we started dating. I don’t know CHS is like, [it] showed me even when I leave this environment there will still be like a reminder if there are people like that in one small area there should be billions of more in a larger area. I don’t need to pay attention to negative stuff cause there are it just made me realize that drama all the time you can avoid the drama, like 100% you can say (Student Interview, 2/16/2012).

These three students find value in the celebration of diversity at CHS. Basil, a student that often wears rainbow belts, bracelets and furry skirts, sees CHS as a place of refuge free from victimization that he had experienced in his previous school. Clarissa, too, came to see CHS as a place where she could express her own identity, which she expresses partially through her purple hair and facial piercings. Clarissa and Heidi both saw CHS as a place where they no longer had to hide their sexual identities, which helped Clarissa form bonds with fellow classmates, and Heidi to begin dating in high school, a traditional rite of passage for many heterosexual teenagers.

Therefore, the schools value placed on diversity allows students the opportunity to express their own identity free from the ridicule of other students. Moreover, it provides queer moments in the students’ lives where they can explore gaps and fissures with a matrix of domination, which gives them the possibility of a life with hope rather than subjugation. Finally, the schools focus on diversity allows for the critical reflection
of domination within society. That is, students, by being able to express themselves, can critique structures in society that seek to normalize and marginalize “others.”

The final norm revolves around the “ethic of caring” by teachers and administrators. While I spoke about the “ethic of caring” throughout this chapter, here I focus on its normative attributes and tangible results. In a general way, Everet states, “that there is support from the teachers and kid’s parents here. Like they are nice as well, they are just like teachers basically, the teachers here are really nice and supportive (Student Interview, 2/1/2012). What I later found out was that Everet had a very difficult home life, which included physical and verbal abuse from his stepfather. His stepfather did not accept Everet being openly gay. As the school’s director told me about a phone conversation she had with Everet’s stepfather said, “He [Everet] has tendencies to be gay. He is a Devil worshipper” (Administration Interview, 3/9/2012). Lori goes on to state:

But he [Everet] came in that morning and said his [step]father grabbed him by the neck, threw him on the bed, and "If I can't beat it out of you, I will kill you!"

Now, what he didn't tell Children’s Services – because he was interviewed by hospital Children’s Services – is that when his father says those words, they have weight. His father went to jail for murder. His father killed someone before. His father has a bad temper. So, the father told me, "I was trying to show him." He said,"[Everet’s] going to end up in jail or dead." I said, "Why would you think that?" "Because of his choices. You see, this is a choice. Because if he'd go to
jail, he's going to get raped or killed. Or if he's on the street because he's gay, he's going to get beat up or whatever. I'm just showing what life would be like for him."

And they said he couldn't come back unless he was changed. "Into what? A horse?" I don't know! I called both parents and said, "You need to know, Everet has talked to me today, and because of the words he said, if a child tells me that he hurts himself for someone else or for someone has hurt him. I must call Children's Services." I said, "After this phone call, I will be reporting it."

The mother said, "He wanted to show him what's going to happen to him. He was just trying to making an example of what is going to happen to him." “I don’t know where, anywhere, it says that in your life, my life, and her life, that someone's going to put their hands on our neck and beat out of me, being a heterosexual white woman? You can’t beat out of you who you are.” And I asked her to talk to our guidance counselor. Our guidance counselor said he needs to go to [a mental health facility] now. He was suicidal (Administration Interview, 3/9/2012).

In light of this horrific home life, Lori took Everet into her home. Lori is an emergency home host and has taken in other kids’ from the school over the years. This “ethic of caring” by the school’s director demonstrates the lengths that the school will go to to protect their students. While an extreme case, and expressing the concerns of one
student, students reflected other examples that were just as important to them as what
Lori did for Everet. Basil reflects:

I’ve been doing so much better [with grades and self-confidence as compared to
his previous school]. The teachers are so much more sweeter to me, and so
much more supportive, and like they talk to me like I’m a person. Like I like your
outfit, I’m like really you like this, yes, oh wow cool. And, like definitely the art all
around the school I feel a lot more open and the kids definitely seeing kids with
bright purple hair like yeah im going to fit in so much perfectly here (Student
Interview, 1/5/2012).

Basil’s reflection that teachers speak to him like a person implies that previously,
teachers did not view him as a person. As noted in the next section, the teachers in his
old school played a part in his victimization along with other students. With students
and teachers now treating Basil as a human being, he is able to work on his grades and
his self-confidence, items missing from his prior experiences.

Clarissa parallels Basil’s comments when she states:

The teachers here, I feel like we can if we have problems with anything like here
or outside of schools. We can come to them and talk to them. I felt in my old
school, if I had a problem with something going on in the school, I felt like
couldn’t even go talk to them....If I went to them they’d be like why are you
complaining. (Student Interview, 1/26/2012).
Elgin, too, commented on the impact of teachers caring at CHS. He states:

Here at CHS teachers actually care and they want to like help prosper, and get like a hold of things, and get everything in your life, and have like a plan for your classwork, and your homework and everything. They are there to help you. Like it didn’t dawn on me until about the 2nd term where I knew I was in a different setting, everything was different, it did really dawn on me. So, coming here I didn’t know that I could talk to teachers, and if I needed an extension on something I could get it or at least I could talk to them about it and see if we could come up with some solution (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

In these two examples, the impact of teachers caring resonated with the students. For Clarissa, she felt a sense of empowerment. Since teachers validated her voice, her locus of power shifted from the external to the internal. The shift allows Clarissa to position herself as a subject rather than an object. In a similar vein, Elgin shifted his perception of himself from that of a person without a voice to a person with a voice due to the care of the teachers he encountered at CHS.

**Queer Strategies.**

Queering is the final strategy adopted at CHS. Foucault (1969/1994) notes, “discourses are objects of appropriation” (p. 382). At CHS, the staff and students have opted to reappropriate various discourses in a queer manner. First, CHS problematizes the deleterious impact *bianrisms* can have on the social body. The drag fashion show
highlights their reappropriation of the gender binary. By having drag queens and kings work with students at CHS, the school usurps the male/female binary in favor of a fluid notion of gender identity. At the same time, the drag fashion show foregrounds the gaps within a heterosexual matrix, allowing for new readings of gender.

Second, CHS uses critique and deconstruction as part of their queer strategies. CHS’s advertisement in the city’s LGBT magazine deconstructs the ideal student as White, middle-class, and heterosexual. The advertisement explicitly states that the school values diversity in its student population. It does so in an enumerated fashion by highlighting their diversity across race, gender, and sexuality lines among others. The deconstruction of the student warrants new renderings of what is of value within the social body. Furthermore, the school reflects it in its actual student population. As Kelly noted, the White, male, heterosexual is not the dominant group at CHS (Teacher Interview, 3/5/2012).

CHS buttresses the deconstruction of the ideal student with the use of critique. By finding value in diversity of self-expression the staff at CHS is actively critiquing the normative gaze of the dominant society. Rather than policing sexual identity or gender expression, the staff at CHS validates the students self-express even as it goes against dominant narratives. This critique of normalization enhances the students’ ability to find value in themselves, which, in turn, can lead to them working on other issues such as academic achievement, self-confidence, and empowerment.
Finally, the “ethic of caring,” though perhaps not seen as a queer strategy by most theorists, is a queer strategy nonetheless. This is due to the social justice imperative of queer theory as seen in the works of Manalansan IV, 2006; Puar, 2005, 2006; Ward, 2008 among others. Foucault (1984/1997) states,

The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them [power relations] in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of the law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self. That will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible (p. 298).

Foucault concerns himself with articulating games of power rather than liberating one’s self from power, since, according to Foucault, society cannot exist without power relations. Therefore, the goal should be to articulate those power relations so society can better manage them with the least amount of domination as possible.

So, too, does an “ethic of caring” seek to provide the least amount of domination as possible. For example, Basil spoke about teachers at CHS talking to him as a human being. The materialization of Basil as a subject rather than an object, in a moment of caring, allows Basil and others to become beings that can begin to care for themselves and others. This process of self-actualization, which begins with an “ethic of caring,” allows students to manipulate these games of power (if they so choose), rather than being an object of their articulation.
**Systems of Oppression**

Concerning my final research question, contesting and acquiescing to systems of oppression, CHS utilizes both when addressing inclusion. That is, CHS contests and acquiesce to various systems of oppression — more so, the former rather than the latter. I define systems of oppression as those power relations that seek to marginalize some and privilege others. These power relations are inherent in discourses as informed by the power/knowledge couplet. These discourses inform, and are informed by, material practices and norms such as the law, medicine, education, science, and media among others. The power of domination resides in the processes of these practices and norms. As Foucault (1978/1990 states:

> Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter; they are the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums which occur in the latter... (p. 94).

With this reading of power relations by Foucault, power relations are in various processes (e.g. knowledge) and are created by inequalities that exist within these processes. Therefore, of interest in this chapter, is the space where inequalities exist in the processes that inform education today.

To explore the spaces where inequalities exist, I will foreground students’ stories of domination that occur within school. The students told other stories as well including
family members and religious organizations ostracizing them for being LGBTQ. However, I focus on their school experiences for the purposes of this study. After the students’ reflections, I will report on how CHS acquiesces to or contests these systems of oppression.

**The stories.**
The stories students told about their previous educational experiences ranged from mild nuisances to horrific tales with the latter being more common. Basil describes his former school as predominately white, rural, and religious. He states:

... the country [boys] are usually the ones that got me the most. Cause you think about it most of the country that go there had very religious families. They didn’t agree with that [being gay]. They were raised to be against how I am, they were raised not to like people like that. It’s just kind of, just human nature to them. Yeh, they got me bad, they were pretty harsh on me, they would talk about me in the middle of class while teachers are teaching like laugh at me I would just sit there. And, the teacher would be like do we have a problem here and they are like no oh no nothing, and then she just ok and continue teaching and they would start right back (Student Interview, 1/5/2012).

When questioned on what specifically happened at his old school, Basil responded:

[There was] no support system whatsoever. There was actually like in my social studies when they were talking about old kings in the past and everything,
apparently, there was this one that had wives but fooled around with men I
guess, and I my teacher would like call him fairy and call him fruity and make fun
of him. And I would just be sitting there and wanting to walk away as the entire
class was laughing and I was the only with a straight face like why are we
laughing about this. What kind of adult does that? Then again there is so many
adults out there that do that

In another episode, Basil tells me of his classmates at his former school.

...and every time I was at lunch or at the hallways the guys would turn and be
like what are you looking at, I’m just standing. They’re like don’t try to come on
to me. And, I’m like, what is it with straight guys that just because you are gay
you want everyone like, oh my it was bad.... Yeh, I even had really really
personal questions that are way too inappropriate for me to mention right now,
but people like asking me like sex and everything with guys even though I never
even had been with a guy. And, I would just sit there with shock that people
were actually asking me such vulgar questions for no reason. People I never even
talked to me in my life.... as far as the kids go they just tortured me. Like I got
beat up a lot. I got pushed in lockers a lot. I called a faggot every time I was in
the hallways. Teachers would look at me be like what are kids wearing nowadays
like call me a freak, call me a drama queen, and I was getting bullied by teachers,
by students, by parents that come in with their kids, like, they would look at me
all awkwardly and be like what is that kids problem. I just walked in the hallways
I didn’t talk to anyone I just had my head down all the time cause I know no one wanted me there and I didn’t want to be there (Student Interview, 1/5/2012).

Basil experienced the power of domination first hand at his pervious school. Not only was he tormented by his classmates, his teachers also ridiculed his identity. This process of humiliation and subjugation is commonplace in most schools in the U.S. (GLSEN, 2009). Moreover, there were no teachers for Basil to confide in or GSA to provide emotional support. Instead, Basil had to endure this practice of victimization on his own. Basil’s attributes his lack of self-confidence to these and other experiences.

Karen, a classmate of Basil’s that went to the same school prior to coming to CHS, also had bad experiences at this school. Karen stated, “It was a bad school... I decided to cut my hair off last year like super super short, I liked it, but they didn’t like it... so I got picked on for that and so I said I don’t want to go here anymore” (Student Interview, 12/7/2012).

Elgin, too, explained the victimization that can occur within a school building. Elgin, talking about his friends little brother, stated:

He [his friend’s brother that went to the same school as Elgin] is immensely smart. I was blown away by him....he was just like this amazing guy once you got to know him, but no one gave him a chance and everyone picked on him [due to a speech impediment]. And, one day he was in the bathroom a student took a pen and stabbed him in the spine and the pen broke inside of him, so he was
rushed to the hospital, and he was in the hospital for months because the ink had like some effect with his blood (Student Interview, 1/25/2012).

Elgin noted that the principal ran the school like a military base. The students wore uniforms and the principal “would take students out of lunch and put them on the wall and yell and scream and humiliate them in front of the whole student body” (Student Interview, 1/25/2012). Elgin was fortunate in that his dad notified the principal that he could not use those tactics on his son.

Other stories emerged from the students in this study all along the same lines, teachers not caring, students being angry and not getting along, the repression of diversity, girl on girl attacks over boys, and the lack of self-expression inter alia. While there were overt forms of victimization there were also covert forms of victimization as well. These practices included a lack of curricula inclusion for diverse voices, no GSA, and isolation among other practices. Because of these types of educational environments, most of the students that I interviewed for this study came to CHS for safety. They saw CHS as a refuge of last resort.

**Contesting Oppression.**  
As I have explained in this study so far, CHS does an excellent job on contesting covert and overt forms of domination. Overtly, CHS includes multiple, diverse voices in their curriculum as seen in the drama, dance, language arts, and social studies classrooms I observed. However, rather than simply including diverse voices in the curriculum, the teachers engage students to critically reflect on systems of oppression and how those
voices became marginalized in the first place. This practice usurps an additive model of multicultural education.

However, contesting oppression does not only occur in the formal curriculum, it also exists in the informal curriculum. This includes having a drag fashion show, having a GSA, having queer and transgender guest speakers, and housing the local LGBTQ youth center in their building for after school programs among other practices. These informal moments of education parallel the values and norms of the school, which includes having openly gay administrators, having an enumerated mission statement that is inclusive of all students, as well as teachers and administrators actively addressing moments of unkindness in an immediate and caring fashion.

Perhaps the most important aspect of CHS’s contesting of systems of oppression revolves around the interview process. Every research participant acknowledges the power of the school’s director in promoting an inclusive, safe environment for students and staff. The diversity hill that the director will die on resonates in every corner of the school building. While the interview process can act as a weeding out process that is not available to non-charter schools, it is a tool that other schools can adopt to combat subjugation.

Policies, curriculum, pedagogy, and normative attributes of CHS all work in coordination with one another to contest systems of oppression. The school does this under an
umbrella of an “ethic of caring,” a critical worldview, social justice, and a sense of community.

**Acquiescing to Oppression.**

CHS, as a public charter school, is not a utopia. It still must adhere to state guidelines especially as they relate to high-stakes testing and state curriculum standards. These standards can be oppressive for the students as well as the teachers at CHS. Rather than promoting creativity and critical citizenry, these guidelines have the potential to inhibit deeper, more intellectual growth. However, during my time at CHS, the teachers did not seem too concerned about these restrictions. Instead, they sought opportunities to build on existing guidelines and teach beyond the official curriculum. Having a supportive administration likely enhanced their ability to see beyond standards and testing.

As noted earlier, there were concerns by some teachers that they were not reaching their African American students. Whether there was an absence of diversity in A.P. U.S. history, or overhearing students concerns about being acknowledged during Black History month, or just a general feeling of disconnect from their African American students, this may be emblematic of not successfully contesting systems of oppression as it relates to racial diversity.

As I also mentioned earlier, there was a mixed message concerning racial issues at the school. The racial minorities I spoke with did not mention any concerns over their racial identity at CHS, in math classes there was a substantial representation of racial
minorities in the advanced classes, the students most likely on academic probations were White male students, and the school’s director actively sought a racially diverse student body. Nonetheless, the school has done an excellent job ensure LGBTQ students felt included in the school’s space, more attention to the needs of racial minorities may be warranted.

**Conclusion**
In this chapter, I have articulated how CHS’s model of inclusion materialized in the daily practices and normative values of the school. The practices include the interview process each student must go through before their first day of class, the critical and immediate attention to addressing issues of victimization in the school, the support of self-expression of students, and the focus on diversity as a mainstay of CHS. These types of practices chiefly used policing strategies to meet the goal of inclusion. I complicated the concept of policing by noting that policing can contain elements of caring, critical reflection, and self-expression rather than simply an authoritarian approach to policing.

Other practices seen in the school’s model of inclusion centered on curriculum and pedagogy. Within the formal moments of instruction, teachers focused on bringing marginalized subject to the center of their curriculum. With this centering of marginalized voices came a critical reflection on why society marginalizes certain communities in the first place. Additionally, there were informal moments of curriculum and pedagogy as well. These included workshops focusing on identity and diversity, a
collaboration with the local LGBTQ youth organization, and the use of a GSA to support their LGBTQ students.

As a result of formal and informal curriculum and pedagogy students felt cared for by teachers, which allowed them to feel empowered and attain a sense of self-worth, which is critical in shifting from a worldview of being an object to a worldview where they see themselves as subjects able to inform their lives. The curriculum and pedagogy also embraced Freire’s (1994) conscientização. This allowed students to not only see the injustice in the world, but to take charge to change the inequitable aspects of society. The school employed a strategy of resistance when implanting their curriculum and pedagogy. That is, the curriculum and pedagogy created space for opposition to the dominant culture. It was within this space that students could begin to articulate themselves, their identities, free from systems of oppression. As a result, students were able to seek social change with this new sense of empowerment (e.g. Equality Now & Pioneer).

The norms at CHS utilized a queer strategy to achieve their goals. I highlighted this in the exploration of the drag fashion show, a local advertisement, and the students’ reflections on the school. These practices illuminated various normative attributes of the school including queering gender in the drag fashion show, a reappropriation of the ideal student in the LGBTQ magazine advertisement, and an “ethic of caring” and critique as expressed by the students themselves.
Finally, overall, the school actively contested various systems of oppression as illustrated throughout the chapter. However, two teachers did feel as though they were not successfully connecting with their African American students. Even though, there was a mixed message on this account, it may be an area for further growth within the school’s model of inclusion.

In sum, I have addressed the following research questions: 1. How does the school’s culture at one U.S. high school promote an inclusive, safe space for its students? 2. How do strategies of policing, resistance, and queering occur within this school’s model of inclusion? 3. How does this school’s model of inclusion acquiesce to and contest existing systems of oppression? In the next and final chapter, I explore the implications of this research for students, educators, and communities.
Chapter 5
Theoretical Insights from the Research
and Implications for Students, Educators, and Communities

There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious—makes you so sick at heart—that you can't take part. You can't even passively take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you’re free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.

― Mario Savio, December 2, 1964

Savio, though utilizing the machine as a metaphor for the hierarchical, oppressive administration at University of California Berkley in the 1960s still serves a purpose in the 21st century. Even though Savio presented the machine as a top down univocal practice that marginalize the masses under the direction of an elite class; today, educators can reappropriate the imagery of the machine to crystallize the complex power relations within the social body that supports a system of domination — a system of domination that occurs within and across various processes (education, economics, law, media, inter alia). As the author of this work, I spend time with the process of education rather than other processes that enable domination.

In this final chapter, I explore the theoretical insights gained from this study; as well as, the practical applications educators, researchers, students, and communities can use to
queer inequitable practices of such processes (i.e. education). Theoretically and methodologically, I consider how this study informs queer theory and intersectionality. As mentioned earlier in this study, queer theory and intersectionality are not independent, segregated silos. Instead, they are dependent on one another to provide a holistic account of how power relations operate within a given process. In this chapter I will also consider the contributions of this study for practical application within the education system. These practical applications provide tools for educators to create a more equitable educational experience for all students.

Before delving into detail concerning the implications of the study, I will provide a few broad strokes of the study for educators, researchers, and theorists. First, theoretically, my study has sought to expand the conversation of multiculturalists and queer researchers in the field of education. In this study, I have articulated the interplay between ideology and materiality. While queer theory often circulates in the regions of ideology and multiculturalist in materiality, I have sought to wed the two. Specifically, I have explored the concept of heteronormativity as an ideology grounded in the normative arrangement of heterosexuality — a normative arrangement that depends on binaries, policing, and material consequences. Social forces, including schools, use binaries to create the “marked and unmarked norm” Halperin, 1995, p. 44); thereby, reinscribing bodies within an “us and them” context. These social forces utilize practices of policing to normalize such binaries as gay/straight among others. As this study has shown, policing can occur in such practices as erasure of identities, gender norms,
sexuality norms, among others. These ideological propositions have material consequences.

This binary ideology materializes itself through such school practices as the exclusion of same sex couples at dances, in the curriculum, in the lack of safe spaces for LGBTQ students, inter alia. It also materializes itself through the victimization of LGBTQ students as evidenced in the overrepresentation of LGBTQ students in incidences of harassment, drug use, suicidal ideation, absences from school, etc. The ideological project of binarism has material consequences that reinforce the ideology.

I have examined the interplay of materiality and ideology as a way to get at the subject. By exploring both constructs (ideology and materiality), I am able to render a subject that is no longer a predetermined object, but a subject that has the potential to finesse existing systems of oppression in a manner in which the subject can begin to write their own script.

Second, this study has added to previous work in the field insofar as I have grounded it in the lived experiences of subjects who have been exposed to progressive, inclusive policies. Previous research in the field has relied heavily on noting the destructive forces of education concerning LGBTQ identities. I stand on the shoulders of that work. To provide recommendations, first, I had to understand the problem. As a result of previous research in this area, I have sought to expand that work by reporting on how an inclusive model actually works within education. Though CHS still polices and
regulates identities, it does so in a much less harmful manner than what has been shown to occur in other schools. This positive agenda allows educators to ground their future policies and practices on actual events rather than hypotheticals. As a result, I have identified five practical steps for creating a more inclusive environment for students. These include a focus on caring, critical inquiry, social justice, curriculum, and school policies. It is within these five areas that real change can occur for all students. With these broad strokes noted, I now turn to the details of my implications for educators, researchers, and theorists.

**Theoretical Insights**
Concerning queer theory, I will spend most of my ink on the concept of homonormativity, since this area has received little, to no, attention, in education. As a reminder, Duggan (2002) defines homonormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (p. 179). Or, as Manalansan (2005) states,

> Homonormativity is a chameleon-like ideology that purports to push for progressive causes such as rights to gay marriage and other ‘activisms,’ but at the same time it creates a depoliticizing effect on queer communities as it rhetorically remaps and recodes freedom and liberation in terms of privacy, domesticity, and consumption” (p. 142).
To *get at* homonormativity within the process of education, I canvass homonormativity within the norms of CHS and their actual practices.

**Queer theory, norms, and practices.**
The ideals of CHS are to promote a model of inclusion that is contingent on honoring diverse voices within a safe educational setting. These norms play a critical role in reappropriating students as objects of scorn and ridicule to subjects that have a critical worldview with the possibility of promoting social justice within their lives. While the norms promoted by CHS do not directly address homonormativity explicitly or implicitly, they do not depoliticize queer subjects either. In other words, CHS posits a new world order in which community is built on diversity rather than conformity. For the most part, CHS does not foster an “us vs. them” mentality as seen in many civil rights movements. Instead, the school seeks societal change through individual change. Ideally, it appears that that the school believes that through empowering the students through and “ethic of caring,” critical inquiry and self-exploration, this will lead to transformation of not only the individual, but the larger society as well.

This transformation of society supported by CHS does not always directly contest other processes that create inequities within the social body (e.g. economics, the law, media, etc.), but it does do so indirectly through its deconstruction of these processes within their formal and informal learning experiences. This lack of connecting individual subjugation to the larger systemic attributes of societal domination allows for the possibility of the co-option of individuals into a consumerist, depoliticized social body —
a key component of homonormativity. That is, since CHS does not always address issues of oppression from a structural point of view, students are susceptible to a dominant discourse of subjugation from other processes (e.g. media, law, economics, etc.), despite the critical pedagogy provided for students at CHS.

Nonetheless, the indirect deconstruction of these processes at CHS enables teachers and administrators to address these inequalities within the social body at an individual level as seen in their practices and policies at CHS. These practices and policies, spoken at length in the next section of this chapter, include contesting gender binaries, a focus on self-expression, a critique of the social world and its use of language, and an enumerated anti-bullying policy that the school enforces on a daily basis.

In short, CHS’s model of inclusion contests homonormativity at the individual level, and to a lesser extent at a structural level. CHS, itself, does not co-op certain LGBTQ populations into a halcyonic haze of consumer citizenry at the expense of “others.” However, the lack of consistently acknowledging systemic oppression in favor of how oppression operates at the individual level may diminish the impact of the school’s work of inclusion. Educators can argue, that students with this experience of inclusion, will take these experiences into other aspects of their lives. And, perhaps there is a case to be made for that. However, I argue that the relentlessness of domination requires educators to address the systemic aspects of domination as well as how it affects the individual student. Educators should do this explicitly and directly.
Finally, CHS’s work at the individual level does appear to shift the student as an object to a student as a subject, which can allow students to seek change for themselves and others. Furthermore, while CHS does promote a narrative of progression with regards to society being a space for equality, it does so by critiquing society as it stands today. CHS’s idealism is rooted in the promise of possibility, but not in a utopian worldview. This idealism allows students at CHS to see other possibilities that are not centered on the ethics of consumerism, privatization, and individualism as proffered by the project of homonormativity at least at the school level.

**Intersectionality.**
Concerning intersectionality, CHS’s negotiation with identity categories aligns with McCall’s (2005) work on categorical complexity. As mentioned in chapter 3, anti-categorical complexity examines how identities are constructed and what work they do in the social body, particularly as it relates to systems of oppression. Anti-categorical complexity concedes there is a material aspect to identity, but critiques its normative construction (Butler, 1993b; Oswin, 2008). Intracategorical complexity foregrounds the complexity of different identity formations. For example, as Kwan (2002/2003) states, “race is often gendered and ... gender is racialized’ (p. 1274). And, intercategorical complexity investigates how identity groups vary across various axes. For example, the differences between two master categories such as men and women and the income disparity between the two.
CHS spends considerable time on all three complexities. CHS works through anticategorical complexity in its work on contesting gender binaries and the social construction of identity. In the drag fashion show the students thwart a delaminating binary of male/female. By contesting this binary, students are able to problematize the social construction of identity and the problems associated with its construction within its present iteration. That is, what happens to those people that do not fit neatly into the categories of male/female? The students and staff at CHS offered one solution to this problem through its use of drag.

Concomitantly, the Equality Now project also complicated the social construction of identity categories. However, for Equality Now, it was not so much about creating new spaces with the heterosexual matrix; instead, Equality Now focused on how society marginalizes subjects based on their respective identity categories. This initial step is crucial insofar as it allows students and audience members to see the fallibility of identity categories and what work they do in the social body with regards to marginalizing certain populations. Equality Now is an exploratory project of identity categories. Again, a step that is need before action can take place to reappropriating identity categories — a key aspect of anticategorical complexity.

Since CHS builds community based on differences, they do not do as much work on intracategorical complexity as is done on the other two complexities. For example, in the study, I did not witness the complication of intragroup differences within formal or informal settings; such as, the diverse voices of African Americans, Women, or LGBTQ
populations. This is not to say it did not happen, but I did not witness it. However, this is not unexpected. When students first begin to explore inequities within a educational setting, politically, it may be more advantageous to see marginalized populations as a unified group. This unified perception can facilitate more power when addressing issues of inequality across different domains (e.g. political access, legal rights, economic equality, educational rights, etc.). This unification of groups also circumvents a practice of “divide and conquer.” Processes that perceive a group as fragmented can more readily maintain the status quo by co-opting some members of the marginalized group, as seen with the case of homonormativity, without having to alter the processes themselves. This is part of the efficiency spoken about by Foucault and his work on biopower.

However, by not articulating the diverse voices within any given population, the school runs the risk of silencing voices not often heard by the larger society. As seen in the patriarchy of the Civil Rights Movement for African Americans and the racism in 1st and 2nd wave feminism. As well as, the lack of attention paid to LGBTQ people who are poor, under insured, incarcerated, elderly, or gender non-conforming. As such, educators should consider if their pedagogical practices and policies address the needs of all within various subjugated populations.

CHS addresses intercategorical complexity primarily through the process of inclusion. The inclusion of diverse voices in the social studies curriculum highlights histories that schools often silence. For example, in the A.P. social studies class the teacher included
the histories of African Americans and LGBTQ people. Rather than simply including these stories, the teacher chose topics and people that actively critiqued U.S. policy and actions; such as, Ralph Ellison, Harvey Milk, and Nina Simone among others. This approach usurps an additive model of inclusion in favor of a critical model of inclusion.

By addressing the practice of erasure, students are able to see the differences in experiences of those that society privileges and those that society marginalizes. Moreover, it gives historical context to these practices, which can lead to a greater reading of how processes can manipulate identity categories over time. Intercategorical complexity does not always address the diversity within a particular category, nor does it problematize identity categories themselves. However, since CHS uses all three complexities the school produces a more holistic reading of identity and their role in society.

In sum, I have shown that CHS engages such concepts of homonormativity, anti- intra-, and intercategorical complexity; though, some to a lesser extent than others. CHS engages homonormativity by shifting the student as an object to that of a subject. The materialization of the student as a subject, coupled with a critical worldview, allows students to contest the co-option of subjects into a halcyonic haze of consumer citizenry, at least at the school level, so often employed to dampen the power of marginalized communities.
CHS works with identity categories through projects such as anti-, intra-, and intercategorical complexity. While the school tends to focus on problematizing identities consistent with anticategorical complexity, and demonstrates the inequities across identities consistent with intercategorical complexity, the school does not usually investigate the differences within certain identity groups. Perhaps it is a political calculation or a lack of time that a deeper analysis of intracategorical complexity demands. Either way, it is one area for future consideration. The use of intracategorical complexity can ensure teachers do not erase sub-groups within a particular marginalized group.

Implications
Implications for students, educators, and communities gained from this study focuses on six areas, which includes an “ethic of caring,” critical inquiry, social justice, curriculum, policies, and strategies. CHS utilizes these practices to implement their model of inclusion. Though not an exhaustive account of the practices adopted by CHS to provide an inclusive environment for its students, it does provide actionable steps that educators can undertake to promote a more hospitable, equitable educational experience for students of diverse backgrounds.

Ethic of caring.
CHS actively promotes an “ethic of caring” at its school; this ethic of caring responds to the needs of the students as well as the staff at CHS. Noddings (1988) emphasizes that an ethic of caring serves as a counter balance to the moral certitude as proffered by
Kant. That is, an ethic of caring reverses the Kantian moral ethic by espousing a relational care, rather than a morality based on duty to conform to a particular episteme (in the case of Kant, Christianity and entrepreneurship). Noddings’ (1988) notes that “modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation” (p. 222) all must be present to ensure an “ethic of caring” within education. While I don’t not explore Noddings’ work in detail here, her four cornerstones, modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation, are all present at CHS.

At its core, the school promotes an “ethic of caring” by unequivocally demanding respect, inclusion, and community when the parent(s)/guardian(s) and students first make contact with the school’s director at CHS. The school director does not speak of inclusion as a platitude, she gives concrete examples of what inclusion means at CHS by providing examples from the student body. She buttresses these examples with an enumerated discussion of what future students can expect to encounter at CHS; such as, people with different abilities, men in traditional female attire, and transgender students.

In addition to the school’s director impassioned call for inclusion, the teachers and administrators act on this clarion call. They do so by not tolerating unkindness by their students against other students or the students themselves. Instead, the teachers and administrators seek community rather than individualism and support of one another rather than competition with one another. Though CHS may appear to be a school devoted to the individual concept as it relates to self-expression, the school seeks unity
and community through this idea of self-expression. This stands in contrast to a school that may try to build community through conformity. In short, the school’s promotion of community through self-expression allows for the honoring of students as themselves, rather than honoring the students for some ideal representation of what society expects of its students.

CHS furthers this sense of community by utilizing community resources in the area. Housing the local LGBTQ youth center within the school itself, brings not only a space for diversity to occur, but also connects students to the larger community outside of the school’s walls.

The school also promotes an “ethic of caring” among its staff. Openly gay administrators feel safe to express who they are in the school. In other settings, this comfort level may have not been possible. Not only are these administrators role models for the LGBTQ students, they serve as role models for all students, usurping negative images that students may have about LGBTQ people from the media, religious organizations, family, and previous school experiences.

The teachers also feel protected by the school this allows teachers to tackle controversial topics without fear of backlash from the administrators. This is critical insofar as it allows them to, critically, address issues within their classrooms; the next topic I address in this section.
Critical inquiry.
As Kumashiro (2009) notes,

The result was not a student who learned the right things, but a student who both learned what mattered in school and society and unlearned or critically examined what was being learned, how it was being learned, and why it was being learned (p. 28).

CHS takes Kumashiro’s words to heart when teachers critically examine the role of the society in today’s world, the effect it has on marginalized populations, and how the process of marginalization operates, historically, and in its contemporary iterations. For example, the teachers, rather than policing language in an arbitrary manner to promote inclusion, the teachers spend time explaining the contentious nature of language, how it is socially construed, and the implications for those centered in a halcyonic haze of privilege and those left at the margins of society. This often requires teachers to go off script and explore topics outside the state standards and guidelines.

As a result of this critical inquiry, students are able to have a deeper reading of the world and their place in it. Moreover, critical inquiry has the potential to lift students beyond mere objects of the “machine” (Savio, 1964) to active participants in changing the social body to a place of respect, diversity, and equality. This critical inquiry is a foundational piece to promoting social justice.
Social justice. 
By having a critical worldview, students are able to promote social justice within their own work. In the Pioneer project and Equality Now workshops, students take their critical knowledge and implement it in their work. This work, when shown to audiences, can transform the students as well as the audience members themselves. The social justice imperative at CHS is an important aspect to CHS’s model of inclusion. This aspect allows students to not only have knowledge of the world around them, it shows them as empowered beings that can create change in an effort to create a more just society for all; a worthy goal in the pursuit of democratic citizenry.

Specifically, Pioneer and Equality Now, both allowed students to create their own stories and narratives as they related to social issues. The students did this by investigating their own role in the matrixes of power within society. By empowering students to investigate, their own social issues and how it has affected them, students are better able to relate to the topic resulting in work that was impactful for students and audience members. Tethered to this work, was research conducted by the students to provide a critically reading of the social body. The curriculum, writ large, also includes a social justice imperative as well as a promotion of critical inquiry.

Curriculum. 
The formal and informal moments of curriculum at CHS seeks to move marginalized populations from the margins of education to the center of education. As mentioned previously, the inclusion of diverse populations does not simply call for the infusion of
disparate groups; it calls for the critical reflection on the social construction of difference.

In formal classroom settings, this required teachers to go beyond the state sanctioned curriculum to investigate topics of diversity on their own. Teachers had to do extra work including reading beyond the curriculum and creating lesson plans that would address the needs of all their students. This did not seem a hardship, as the teachers I interviewed for this study had a passion about their fields, and are avid learners who embrace learning from a wide range of perspectives. As Robby noted,

I like to know how people live because I don’t think there is one right way to live. In college, I was really influenced, there isn’t one right way to live, and my own personal readings, so I wanted to see how other people lived and believed and thought.... I just watched films, read about it, and I’ve always been an open person interested in the ideas of others. So, I think it’s just an intrinsic thing it came from me quite frankly. What life was like, why they perceived things the way that they do. I came to the conclusion that truth is perspective. And, if truth is perspective...it’s important that we see as many perspectives as possible (Teacher Interview, 3/5/12).

Education is dependent on its teachers among other things. Teachers at CHS have a passion for their respective fields and often go beyond the official curriculum to ensure they are educating their students in a manner that is important to the students. As Lori
reflected, the students run the school at CHS (Administration Interview, 3/9/12). While, perhaps a bit of hyperbole, this comment by the school’s director does demonstrate the attention given to the students by teachers and administrators when making curricula decisions. Moreover, the teachers know they have the support of the administrators when making those decisions. In short, the administrators at CHS respect the teachers and their decisions, which provides them with a passion to pursue a just education for their students.

In addition to these formal moments in the curriculum, the school provides a wealth of educational experiences during informal moments at CHS to try and reach their students. These experiences include a GSA, the drag fashion show, guest speakers from diverse backgrounds, and workshops on issues of identity and social justice among many others. Not only do these informal moments provide a connection with the students, it also allows teachers to pursue topics that they may not get to address in their regular classes. These formal and informal curricula practices strengthen the policies at CHS.

**Policies.**

Policies at CHS are straightforward in their meanings — no victimization of yourself or others, respect, community, value in self-expression, academic achievement, and valuing diversity. What is not as straightforward is how the school goes about ensuring that students and staff adhere to these policies.

First, the school presents an enumerated no bullying policy to their students. An enumerated policy grounds these lofty ideas in concrete, real-life examples. This allows
students and staff to, clearly, know where the school stands on ensuring an equitable education for all. Without a clear understanding of this policy, students and teachers would be ambivalent in implementing and adhering to the policy itself. There would be no clear demarcation as to what is acceptable or not at CHS.

Second, since, teachers, staff, and students clearly understand the scope of the policies at CHS, they are able to implement them in a timely manner. This lack of ambiguity of policy creates the possibility for action to ensure an inclusive educational experience for their students.

The school implements these policies by using strategies of policing, resistance, and queering. Policing strategies are not top down, hierarchical directives from the administration; instead, policing occurs at multiple levels and in multiple ways. For example, there is self-policing, student-to-student policing, along with the more common teacher and administration policing. However, the teacher and administration policing does not occur within a vacuum. Instead, the policing by teachers and administration police through such practices as critical inquiry, an “ethic of caring,” and connecting policing with a social justice imperative.

Strategies of resistance promulgate policies as tools to ensure the school does not marginalize minority populations within the curriculum or the school itself. The strategy of resistance counters the normative gaze of dominant society by critically reflecting on
the social processes that marginalize populations and by giving a voice to diverse populations within CHS.

Using queer strategies to support the policies at CHS revolve around the practices of normative attributes of socialization within society. That is, CHS queers identity and the matrixes of power relations that support a binary worldview. CHS seeks to achieve this through such practices as producing a drag fashion show that shows the gaps and fissures within this a heterosexual matrix. The drag fashion show demonstrates the performative aspect of identity and its fluid construction within society. Moreover, using queer strategies decenters the ideal student from that of a White, heterosexual, middle class, able-bodied male to a student that is marked by difference; albeit, a difference that is socially constructed.

In sum, implications for educators, students, and communities center on an educational experience that focuses on an “ethic of caring”, the promotion of critical inquiry, an imperative of social justice, curriculum that challenges the practices of domination, and policies that favor inclusion over exclusion. Not only do these implications serve to empower the students and reach their full potential, the implications provide teachers with greater respect and trust; as well as, a greater demand to go beyond state mandated guidelines. By having these types of policies and practices, students have a chance to give back to their communities outside of the school, and realize the potential of being a democratic citizen in a pluralistic society.
Conclusion
As noted throughout this study, I have chosen to foreground LGBTQ identities. If I had
chosen to foreground other identities based on race, class, ability, and so forth my
conclusions would have been different. However, the model of inclusion spoken about
in this study is translatable to groups not highlighted in this study.

The director started CHS as a space that was inclusive and free of victimization for its
students. Though no school is perfect, CHS has made considerable strides to create such
a space. They made these strides by developing an ethos of diversity and relentlessly
adhering to the needs of that ethos in their policies and practices.

In this study, I have shown with the use of queer theory and intersectionality that CHS
builds a community of learners through the celebration of differences rather than
demanding students conform to the values and demands of the dominant society. This
is not to say that dominant culture is not at play at CHS, it is. But, from my reading of the
school, the school seeks to allow the students “to acquire the rules of the law, the
management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self. That
will allow [them] to play these games of power with as little domination as possible
(Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 298).

The school attempts to allow the students to play these games of power by instilling a
particular worldview. A worldview that is positioned vis-à-vis particular practices within
the school. The practices include an “ethic of caring”, of focus on self-expression, a
social justice imperative, a critique of the processes within the social body, and policies that support these practices.

The “misfits” at CHS have found a space where they are free to be themselves and explore other aspects of the world without concern for their safety. They have built a community that is centered on respect and concern for each other rather than competition and a normalizing gaze often found in other schools. The “misfits” have built a space where being a “misfit” is honored and new knowledges can take root.
## Appendix

### Analysis of Documents

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renata</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaican Descent</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>IDs as Rastafarian often mistaken for African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Biracial: Hispanic/White</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elgin</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarisa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everet</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Multiracial: African American and German Descent</td>
<td>Gay/Bisexual</td>
<td>In a polyamorous relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.1. Student research participants at CHS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role at CHS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>Parent/Substitute Teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Safety Coordinator/After-school Coordinator</td>
<td>Cisgender Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Queer/Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robby</td>
<td>Language Arts Teacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Theatre Teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velma</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlene</td>
<td>History Teacher/Administrator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>School Director</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantham</td>
<td>Artist in Residence</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.2. Teacher, administration, parent & visitor research participants at CHS
WHAT IS

The ! is a student-designed, student-led piece of social justice theatre launched by the \ students. We visualized a way for themselves to have an impact on the devastating issues of inequality in schools.

With assistance from regional and national partners and enhanced sustainability planning, the 2011-2012 \ is poised to make a national impact. The six-hour workshop will teach the how-to process of using Inquiry Based Learning and postmodern theatre to create social justice theatre. We've combined more robust components — video, blogging, and a community support website — with multiple state-wide workshops designed for to guide teams of teachers and students in creating their own school. The outcome: disseminating messages of equality, diversity and acceptance to potentially thousands of people in Ohio, the Midwest and across the nation.

WHAT THE PROGRAM PROVIDES

LEARN THE EFFECTS OF INEQUALITY
• Manifestations through bullying
• Increased absenteeism
• Low student engagement and test scores
• Serious depression leading to violent acts

CREATE A MEASURABLE PROGRAM
• Pre-program student and faculty surveys to establish baseline metrics
• Post-program student and faculty surveys to evaluate effectiveness and change

PROVEN METHODS AND BEST PRACTICES
• Documentary on program development
• Use of student-to-student social awareness
• Supply of customizable posters and PSAs
• Q&A sessions with program developer and an access to instructional videos from the 2-day intensive workshop in Columbus, Ohio

SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY WEBSITE
• Secure, Facebook-like community website dedicated to connecting faculty and students to share ideas, questions, results and more while developing their Equality Project

Figure A.1. Equality Now brochure
Figure A.2. Drag fashion show flyer
Figure A.3. Drag queen donation flyer
Figure A.4. Drag king donation flyer
Now enrolling grades 9 through 12 for the 2012-2013 school year. Apply online and schedule a visit now.

Tuition free!

A Designated Safe Space for ALL

The climate of CHS is one of acceptance and diversity in regards to race, sexuality, gender and whatever else makes us unique and different from each other. These ideals are threaded into our rigorous college prep and arts curriculum and are evident in both our student body and staff. Our #1 rule is to simply respect and be nice to one another.

* 2 Year School of "Excellence"
* Arts & Critical Thinking Curriculum Taught by Progressive Teachers and Community Leaders

Figure A.5. CHS advertisement
Bibliography


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