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Teacher Professionalism, Embodiment, and Surveillance: An Autoethnographic Study

Melanie Cloutier-Bordeleau, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Martino, Wayne, *The University of Western Ontario*

Joint Supervisor: Ingrey, Jennifer C., *The University of Western Ontario*

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study entails using my own situated knowledge and experience as a white bisexual secondary school teacher from a low socioeconomic background as a basis for data generation and analysis. Attention is given to examining the current enforcement of specific norms governing behavioural and physical conduct, and the role these norms play in constructing and reinforcing hierarchical structures of identity related to race, gender, socioeconomic status and sexuality. The main question the study explores is: How does the performativity and performance of educator “professionalism” contribute to constructing/reinforcing hierarchies of identity with respect to gender, sexuality, social class, and race? This study explores the idea that “professionalism” as a concept within educational institutions serves as a regulatory regime that is dictated and informed by a cisgender, white, heterosexual, male perspective, and it further examines my own experiences of such regulatory conditions.

Keywords

teacher professionalism, autoethnography, critical theory, Foucault, performativity, intersectionality, bisexuality, gender, race and white supremacy culture in schools, classism and sexism in education.

Summary for Lay Audience

In this study I provide a reflective account and analysis of my own experiences and how I understand the concept of “professionalism” in teaching and its impact on my own life as a teacher. Specifically, I am focused on how this idea of being “professional” reflects “values” of white supremacy, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, classism, and so on, in our culture. I highlight how professionalism enforces particular codes of conduct and expectations which impact in significant ways on how teachers perform their identities with significant equity implications. As such, in this thesis I reflect on some of my critical experiences in education as a teacher, and as a white, bisexual person from a low-income background to provide insight into the impact of professional codes of conduct on my life as a teacher in school. The main question this study is interested in exploring is: How does the teacher performing “professionalism,” as expected, further contribute to reinforcing ideas about people and their identities? (i.e., race, gender/gender identity, sexuality, class...). Further, another important question is: how does this teacher performance affect the visibility or expression of one’s own identity? This study will show that this concept can be used to reinforce particular identities and people as more acceptable than others.

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Firstly, I would like to extend the deepest gratitude to both of my incredible supervisors, Wayne Martino and Jenny Ingrey. It has been nothing less than a challenging few years inside and outside the context of this thesis, and I am beyond appreciative of the level of compassion that both Jenny and Wayne exercised through it all. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with both of them, and I truly feel that I have learned so much from this experience and from them both. Their helpful engagement with the writing process truly brought clarity and depth to my voice in this thesis. Next, thank you dearly to Matthew White, my too-good-to-be-true partner, who listened to me read this thesis and its variations out loud to him over and over again for the past few years, each time with dedicated focus, in order to provide insightful feedback. He truly deserves recognition for helping me bring greater clarity and depth to this work as well. Lastly, I would like to extend a special thank you to my mother, Linda Bordeleau, who cheered me on tirelessly and supported me throughout the entire process. If it were not for my mother - for her love, hard work, commitment, values, and encouragement - I would not be writing this thesis today. She has always been the person that I can truly depend on to motivate me, to lift my spirits, and to keep me in check when necessary too (how Foucauldian of her).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Thesis

Through an autoethnographic approach, this study will entail using my own situated knowledge and experience as a white, predominantly feminine, bisexual secondary school teacher from a low socioeconomic background as a basis for data generation and analysis. It is evident from extensive literature in the field that schools assist in reinforcing particular normative identity constructs through curriculum, pedagogical practices, and the general school culture/climate (Ingrey, 2018; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005). Attention will be given to examining the current enforcement of specific norms governing behavioural and physical conduct, and the role these norms play in constructing and reinforcing hierarchical structures of identity related to race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality. My aim is to show that there are constructed ideals of performed “professionalism” dictated and informed by a cisgender, white, heterosexual, male perspective. I am interested in exploring the idea that “professionalism” as a concept within educational institutions is a regulatory regime which has impacted on myself and my sense of identity as a teacher, and as such, I would like to also present the notion that these ideals are precisely what must be resisted in order to open up more encompassing and inclusive conceptions of professionalism - ones which are not identity-restrictive or invested in concepts rooted in the oppression of marginalized identities.

1.2 Research Questions and Aims

The main question I am interested in exploring is:

How does the performativity and performance of educator “professionalism” contribute to constructing/reinforcing hierarchies of identity with respect to gender, sexuality, class, and race?

In considering this, the sub-questions I intend to explore in relation to my own subjectivities are the following:

In what ways does the institutionalized definition/expectation of “professionalism” or “professional conduct” in schools exclude bisexuality, or contribute to particular marginalizing perceptions and practices of bisexuality?

In what ways does it reinforce perceptions of class-based differences or the normative expectations of class performance/passing?

In what ways does it reaffirm and perpetuate binarized conceptions of gender and of male dominance and patriarchy?

And, in what ways does it contribute to the continued maintenance of white supremacy culture inside and outside of schools?

The critical focus is on professionalism and professional conduct. With these questions in mind, I will explore the influence of both *explicit* (enforced, and written/binding), and *implicit* codes of conduct (enacted and discursively encouraged within our day-to-day interactions) on educator identity and embodiment (Foucault, 1975). Explicit codes are the visible, tangible, spoken/written codes, which may entail practices such as: accountability measures, evaluation processes, and so on. Implicit codes are hidden social codes that are influenced by explicit expectations/cultural norms, which may produce

particular conceptions of self within institutional contexts, unspoken/un-coded expectations of conduct and image, peer pressure, internalized self-regulation/identity adherence, and so forth. These codes seep into our individual ways of being, and they strongly influence and impact on our conduct and embodied relations in educational institutions such as schools. As such, codes (both implicit and explicit) are understood in terms of their normative and regulatory impact on our daily lives, particularly with respect to how we perform and enact our identities which speaks in powerful ways to Butler's (1990; 1993) conception of performativity and Foucault's (1975; 1980) notions of subjectivity and power relations.

At the heart of these normative expectations and requirements with respect to enacting "professional" conduct is a binarized construct of sexuality, with heterosexuality being positioned superordinately in relation to any other sexuality, such as bisexuality, as its subordinated "other" - one constructed as legitimate, the "other" as illegitimate. Anything beyond the scope of these categories falls into the cracks as non-existent or unacknowledged. Gender is also binarized into two normalized categories, with men and masculinity privileged over women and femininity, which are devalued and repudiated, which Sisson and Iverson (2014) explain can be read through "a feminist lens [that] exposes how gender norms and stereotypes associate greater status and competence with masculine rather than feminine characteristics" (p. 219).

Racial hierarchies, which have been historically enforced, are also maintained through understandings of "professionalism" as well as through hiring practices, and more. In her article, "Troubling the Teacher Diversity Gap: The Perpetuation of Whiteness Through Practices of Bias Free Hiring in Ontario School Boards," Abawi

(2018) finds “that ... policies have not had the desired results, and in some ways have contributed to perpetuating the status quo, and the ongoing overrepresentation of white teachers in schools” (p.ii). In addition, socioeconomic status is maintained through financial control and wealth, but is also constructed through “acceptable” attire/dress, and manner of speaking etc., with visual and behavioral cues working to classify and categorize people, particularly those of lower socioeconomic income brackets. “Proper” behaviour and ways of being as a teacher are not only gendered, raced, and heteronormatively framed but also embedded in classed relations.

It is in this sense that I understand discourses of professionalism as implicated in certain normative systems for enforcing “intelligible” and “unintelligible” ways of being (Butler, 1990) a proper teacher/educator. “Professionalism” or rather being or acting professional, therefore, is performative; it is one way of prioritizing the embodiment of enforced and expected norms. The “professional” becomes *the* image or persona that educators are expected to embody and to *be*; this act of *being* is therefore a prerequisite for entering the field and is encouraged by and introduced within teacher training programs. The “professional” categorically includes particular identities and their signifiers as acceptable/intelligible and excludes “others” as unacceptable/unintelligible.

This concept also serves as a means of reinforcing conceptions, or misconceptions of teacher identity, in other words, there are certain expectations for teachers in terms of what is considered to be appropriate conduct and behaviour which are raced, classed, gendered and heteronormatively framed. As such, educators are subjected to regulatory norms with regard to maintaining their professional image; personal and professional lives are not viewed as clearly distinct within the field of education.

1.3 Overview of Thesis

The thesis comprises six chapters, including this one. In chapter 2, I outline the relevant theoretical frameworks, centering critical concepts by Foucault (1975), Butler (1990; 1993), and Crenshaw (1989; 1991). In chapter 3, I summarize and contextualize some of the existing literature applicable to four determined areas of focus in my thesis (Educator Professionalism and/or Performativity and Teachers as Role Models; Sexuality and Bisexuality in Education; Gendering Identity in Education; Class and Identity in Education; and Race and Identity in Education). In chapter 4, I provide a methodological justification for employing a critical autoethnography as a basis for my study. In chapter 5, I provide the actual autoethnographic accounts of my lived experiences as a white bisexual teacher from a low-income background in the form of a series of vignettes and critical incidents that focus on key moments in my professional life. Finally, I conclude with chapter 6, where I provide a summative overview of the thesis and outline the implications for moving forward.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction to Theoretical Framework

In the analysis of this thesis, I draw on theoretical frameworks that are informed by my reading of Michel Foucault (1975) and Judith Butler (1990, 1993). Foucauldian interpretive analytic frameworks address questions of normalization with respect to conceptualizing and disciplining the body within institutional spaces of schools. Butler addresses the relevance and significance of sexuality and gender performativity to examine the impact of the heterosexual matrix which informs my own understanding and embodied experiences of the norms governing professional conduct in schools. The sections below will develop upon these concepts further.

2.2 Foucault

It is important to note that when Foucault (1980) discusses “power” he is not referring to it in the most familiar sense of the term, in which it is regarded as a form of control or domination implemented from the top-down, or as authoritarian. It differs from this common misunderstanding of the term as authoritarian, as it is “not the domination of the King in his central position, but that of his subjects in their mutual relations: not the uniform edifice of sovereignty, but the multiple forms of subjugation that have a place and function within a social organism” (p. 96). Power, therefore, is seen as relational, exchangeable, and is often redistributed circumstantially; it is maintained, as well as managed. Thus for Foucault, power is not as overt as we may perceive it or understand it to be, rather, it is subtle and it is a part of our everyday regulatory conduct – sometimes acknowledged, and other times not. I draw significantly on such notions to examine my own engagement with the regulatory regimes and norms that govern professional conduct

for teachers in schools to highlight both their impact, and also my own ways of negotiating with such power relations. While these power relations have an impact and exert an influence on my own life as an educator, I am not merely a docile subject who submits to such norms.

Foucault considers power to be a network of relations, exercised both visibly and invisibly by various social components and by all individuals in some form or another through practices of imposed and embodied discipline. He understands power to be both indiscreet *and* discreet, a permanent apparatus that is alert and everywhere, while simultaneously functioning largely in silence:

the apparatus as a whole [...] produces “power” and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely ‘discreet’, for it functions permanently in silence. (p. 177)

Thus, *disciplinary power* is understood as a technique that entails shaping and directing one’s actions and conduct: “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. It is not a triumphant power [...] it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy” (Foucault, 1975, p. 170).

Foucault believes that with the development of disciplinary spaces - spaces constructed in ways which allow for power to regulate more efficiently and effectively - and practices such as those involving codification, surveillance, and normalization, we

have all become participants in a socially contractual oppression and regulation of others and of the self. We regulate behaviour in social contexts, and in the internalized regulatory behaviour of self-governance in order to fit normative structures. This informs my own understanding of how power is exercised with respect to establishing norms governing what is to count as professional conduct and embodied expression for teachers in schools. For example, teachers are expected to behave and act in certain ways that are consistent with norms governing what it means to be a professional which are implicated in white, hetero-cis, and middle-class frames for determining and legitimating one's status as an educator in the school system.

Specific regulatory norms inform what counts as ideal behaviour and professional conduct for teachers – failure to adhere to such norms can result in being cast as an abjected or repudiated subject. According to Foucault (1975), one of the greatest effects of power is to normalize. Norms become created, enforced, and henceforth, embodied. Non-conforming, or undisciplined bodies become subjected to scrutiny or punishment: “The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (Foucault, 1975, p. 170). We are in a process of perpetual regulatory surveillance, which seeks to compare, differentiate, hierarchize, homogenize and possibly exclude. While this structure encourages uniformity and the creation of a social body (by means of collective coercion), it also does so through a process of individualization. Each individual is measured by standards of constructed normalcy and regarded as acceptable or unacceptable by all who participate in the process, and we *all* participate in the process somehow. Whether we are vessels in our

own subjection, or whether we resist the subjection (as we are not “merely docile”), we are all still “made” or produced as particular subjects within certain networks and regulatory systems of power. Foucault (1975) does not regard this social structure of power as inherently negative, but as functional and utilizable in its productive potential to challenge existing norms and to produce alternative possibilities.

However, Foucault does focus on disciplinary power and its effects with respect to subjugating individuals: “A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching [...] as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency,” and as the “effects of power derive from one another,” educators are equally regulated by this structure and process of surveillance; they are “supervisors, perpetually supervised” (Foucault, 1975, p. 176-177). In this respect, teachers are consistently subjected to scrutiny within the field of education and specifically in schools particularly with respect to their role as professionals. They not only are subject to this scrutiny, but they also exercise this onto others (peers and students). They exist as individual components of a larger social structure, “meticulously coordinated cogs of a machine” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, p. 186) through which they are open or exposed to a degree of surveillance and enforced accountability measures with respect to their conduct, identities, and pedagogical practices.

For starters, the actual architectural and physical spaces of the school are oftentimes constructed to reinforce the disciplinary role of the institution as an apparatus for examination through practices of normalization. Not only does the constructed disciplinary space impact student conduct, it influences and shapes educator conduct as well. There are certain expectations within school spaces to which teachers are required

to adhere. Cameras are often displayed throughout schools, magnetic fobs are sometimes used to track those who enter and depart, sign in/sign out sheets are expected to be utilized diligently, staff members are dispersed throughout the school, student and staff formally and informally evaluate teachers, classroom doors are expected to be open at all times.... etc. The discipline of educators is regulated by those who are visible within the space (administrative staff, students, coworkers, and the self), as well as by those who are invisible (school board agents, parents, community members, politicians...and so forth): “It is this fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection” (Foucault, 1975, p. 187). Persistent governance and surveillance also tend to play a role in reinforcing social hierarchies of identity in relation to normative constructs (related to gender, sexuality, class, race...etc.). Bodies in disciplined spaces, like schools, are “made” by the codes of conduct (explicit codes, their interpretations, and their practiced forms), and enforced through practices of surveillance.

As Foucault (1975) argues, there is power in writing, in codifying; power lies within the normalization of conduct, behaviour, appearance...and so forth. If it is written, it is punishable or exploitable – and there is then potential for it to be ‘othered.’ As an example, at one former place of work, the educator code of conduct document stated that it is important to celebrate cultural diversity and individual differences. However, this stipulation is followed by an extensive list of regulations and rules governing individual educator appearance, attire, behaviour, and practice. I would argue that these regulations inhibit certain cultural (social, political, and so on) practices related to one's identity.

Within these codes lies the creation of intelligible versus unintelligible identities, where

members of marginalized groups are particularly excluded, and others are endorsed/encouraged.

Because educators face immense pressure to conform to certain norms of the institution through constant governance and micromanagement, they often participate (consciously or subconsciously) in the performance of a constructed persona of “professionalism” – they embody the codes or rather norms (social, written, interpreted...etc), and as such they are “made” through enacting or performing them. While codes of conduct or employee handbooks may not explicitly state particular content in relation to the embodiment of identity, there are certainly implicit messages in these codes, or codes that often exist outside of the text that surface within the spaces (in short, not all of these existing “codes” are written). For example, vague and interpretable terms like “professional” can be used to reinforce that certain physical or behavioural presentations of the self do not fit within the stipulated frames of reference, enforcing a process of normalization.

2.3 Butler

Butler’s (1990; 1993) work has also significantly informed my understanding of the performative expectations of teaching in schools and its gendered aspects with respect to determining the normative limits of what is to count as professional conduct. She focuses heavily on her critical concepts of gender performativity, the *heterosexual matrix*, and embodiment. To Butler, gender is performative, not always in the literal sense but more in terms of embodying certain norms. When Butler discusses this notion of performativity, she is not suggesting that we are actively “choosing” our self-

representations through complete consciousness, or that we are theatrically producing these roles as actors would actively produce theirs with the awareness of doing so, but that we are participants in “a *stylized repetition of acts*” which are “instituted in an exterior [socialized] space” (Butler, 1990, p. 191). Essentially, we are compelled by the normative structures of identity categories, particularly by those of gender, sex, and sexuality. Butler (1993) critically distinguishes the two terms, performance and performativity, with great clarity and purpose:

performance as bounded “act” is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s “will” or “choice”; further, what is “performed” works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable. The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake. (p. 178)

She believes the socially constructed norms and expectations of gender “compel” us into a particular way of inhabiting the body. Despite stating that it is not particularly willful or by “choice,” she does acknowledge that the role of the individual is that of active participant in the process of repetitive gendered acts. Gender can only be *chosen* within the parameters of culturally available terms that pre-exist the subject; the subject may not be entirely free to create the self at will, but they create the self on the basis of terminology and the coherent identifications available to them.

I have created a diagram (*Fig. 1*) that represents my understanding of the *heterosexual matrix* discussed by Butler. The *heterosexual matrix* illustrates that intelligible and normative identity is constructed relationally, where gender informs sex,

sex informs gender, and these both inform and are informed by sexuality. In other words, gender and sex are both constructed categories which relate to each other and inform an understanding of sexuality and its limitations. This is particularly important with respect to how sexual identity is heteronormatively regulated. Therefore, to fit within normative constructions of gender, to be seen as a “proper” or “intelligible” subject, one must

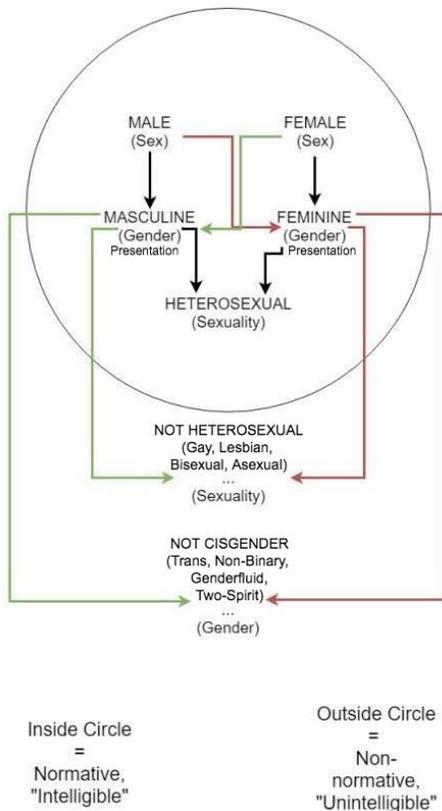


Figure 1: My Understanding of Butler's Heterosexual Matrix

participate in the heteronormative performativity of their specific categorization. For example, a subject that has been constructed as or is perceived as female should adhere to norms of feminine gender presentation and embodiment, and as a result would therefore be viewed as, and further constructed as heterosexual (even if by perception only).

As Fig. 1 indicates, if the perceived female is perceived as masculine, the subject may become identifiably subversive, and as a result, the perception of the subject shifts to become the unintelligible, non-normative “other.” This “other” may be perceived as incoherently/incorrectly

gendered, ungendered, non-heterosexual etc., and as a result of this “disruption” the subject may be rendered incoherent or simply attributed an abjected status given the regulatory heteronormative framework for legitimating embodied gender and sexual identity. Butler (1990) states that *the heterosexual matrix*:

designate[s] that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. [It is a] discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (p. 208)

Hence, the *heterosexual matrix* reaffirms the idea that the practice and process of gender is about maintaining what has become accepted as a coherent gender and sexual identity. The continuity of identity creates a coherent subject and maintains the resulting power relations which have become culturally stabilized. Discontinuous or “incoherent” subjects bring attention to the normative limits of the matrix and are seen as unintelligible subjects as a result of the disruption to normalcy. To sum up, Butler believes that gender is a performative practice occurring in a culture, where it is continuously enacted and embodied in accordance to specific cultural norms and in context specific ways in our everyday lives. It is in this sense that the body is not static and is also not entirely self-created – it is not determined solely by biological sex but is experienced and lived within specific contexts and enacted according to specific regulatory norms.

Butler has allowed me to grasp, with greater clarity, the ways in which gender norms function in regulatory ways to constitute sexual subjects. This is critical for my work, as I have come to better understand how norms governing understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality are so prominent in our day-to-day embodiment, and how they influence the normative expectations of “professional” conduct within institutional contexts. Hence, the performance of gender and sexuality are heavily tied to the

heterosexual matrix as a basis for constructing socially acceptable and unacceptable, or incoherent identities. Institutions utilize this framework and aid in reinforcing the social constructions of “normal” gender and sexual identity. This regulatory sex-gender system enforces certain norms of educator embodiment that are enacted according to a set of expectations about what it means to be professional and “othered” as unprofessional. As I illustrate in this thesis through my autoethnographic account of my own experiences as a teacher in schools, being read as “incoherent” or non-normative in relation to gender, sex, sexuality, class, race...etc., is often interpreted in ways which risks one being thought about as “unprofessional”. It is in this sense that the term “unintelligible” which Butler frequently uses to describe subjects that exist outside of normative constructions of identity, is to be used interchangeably with the term “unprofessional” in my thesis.

In drawing on Butler, I am concerned to examine how the performativity *and* performance of educator “professionalism” contribute to constructing/reinforcing hierarchies of identity and oppression. In this respect, I understand that performance (the conscious enactment) *and* performativity (the enactment compelled by normative expectations) are interconnected in this process of “professional” embodiment, and specifically in relation to gender and sexuality. In my experience as an educator, I have been aware that there are particular moments where I am not wholly cognizant of, or considerate of the fact that I am unconsciously producing what is expected of me as a “professional”, and I am unchecked by certain aspects of my identity (such as my whiteness) as well. But then, there are also times where I am actively and entirely aware of this process, and I *choose* to participate in (or resist) the theatrics of this production. As an educator I am often aware that I am acting out “teacher” and even sometimes

“woman” – a white woman - in a particular way when I enter a classroom. In short, I do not understand these actions as existing in opposition to each other; they are mutually constitutive.

I have also found Butler’s conception of heterosexual hegemony and the heterosexual matrix to be helpful and relevant in terms of my own conceptualization of embodiment as a bisexual teacher. As a bisexual person, and as someone who has fallen in and out of certain expectations of gender-presentation, I have often been regulated within the space of educational institutions (as both a student and an educator) and therefore I fit outside of the normalized conception of identity, as indicated by the heterosexual matrix. I exist outside of the dichotomy and am often displaced as a result. That being said, the perception of my identity is malleable. I can fall on either side of the spectrum (the visible/disrupting other, or the invisible/acceptable norm) based on my partner at any given time and on whether or not I decide to “out” myself in particular contexts; social perception disregards my bisexuality when I am partnered with men - i.e., my bisexuality is more likely to be debated or not legitimated due to the presumption/outward appearance of heterosexuality. Not only is my identity (sex, gender, sexuality) implicated by this process of production and definition, but my role as a “professional” educator is produced and performed within and against the parameters of the *heterosexual matrix* as well. This role is also compelled by regulatory practices and norms (implicit and explicit).

For Butler, agency seems almost illusory in the sense that we believe that we are actively and intentionally making certain choices, but the structures, norms, and networks of power in which we are enmeshed determine the limits of these choices as teachers

within the context of our profession. So, while agency exists, it is enacted within regulatory systems and networks of power. We are often complicit in our own regulation, and in our own self-presentation. We cannot, as educators, simply choose not to produce the persona of the “professional,” as there are tangible consequences to this. We either *do* choose to participate in the production for fear of these consequences, or we resist and face the potential consequences.

2.4 Intersectionality

Much like Butler’s points about gender, there exists particular identities which are “intelligible” or “professional,” and those which are “unintelligible” or “unprofessional.” Essentially, professionalism is a way of enacting an embodied subjectivity, within pre-existing specific (schools/workplaces) and broad (community, social media) contexts. As such, “professional” embodiment is enforced/regulated in several ways. Professional identity is also constructed in consideration to the intersections of identity (which Butler states are important to consider), such as class, gender, race, sexuality... etc. The consideration of ‘intersectionality’ (coined by Crenshaw, 1989;1991) is imperative to any work that takes a critical perspective of identity and interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 2019). These intersections are inseparable components, and they all play a part in the performative aspect of professional identity. As an educator, gender is regulated through acceptable/unacceptable constructs of feminine or masculine presentations or behavioral conduct. Class indicators are performed through signified classifications, where anything deemed as existing outside of acceptable class discourse/presentation is made visible for the purpose of exploiting/othering or is merely rendered invisible.

Sexuality is subjugated, regulated, or erased, and additionally, race is hierarchized. How all of these categories intersect and exist in combination with each other is important to consider as well.

Anthias (2012) states that intersectionality is “an approach which relates to the social, economic and political context ‘within which intersecting oppressions’ linked to gender, race and class are organised [... and it] requires locating social categories and divisions within a broader social framing that attends to power, hierarchy and context – both spatial and temporal” (p. 5). I intend to explore “the connections between different forms of subordination and exploitation” by making use of “the notion of interlocking oppressions organised through a ‘matrix of domination’ [...] relating to various domains of power (identified as structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal)” (p. 5). Throughout this thesis, I employ this critical concept of intersectionality to expose the ways in which educator embodiment further contributes to marginalizing and hierarchizing practices in schools.

2.5 Conclusion to Theoretical Framework

Both Butler and Foucault are concerned to provide us with analytic and interpretive frameworks for explicating regulatory systems of regulation, whether they are for constructing and creating a process for homogenizing specific gender and sex-based identities (Butler), or whether they create expectations of conduct enforceable through systems of power relations (Foucault). Both theorists illuminate how behaviour, image, and conduct are regulated to “make” subjects into particular beings. Bodies are made through regulatory practices and normative/cultural constructs and are disciplined

through normalizing practices that hierarchize identities and enforce homogeneity. They believe that we do have some agency in this process; the body is not docile entirely, but it *is*, rather *we* are, influenced by regulatory norms, and as a result, we may become complicit without paying attention to the ways in which such norms can be disrupted or challenged. Though both Foucault and Butler believe that we are complicit in our own regulation and self-presentation, their work highlights that we can also choose to resist, and in so doing new ways of being can be opened up as a result. I employ these critical Foucauldian and Butlerian analytic concepts to make sense of my own experiences as a teacher in order to address concerns of normalization as a means of constructing the body under the guise of “professionalism.” It is in this capacity that I reflect on both the limits and possibilities that exist for breaking away from these expectations.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction to Literature Review

In this chapter I provide a review of the relevant literature. The review is organized into thematic categories related specifically to my resource focus and topic: (i) Educator Professionalism and/or Performativity and Teachers as Role Models; (ii) Sexuality and Bisexuality in Education, (iii) Gendering Identity in Education, (iv) Class and Identity in Education, and (v) Race and Identity in Education. I provide a review of the relevant literature under each of these organizational categories and highlight how my own reading of this body of work is connected to and informed by critical questions and issues related to professionalism and professional conduct that inform my own thesis. I also identify the gaps that my own study fills.

3.2 Educator Professionalism and/or Performativity, and Teachers as Role Models

Many educators experience difficulty living a life which allows for the interconnectedness between their personal identities and their roles as educators. There is existing research on the subject which has made evident that many educators feel subject to scrutiny and are forced into the practice of identity management through a process of constant surveillance. The surveillance and policing that educators face create an equally inhibiting practice of self-governance, which is highlighted in the autoethnography and analysis chapter of this thesis on the normalized educator performativity of “professionalism.” Below, I provide a review of some of the research that informs my

own study and focus on teacher professionalism, identity negotiation, and the existing gaps.

Aslup (2006) highlights an “identity development that involves the integration of the personal self with the professional self and the “taking on” of a culturally scripted, often narrowly defined, professional role while maintaining individuality” (p. 4), which relates specifically to my study. I argue that such narrow scripting causes some educators to become complicit in the constructions of, and reinforcement of North American dominant identities, predominantly “modeled” and/or dictated by a cis, white, heterosexual male lens. Certain identities become seen as “acceptable” and others as “unacceptable” through the pressured enactment of professionalism by means of performance. In a Butlerian sense, hooks (1994) states: “Teaching is a performative act [...] Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle” (p. 11), and in the Foucauldian sense, Sisson and Iverson (2014) argue that the “professionalism discourse serves as an example of how power operates discursively” (p. 220).

Policy, and/or socialization within the school environment through that lens of “professionalism” essentially results in the regulation of self and peer professional identity and contributes to the erasure/marginalization of particular identities. Franzosa (1992), for example, argues that “as socializing agents, schools classify, transmit, evaluate, and make coherent a partisan version of what knowledge is of most worth. They have an explicit warrant to define, codify, and teach the terms in which individuals, their world, and their interactions will have social significance” (p. 397). Professionalism as a concept heavily persuades and restricts educator embodiment, having great potential to

enforce complicity with respect to embracing normative constructs of identity, as I illustrate in my own thesis and with respect to my own experiences.

To begin delving into the subject of educator professionalism, it is important to first consider defining such a term. In the article, “Defining ‘Teacher Professionalism’ from different perspectives,” Nihan Demirkasimoglu (2010) works to summarize the concept through explicating various perspectives. In relation to ‘teacher professionalism’ specifically, “the meaning of the term changes as a response to external pressures, public discourses and scientific developments” (p. 2048). Within a neoliberal society, “the need to attain and develop certain standards and benchmarking criteria for all professions has increased [... to] assure high operational quality” (p. 2047), resulting in the construction of constantly shifting demands of this conceptualized “professionalism.”

Currently there exists a sort of contention between neoliberal systems of accountability, which result in educators being nearly stripped of autonomy within the field of education, and the push for a transformative model of education, which requires even greater autonomy than educators are given at present. In the text, *The Active/Ethical Professional: A Framework for Responsible Educators*, Gunzenhauser (2012) also focuses on this contention between a system of accountability and educator ethics through a Foucauldian understanding of power and regulatory norms. He states that, “normalization under high-stakes accountability draws educators further from the pedagogical relation, displacing philosophy in education and ethical practice” (p. 82). To quickly summarize, Sisson and Iverson (2014) claim that essentially there is “one discourse [that] represents schooling as a force of empowerment and liberation for individuals and society, while the other frames it as an effective means of training good

citizens and maintaining a well-ordered and controlled society” (p. 218). This claim suggests that teachers are compelled to operate according to the dictates of a neoliberal rather than a transformative model, which I highlight in my thesis has major equity implications. Bourke, et al (2013), for instance, believe that as the concept of performativity becomes more pervasive in educational practice: “it is timely to investigate how teachers are performing their roles by accepting, reacting to, or challenging such a performative discourse. [They] argue that there is a need to [...] explore how teachers are responding to this redefinition of professionalism as performativity” (p. 1). I focus on the concern that, despite this critical goal, teachers are limited by the restriction of autonomy imposed through “professionalism” as it currently stands as a “device of professional control [...] an ideological weapon aimed at controlling teachers [through] intensifying the work demands” (Demirkasimoglu, 2010, p.2050). I take this even further, by stating that it not only impacts my individual autonomy as an educator, but the ways in which I perform, resist, or embody identity, and the ways in which we see various identities as acceptable or unacceptable.

In the book titled *Professionalism, Law, and the Ontario Educator* (2016), Kitchen and Bellini outline the legal and coded expectations of educators. They state that:

Due to their special relationship with students, teachers are also regarded as role models. This has profound implications for the teaching profession, since, in addition to behaving appropriately in school, teachers are expected to embody moral qualities in their civic lives and even in their personal lives. Indeed, teachers should expect to be scrutinized more than ordinary citizens are. (p. 10)

This sort of constant surveillance can be well understood through a Foucauldian lens, which I apply in the autoethnographic analysis in relation to providing insight into the significance of teacher identity formation as it informs an understanding of the political significance of role modelling. Tannenbaum (2011), for example, highlights that the role of the educator is one of influence in the reframing of student worldviews: “In order to formulate one’s values, beliefs, and attitude, exposure to other people’s behaviors is an important part of the learning process [...] Role models are considered key players in the socialization process” (p. 559). As an educator, if I am contributing to the erasure/stigmatization of particular identity categories through the performance of “professionalism” as a concept, then I am limiting the opportunity to be a social agent in shifting cultural understandings of identity and hierarchies. In other words, as a teacher who is “professional”, I am not affording students the opportunity to question their own biases/assumptions, and most importantly, through complicity, I am not allowing students to see themselves reflected in the real world (particularly if their identities align with my own).

Gunzenhauser (2007), for example, argues: “The teacher who is engaged in his or her own project of freedom is the teacher most likely to encourage the same in a student” (p. 30). As previously mentioned, in the current push towards a transformative model of education, one that claims a role in social progression and greater inclusivity, it is critical to gauge the experiences of inclusion from the *top down* in order to allow for greater representation and true diversity at the employee level, which will ultimately impact student feelings of belonging and acceptance. In fact, hooks (1994) argues that “teachers

must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (p. 15).

Such literature is relevant in that it informs my concern about the need to address the invisibility/subjugation of particular identities within educational contexts, such as schools. This visibility could result in shifting preconceived or pre-learned notions of these identity categories. For example, if bisexual educators could have more direct opportunities to be representational figures in the classroom, rather than to feel forced into complicity of self-erasure, or into the performance of “acceptable” identity, then they would be able to serve as a critical component of a transformative, inclusive, and self-accepting process of education for students. In a Foucauldian sense, Gunzenhauser (2007) argues that, “Disciplined selves are complicit in their own subjugation when as modern subjects they comply with the procedures of self-discipline and the comparison of one’s traits to social norms [...] They are both normalized and normalizing, due to the constraints placed upon them” (p. 28). As I will suggest in the conclusion to this thesis, in order to subvert dominant discourses, or to open up possibilities, educators need to become agents of change, and need to “articulate difference as part of the construction of a new type of subject” (p. 27).

The book *Identity Intersectionalities, Mentoring, and Work-Life (Im)Balance: Educators (Re)Negotiate the Personal, Professional, and Political*, edited by Mansfield et al (2016) provides insight into the lives of educators/professionals and their challenges in creating/negotiating a balance between their work and personal lives, especially in relation to the particularities of their identities and/or identity intersectionalities. This book takes into account the contention between the personal self and the professional

self, as dictated by various guidelines and regulatory practices in education. Mansfield, et al (2016) state within the introduction the following: “Taken together our book highlights the voices of those who have been ‘othered’ by the dominant culture in a variety of intersectional ways and how their experiences with sexism, racism, heteronormativity, language/nationality, religion/spirituality, ableism, and ageism interact with this negotiation process” (p. xvi).

The collection of work edited by Mansfield et al (2016) highlights that institutions were constructed *by* and *for* particular people (white cisgender heterosexual men), and as a result, have fostered, and continue to foster, exclusionary spaces on the basis of not adhering to normalized, dominant categories of language, ability, race, nationality, religion, sexuality, and more. The institution is a homogenizing space, one which expects conformity and complicity. In Chapter 10, Carter and Avalos state that people are “forced to remain complicit because he/she [sic] cannot speak out of fear of professional repercussions” (p. 125), and options are often limited to passive coping methods for the sake of job security and survival. These sorts of dynamics and spaces create negative and life-changing impacts on mental, and even physical health, and many authors describe this impact throughout the text. The book focuses quite well on the individual experiences of various educators in their struggle to separate personal and professional lives, but it does not get into the work on understanding “professionalism” as a restrictive concept or as a catalyst in producing performative identity. As such, my own thesis fills this important gap in this body of work.

3.3 Sexuality and Bisexuality in Education

While there is an abundance of literature which addresses general concerns of race, gender, class, and even sexuality in education, there is also a definite gap in literature as it pertains to the experiences of bisexual educators who tend to become pressured in the highly governed spaces in which they work into complicity in the erasure of their own identities through the enactment of performed “professionalism.” There is a recent surge of research related to bisexuality and student inclusivity/wellbeing, and there is also research relevant to the performativity and governance of educators, but there is very little that includes the perspective of bisexual educators. In fact, bisexuality is missing/minimized in the current educational discourses of schooling, particularly as it relates to addressing questions of teacher identity and subjectivities in schools. In my own study I am committed to addressing this erasure of bisexuality in schools, and the implications of such visibility and recognition for both teacher and student empowerment.

In one of the few studies that addresses bisexual identity from a teacher standpoint Meyer (2005) employs an autoethnography as a methodological approach to address such crucial questions of visibility. She discusses her experience of “coming out” to her class as bisexual and details her emotional reactions, and the various responses from students. She illuminates how “bisexual individuals are displaced from heterosexual and gay/lesbian communities, to the point that their identities become *debatable* by the social system” (p. 7). Such conditions of erasure contribute to a fear that educators face in relation to making visible their bisexual identity, as demonstrated later in the text when she tells her story and reacts to the student responses internally saying, “suddenly I was *debatable*” (p. 8). Meyer claims that some students had never witnessed such

vulnerability, or such a disclosure from a teacher, pointing out that a particular “student spent her whole education disconnected from teachers as *people*; not a single teacher ever disclosed anything personal to her in their time together” (p. 10).

Such conditions of identity erasure for bisexual teachers, I believe, is a result of the pressures to conform to the concept of “professionalism” and it often results in teachers performing outside of themselves to the extent that the personal is no longer visible. In other words, coming out as bisexual contravenes certain heteronormative ideals that teachers are expected to embody and enact in the professional sense. Though Nathanson (2009) states that “bisexual pedagogy [...] is not dependent on coming out, nor in fact on the instructor’s sexuality at all” (p. 72), I would argue that educator visibility can certainly contribute to creating a sense of comfort for bisexual and sexual minority students in schools, which relates to the whole political question of representation and role modeling that I addressed in section 3.2.

Elia (2014a) highlights that “although attention to research and scholarship on bisexuality has increased over the past several years, not only is there still a relative dearth of information, but also the approaches to conducting research on bisexuality in educational contexts continues to need serious attention” (p. 146). This absence is not only evident within academic research, though; common problematic school discourses surrounding sexuality contributes to this erasure and marginalization of bisexuality, as evidenced by the research that *does* exist and that which does under the acronym of LGBT studies in education (see Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016). There are two clear ways in which societal discourses of sexuality contribute to erasure of bisexuality: first, with commonly used dichotomous/binarized language underpinning discussions and

understandings of sexuality, and second, by exclusion through inclusion of a general LGBT discourse.

Marshall (2014) discusses how the expression of sexuality which evades expected practices or expressions often results in penalization and foreclosure in people's lives. He specifically discusses bisexuality by "querying the way in which the dichotomous structure of much of this thinking forecloses articulations of sexualities and gender experiences within the social framework of the school that eschew binarized organization" (p. 128). Essentially anything that does not fit into the recognized dichotomous language of sexuality, being "straight" or "gay," seemingly ceases to exist; this is reinforced simply by the use of binary constructed language of sexuality within social contexts, especially in influential spaces like educational institutions and specifically schools. "Schooling [...] emphasizes and reproduces heteronormativity [...] The focus of school culture in general is on either side of the continuum (i.e., heterosexuality or homosexuality), with bisexuality and sexual fluidity being largely erased" (Elia, 2014b, p. 36). Pallotta-Chiarolli (2014) also argues that "bisexuality continues to fall into the gap between the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality across all educational sectors. These absences and erasures leave bisexual students, family members, and educators feeling silenced and invisibilized within school communities" (p. 8-9). Though Pallotta-Chiarolli makes mention of educators here, she does not really develop this or consider the influence that their experiences have on students in schools; she focuses predominantly on student experiences and structural impacts, like most researchers working in this field.

There is also the issue that within educational spaces the concept of inclusion takes place almost solely through the discourse of “LGBT” safe and supportive spaces. The acronym “LGBT” includes bisexuality in combination with other, very different, identity categories. Within social discourse, research, and schools, the solution has been to include all gender and sexual identity groups together. Unfortunately, this leads to what Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) calls “exclusion through inclusion” explaining in her later work that “the exclusion of bisexuality through its inclusion into gay and lesbian categories” (2014, p. 10) plays a detrimental role in the erasure and misrecognition of bisexual identity in schools.

Epstein et al (2000) also write about the comfort that such inclusion provides, despite simultaneously maintaining the exclusion of a focus on bisexuality. However, educators and actors within the academic system often see this issue as “just semantics.” McAllum (2014), for example delves into the issue of bisexuality being described in this way by a particular teacher, saying the “teacher may have used the term ‘semantics’ to relegate the status of bisexuality to nonimportance, and in doing so he altogether erased bisexual presence from the discussion” (p. 83). Jones and Hillier (2014) discuss how the lack of explicit references to bisexuality in policy and practice in schools has clearly contributed to negatively impacting a sense of belonging and visibility for bisexual students in schools, proving that these issues are more than “just semantics.” In fact, Elia (2014b) claims that “there is a hierarchy of sexualities, and [...] bisexuality is given little if any visibility” (p. 38). The idea being enforced by all of these researchers, and others, is that people whose identities fall within the acronym of LGBT are not actually as similar to one another as many may believe them to be and that by combining them or refusing their

distinctions under the LGBT acronym is further contributing to the erasure of bisexuality as a distinctive identity group. Each identity category in the generalized “LGBT” group experiences varying forms of marginalization, and subsequently requires distinct/different solutions to deal with the particularities of their concerns.

Such erasure and social marginalization has been shown to impact the health, safety, and well-being of bisexual individuals. As Pallotta-Chiarolli (2014) argues, “These absences and erasures have been considered a major factor in bisexual young people, family members, and educators in school communities experiencing worse mental, emotional, sexual, and social health than their heterosexual or homosexual counterparts” (p. 9). Rainbow Health Ontario (2011) also corroborates this assessment of the detrimental impact of such erasure and identity marginalization on the mental health of bisexual people:

Bisexuals are often grouped together with gays and lesbians or with heterosexuals, making it difficult to obtain data about bisexuals specifically. [...] In many instances bisexual people have worse health indicators than their gay and lesbian counterparts [...] Both Canadian and US studies have shown that bisexuals report higher rates of anxiety, depression, mental illness, suicidality, and self-harm, relative to gays and lesbians. (p. 1)

Much of these health and safety concerns are related to the fact that bisexual students do not feel represented, or welcome in any particular community – they simply do not exist: “Research in both Canada and the US has found that bisexuals feel marginalized by heterosexual, lesbian, and gay communities” (Rainbow Health Ontario, 2011, p. 2).

Representation and general inclusion for bisexual students is severely lacking in various ways through educational contexts.

While much of the research regarding bisexuality focuses on the constructions of identity, there is a lack of research reflecting on the role of self-erasure produced through this performance by bisexual educators within the governing education system. Educators are, as a result of the current expectations, fearful of being themselves or being “personal” within their classrooms, and this ultimately further contributes to the erasure and marginalization of bisexuality.

In the article, “Passing through professionalism: South African Black male teachers and same-sex desire,” Thabo Msibi (2019) begins to consider the role of “professionalism” as it relates to identity intersectionalities. He discusses the tendencies amongst gay Black male teachers in South Africa to “pass” through the enactment of hyperprofessionalism. This enactment of high levels of professionalism is driven by the idea that one who exists outside of “good” private practice (sexuality as relegated to the “personal” space) can overperform in order to be “good” and valuable within professional practice. This performance, is, in a way, an overcompensation for, or an attempt at, overshadowing the “baggage” of non-normative sexuality in a heteronormative space. This performance can result in higher levels of power/influence, “passing,” and lack of stigmatization. Msibi argues that on the one hand gay educators “seek legitimacy through high performance and hyperprofessionalism, while on the other they seek to act as agents of change, hoping to undermine homophobia” (p. 4). In this thesis, I discuss the idea that performative adherence to the concept of ‘professionalism’ affords privileges within educational institutions – though I believe these privileges come at the cost of affirming

acceptable vs. unacceptable identities on both societal and individualistic levels. This complicity in affirmation results in reinforcing heteronormative, patriarchal, classist, racist, white supremacist, sexist, ableist hierarchies and structures.

Msibi (2019) expresses concerns that “inclusion only exists on paper” and that educators participate in the performance “negotiation and management” of their own identities (p. 5). Not only does Msibi make reference to disciplining in the Foucauldian sense through regulation, but he also utilizes Butlerian conceptions of compulsory heterosexuality (or presumed heterosexuality: i.e. the aforementioned *heterosexual matrix*) in constructing his understanding of power, sexuality, and normative practice. While Msibi focuses on a specific demographic (gay Black men) within a specific geographical location (South Africa), I believe that there are still very strong correlations between my own experiences as a bisexual teacher and the experiences of educators that he interviews in his work. “Schools are key enablers for heterosexuality through institutionalising and regulating practices” (p. 3), Msibi argues, and even in the North American context, I believe it is fair to state that our schools produce heterosexuality as normative.

Msibi (2019) states that “because of persistent homophobia prevalent in school cultures, same-sex identifying teachers adopt one of four context-dependent strategies in order to manage their identities in schools: (a) passing, (b) covering, (c) implicitly coming out, and (d) explicitly coming out” (p. 3). I would say that through my own experiences, I have predominantly found myself a participant in these strategies, particularly those of “passing” or “implicitly coming out”, but more recently, “explicitly coming out.” While Msibi brings attention to the kinds of power and influence that

“passing” educators can have, saying: “the ‘closet’ can in fact be a form of resistance and a space to speak back to power” (p. 4), I believe that visibility is more powerful for long-term systemic and cultural change. As Msibi points out, “Visibility, [...] difficult as it may be, has been seen as representing a powerful political act, which has the potential to aid teachers to become role models for LGBTI learners” (p. 4). In the conclusion of this thesis, I draw out the further implications of my study particularly as it relates to the need to address the politics of visibility, particularly as it relates to enacting and embracing a more transformative model of schooling and education that is inclusive of sexual diversity in all of its embodied forms.

3.4 Gendering Identity in Education

Whereas the men in Msibi’s (2019) study derive some benefit on the basis of the privilege granted to them and the respect that that they are given due to their gendered position, as a bisexual woman I do not have the same status, nor am I granted the same degree of authority as a female teacher. It would be presumptuous for me to believe that the gaining of respect and power, even if “passing” through pursuits of hyperprofessionalism in the ways that men approach this, would be as similarly afforded to me, because approaches that work for men do not always work for women. A discourse of race and racism is, however, still critical and necessary here as well, as what works for me as a white educator does not always work well for an educator of colour, and I will discuss this further shortly. On a personal level, I still face the concern that “schools exist as highly gendered spaces, with gender norms and roles emphatically

reinforced through the historical recitation that serves to privilege men” (p. 9), or masculinity more broadly.

In the article, “Disciplining Professionals: a feminist discourse analysis of public preschool teacher,” Sisson and Iverson (2014) do, however, indicate: “women more than men [...] feel the ‘need to prove themselves up to the task’ and ‘have internalized a stronger need to follow the rules,’ and thus [...] may be more likely to take up identities available through the discourse of professionalism” (p. 226). They argue this through “gender theory [that] contends that hegemonic femininity is more passive than active” (p. 221). Passivity in spaces where productivity and efficiency are expected through neoliberal accountability systems does not bode well for notions of success. The “discourse of professionalism is also supported by a dominant discourse of masculinity, which privileges rationality, independence, control, and authority,” where the caregiver identity is “supported by a dominant discourse of femininity” (p. 221). This further discourse of professionalism contributes to marginalizing women and/or gender non-conforming people.

Performed professionalism is key in this educational construction of male power. Blackmore (2014) discusses educator performativity as it relates to the subjugation of women, stating that over time “notions of merit shifted from ‘suitability’ to ‘acceptability’” (p. 4) and believes, like me, that we must “consider how to democratise organisations in ways that recognise that organisations are gender(ed), classed and raced constructs which position some groups and individuals more favourably than others” (p. 8). This again, brings us to revisit the necessity for a shift from neoliberal models, which

traditionally favour men/masculinity to a transformative model where authentic embodiment or assertive resistance is critical for cultural change.

3.5 Classism and Identity in Education

The invisibility of class (beyond a “we” vs. “them” dichotomy) is perpetuated by the often-silent encouragement of class performance. As Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (2005) says in her book *Class-Passing: Social Mobility in Film and Popular Culture*:

Class-passing and class mobility are not usually treated as behaviors or fantasies that spring from desire, whether it be the work of the unconscious of the individual or that of the collective unconscious. Class-passing simply has been normed so intrinsically that it no longer stands out, much like whiteness. Like whiteness, it has been dangerously adopted as a norm. (p. 3)

This means then, that class passing may also be framed as a sort of normed daily performance and performativity like gender, even if by means of assimilation or invisibility.

The expectations of class passing are often founded upon offensive stereotypes, assumptions, and the diminishment of lower socioeconomic classes. For example, the expectations of “appropriate” or “acceptable” cues/behaviours are designated through a set of truly offensive categorizations by Ruby Payne (who creates educator training material centred on students in poverty, despite her lack of direct experience with it). Her work titled *Hidden Rules Among Classes* classifies distinct registers with particular traits based on socioeconomic class categories where a “casual register” is a trait of poverty in contrast to the “formal” register of the middle-class and wealthy, or that money is to be

“used” or “spent” for those in poverty rather than to be “managed” or “invested” like it is for those in the middle-to-wealthy classes.

In her article, “Understanding and Working with Students and Adults from Poverty” Payne (2003), states that “school and businesses operate from middle-class norms and use the hidden rules of the middle class. [...] We must understand our students' hidden rules and teach them the hidden middle-class rules that will make them successful at school and work” (p. 1). Essentially, what is “middle class,” according to Ruby Payne, is what is “acceptable” and “successful.” Meanwhile, what she categorizes as “poverty” is considered to exist within the realm of “unacceptable” or “unsuccessful” and therefore requires a performance outside of itself. Payne (2003) states that “individuals who made it out of poverty usually cite an individual who made a significant difference for them,” (p. 4) and her implication is that the educator can fill this influential role as long as they present “middle-class” ways of being, so that students can emulate them in order to be led to pathways of “success.” It is also important to note that Payne believes the result of individual poverty to be “the problematic mindsets of people experiencing generational poverty” not the “inequities or [...] unequal distribution of opportunity or even [...] educational access disparities” (Gorski, 2018, p. 68). Payne argues that rather than altering the system that stigmatizes and oppresses the lower classes, we should alter subjects themselves - assimilation to norms and performance is thus seen as a prerequisite for potential cultural and/or financial stability to those like Payne.

Despite being debunked and problematized, Payne’s ideas here are applicable in that they illustrate the ways in which the system and its beneficiaries perpetuate preconceived

notions of class-based differences which everyone, regardless of class background, is expected to adhere to. Paul Gorski (2018), for example, states that:

Ruby Payne has suggested, incorrectly, that people in high-poverty communities often fight with one another because they do not have the necessary verbal communication skills to resolve conflicts [...] despite this stereotype, studies show that people experiencing poverty communicate with the same sophistication as their wealthier peers (p. 80).

I agree strongly with Gorski that lists like these “are detrimental because they essentialize low-income population groups,” (p. xii) and perpetuate a propagandistic training model founded upon classist, racist, sexist norms and assumptions.

For those of us from lower socioeconomic households, this expected performance or assimilation is not new to us, because of internalized oppression, and often an adherence to it seems to derive from the culturally (intentionally) produced shame of our status/identities, and even more so, from the focus on individuals as the problem (i.e., the deficit framework), and therefore the only possible solution to a truthfully deeper systemic and cultural issue. Rita Felski (2000) writes about this production of shame in her article, “Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class” saying that shame “is a sense of failure or lack in the eyes of others. It has less to do with infractions of morality than with interactions of social codes and a consequent fear of exposure, embarrassment, and humiliation” (p. 39). When class is visible or perceived as lower, low expectations follow: “educators in a variety of roles regularly show lower academic expectations for students experiencing poverty than economically privileged students” (Gorski, 2018, p. 111), and this can be seen as a constructive racializing

practice as well, illustrated by Maylor (2009) who says that the dominant workforce (white middle-class women) in education often have low expectations of those who have different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds than their own.

3.6 Race and Identity in Education

The low expectations of racialized students has had, and continues to have, a direct impact on students of colour, especially Black and Indigenous students in Canada. Clanfield et al (2014) discuss the “ways in which streaming [for example] is operationalized, leading to differential educational outcomes for particular racialized groups [...] diminished educational experience, and destructive outcomes” (p. 185). The low expectations produce a similar result to that of normalizing the middle class, wherein the performativity of, or a performance of whiteness, as near as one can get, is expected in order to be legitimated or less contested. This performance is one not necessarily expected of white educators like myself, at least not to the same degree, as our whiteness is read on our body through our skin first and foremost. It is important to note that various intersections of identity related to class, gender, sexuality... and so on also may affect how whiteness is read on the body. For educators of colour, this performance is never sure to be a fruitful pursuit, as the colour of one’s skin *can be* and has proven to be read into with negative stereotypes and associations for darker skin (Smith & Hope, 2020). Racialization, racism and white supremacy are ongoing cultural practices embedded within schools, despite contestations that they are not. Livingstone (2014) states: “Processes of racialization and minoritization are now understood to relegate many of those with discernible differences from whiteness to inferior positions regardless of actual abilities. These processes are evident in school and society alike” (p. 12).

Further to this point, Oluo (2019) says, “race was not only created to justify a racially exploitative economic system, it was invented to lock people of color into the bottom of it. Racism in America exists to exclude people of color from opportunity and progress so that there is more profit for others deemed superior” (p. 12). According to these scholars, whiteness has been the dominant narrative and the dominant voice in North American culture, and it has been integrated into our cultural systems and spaces as such.

Seawright (2018) states that “whiteness is enmeshed within the normative [...] operations of schooling” (p. 911), and Foster (2003) states that “those who do not fall into white category are marked as *other* while [...] whites are not of a certain race, they’re just the human race” (p.1). Whiteness is, henceforth, a norm expected to be performed by everyone, and it is tangled together with the pre-mentioned classist norms as well. This norm produces automatic privilege to those who are white, or are perceived as being white (i.e., “pass” as white). For an educator of colour, passing through “whiteness” as a normative concept (ex: through altering speech, dress... and more) may lead to less imposition on their practice, or less surveillance, but they will still exist within the margins, as whiteness, is first and foremost a norm based on skin colour (and the history of white supremacy). These norms, I suggest, are reflective of the insidious power of the term “professional” enacted and expected in schools. An educator who *has* questioned the politics of the concern regarding “professionalism” as coded racism, Black Toronto educator and academic Matthew Morris (2018) addresses his confrontation with this normative culture of whiteness and his expected adherence to it as part of the role of “teacher,” saying:

There was also a time at the beginning of my career where, instead of listening to the music I liked coming into work, I would listen to talk radio. And I didn't listen to it because I had grown "older" and developed a liking for the latest news and sophisticated conversations. I was listening to talk radio on my way into work because I wanted to "learn" how to talk "white" or "professional" or whatever other term we use to describe racist rhetoric. (p. 90)

This speaks to Foster's (2003) point that the "way to pass as white for someone defined as 'black' had as much to do with behavior and a perception of 'acting white' [...] as it did other factors" (p. 68) and it also illustrates further efforts and considerations white people are not expected to adhere to (as there is no need to "act white" if perceived as white). It is still important to note that there are limitations to the performance or performativity of whiteness for people of colour, as mentioned above, as it will not allow someone who cannot be operating within whiteness to become acceptable as white.

Morris (2018) demonstrates further reflection in his work, coming to the conclusion over time that it is important to be authentic in how he presents his identity, but also to consider this with caution, saying that "we cannot simply encourage educators to 'be themselves' in the classroom if their views about particular bodies and the way they negotiate personal relationships based on those views inform their pedagogy from a perspective that negatively taints student learning, validation, and outcomes" (p. 92). As detailed earlier, representation matters, and as Maylor (2009) says "it is widely believed that Black pupils will benefit from having access to successful Black teachers in school" (p. 10), and hiring practices is one of the most critical and urgent matters in education.

White people, myself included, need to accept that in order to transform education for the better, hiring practices need to change. This means that white people need to be hired in exponentially lower numbers than racialized people, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour), must be prioritized when hiring. As Oluo (2019) says:

profit itself is the greater promise for nonracialized people - *you will get more because they exist to get less*. That promise is durable, and unless attacked directly, it will outlive any attempts to address class as a whole. This promise - *you will get more because they exist to get less* is woven throughout our entire society. Our politics, our education system, our infrastructure - anywhere there is a finite amount of power, influence, visibility, wealth, or opportunity. Anywhere in which someone might miss out. Anywhere there might not be enough. There the lure of that promise sustains racism (p. 12)

In the analysis, I aim to further interrogate the role that white educators, and truly many educators, play in the continued systemic and individualist racism inside and outside of the schools through performing the concept of “professionalism” much like Morris does. In this respect I devote some attention to my own embodied whiteness as an educator through an intersectional lens that draws attention to the layered complexities involved in enacting a professional identity as a school teacher within the context of a racialized dynamics of power relations in the classroom.

3.7 Conclusion to Literature Review

In providing a review of significant literature in the field as it informs my study into teacher professional conduct and embodiment, I have drawn attention to the connection

that exists between teacher identity, “professionalism,” and normative othering practices within schools, with some scholars even acknowledging the limitations of the concept regarding their own identities (e.g. Morris, 2018). This body of work together highlights the importance of adopting an intersectional analysis, which attends to the ways in which gender, sexuality, race and socio-economic class together to inform and ground my own understanding of my embodied teacher identity as a white, bisexual female teacher from a low-income background (Crenshaw, 1989; 1990; Anthias, 2012). As such the current body of literature on Educator Professionalism and/or Performativity and Teachers as Role Models, Sexuality and Bisexuality in Education, Gendering Identity in Education, Class and Identity in Education, and Race and Identity in Education, provides both a contextualization and a further grounding for my own autoethnographic study on teacher professionalism and its regulatory effects.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a justification for employing a critical autoethnography as the basis for my research. From an ontological perspective, it is important to clarify that I consider individual subjectivity and lived experiences as critical factors in research and their correlating significance to our social and political realities. For this reason, I embrace an autoethnographic approach to research. “With autoethnography, we see the transformative power of ‘writing the self,’ transforming personal stories into political realities by revealing power inequalities inherent in human relationships and the complex cultures of emotions embedded in these unequal relationships” (Ettore, 2018, p. 2). I believe that people are “anticipatory, meaning-making beings who actively construct their own meanings of situations and make sense of their world” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.288) through their own lived reality and knowledges. This belief is supported by qualitative research scholars such as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) who argue that most qualitative research is concerned to engage with ontological and epistemological questions related to addressing the messiness and complexities of human experience and reality as multiplicatively constituted. In other words, these scholars highlight that “reality” cannot be considered as singular or objective, and that meaning-making is socially and culturally constructed: it needs to be understood in terms of its historical and contextual specificity. Because behaviour and data are socially situated, this point of *context* matters significantly.

4.2 A Critical Autoethnography

In following Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) I conceive of my study as a critical autoethnography which I understand as combining elements of both auto and critical ethnographic methodologies as outlined in the Table below:

Critical Ethnography	Autoethnography
Critical Ethnography is critical theory (ex. queer theory, critical race...etc) in action	Seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)
Concerned with what <i>could</i> or <i>should</i> be	The self (in context) is at the centre of the research
Facts and values are inseparable	Often has a political, social, critical theoretical transformative agenda
Concerned with exposing oppression and inequality and works towards emancipation/empowerment	Questions socially constructed self and relationship to others
Things need to be changed, rather than just interrogated	Concerns how one is 'othered' and situated
Activism – research is a political act	Researcher's voice (both seen positively and negatively)
Power relations mediate thinking	Autobiography <i>with</i> critical ethnography
5 stages: collect objective data, reconstructive analysis, dialogical data collection, discovering system relations, and using system relations to explain findings	

Table 1: Summarized content from Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) into chart form

As the above Table outlines, critical ethnography is a methodology which seeks to make use of critical theory in a more active sense. With the belief that power relations mediate thinking, critical ethnography is interested in exposing oppression and inequality, working towards emancipation/empowerment. In critical ethnography there is a belief that conditions need to be changed, rather than just interrogated, and because of this, such research is considered to be a form of activism. Autoethnography also considers research as a political act, concerned with what *should be*, rather than what *is* in relation to social concerns. It seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural and political aspects of experience (ethno). It is a

methodology which “is an active demonstration of the ‘personal is political’” (Ettore, 2018, p. 4); “Feminist Carol Hanisch’s long-ago rallying cry ‘the personal is political’ is never more necessary in a contemporary social and cultural landscape where questions of whose lives matter and whose lives ‘count as lives’ are subject to debate” (Jones & Harris, 2019, p. 7). Autoethnography is often interested in examining the socially constructed self and the processes by which particular people become “othered.” Both of these methodologies (critical and autoethnography) are grounded in constructivist and transformative research paradigms, in this sense, I understand my methodological approach to be a critical autoethnographic study into the politics of professionalism and its regulatory effects in my own life as white, bisexual female teacher.

It is also important to note that autoethnography differs from autobiography/memoir. Autobiography or memoir is about providing a narrative of one’s life or experiences, whereas autoethnography does this with the added intention to analyze the larger social or cultural significance of those experiences. It is a method of ethnographic study/qualitative analysis of the self within larger social contexts or topics. “Autobiographical research is mainly concerned with placing the ‘I’ within a personal context and developing insights from that perspective. It may be political, or it may not. On the other hand, autoethnography, although ‘an autobiographical genre of writing and research’ is all about placing the ‘I’ firmly within a cultural context and all that that implies” (Ettore, 2018, p. 2). To summarize, “autoethnography is all about describing the cultural dynamics that an individual confronts rather than personal dynamics as in traditional autobiography” (p. 2).

4.3 Performative Vignettes and Critical Incidents

My autoethnographic approach entails both inductive and deductive elements. For example, narrating my own personal experiences as a teacher will be suffused with my own engagement with Foucauldian and Butlerian analytic concepts that draw attention to the disciplining and regulation of bodies in schools with a specific focus on the performative aspects of teacher professionalism. In addition, I have engaged in inductive analysis to find connections between the content in relation to my topic and research questions, which required inference-based understandings and deconstruction. In short, I conceive of my research as giving voice to the self by undertaking a critical autoethnographic study which serves as a basis for investigating my own embodied experiences as a white, bisexual female educator from a low-socioeconomic background. Through the analysis of performative vignettes (Humphrey, 2005) or critical incidents (Tripp, 1994), I consider the ways in which norms and the governance of my “professional” conduct have impacted my self-understanding, visibility and behaviour in situ, and how this relates to student inclusion and larger social contexts of inclusion/exclusion.

The “performative vignettes” (Humphreys, 2005, p. 842) are organized into concise narratives - based upon my recollection of the events and any notes I may have taken following the scenarios. So, much like Humphreys, “my own ‘micro-ethnographies’ [...] are derived from sources described [...] as ‘diaries, free-writing, self-introspection and interactive introspection’” (p. 842). The vignettes serve as “vivid portrayals of the conduct of an event of everyday life,” and through these portrayals I wish “to overtly acknowledge my awareness that I am an ‘actor’ in my own life

production” (p. 840), something I continue to develop upon even more throughout the analysis. It is also important to clarify that this thesis is not a complete representation of my teaching practice/experiences; these moments in my career are merely fragments of my practice as an educator thus far, and even smaller fragments of what I will continue to experience in coming years. As Tripp (1994) states, “The analysis of critical incidents is an on-going process in which new links can constantly be made, not only to current practice, but to how we see ourselves in relation to current and past selves and practices” (p. 73).

What Humphreys refers to as “performative vignettes,” Tripp (1994) refers to as “critical incidents” and I employ both in undertaking my autoethnographic writing as part of this thesis. Tripp extends the notion of critical incidents into the practice of teaching “to include the commonplace events that occur in the everyday life in the classroom,” noting that “such incidents are rendered critical by the author by being seen as indicative of underlying trends, motives, and structures, and are often presented to teachers in the form of a dilemma in which they have a choice of at least two mutually exclusive courses of action” (p. 285). Each moment/event in this autoethnographic study has been carefully considered and selected by me as *critical* in regard to the explication of my research questions/overall thesis topic. I would also like to clarify that all specific details (names, places...etc.) have been omitted, as my intention here, again, is to reflect upon/analyze some of my own experiences in relation to their connections to my proposed thesis.

4.4. Autoethnography's Valuing of Researcher Subjectivity and Experience

I am bringing my own subjectivity and experience to the text, as “both [the] writer and [the] subject” (Humphreys, 2005, p. 842), and this is imperative, not only for the methodology, but also for my ontological/epistemological framework as well. What I present here in this thesis is a multi-purpose analytical reflection – one which explores disciplinarian/normative school culture itself, as well as personal learning and growth as an educator by means of documentation and analysis of my own experiences. This study is by no means a representation of “absolute” or “objective” knowledge; rather, it is written as a form of advocacy for bringing higher valuation to subjective realities, and to the relationship between research itself and the writer of the research. As hooks (1994) says:

When [educators] bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors [and teachers] take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material.

(p. 21)

I want to challenge the notion that one must remain detached, “unbiased” or distant from the subject or research at hand in order to produce accurate, truthful, or valuable content.

I want to bring forth the importance of experiential knowledge, learning, and truths.

Much like Humphreys (2005), “my intention here is to provide access to some of my [...] reactions and [to] dispel any notion of a researcher as an independent, objective observer” (p. 842). I am allowing readers to, in a sense, be a part of my own experiences both in

personal and professional contexts. Through this process, I am also allowing readers to have the space/opportunity to judge, analyze, and explicate their own understandings of my own personal scenarios.

As a result of this personal association to the work, there is a certain level of vulnerability and tension that I have felt in producing this text. And again, much like Humphreys, I have even experienced “anxiety as I consider who might read this – colleagues, strangers...” (p. 844) and how they may all react upon doing so. Despite these fears and anxieties, I believe that honest and vulnerable accounts of personal experience are imperative to understanding cultural norms and conceptions of identity, especially within the context of a neoliberal society where the most wealthy/powerful demographics work tirelessly to maintain the construction of advantaged versus disadvantaged subjects.

Autoethnographic research is grounded in a valuing of the researcher’s own experiences and subjectivity and clearly positions the researcher as what I like to call, *experiential experts*. As Seawright (2018) states, “the social world that we are emplaced in is an extension of who we are and how we know, and in turn, we are an extension of the social world. It is only through this lived reality—*through experience*—that we carry the means of knowing” (p. 918). Subject-researchers with direct experience of the topic at hand hold tangible knowledge that cannot be undervalued or comparable to merely subject knowledge through study. There is potential for even greater value to the subject-researcher as they have both studied knowledge *and* experiential knowledge of the topics at hand. There is also potential for greater investment, more involvement, and a greater sense of purpose/cause when the researcher has direct experience with their work. It is

not fair to state that when one is directly connected to the topic of research, that they are incapable of remaining unbiased. “One way to break with the past is to identify practices that have become habits and examine them, revealing what could be changed to achieve different outcomes” (Tripp, 1994, p. 69), and one way to do this is to value direct and actual experience of the peoples, spaces, practices, habits, or concerns under study.

Ultimately, scholars such as Humphrey’s (2005) assert that “autoethnographic accounts can ‘illuminate the culture under study’” (p. 842), and that “self-reflexivity brings to consciousness some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing” (p. 853). It is in this sense that the practice of autoethnography contributes to a greater understanding of the various cultures under study. In my case, the culture under study is schools/educational institutions (spaces where cultural conditioning/normalization processes flourish still to this day). Not only is producing this thesis a process of *cultural* reflection for me, but it is also a process of *self*-reflection to me as an educator interested in/dedicated to the general inclusion of all peoples. As Tripp (1994) states:

Working through critical incidents reveals things about our biographies that we would not otherwise be able to recall. In working on critical incidents from our past, we are not only seeking to recall, document, and explain past events merely for our own interest, we are seeking the presence of the past as a way of illuminating, articulating, understanding, and gaining control over our current professional practice and habits. (p.69)

So, from a personal standpoint, why do I want to complete this thesis in the form of an autoethnography? During the course of my undergraduate studies, I learned that non-

normative identity has historically been studied and written about from the lens of normative people and perspectives. Not only have the experiences and identities of “others” been constructed by people who embody privilege in many forms, who are normalized as legitimate bodies, but they have even been written as objective/scientific “truths.” “Autoethnographers are sceptical of positivistic research, they question ‘grand narratives which claim objectivity, authority and researcher neutrality in the study of social and cultural life’ and reject ‘the assumed ubiquity of stable meanings, existing independently of culture, social context and researcher activity and interpretation’” (Ettore, 2018, p. 3). There are limitations to positivist approaches to research, as they do not account for actual individual or even collective experiences, and they do not always delve into the “root” causes of the results/findings. I believe that it is imperative to shift cultural understandings of various identities, and in order to do this, it is necessary that people construct their own personal narratives and express their marginalized experiences independently. As such “it is through ‘action and speech that we insert ourselves in the world’” (Ettore, 2018, p. 1) as marginalized people.

It is also equally important for us to acknowledge our privileged/hierarchical positions in relation to marginalized people, and our complicity in maintaining unequal or oppressive structures. As someone who exists within the intersections of multiple identities, some privileged, some marginalized, and some nearly erased, I believe it is important to express the variations between the cultural allowance/disavowal of my existence within each category. My experience is similar to Ettore (2018), who says, in her book *Autoethnography as Feminist Method: Sensitizing the Feminist ‘I’*, that she:

became increasingly mindful that disenchantment with the dominant Cartesian paradigm of rationality at the heart of modern social sciences led us as scholars to narrative. We did this because narrative emphasizes plurality of truths that all cultures claim about themselves. Narrative shifts or pushes us from notions that there is a single cultural perspective revealing an irrefutable set of truths; and through narrative, any scholar can achieve an understanding of personal experiences “beyond specific historical contexts or shifting relations of power and inequalities” (Bell, 2000: 139). For [her], narrative methods generate useful ways of creating knowledge about individuals, collective agency and the interior language of emotional vulnerability and at times, wounding, which to [her] is at the heart of good autoethnography. (p. 1)

Knowledge exists in various forms, and experience through narrative is one form that has been grossly undervalued in my opinion.

In this thesis I am encouraging the idea that rather than viewing experiential or anecdotal evidence as biased, we should view it as a sort of expertise. Cartesian/positivist paradigms of research have long made a distinction between what is “emotional” versus what is “rational.” I do not believe that these two things are mutually exclusive, and that emotion *can* and *should* exist within any discourse of identity politics. As Ettore (2018) argues: “We need to [...] reject the separation of rationality and emotions. Importantly, a focus on the relation between rationality and emotions allows oppositional consciousness to take shape” (p. 12). In the world of online politics people like to call this, “reals over feels” to communicate the idea that what is “objective” or “numerical” in terms of data is more valuable than what is “emotional” or “personal.”

Personally, I believe that we could not have a fully grounded understanding of what is said to be “real,” without the associated experiences or what “feels” relevant to the topic/identity at hand. I am calling this concept of objectivity into question because it threatens a “sense of collective historical objectivity and agency and [...] ‘embodied’ accounts of the truth” (Haraway, 1988, p.578). By taking back agency and disrupting conceptions of truth, we can reclaim power and bring value to experiential data and lived truths. As Jones and Harris (2019) state:

Focusing on experience within relationships of power asks autoethnographers to attend to intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1991) to call attention to how oppressive institutions, attitudes and actions in cultures including racism, xenophobia, sexism, heteronormativity, classism, religious and spiritual fundamentalism, ageism and ableism are connected and mutually influencing. Intersectional autoethnographies work to ‘capture the complexities of intersecting power relations’ by producing multiple and diverse perspectives and voices (p.2)

Inclusion of experience is, therefore, critical to truth in understanding power relations. In order to see change in hierarchical structures or social systems, marginalized individuals’ voices need to be heard in order to encourage a greater push against the systemic forces of/actors of power. Jones and Harris (2019) further explain:

Ethnographers remind us of the necessity of understanding the individual in relation to culture and politics and bringing ethnographic research and representation back to the body itself, to corporeality and to a range of post-structural and postmodern approaches that understand the co-constitutive nature

of performing self-in-culture. ... Investigating how experiences are enlarged and/or constrained by relations of power has been the particular focus of critical autoethnography. (p. 2)

In acknowledging the power that I believe critical autoethnography holds, I also know that there will be challenges I need to face along the way in relation to telling my own stories. Delving into the personal can be emotionally laborious work, and it requires the consideration of the people who are also a part of these stories as well. I have faced these issues before in previous written pieces, and even within my artistic practice. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) state:

The self-questioning auto-ethnography demands are extremely difficult. So are confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering. [...] there's the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written, or having any control over how readers interpret it. It's hard not to feel like your life is being critiqued as well as your work. [...] and the ethical issues [...] writing about family members or loved ones who are a part of your story. (p. 738)

Despite this particular challenge, through my telling of personal narrative along with larger cultural analysis, I believe that my work will illuminate some of the critical issues within the teaching profession, particularly in relation to self-identification and acceptance.

In the next section, prior to the analysis chapter, I will demonstrate my methodological approach through the analysis of a vignette exploring my earlier years of schooling, prior to teaching. I will reflect on how I first began to encounter, engage with,

and identify the assimilationist, performative expectations of school spaces, with the application of Foucauldian and Butlerian analytics frameworks.

4.4.1 My Own Situatedness - Early Learning in School: “One is Not Born a Woman” (de Beauvoir)

As a child, I struggled to make sense of my gender presentation. I was what was popularly called a “tomboy” at the time. This style was maintained for a portion of my childhood and it led to incessant bullying. I felt comfortable with my own presentation (wearing my brothers’ hand-me-downs and a baseball cap daily), but it became abundantly clear that my lack of overt femininity created discomfort in others. I was harassed by girls and boys in the school in ways such as: being bullied out of the girls change room for ‘fear’ that I was a lesbian and would be watching them as they change, being called slurs and names like “dyke” regularly, forced into playing team sports in gym class on the “boys team,” and students often asked me if I just wanted to be a boy, refusing my self-identification at the time, “girl” – all because of my comfort in a more masculine self-presentation. Over the years, because of the social experiences around my identity, through the pressure, I began to shift into more feminine ways of being. I eased in through pop-punk culture of the early 2000s with outfits mimicking Avril Lavigne’s “tomboy-femme” style, wearing various “gendered” materials to style myself, like make-up, skirts/skorts, piercings, jeans, baggier clothes/sweaters, tights, heels, skater shoes, and even neckties to balance the masculine and feminine.

I provide this brief anecdote about my experience as a student because how I continue to understand the regulation of the educator body begins with these early forms of my embodied experiences in schools. Before I begin the task of analyzing this incident, it is critical to establish the fundamental concepts at play. I will utilize Foucauldian and Butlerian analytic frameworks here. Both Butler and Foucault recognize that our social behaviours are informed and regulated by norms and the citations of those norms through various forms of performance, performativity, discourses and our own participation in the various facets and functions of self-governance and normalization. In the (1975) book

Discipline and Punish, Foucault describes the process of normalization and the effects it produces. He states that:

the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences. (p.184)

In this sense, normalization is the function by which people know what “acceptable” and “unacceptable” behaviour or identification is – what is “normal” and what is “abnormal.” Those who adhere to the norms are individualized in that their participation is acknowledged *as* the norm, while those who do not adhere to the norms are also individualized by them, but rather, through their deviation from the norm. I was slowly capitulating as time went on, due to the increased pressure to adhere to norms that I was learning about through my own subjugation and the consequences of subversion, whether intentional or not. Butler suggests, "the norm of sex takes hold to the extent that it is ‘cited’ as such a norm, but it also derives its power through the citations that it compels" (p. 13). The reiteration of the norms (consciously or unconsciously) produces a sort of recognizable regulatory power. This power produces the ways in which I, and all others behave. The way that I behave will be dependent on what aspects of my identity are perceived as “acceptable” in a given situation.

As previously discussed in chapter 2, the norms at play here are, what Butler refers to, as the *heterosexual matrix*. As Butler (1986) explains,

One chooses one's gender, but one does not choose it from a distance which signals an ontological juncture between the choosing agent and the chosen gender [...] Not wholly conscious, but nevertheless accessible to consciousness, it is the kind of choice we make and only later realize we have made [...] Becoming a gender is an impulsive yet mindful process of interpreting a cultural reality laden with sanctions, taboos, and prescriptions. The choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear one's body a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles. To choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organizes them anew. (p. 40)

This concept of performativity and the compulsion to choose an identity from a preconceived set of choices is precisely the kind of rationality and self-governance that is fundamental to Foucault's understanding of disciplinary power. Foucault (1975), for instance, states, "We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (p. 27). The careful monitoring of and adhering to these codes, or the shame associated with any inability to adhere to the norms, is simply a normal expectation in cultural spaces like schools.

I am a predominantly feminine presenting person today, still struggling to truly understand how to define my gender or to embody it, all as a result of these experiences. I have felt that the negative experiences and threats meant that I needed to push myself further into feminine ways of being to be taken more seriously/to be acceptable by social

perception or expectations. I realized that my body was not simply my own as I grew older. “Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine” (Butler, 2004, p. 26). Although I felt more comfortable in “boys clothes,” my choices were always informed by the codes of the stringent gender binary. The punishment and bullying I received was the result of choosing to not properly self-govern from the cultural codes that were available to me - informed by the heterosexual matrix. Butler (1990) states: “Certainly, one can practice styles, but the styles that become available to you are not entirely a matter of choice. Moreover, neither grammar nor style are politically neutral. Learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into the normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself” (p. xix). As I grew older and continued to feel the pressure to adhere to certain ways of being, I realized that much of our decision-making in relation to our identities is centred on being acceptable for the economic workforce; it is neoliberal in nature, it is the way we were raised to think in many regards. The loss of intelligibility in our culture is strongly tied to the loss of economic stability, or the concern for it at the very least - if one is seen as problematic or “difficult” within professional contexts, job loss or the loss of “reputation” and therefore opportunity may follow. For example, Wright and Smith (2015) suggest that many teachers feel that they will suffer consequences for simply coming out to their administrators and colleagues, explaining that “one third [of teachers] felt that their employment would be at risk if they came out

to an administrator, and many experienced negative consequences such as a threat of job loss, pay discrimination, and reassignment by administrators” (p. 403).

This realization of my own coded and signifying body reflects Butler’s (1986) point about how gendered bodies are culturally constituted:

The body becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and “existing” one’s body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms. To the extent that gender norms function under the aegis of social constraints, the reinterpretation of those norms through the proliferation and variation of corporeal styles becomes a very concrete and accessible way of politicizing personal life. (p. 45)

Now, as an educator dedicated to identifying with other activist educators to alter educational systems of oppression, systems that I was subjected to and that I wish future students not be subjected to, I see the potential for subverting these norms through a reversion of my own gendered undoing. Butler (1986) explains:

If ‘existing’ one’s gender means that one is tacitly accepting or reworking cultural norms governing the interpretation of one’s body, then gender can also be a place in which the binary system restricting gender is itself subverted. Through new formulations of gender, new ways of amalgamating and subverting the oppositions of “masculine” and “feminine”, the established ways of polarizing genders becomes increasingly confused, and binary opposition comes to oppose itself. (p. 47)

If educators participate more openly in disrupting the existing matrix and norms, we can potentially participate in creating new articulations of rationality. Educators could use

their presupposed power to articulate new kinds of “acceptable” bodies in schools, their own bodies. The way it currently exists, it is a world where “otherness” is still being articulated through norms of acceptability in the space of schools.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a justification for my methodological embrace of a critical autoethnography as the basis for generating research-based knowledge into the regulatory impact and effects of discourses of professionalism in my own life as a school teacher. In the following chapter an analysis of autoethnographic critical incidents and vignettes is extended and developed to illuminate the overarching concept of my thesis; the performance or performativity through expected adherence to the regulatory norms of “professionalism” and its effects in constituting non-normative or *othered* subjects.

Chapter 5: Autoethnographic Vignettes and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my autoethnographic analysis through employing both performative vignettes (Humphreys, 2005) and critical incidents (Tripp, 1994) as an organizing principle for reflecting on my practice and lived embodied experiences as a teacher. Performative vignettes may be defined as concise narratives built upon the author's recollection, and critical incidents may be defined as moments within the everyday that encourage continued reflection. The narratives that I provide throughout the analysis are based upon my own recollection and/or notes, notes often taken after the realization that these moments were critical incidents requiring further reflection and consideration. In terms of its overall organization, this section is composed of various thematic categories of focus which incorporate vignettes and the corresponding reflections of my embodied experiences throughout various phases of my time as an educator and within various Ontario schools including: teacher candidate practicum, teaching within the private sector, and within the public sector.

I aim to begin some of the critical work of self-reflection and analysis to better understand the social systems in which I am situated as an educator through this critical autoethnography. In writing this critical autoethnography, my goal is to develop my understanding and critical self-reflexivity of systemically oppressive systems vis-à-vis their impact on my embodied experiences and professional conduct as a teacher. It is important to acknowledge that the interactions that take place in the classroom are imbued with ethical implications for how teachers are regulated and feel compelled to regulate themselves in schools, they illuminate the sort of power relations that are

implicated in discourses and norms that govern teachers' practices and how they come to be formed as certain sorts of subjects.

5.2 It's a Cis-Het White Man's World: Constructing Otherness

At the end of the first year in my teacher education program (concurrent), I was placed in my very first practicum, which was a week-long observation-only block. I was placed for one full school day with a special education teacher. He was an older white male, who taught law (among other classes) at what was considered to be an "at-risk" high school. I was walked over to his classroom for the day by the principal who told me that this teacher was great and was very well-liked by the students. In one of his law classes in particular that day, he began a discussion about gender equality, stating: "I don't know why women still complain - women are just as equal as men. I would say they might even be 'more' equal. We are expected to open doors for them, to buy flowers..." etc. He went on, mumbling the oh-so-common husband "jokes" about his own wife. I was there only for observation in what was my very first in-school placement experience, so I was quite nervous and just sat quietly, shaking my head in the corner of the room – visibly disagreeing with his sentiment. During designated work time, he then made homophobic "jokes" in the direction of two boys in the classroom, asking questions meant to cause discomfort, like: "Why are you guys sitting so close together? Are you his boyfriend?" - all asked with a suggestive and mocking tone. The boys sat embarrassed, clearly uncomfortable by the questions, as they worked to stave off the attention aimed at them - vehemently denying the "accusations" and creating further distance between themselves. At the end of the class, one of his female students submitted her work to him on her way out. When she left the room, he began to talk to me about her - complimenting her on her academics and praising her intelligence. He said to me, "that young lady is very smart, she is going places... She could be a fantastic legal secretary one day!" I was taken aback by this, as he had entirely disregarded the idea that she could be an amazing lawyer and instead designated her to the role of legal secretary without a second thought.

In this vignette, the male teacher represents the "acceptable" normative subject; he is "normal," or at the very least, performing expectedly his role as a white, straight, cis man. This teacher reinforces patriarchal sexist and homophobic norms which are reflected in his discourse in the classroom where he positions women and non-

heterosexual subjects as cultural and disparaged *others* – or “unacceptable” and non-normative. This experience highlights the citation of certain norms and their regulatory effects. Normalization is a process by which the rules and expectations of society are recognized and actualized through daily regulatory behaviours. Much like how Butler (1990) suggests that “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*,” (p. 191) so are all identity-based norms. Evidently, these norms are not neutral; they are not apolitical - and neither is the reinforcement of the norms by educators who are expected to remain ‘apolitical subjects’ within their public roles.

What was apparent in the behaviour of this male teacher was that his degradation of women and sexual minorities was viewed as culturally acceptable or at the very least normalized given his positionality as a dominant figure (i.e., toxic, racist, heteronormative expressions of masculinity). He saw no issue with explicitly calling attention to and spectaculizing a potential instance of expressed queerness or an expression of non-toxic masculine friendship in the classroom, or with dismissing concerns about women’s cultural and economic status as below men. As Butler (1990) notes, “sexism, homophobia, and racism, the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color is an ‘expulsion’ followed by a ‘repulsion’ that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality” (p. 182). This male teacher is achieving his sense of self-importance and status through an iteration of embodied norms of gendered power and the presupposition of gendered authority. As Butler states:

the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction.

That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that

the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (Butler, 1990, 192-193)

For example, this male teacher's assumption that a young girl with remarkable intelligence, talent, and an interest in law would prefer to become a legal secretary rather than following the commonly associated career path of the subject (a lawyer) exposes the underpinning assumption of female inferiority, and therefore male superiority. It is important to note that this young woman was a student of colour and that she was in a special education course at an "at-risk" school. These low expectations, rooted in normative assumptions, are not just sexist, they are racist, classist, and ableist as well. As Harry Smaller (2014) states, "a multitude of studies continue to portray in detail the ways in which the success rates of many working-class and minority students are deeply affected by the expectations held of them by their teachers" (p. 93). In this special education class, most students were students of colour. The low streaming of students of colour has been a long-debated issue in Ontario education, so-much-so that the public has driven the current provincial government to begin the process of de-streaming for a step toward anti-racism in education.

Unsurprisingly, given the power dynamics within the classroom, no one challenged his behaviour. This was not even a "display," as it was entirely too mundane; no one was in an uproar, most *seemed* unoffended, and no one seemed surprised. There is a general expectation for "others" to accept indirect or direct attacks on their identities,

especially at the hands of the dominant subject. There was perhaps a silent discomfort, or sense of shame/embarrassment in the room, but it all seemed “normal,” in a sense. What occurred in this classroom was likely a result of the performed expectations of submission or silence from cultural “others” rather than an agreement or comfort with the expressed sentiments. As Oluo (2020) states: “white male mediocrity seems to impact every aspect of our lives, and yet it only seems to be people who aren’t white men who recognize the imbalance [...] white male mediocrity is a baseline, the dominant narrative, and [...] everything in our society is centered around preserving white male power regardless of white male skill or talent” (p. 6).

Essentially, many of us, including educators in a teaching profession, have acclimated to a culture where our own oppression *is* the norm. “As silence and obedience to authority were most rewarded, students learned that this was the appropriate demeanor in the classroom” (hooks, 1994, p. 178). No one outwardly disrupted the notions of normative sexuality and gender that he was reinforcing through this embodied authority, including myself, which I would argue results in the presumption of normativity of all present subjects, ignoring the existence of “others” and also stigmatizing this “otherness” in a way that would discourage even the potential of its visibility. As Epstein, O’Flynn and Telford (2000) state, “exclusions are painful, [...] and] it may be impossible to sustain a gay [or bisexual] identity when a heterosexual one provides [one] with a key strategy for inclusion. In this way, a rehearsal of normative heterosexual adulthood is coerced from students” (p. 133), and I would even argue for teachers as well. In cases like this, silence (or omission), out of fear of discipline, serves to reinforce the normalization of these culturally perpetuated ideas. This teacher’s years within the profession without any

visible consequences to these inappropriate actions/words is a testament to the acceptance of exclusionary language and practices such as this.

Challenging this particular teacher would have required an intervention from one of us in the room – all subjects not invested with the same authority or attributed status within the hierarchical structures that we all acknowledge exist. This teacher acted in the way he did because it is what he always did – this behaviour had been individually and socially normalized for him as a white man, and due to this, the risk of punishment for him was very low. As a first-year teacher candidate, this was early on in my profession. This incident occurred early in the program prior to any actual engagement with or exposure to the various existing laws and professional codes of conduct/expectations placed upon me as an Ontario educator. Regardless of the lack of explicit professional knowledge I had, I understood immediately that his behaviour was certainly not acceptable and clearly not “professional.” I was already able to identify that he was not abiding by norms of “professionalism”, or, rather those for determining professional conduct of teachers in school. I believe that this cultural knowledge attests to my pre-existing understanding of the necessity for self and peer regulation in the field of education. Soon, I would realize the extent to which this constant regulation and acknowledgement of teacher embodiment would impact me.

Even at the time, I had wondered if his identity had been different (i.e., non-normative/non-dominant), would he have behaved in the manner that he had, or would he have greater reservations about expressing some of these views? I knew that if I had been in his position, I would not have acted in such a way. As Seawright (2018) asks, “how do white male bodies come to know that they are welcome, in place, and can easily extend

themselves into social space without concern or hesitation?” (p. 918). By making certain bodies “abnormal,” he implied the normalcy of his own body. When discussing Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of an “abstract masculine epistemological subject”, Butler explains “the female sex becomes restricted to its body, and the male body, fully disavowed, becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom” (Butler, 1990, 16). This “radical freedom” that Butler describes is the freedom from identification within the norm, an escape from cultural spectacle through normative iteration. It is the freedom he exercised on this day by demonstrating a lack of concern for any possible consequence, including the reversal of his own behaviour/normative process. His mere existence as a masculine dominant figure is considered to be more intelligible than a non-heterosexual person’s existence within our existing cultural matrix. “‘Intelligible’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (Butler, 1990, p. 23). Not everyone can navigate the school spaces in such a way, which speaks to this question of gendered authority and specifically male privilege and power. Marginalized people navigate normative spaces like schools in a way that is tedious, cautious, and highly considered – this is something that I will continue to expand upon throughout this chapter.

Unfortunately, I was fearful during this time and cared about the idea that a confrontation with an educator above me, as I worked to gain a positive reputation prior to entering the field, could have been a threat to my career. I felt I was positioned as not having support to file any sort of complaint, just as I had felt when I was in high school

as a student myself. According to best practices from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT):

If you have concerns about a teacher, you should speak with the teacher, if appropriate, or go to the principal of the school and discuss your concerns. You may wish to contact your school board and speak to the superintendent who has responsibility for the school where the teacher works. In certain circumstances, College staff may be able to assist in resolving the matter. If not, you may file a formal complaint with the College. (n.d.)

In other words, the governing body wants teachers to deal with their professional issues on their own - to “self-govern”. It is a “self-governance first” approach. It is not a “top-down” governmental structure first and foremost; it is transactional and at all levels functioning. As Foucault (1980) says:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (p. 98).

The Ontario College of Teachers expects one to regulate oneself within this net-like organisation, or to “act professionally,” with all of the behavioural connotations that come with that term – i.e., being polite, collegial, respectful of each other...etc. Within

this structure conflict resolution has been passed off to the teachers to deal with themselves, giving people with power the ability to enforce their own vision of professionalism. The outcome of this design for conflict resolution (where teachers are meant to work things out amongst themselves) causes teachers stress, further conflict, and their own understandings of themselves as people and as professionals to be questioned. Because there is such a barrier and potential for negative consequences, it is possible that teachers in these uncomfortable situations will opt to not do anything in an effort to maintain generic expectations of professionalism to be polite (especially women). To be respectful, “not a problem,” or not “difficult,” is critical for a marginalized educator, but not for this white male educator, who is allowed to rewrite and rationalize normalized working behaviour according to his own power and privilege.

Unfortunately, this kind of situation is socially and professionally complex and difficult to navigate. As Kitchen and Bellini (2016) explain, “Teachers are well advised to avoid insubordination or even the impression of insubordination, because these could lead to complex grievance procedures and even dismissal” (p. 113). Challenging such behaviour as embodied by these male teachers, “can result in multiple investigations, hearings, and consequences” (p. 71). Confrontation with the purpose of disrupting social norms, and confrontation as a marginalized person is not encouraged – it disrupts the function of normative discursive power more than it disrupts the “unprofessional” behaviour exhibited by this male teacher, precisely because his behaviour is so normalized. Marginalized people in particular are “forced to remain complicit because he/she cannot speak out of fear of professional repercussions” (Oliver & Oliver, 2016, p.

125). The institution is a homogenizing space, one which expects conformity and complicity.

While there is merit to the idea that teachers should be transparent with each other, it is also evident that the systems do not take in account power relations and hierarchies within schools. Let me explicate this just a bit further. In his 1983 lectures, Foucault says that “*Parrhesia* is ordinarily translated into English by ‘free speech’ [...] *Parrhesiazomai* or *parrhesiazesthai* is to use parrhesia, and the *parrhesiastes* is the one who uses *parrhesia*, i.e., the one who speaks the truth” (p.11). Further, Foucault (1983), states:

Someone is said to use [free speech] and merits consideration as a [speaker of truth] only if there is a risk or danger for him in telling the truth. For instance, from the ancient Greek perspective, a grammar teacher may tell the truth to the children that he teaches, and indeed may have no doubt that what he teaches is true. But in spite of this coincidence between belief and truth, he is not a [speaker of truth]. However, when a philosopher addresses himself to a sovereign, to a tyrant, and tells him that his tyranny is disturbing and unpleasant because tyranny is incompatible with justice, then the philosopher speaks the truth, believes he is speaking the truth, and, more than that, also takes a risk (since the tyrant may become angry, may punish him, may exile him, may kill him) (pp. 15-16).

While raising concerns about a dominant member’s marginalizing practices would be highly unlikely to lead to death, it certainly could lead to consequences for marginalized people or people hierarchized as lower (a new, first day teacher observer candidate with no relegation of power).

I will make use of Weiskopf, et al (2019) and their ideas which further develop this Foucauldian concept: “Like the parrhesiastes, the whistleblower [or speaker of truth] speaks truth to power ‘from below’, and thereby takes a high risk of being excluded, ostracised, stigmatised [...], or otherwise punished in the process of doing so” (p. 674), but further states that while

some actors [like this white male teacher] are considered to be legitimised to blow the whistle and are supported by their networks and infrastructures in the process of doing so, others [anyone classes as lower or othered] lack this support and the legitimacy to “speak truth to power” (p. 676).

Within the public role as an educator, to accuse a person of something as sensitive or contentious as racism, sexism or homophobia, and so on, in a culture that caters to and legitimates the dominant subject, is not something that can be done neutrally without threat of possible consequence. It is challenging to talk to supervisors or colleagues, particularly those with more experience and authority and an overall “good” perception and reputation by the community, and the threat present may pose a risk too high for some who are in marginalized or precarious positions (like myself and the students during these moments).

Codes of conduct and general assumptions and conceptions about the norms of “professionalism” can be seen as examples of a discursive attempt to normalize subjects. These codes exist for the re-education of people who subvert normative expectations through self and peer governance at various levels, in public spaces; they are about regulating behaviour. It is a way to further subjugate “others” as a form of punishment for not adhering to designated and socially sanctioned norms, those of which are

advantageous and even conferred through systems of power to the dominant subject. It is important to note that the embodied dominance of the male authoritative subject is also an effect of this normalization. In the interest of being perfectly clear, the codes of professionalism are not saying that teachers should be racist/misogynist, it is rather that they do not seek to stop it and also can encourage it discreetly. The codes, I am suggesting here, are more about policing non-normative behavior and encouraging and centring white male middle-class values at the expense of others. The intention of these codes is not to stop racism or encourage an equity environment in reality. The codes of conduct are designed to promote conformity based on dominant values.

5.3 Power Posing: Who's the Boss?

In one of my final university placements, I had a mentor teacher who was incredibly unsupportive. He would leave me to supervise the class during class time, despite the fact that this is not allowed according to OCT regulations and Mentor Contracts/Expected Roles through various post-secondary institutions). He once also left for nearly the full duration of the class during the teaching of my very first lesson (when he was meant to be evaluating me - also not allowed). He had at least three other teacher candidates, which was not an ordinary scenario in my program. He would cancel days with me at the last minute, telling me that the other two teacher candidates were teaching, and that I did not need to come in because there would be nothing to do. This is not proper practice/protocol for mentor/mentees, as teacher candidates are expected to be in each day for their placements. One day I came in for my expected time. He walked into the office, saw me, and stopped in his tracks, asking me "what are you doing here?" He did this in front of the other two female teacher candidates and all of the other teachers in the office. I felt so embarrassed. He hadn't expected me to be in – despite the fact that the expectation from my program had been to attend each day of my practicum. He then proceeded to tell me that he hadn't expected me to be in that day because there would be nothing to do, and that I need not come in for the remainder of the week. On the one occasion that I did teach with him in the room for the full duration, he provided me with nothing but negative criticisms. I am very open to constructive criticism in my teaching practice, but many of the things that he focused on seemed to be more about my physical habits (volume, stance, "command" of the room...), and not so much about the lessons or anything else. He consistently insisted that I would need to command the attention of the class more. He encouraged me to project my voice more and to use "power poses" (he demonstrated this: legs apart, firmly planted on the ground, hands in fists resting

on his hips – think, Superman). He sat me down to watch a TED Talk video one day by Amy Cuddy (2012) entitled “Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are.” I was skeptical of the study’s legitimacy, immediately taking notice that there seemed to be prior assumptions involved about the reason for opting out of “power posing,” there was also a clear lack of intersectional consideration with regard to the results. I was incredibly uncomfortable with the general focus on my body and was bothered by the specifically requested change in my physical body language, as I was not interested in taking on an authoritarian approach to teaching. Admittedly, I was a bit shy and needed to work on this - but this was a great challenge in this circumstance, given that I was being sternly watched by a man who would hardly even smile in my direction. The experience was likely uncomfortable for us both, and to me, not conducive to my learning or developing confidence in the classroom. If anything, it only further cemented my idea that taking this sort of approach with students was something I was not interested in, or even comfortable doing. I began to hate going into my placement (each day that I was actually asked to come in), as these kinds of microaggressions continued. Eventually, I talked about these continuing and repeated concerns to my practicum leader, and she decided to work on re-placing me.

Prior to reflecting on this, I would like to first consider the role of the “mentor teacher,” as this man was to be my mentor for the year. According to the York University Faculty of Education (2015) document entitled “Role of the Mentor Teacher” the mentor teacher “is to invite [their] Teacher Candidate (TC) into a learning environment that creates shared experiences of teaching and learning in an Ontario school. [...] one must work closely with [the] TC [which] requires an open and trusting professional relationship that invites questioning, solidifies understanding and encourages ongoing reflection on daily successes and challenges.” Some of the specific methods of supporting this progress are stated as: “Modelling a collaborative and inclusive learning environment and a commitment to innovative, inclusive and equitable teaching practices.” From my perspective, not only did he not meet the criteria of collaboration and inclusiveness, but instead attempted to dictate the formation of my identity as an educator by modeling a way to teach that reproduced rigid and normative constructs of the “teacher” as a domineering authority figure. Rather than being provided with an experience of

reciprocal growth between mentor/mentee, I was given instruction on the practice of teaching as a process of constructing and maintaining normative, regulatory identity - and the performance being taught was one of a culturally constructed masculine ideal of professional embodiment.

My mentor teacher exercised a sort of regulatory power and attempted to enforce the disciplining and self-governing of my body as a teacher candidate. He did this from a position of authority, as he was my “mentor teacher” – the man that I was meant to look to as an example of an effective educator. Mentor teachers participate in a constant surveillance, watching, judging, and nitpicking behaviour/conduct of teacher candidates as part of their expected role. In part, my mentor teacher did this in order to push for my assimilation into “proper” or acceptable ways of being an educator. He scrutinized me in order to elicit a shift in my behaviour – a shift from an “improper” or “less effective” approach to a more “proper,” traditionally masculine approach to teaching. This was the first time that I had experienced a male perspective on my actual physical teaching style/presence, the first time I felt the pressure to adhere to a male-specific style or understanding of professional conduct. It seemed he felt the need to train me on what he understood to be the embodiment of professionalism, but simply put, what works for men in the field of teaching (or general culture) does not necessarily work so well, or so easily for women. “Schools exist as highly gendered spaces, with gender norms and roles emphatically reinforced through the historical recitation that serves to privilege men” (Msibi, 2019, p. 9). It became clear to me that masculinist dominance, in a sense, was something to be valued in the field of teaching.

This performance of masculinist dominance is all too commonly accepted as a valued pedagogical framework for successful classroom management – an approach which has always seemed more dictatorial and authoritarian. This method of teaching is essentially predicated upon the importance of acquiring an overall “command” of the class, and hence, it is essentially a pedagogical philosophy which values, above all else, complacency and control of the students in the room through the maintenance of traditional hierarchical authoritarian power relations in the classroom. I recognize this style very well. Much like hooks (1994), I have noticed that many of my teachers throughout the years, “lacked basic communication skills, they were not self-actualized, and they often used the classroom to enact rituals of control that were about domination and the unjust exercise of power. In these settings I learned a lot about the kind of teacher I did not want to become” (p. 5). This pedagogical practice has never appealed to me, and based upon my current experience in teaching, I am glad that it was not the approach that I decided to adopt and embrace. As hooks (1994) states:

Fear of losing control in the classroom often leads individual professors to fall into a conventional teaching pattern wherein power is used destructively. It is this fear that leads to collective professorial investment in bourgeois decorum as a means of maintaining a fixed notion of order, of ensuring that the teacher will have absolute authority. Unfortunately, this fear of losing control shapes and informs the professorial pedagogical process to the extent that it acts a barrier preventing any constructive grappling with issues of class. (p. 187-188)

The mentor teacher’s suggestion that I should stand in a particular way, “power posing,” as he consistently called it, was something that I did not accept easily, and I never did act

on this suggestion. I could tell that it was bothering him that I did not think it was going to help me. My refusal to strike a power pose in the classroom ultimately led him to having me sit down at the computer for some time to watch Amy Cuddy's 2012 TED Talk, *Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are*. Amy Cuddy claims that she "became especially interested in nonverbal expressions of power and dominance," and this led her to study the effect of "nonverbal expressions of power" on individual feelings of power and confidence. Her main question of interest in this study was "do our nonverbals govern how we think and feel about ourselves?" She compares these "nonverbal expressions of power" to those seen in "the animal kingdom, they are about expanding. [...] What do we do when we feel powerless? We do exactly the opposite. [...] We make ourselves small."

The study seemed to over-simplify our physical expressions as human beings with deeper cognitive thinking skills than much of the "animal kingdom." For example, as a mostly feminine person, I *do* often feel the pressure to try to make myself "small" so as to not seem disruptive or aggressive. But I also feel that, as an educator, I do not think of dominance as an equitable or effective approach for a completely different reason, and it should go without saying, but students (people) are likely to respond better to me if I am not treating them as insubordinates, intimidating them, or trying to create a sense of authority over them. Despite the fact that I am not "power posing" or "stretching" myself out in both of these mentioned circumstances, my intention/purpose is different in either scenario. This is something which could not have been measured in this survey, the underlying intention or purpose is not made clear. Sometimes there is power in "shrinking" (for example, opting to minimize presupposed power of the teacher, rather

than amplifying it), and just because it is not an explicit expression of power or confidence – it does not mean that power or confidence is not there.

Cuddy's concept of power was repeatedly and strongly tied to associations of masculinity and domination. As Oluo (2020) states, "when I talk about mediocrity, I am talking about how aggression equals leadership and arrogance equals strength - even if those white male traits harm the men themselves" (p. 6). The concept is ideological; it is grounded in simplistic biologicistic understandings of sexed embodiment which have been questioned by feminists such as Fausto-Sterling (2000) in *Sexing the Body* and neuroscientists such as Lise Elliot (2009) in *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*. Interestingly, in doing additional research I found that Cuddy's main contributor in the study, Dana Carney, came out with a statement of her own in 2015 in the interest of distancing herself from the research. She articulates a new stance regarding how she now views the data, stating, "the evidence against the existence of power poses is undeniable. [...] I do not have any faith in the embodied effects of "power poses." I do not think the effect is real." In her paper "My position on 'Power Poses'" (2015), she critiques the legitimacy of the study and the results acquired and validates the findings of a more developed study by Eva Ranehill et al (2014) titled "Assessing the Robustness of Power Posing: No Effect on Hormones and Risk Tolerance in a Large Sample of Men and Women." Ranehill et al: "using a much larger sample size but similar procedures as Carney et al. did, [...] failed to confirm an effect of power posing on testosterone, cortisol, and financial risk taking. [They] did find that power posing affected self-reported feelings of power; however, this did not yield behavioral effects" (p. 654). The discovery of this new information only

further validated my concerns with regard to this study and my mentor teacher's insistence that I integrate it into my teaching practice.

It is critical to note that this mentor teacher was a Black man, and the behaviour of this teacher differs quite significantly from the white male teacher in the previous vignette. My identity and its various intersections, my preferences, my personality - as well as his own (as a Black male educator) - were cast aside to fit within the constraints of one, singular and stereotypical embodiment of "teacher" that he thought represented success and control. As hooks (1994) states: "Let's face it: most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal. This has been just as true for non-white teachers as for white teachers. Most of us learned to teach emulating this model" (p.35). This continuation has resulted in a mode which has been so normalized that we all enter the field attempting to emulate it. As a Black male educator here in Ontario, who often speaks to this contention between his identity as a Black man and the general "rules" or expectations/codes of educator identity, Matthew R. Morris (2018) says:

As I learned how to become a teacher, I found myself emulating my peers and the veterans in the building; their style, their discipline, their demeanor. I had started to emulate whether I agreed with it or not, simply because I thought that was *teaching* [...] Early in my career I tried to talk differently. In fact, I tried to talk like how a teacher ought to talk, informed by my prior experiences about the school system. As I got more comfortable in my role, I got more agitated with the veil I was purposely concealing over my true identity. I also realized that this sort

of attitude was perhaps sending wrong messages to many of my students, especially the marginalized ones [...] By neglecting my own culture in my own classroom, I was contributing to a historical source of internalizing conflicts that fostered so many Black students' disdain and disregard for school. (p.90)

This singular “acceptable” teacher identity is one which is/has been constructed by its beneficiaries and is maintained by the various structures of discipline/sites of normative reproduction (such as schools). This can best be explained by Franzosa (1992) who states that, “by normalizing a dominant ideological perspective, schooling functions to conceal and repress alternative and dissenting perspectives” (p. 397). Our understanding of teacher embodiment through this singular norm is ultimately what conceals our differences. If instead we ensured our visibility or existence, educators “may attempt to deconstruct traditional biases while sharing that information through body posture, tone, word choice, and so on that perpetuate those very hierarchies and biases they are critiquing” (hooks, 1994, p.141).

Perhaps my mentor teacher was trying to teach me strategies of hyperprofessionalism that work for him as Black male educator: an overdetermination of normalized performance to compensate for any idiosyncrasies that marginalized identities could expose. My mentor teacher could have been aware of negative associations of Black masculinity/identity and worked to “seek legitimacy through high performance and hyperprofessionalism” (Msibi, 2019, p. 4) as compensatory practices. John and Michele Oliver (2016) state in “Work-Life Balance from an African-Centred Perspective,” that they are under “greater scrutiny than some of [their] white colleagues just because of the skin that [they] are in” and that they “must check [their] facial expressions and verbal

responses, lest [they] be categorized as the angry Black man or woman” (p. 44-45). As a white person, I cannot relate to the pressure to adhere to hyperprofessionalism as a direct result of my race. As Maylor (2009) states, “the expectation to be ‘twice’ or even ‘three times as good’ as a role model was not an expectation put on White teaching staff, and if Black teacher role models failed to be that good then the probability is that they would not be recognised (by staff and pupils) as positive role models” (p. 14). As a low-income, non-heterosexual person, I feel pressure to adhere to strict understandings of/expectations of professionalism, but I can do so through a sort of *passing* and invisibility that is not afforded to racialized people. Oliver and Oliver (2016) simply state that “Black people within the White male experience is not an optimal fit” (p.44) and due to the cultural power imbalances “Black professionals must evoke power strategies to successfully combat and manage oppressive forces in dominant cultures” (p. 113). They also add that “these strategies may be necessary as a coping mechanism to endure systemic racism that exists in our culture overall” (p. 45). I am by no means speaking for this teacher, and I by no means have definitive knowledge of his consideration of these norms in his day-to-day experience.

It is still important to note that, rather than focusing on critical matters in education such as inclusion, differentiated instruction, student safety, or greater concerns of equity in his role as mentor teacher, he instead, monitored and surveilled me for my bodily adherence to this normalized embodied professionalism (the previously discussed “universal” teaching model that hooks and Morris sought to initially replicate in their careers as educators). Essentially, there seemed to be a disconnect between me and my mentor teacher, potentially as a result of misunderstanding the differences between

racialized and gendered expectations of identity negotiations in a white male space. He was not as aware of gendered expectations or differences in teaching, and I was not as aware of racialized expectations or differences in teaching.

5.4 White Supremacy Culture in Schools: Black Students Deserve More

One day, at my first practicum school (an “at-risk” school), I was overseeing a class in the library as they used the computers to complete an assignment (the mentor teacher from the above section, 5.3, had left me to watch over the class alone). My “job” was to “keep them on task.” There was one student in particular on this day who was talkative and not focused on completing the assignment. I tried to encourage him to work on his assignment, prompting him throughout the class time. He had a very fun and energetic personality, and therefore stood out as a result. I asked him why he didn’t want to do his work, and he told me that he didn’t think it mattered. I asked why it didn’t matter. He then responded by telling me that there is no point in him trying so hard in school, that he would be better off to “keep selling drugs because it is not like anyone is going to ever hire me looking the way I do.” He was a young Black boy with cornrows in his hair and baggy clothing. I had, truthfully, only just started to get to know this student, since this was my first active placement. I acknowledged my privileged position, even back then, and I knew that I could not, as a white person, provide this student with what he truly deserves and perhaps needs to be persuaded (representation, himself reflected) - but I still encouraged him. I told him that I think he should still try because I could tell that he was smart, and that he could always think of it as a way to prove people wrong. He shrugged it off and continued on talking to anyone in his friend group who would pause from their work to listen to him. For the short remainder of the class time, he continued talking, joking, and laughing with the class - myself included.

A bit later, in my career and in class teaching at an International Private school, I was having a conversation with a student in the class from Nigeria. He was talking to me about a new hat that he had just gotten at the mall. He talked about how great it was and how cool he looked in the hat, but then told me that, unfortunately, he couldn’t even wear it. “Why not?” I asked. He told me that he had bought the hat at a particular store in the mall and realized when he got home later that day that they hadn’t taken the security tag off of it. I asked him if he still had the receipt so that he could take it back and ask them to remove the tag. He told me that his friend (another student in the class) had taken the receipt and used a lighter to make the text on the receipt disappear (this works – I tried it, and it is pretty cool!). They jokingly bickered back and forth about it. Then he looked back at me and said, “well anyways, I can’t take it back now. Imagine – a young Black guy coming into the store and saying, ‘I bought this hat here and they forgot to take off the security tag!’ – they would think I stole it!” I realized as he was saying this through laughter, that this was not truly a “funny” situation. I

*felt I had a good relationship with this student, which perhaps, in addition to being a **person** not just a “teacher robot” to him, was why he was open and candid with me. I nodded in understanding and I asked him if he would like me to go to the store with the hat to try to return the hat. He said he would bring the hat into the class the next time he could. Unfortunately, this was at the end of the school year and we were unable to come back to this.*

In both of these scenarios, young Black male students are relaying the message to me that they are automatically read and perceived as problematic prior to any meaningful engagement with individuals purely on the basis of their race and cultural signifiers. The contrast is undeniable, as this is not a regular experience that I have ever had to face as a result of my immediately visible and codified skin colour/race - that, in and of itself, is a testament to the benefit that exists. This is not new information, but it is information that many white educators are not actively considering within their daily practice, and this white innocence has an impact. “Despite claims to mean no harm, we all know that skin color continues to serve as the most obvious criterion in determining how a person will be treated. In America and around the world, because of deeply entrenched racism and anti-Blackness, we know that dark skin is demonized, and light skin is generally prized” (Kendall, 2020), p. 92). Even the initial reaction of mine during this time in my career demonstrates this - a lack of acknowledgment or ignorance of *why*. *Why* aren’t you doing your work? *Why* can’t you just bring the hat back? That I was perplexed in those moments, is itself illustrative of the privilege. As white educators:

We continue to fail students of color by buttressing what Leonardo (2008) calls “white racial knowledge,” an ‘epistemology of the oppressor to the extent that it suppresses knowledge of its own conditions of existence’ (p. 233). In institutional and personal ways, such an epistemology allows whites to claim a lack of racial knowledge and maintain ‘white innocence’ (Gotanda, 2004) in the face of a racial

structure of oppression while at the same time continuing to benefit from it.
(Galman, et al, 2010, p.226)

These two students from vastly different backgrounds (one in an international private school and one in an “at-risk” public school) communicated, with such clarity, their understandings of racialized perceptions and the cultural and economic implications of these perceptions. They communicated their lack of faith in a system (fairly and rightly so) regarding the feasibility for ease of employment, and for ease of reasonable economic transactions. We live in a culture which classifies particular bodies and/or embodiments as more acceptable than others.

We live in a racist and colourist culture - a white supremacist culture. Non-white identity, particularly Black identity must be highly mitigated in order to be considered “professional” or “acceptable” for the workforce (and even this mitigating does not guarantee this). Galabuzi (2014) says, “As Dei (1997) has remarked, “whiteness is the visual image of normalcy for most people” in Canada. What occurs outside of that conception of normalcy is considered deviant” (p. 202). It is not best that I take up space by speaking to this on my own, so to defer to educators who can speak to this experience more authentically than I can, I bring attention to a tweet by Maribel Gonzalez (2021) that attests to this: “Gentle reminder that educators of color (teachers, instructional coaches, counselors, admin) found jobs and are keeping our jobs because at some level we conformed to whiteness. Think about how this impacts how we serve youth of color in our schools.” I will also bring attention to and encourage further reading of Matthew Morris’ work and platform. Morris (2018) recognized this expectation of conformity to

whiteness through his practice and began to shift his thinking and style in order to reclaim his identity. He says:

when I first started teaching I was afraid to wear my earrings into the school. I was anxious about leaving my polo untucked or wearing a short-sleeved shirt that would expose the tattoos I had on my upper arms. Perhaps the unconscious micro-aggressions I had received as a high school student, and then again in undergrad, prevailed over my notions of how to navigate my own representations. As I became more comfortable in my position I started to reflect my identity more authentically. (p. 92-93)

The awareness that Morris illustrates of the implicit or expected codes (based upon the normalization of whiteness), is the same thing that both of these boys are aware of. Both of these boys are aware that they would need to mitigate their identities in order to meet white professional standards, *or* that even with mitigation, the reading of their race would pose a risk, due to the dominance of white supremacy culture in schools or professional workplaces. Mikki Kendall (2020) says, “having darker skin is linked to lower job prospects, difficulty getting promoted into high-level positions” (p. 90) and the student in the first anecdote illustrates his understanding of this. She also says that “As a society we tend to erase dark-skinned people and even punish them for existing” (p. 90) which is something both of these boys express - being punished for existing in their own skin, with or without signifiers that have been villainized by a history and culture of white supremacy (despite being mere expressions of one's culture, race, and pride). It is important to note that this is not only true for Black boys, but for all Black students - girls, trans, or nonbinary students, and more. Kendall (2020) says that “girls of color,

especially Black girls, must deal with erasure and higher expectations, all while managing to fit in with their peers without running into the clutches of the school-to-prison pipeline or predators” (p. 70) and that for Black girls or women:

having hair that is not styled well, clothes that aren't flattering, and so on can undermine your chances at success. While a messy bun might be considered sloppy chic for white girls, any hint that a Black woman has failed to put effort into her appearance is met with ardent disapproval both inside her community and outside it. (p. 88)

The awareness that these boys demonstrate can be even further affirmed by an ethnographic study done by Smith and Hope (2020), who state:

The participants' [five young Black boys] preoccupation with the ways in which they and other Black people at school were perceived negatively was not surprising. Previous scholarly literature suggests that Black students (especially Black boys from middle class backgrounds) are aware of the negative stereotypes that exist about Black people, actively work to refute those stereotypes, and associate anxiety with those efforts. (p. 558)

Much of the anxiety that these boys are experiencing seems to be internalized or handled through humour - which is a result of systemic failures and a lack of true support within the school systems made *by* white men *for* white men.

In what I would consider to be a disservice to both of these students, I felt unprepared for these moments - despite the fact that I had considered myself to be “equitable” and “inclusive” in my pedagogical philosophy, my activism, and my personal morals. I failed to consider “the degree to which, and manner by which, the body

impacts, shapes, and brings educational spaces to life” (Seawright, 2018, p. 911). I came to realize that I needed to be more considerate of how I navigate my racial identity, and how my position as a white educator is already imbued with power and privilege. My whiteness, paired with a position of “authority” as an educator, could result in the inadvertent participation of imposing white supremacist, colonialist, and normative ideologies through day-to-day actions, particularly if I am not considerate enough of the implications of even the most “mundane” actions.

Seawright (2018) talks about “the extent to which Whiteness is operationalized in more mundane and material ways, [...] it is articulated in a real-time relationality through situated bodies emplaced in the spatial and temporal contours of social worlds” (p. 912). It is not only important that I understand my privilege as a white person, but that I understand how my white body interacts with and participates in the subjugation of racialized bodies through mundane and material ways. As Galabuzi (2014) says:

Henry and Tator (2009) have suggested that whiteness is a location of structural advantage, power and privilege that is deployed by those in a dominant position. It is also a “standpoint” from which a dominant White society views itself and its experience as universal, while diminishing the experiences of the “other”. The normativity of whiteness affords members of the dominant group benefits that are assumed to be entitlements by right, even as they are denied to “others” (Mills, 1997). (p. 202)

My whiteness is a privilege as a result of a colonialist history of displacement and genocide, and these students made me even more aware of what this means. In the context of my career, this means that my white skin is automatically beneficial to me in

regard to being viewed as an “acceptable” or “professional” subject, and despite coming from a low-income background this results in easier access to economic privileges as well. It highlights the critical importance of race as part of the economic structure (in that, my class no longer matters, as my race is the more significant of the two in relation to how I am seen day-to-day as a teacher or person). Just as I had been aware of my low-income status and the associated perceptions attached to it, these students are aware that their race/skin colour has associated perceptions attached – and there is no privilege of invisibility/performance outside of that available to them. In my day-to-day life, as a white person, race, more often than not, is a non-consideration for me.

Whiteness is so culturally normed as the default, as Seawright (2018) states:

Whiteness serves as an organizing principle that conditions normative ways of being in and understanding society that are fundamentally predicated upon the raced body as social signifier, [...] It is curious then, that the body remains under-examined and not treated as a serious analytic. (p. 911)

It is not accidental that whiteness has been constructed as the norm within a set of systems that were constructed by the beneficiaries of those norms (white people), and likely not accidental that the body remains under-examined. As Galabuzi (2014) says:

The processes of racialization serve to categorize groups on the basis of socially constructed characteristics and attributed abilities, values, morals and behavioral patterns that come to be related to those characteristics. The process serves to then essentialize, homogenize, generalize the experiences of minority groups and to de-emphasize intergroup differences in a manner that dehistoricizes and decontextualizes their experiences. (p. 201-202)

This process of racialization is hardly accidental, and the lack of research regarding embodiment likely is not either.

It is necessary for us, as educators, to begin to interrogate this within our roles, even if/when there will be deep discomfort and so-called costs involved. Galman, et al (2010), state that the

call for teacher education programs to address the challenge of preparing a predominantly white, middle-class, female teaching force to work effectively with an increasingly diverse population of students is resounding [...] There is a need for teacher education programs to better prepare white educators for their roles as such, because, “despite the purest motives, our efforts might be misdirected, fruitless, or, worse, counterproductive”. (p. 225)

As such, there is a critical need for greater representation in the employment of teachers. Preparing a white work force for progressively more and more diverse spaces is inexcusable, as “White teachers ‘often do not have the same cultural experiences and worldviews as their students’ or expectations of Black achievement, which impacts on their ability to be role models to Black pupils” (Maylor, 2009, p. 3). Not only does educator representation matter, but educator expectation levels matter as well. Galman et al (2010) state that

Research shows that many [white, middle-class, female] teachers have low expectations of students who belong to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups other than their own (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Irvine, 1990). Their developing cultural competencies and understandings of antiracist pedagogy shape their practice, the educational opportunities they provide for students, and the ways in

which they interact with students, families, and communities [...] New teachers need preparation to be antiracist educators, including opportunities to gain understandings about race and racism in the context of their own identities and others' [...] New teachers have been shown to use race as a major factor in determining academic and behavioral expectations and treatment of students of color in their classrooms. (p. 225)

Acknowledging this concern of low expectations for students of colour and admitting to my white privilege is not enough: “these ‘ritual confessions’ create the conditions for a form of pseudo antiracist practice that assumes that if you intellectually engage with the racist history [...] and reflectively confess your relationship to it you are doing your part,” (Seawright, 2018, p. 917). Seawright also highlights the “tension between working with teachers to acknowledge the degree to which they are personally caught up in systems of racial hierarchy while also attending to the ways that this system perpetuates itself despite a teacher’s intellectual commitments to antiracism” (p. 917). Action beyond words is required of me and reflecting on the ways in which I am caught up in these systems and practices is merely a first step. It is critical to understand that educators who are Black, Indigenous, and educators of colour are all potentially experiencing schools, in some ways, similarly to these young boys (as indicated by Morris and Gonzalez above).

5.5 Interrogating White Supremacy Culture in Schools

I had a student, a young white boy, who came to class wearing a MAGA (Make America Great Again) hat one day. When I first noticed the hat, I asked him to take it off and to put it out of sight in the classroom to deal with the concern (though, I want to directly note that this is counter to my general approach, but I thought avoiding spectacle or the bringing of attention to it as much as possible was best). He would take the hat off of his head, but I would turn around and he would sneak it back on. I continued to tell him to put it away. On the second day of this hat entering the classroom, a student of colour in the class asked to speak

to me privately. Once all of the other students cleared the room, he told me that he had a concern that he wanted to address with me. He started off by saying, “this might be small or dumb but...” and followed this up with a discussion surrounding the presence of the MAGA hat in the classroom. He told me that he and his close peers (who were too nervous to partake in addressing the issue) were uncomfortable with the hat in the classroom. I assured him that this concern was not “small” or “dumb”, and that his feelings were more than valid. I told him that I would address the concern to ensure the hat would not enter the classroom again. With the influx of white nationalist associations and racial tensions regarding the symbology of the hat, it felt most appropriate for me to try my best to see what I could do. When I addressed this with higher-ups, I was cautioned to avoid making it about the “MAGA Trump” hat, as that would read more as a political bias than anything. Before he entered class the next day, I decided anyway to pull the student aside to talk to him privately. I asked him not to bring the hat into the classroom anymore, to leave it in his locker or in his bag during class time. It was unclear if he was wearing it as a result of true support, or for the “shock” value it provided. Either way, his privilege allowed him to have a sense of detachment to the reality that the hat presented (intentional or not). He asked me with a grin, “is this because it’s a MAGA hat?” I hesitated briefly, keeping in mind the “cautions” I received beforehand, but decided to respond to him honestly saying something like, “I will be honest with you, it is because of the hat. You have to understand that this hat has a lot of different meanings to different people, and some of those meanings will cause people to see you and your intentions a certain way. My job is to make sure that everyone feels welcomed and safe in the classroom, and I would really appreciate your cooperation to make sure of that.” Our chat went a bit further than this, with me pointing out to him that it is not being read by peers or by myself in a positive or humorous manner (if that was his intent), that it was hurtful to some people, and that truthfully, I was uncomfortable with the hat as well. Ultimately, he agreed to leave the hat out of the classroom from that point on, and I started to notice that he switched hats entirely, not even wearing the previous one again to school.

To begin, there exists a prevalent, foundational culture of white supremacy which continues to be reinforced and maintained in school spaces. As Oluo (2020) clarifies:

when I say “white supremacy,” I’m not just talking about Klan members and neo-Nazis. Blatant racial terrorists - while deadly and horrifying - have never been the primary threat to people of colour in [North] America. It’s more insidious than that. I am talking about the ways our schoolrooms, politics, popular culture, boardrooms, and more all prioritize the white race over other races. (p. 3)

I felt that this notion of cultural tending to whiteness was evident in this scenario. In navigating this situation, it was abundantly clear to me that the students who were uncomfortable with the presence of the hat should clearly come before the object itself. Yet, there was a strange pressure for me to be incredibly careful about how I dealt with this issue. I was discouraged from any direct racial/political discussions surrounding the hat. There were, in a sense, regulatory constraints at play that relate to both addressing the question of whiteness in the classroom, and there was also the requirement to remain neutral or unbiased. I am expected to perform as a politically neutral subject, despite the impact that these politics have on real, lived experiences. My aforementioned white privilege allows me to dodge the conversation of racial tensions specifically if I choose to allow it. It was as if the importance of the resolution lay more so in being digestible for the young, white male subject instead of being centred on the experiences and impact felt by racialized students.

To me, it seemed obvious that we should not or *could* not allow the hat to be reduced to a simple political leaning/opinion. The message of the hat, “Make America Great Again,” is a clear example of a “dog-whistle” or a multivocal political communication:

Multivocal communication occurs when the same words have distinct meanings to different audiences. In political speech, multivocal communication reflects situations where the sender of a message sends a targeted appeal to an ingroup that understands the specific meaning of a particular phrase based on a shared history of past practice while an outgroup remains unaware. These sorts of

multivocal appeals are a form of targeted marketing, which allows politicians to deliver a tailored message to a subset of the population. (Albertson, 2015, p. 5). Relaying this, in a sense to the student, was exactly how I chose to address concerns of the hat. Political tricks like dog-whistles intentionally create difficulties and “grey areas” for applying school policy directly, making the job of activist educators more complicated. There is a real danger involved with the insistence upon ideas that these things are “just politics” comparable to a “Hillary” hat (which was a comparison made during a conversation with someone “above” me). There is no comparison between something that has become culturally symbolic to the degree that it has been recognized as a racist dog whistle and a simply representational political merchandise piece. To compare, simply put, is grasping onto a false equivalency for the sake of avoiding backlash from the dominant, catered to culture and subject. This illustrates the great concern with educational institutions and their role in perpetuating and validating racist ideologies and symbolism.

Oluo (2020) also says that:

the rewarding of white male mediocrity not only limits the drive and imagination of white men; it also requires forced limitations on the success of women and people of color in order to deliver on the promised white male supremacy [...] we condition white men to believe not only that the best they can hope to accomplish in life is a feeling of superiority over women and people of colour, but also that their superiority should be automatically granted them simply because they are white men. (p.6)

Schools are often backed by a logic of bureaucratic and liberal forms of governance and management. They are “equity” centred on paper, but often not in action, and one of the significant reasons for this is that “Whiteness is enmeshed with the normative ideological, psychological, curricular, pedagogical, and policy operations of schooling” (Seawright, 2018, p. 911), and since white people are still dominant in the education system here in Ontario, it has not been challenged on a systemic level. This systemic challenge is a necessity for progress in education. As Galabuzi (2014) says:

Whiteness was normalized and institutionalized in Canadian education as part of the Canadian national project from the very beginning of European contact in the 16th century. It became central to policy-making, curriculum development, school administration and classroom instruction. [...] the educational system that focuses on the learning needs of middle-class, able-bodied, White students as the human standard, at the expense of girls, working-class youth, Aboriginal and racialized boys and girls, children with disabilities and immigrant children. (p. 201-202)

Bodies like mine—white bodies in Canadian schools—have historically been a part of the larger mechanism of white supremacy: made to assimilate and homogenize.

This history still informs marginalized student experiences today (as illustrated by the ongoing issues mentioned earlier: streaming, low expectations, negative stereotypes...and so forth). I cannot extract this history from my body and/or my race, so I need to advocate for greater representation in the field, even at my own expense, and I need to tend to the feelings, emotions, and expressions of marginalized students first and foremost. This being said, it is important that I not venture into “white saviour” territory. I truly believe that students are the experts of their own lives and in their own practice as

learners (what their strengths are, what they wish to improve on, what they require for focus, support...and so on). I do wish to state, further, that it should not be a concern that Black students, Indigenous students, and students of colour feel their concerns regarding their own safety and inclusion ever be considered “small” or “dumb,” or that they not have the ability to voice their displeasure outwardly, that I have the privilege to address it more outwardly as a result of my teacher and white status.

I cannot avoid conflict for the benefit of dominant subjects - I need to show my support for students of colour through tangible actions, even if “mundane.” If we are avoiding conflict, then how are we changing things? What effect does this neutrality have? Can one truly be “neutral” through silence or omission? As Desmond Tutu has famously said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” I would say that this guise of neutrality demonstrates the complicity of schools and school actors in creating and maintaining normative structures in insidious ways. This guise of neutrality also shows that the system favours white comfort over even the consideration of the lived realities of Black students or students of colour. It is evident then, that schools often favour illusory “equality” with the contradictory concept of so-called “freedom of expression” – the notion that everyone is entitled to their opinion (even if there are racist aggressions or microaggressions involved...). Yet, I or the students impacted, cannot address the concern of this undeniable association to racism (freedom for who?). Assimilation is still modeled and/or expected within the school system to some degree, and if we could all be more critical of the systems, more open and honest about these processes, then we can move to truly alter them.

It is important to note that race is critical to the role of the educator, but class is also critical, and class is also read on the teacher body. For example:

there is “a gulf which separates Black teachers from Black pupils” in schools and [...] this “gulf relates to class”. This class “gulf” makes it difficult for some Black teachers to gain respect and admiration and to be considered as role models by Black pupils, as Black teachers are often perceived by Black pupils as middle class (whether they are or not). Perceptions of class differences are fuelled by Black teachers’ use of standard English together with “European body language and gesture[s] ... and non-verbal expression” which leads to them at times being viewed by Black pupils with “suspicion” and questions raised as to whether they are “Black or White” (Evans 1988, 185). This perceived “denial of one’s Black cultural identity” (Evans 1988, 185) in favour of English/European mannerisms contributes to Black teachers being constructed by Black pupils as “acting White” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Gordon 1994), and “having nothing in common with them as Black pupils”. (Maylor, 2009, p. 15-16)

The performance of race and class is so culturally connected within our culture, where usually the darker the skin colour, the more likely the body is assumed to be of lower-income status, as demonstrated by a study done by Brown-Iannuzzia et al (2019) which “found that people tend to implicitly associate Blacks with the concept of being poor, as opposed to rich” (p. 33). So, despite the fact that having the position of “educator” may re-class the Black body, the truth remains that the white body need not be mitigated in the same manner to even be assumed middle-class. This means that, oftentimes, classism and

racism go hand-in-hand within school-based experiences for racialized students and teachers.

5.6 Classism is in Session

*During one of my practicum placements, I remember speaking to another teacher candidate on the way into the school on the first day. She was expressing her concerns about being placed in the school (one considered to be an “at risk” high school). She talked about how she wanted to teach at a “better” school in a “nice” neighbourhood, where the kids “cared” about their education. Not only did she have this perspective, but it became increasingly clear that staff members at the school also had this perspective as well. There were staff members who indicated their low expectations several times throughout the practicum, particularly regarding the students’ chances at success. As a matter of fact, even in the education program it was common to face teacher candidates with this perspective. I once sat in one of my classes focused on human rights in education where the professor had just shown us a documentary film called *Four Feet Up*. This film follows a family in Canada living below the poverty line. The professor encouraged a discussion following the film, and many students went on to express their concerns about the parents’ spending habits, attributing their struggles to what they deemed ‘unnecessary’ or ‘selfish’ purchases (ex: soda for the children and cigarettes for themselves). Growing tired, I eventually decided to raise my hand to address the class, saying something along the lines of, “Not all of us come from the same background, and I think many of you need to be careful about what you are saying about this family and how you are placing responsibility on the parents for their financial situation. As someone from a low-income background, I relate to this film to some degree. So, while you are all debating the choices and experiences of those in the film, I am relating to some of those experiences – and you are, in some ways, judging myself and my family as well.”*

The above experiences as a teacher candidate gave me greater insight into the roles that educators play in placing, and making visible this placement, of low expectations upon students in low-income households or “at risk” schools. I was unable, in high school, to change perceptions of my class background, as most teachers had been aware of my socioeconomic background to some degree or would *become* aware of it when I was forced to perform my class outwardly (for example, when my name was called out for not having paid the course fee in an art class, and I would have to respond to explain that I did not have the money yet). As Gorski (2018) states, “as over a decade

of research shows [...] educators in a variety of roles regularly show lower academic expectations for students experiencing poverty than economically privileged students” (p. 111). As a result of these preconceived notions about my background, I began to question whether my acceptance into university was something I was even worthy of - this “highlight[s] the hidden injuries of class-passing, an internalization of feeling unworthy” (Foster, 2005, p. 74). As a teacher today, I still struggle with these feelings of imposter syndrome or inadequacy. Imposter syndrome is about the construction of shame through classism.

hooks (1994) states that “there is little or no discussion of the way in which the attitudes and values of those from materially privileged classes are imposed upon everyone via biased pedagogical strategies. Reflected in choice of subject matter and the manner in which ideas are shared, these biases need never be overtly stated” (p. 179-180). Despite the fact that these need not be overtly stated, people are still made aware of the preconceived notions and assumptions of their class identities, notions which are a result of where they come from geographically, how they respond verbally and/or physically, how they dress...etc. Mentioned earlier, Ruby Payne (2003), has constructed various tables/charts detailing offensive distinctions regarding stereotyped class-based behaviours and values. It is important, again, to clarify that I find Payne’s ideology and classifications utterly offensive, divisive, and cruel - but I utilize it here to communicate a socially accepted, normative perspective and cultural understanding of those in/presumed to be in poverty, and of the socially constructed signifying “cues” which people *may* or *may not* actually embody/exhibit. Here are some of the examples from her text “Hidden Rules Among Classes,” from *Understanding Poverty*:

	POVERTY	MIDDLE CLASS	WEALTHY
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Humour	About people and sex.	About situations.	About social faux pas.
Personality	For entertainment. Sense of humour is highly valued.	For acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued.	For connections. Financial, political, and social connections are highly valued.
Money	To be used, spent.	To be managed.	To be conserved, invested.
Education	Valued and revered as abstract but not a reality.	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.

Table 2: Summarized examples from “Hidden Rules Among Classes” by Ruby Payne (2003) in chart form

This Table would have many believing that people in poverty are generally a more self-interested, simple-minded/not serious, irresponsible group of people in comparison to the other two presented – since, according to Payne, they mostly joke about people and sex, they view themselves as objects of entertainment, are not engaged in politics or even proper social etiquette, they fantasize about education - but do not pursue it, they use/spend their money, they do not “manage” it, and so forth. In response to the latter of the misconceptions listed, I find it prudent to say that I always saw my mother being particularly careful each month to properly “manage” the money to ensure our stability and comfort, despite being low-income.

Payne encourages students/people to embody “middle-class” ways of being in order to “climb” out of poverty. This encouragement reads as encouragement for assimilation into the dominant class, more than anything, and certainly would not ensure that anyone “climb” out of poverty. This, still, is part of a normalizing cultural matrix, much like Butler’s (1993) heterosexual matrix:

This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet “subject”, but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy

the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unlivable” is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject [...] In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, “inside” the subject as its own founding repudiation. (p. xiii)

These social expectations/assumptions about our values, behaviours, and identity – this perception is not new or unexpected to us, it is experienced repetitiously, and it therefore becomes our personal/unifying knowledge; “We were encouraged, as many students are today, to betray our class origins. Rewarded if we chose to assimilate, estranged if we chose to maintain those aspects of who we were” (hooks, 1994, p. 182).

Rita Felski (2000) states the following:

Those who are poor often experience shame when their poverty is exposed before the eyes of others. [...] The opportunities for experiencing shame increases dramatically with geographic and social forms of mobility which provide an infinite array of chances for failure, for betraying by word or gesture that one does not belong to one’s environment. (p. 39)

In university, I still felt that I did not belong to my environment, despite the fact that I was not overtly questioned or acknowledged as not belonging most days - my background was not made visible on the mostly anonymous campus ground. “Shame, in other words, rises out of a discrepancy between certain norms and values and others perceived as superior” (Felski, 2000, p. 42). Generally:

low-SES [socioeconomic status] students regularly report feeling like they “do not belong” in the college context [...] and are particularly prone to experience

“imposter syndrome” (i.e., the feeling that they do not truly deserve to be there and that they fooled anyone who thinks otherwise [...]) Such a feeling might also be explained by these students being aware of their underprivileged background (Jury et al, 2017, p. 26-27).

This feeling of inadequacy strongly relates to the concept of stereotype threat. There is often a fear of being “caught” and a strong sense of shame for those experiencing poverty or low-income circumstance due to:

false associations of [...] socio-economic status in our culture. Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson discuss Philip Roth’s work, and what he refers to as the Jewish “predicament” but they broaden the concept to include the larger context of race, with a specific focus on African American identity. In this work, they coin the term stereotype threat: “Stereotype threat is being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group.” This results in constant self-regulation/evaluation, which serves not only as a distraction to daily tasks and expectations, but results in the “anxiety of knowing that one is a potential target of prejudice.” Essentially one either “performs,” in a sense, the expectations of that identity, or they are in constant fear that they are reinforcing the stereotypes surrounding their identity. Not surprisingly, their study suggested that the stereotype threat affects students cognitively, and therefore academically when being tested in comparison to their counterparts. This concept can also be applied to [students from low] socio-economic [backgrounds]. (Cloutier-Bordeleau, 2015, p. 98).

Throughout my years in high school, stereotype threat was a significant concern of mine.

With this shift into academia, it seemed that my mere presence on a university campus (of course, also as white) meant that I was often simply presumed to be from the middle to upper-middle class demographic. I could pick up on this in the ways that people treated me, spoke to me, and assumed general capability from me in a new way. Even my casual unbranded attire, which was often a signifier of my class-background in high school, was suddenly regarded as an acceptable embodiment of an undergraduate white student in the large city of Toronto. As a teacher, this same casual clothing would likely re-classify me as less professional or even unprofessional, simply as a result of the stringent concept of professionalism which rely on an expected performance that my teacher identity and job stability are contingent upon. These constructed classifications stem largely from widely accepted and unquestioned classist assumptions, much like Ruby Payne's ideas - that are themselves classist. It is assumed that those who pursue education have the *means* and the *drive* to do so. As a result, what we see is a production and reproduction of these middle-class "cues" under the guise of "professionalism" being performed by both the subjects themselves (middle-class people), and the "others" in order to stave off shame or to resist the stereotype threat.

There is a clear underlying assumption in the university space, and in the field of teaching, that everyone there is, at the very least, middle-class (especially those who are white). There is a general assumption that if you are pursuing post-secondary education as a white person it is because you are financially well off enough to do so, as it is largely assumed that low-income individuals do not "value" education the same way (even Payne's "training" can attest to this cultural assumption). As Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (2005) says:

We all class-pass. We all negotiate class. We all experience and perform class [...] Class-passing and class mobility are not usually treated as behaviors or fantasies that spring from desire, whether it be the work of the unconscious of the individual or that of the collective unconscious. Class-passing simply has been normed so intrinsically that it no longer stands out, much like whiteness. Like whiteness, it has been dangerously adopted as a norm. (p. 1, 3).

This active participation in “class-passing” - by means of omission and/or through the intentional performance of class, or the unintentional performativity of assumed “middle-class” cues (which, not so coincidentally go hand-in-hand with the concept of “professional” and “white”) – affords educators with a normative designation, unless otherwise disrupted.

Foster (2005) borrows from Judith Butler stating the following:

...on the performative nature of gender, I think revisiting [Butler’s] most important and revolutionary work – the chapter “Subversive Bodily Acts” in *Gender Trouble* – is helpful here. In the following passages, I have substituted the word *class* for *gender* to display how Butler’s methodology, when applied to class, disrupts the notion of coherency and stability when it comes to class, just as it disrupts the gender binary system.

If the inner truth of [class] is a fabrication and if true [class] is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that [classes] can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity [...] (174-175)

Thus, whereas Butler overhauls the idea of original or true gender identity, I have used her words to disrupt the notion of immutable class identity. Class, like gender, may be construed as a socially constructed and regulated series of performed acts and gestures. One might say, then, that actual wealth is necessary to perform class, but that is not always necessarily true [...] Using Butler [and keeping in mind Payne], we can conclude that class norms are in many ways a fiction disguised as a truth and that the perimeters of class are patrolled just as regularly as those of gender. (p. 38-39)

So how does this all relate to my practice/experience as an educator? By simply *being* a white educator, I have significant privilege as a normative subject, through the “passing” or omissions of my marginalizations. As Foster (2005) states,

Class passing is in some ways like race-passing, gender-passing, or straight/gay-passing, but class-passing like whiteness, is not often noticed or examined. It is essentially viewed as normative behavior, [...], where one is expected to do as much class-passing as possible regardless of one’s race, gender, or economic circumstances. (p. 4)

That all being said, it is critical to consider this more intersectionally - as this idea of “passing” through an active/inactive avoidance of perceived “low-income” status or style is more easily afforded to white people than it is to racialized people. “Socially imposed forms of difference—like sexualized, genderized, racialized, and classed differences—create different experiences” (Seawright, 2018, p. 914). Culturally exists “the ‘norm’ of whiteness, [...] those who do not fall into the white category are marked as *other* while, ‘at a level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain

race, they're just the human race'" (Foster, 2003, p. 1). The colour of our skin is a cultural capital, even (or especially) in educational spaces, where the lightness of one's skin directly correlates to more positive perceptions or expectations.

In this classroom, where I sat and listened as educator candidates (my classmates) judged the low-income *other*, why were people so comfortable speaking so openly about low-income people, as if there were no one who identified with them in the room? The presumptions about whether low-income individuals were "educated" or interested in the pursuit of education, the dominance of whiteness in the room, the way of speaking and dressing in "socially acceptable" ways – all contributed to the assumption of the "normal" middle-class subject; the "cues" of poverty were not overtly visible to those in the room. When I called attention to the stigmatization taking place in the classroom full of my peers after this documentary film, there was a mixture of subtle support/appreciation for my perspective, and a hush of silence amongst many who were previously vocal in their opinions on the family in the film. It is important to note that I did not necessarily adhere to middle-class cues or norms, but that my whiteness, paired with being in a space presumed to be for a particular class of people, rendered me as not visibly or expectedly low-income. This invisibility or "passing" is something that I experience, with both "benefits" and disadvantages involved, with regard to my sexuality and gendered body as well.

This exposure to "professionalism" as a concept deriving from classism, racism, sexism...and so on, only became more apparent in the shift out of the teacher education program and *within* the field:

A colleague of mine once talked about an experience a friend of hers had following an interview with a school board. The woman was applying for a position on the occasional

teaching “list.” She was rejected from the position and was provided feedback by email regarding her attire, more specifically, she was encouraged to present herself more “professionally.” She had gone in with a “nice top and a pair of dark jeans.” Presumably, it was the pair of jeans that were not considered to be “professional” enough in this circumstance. The woman had recently had a child, and much of her clothing was ill-fitting. She even purchased this pair of jeans specifically for the purpose of the interview, despite the cost.

In one of the schools I worked in, each year teachers were to be formally evaluated by upper management and department heads. Formal evaluations are common practice in the field of education. During this evaluation, one member of management and the department head would sit in on a class and observe the lesson. After one of my evaluations I had a meeting to discuss the results. I looked over the evaluation and saw a “score” out of five for “professional appearance.” I asked what this score meant and was told that it was ultimately a judgment on choice of attire/aspects of appearance. Essentially, I was being judged on my style and my ability to adhere to the code of conduct regarding professional clothing/appearance at the school (for example: skirts/shorts, heels must be of a “professional” length/height). I had gotten a score of 4 out of 5 and was told “everyone basically receives this unless they have gone above and beyond for professional attire.” As a side note, I had asked earlier on in the year if it would be ok for me to dye my hair pink and was told that it would not be allowed. Students (in strict school uniform) were not allowed to have colourful hair, and therefore, neither was I. I assumed that if I had dyed it, I would have been reprimanded in some way – and it certainly would have affected this “score.”

I feel it appropriate to lead with Foucault (1975) here:

The examination, surrounded by all its documentary techniques, makes each individual a “case”: a case which at one and the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power. The case is no longer, as in casuistry or jurisprudence, a set of circumstances defining an act and capable of modifying the application of a rule; it is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc (p. 191)

Much in the same way that my mentor teachers participated in examination and documentary techniques in their roles as observers and assessors, these regular interviews

and evaluations (common in the teaching field) serve the same purpose of regulation through threat of job security (or even loss of job opportunity), “measuring” progression, “success,” but more importantly and truthfully, adherence. As Bourke, et al (2013) state:

the nineteenth century disciplinary technologies of hierarchical observation, normalization and examination are still well and truly alive in education, yet in more covert ways, masquerading as a “new” professionalism. [...] disciplinary technologies in the twenty-first century apply equally to teachers and their students, with the surveilling gaze emanating from above (regulatory authorities), beside (communities and colleagues) and below (students). (p. 84)

This is where the difficult-to-pin-point definition of professionalism and the neoliberal accountability measures addressed in the literature review become most relevant. Bourke, et al (2013), for example, state that:

Performance criteria are often justified as a necessary means of ensuring accountability and equity in the distribution of scarce educational resources with some limits placed on professional autonomy accepted as minor collateral damage (Groundwater & Sachs, 2002; A. Hargreaves, 2003). However, Chua (2009, p. 160) claims that the result is a restriction of teachers’ “designerly cognition” and “designer identities,” lowering the professional standards of educators as they limit their aim to the visible and measurable goals captured by the performance criteria. Similarly, Avis (2005) claims that other conceptualizations of good practice outside performance criteria are silenced and denied legitimacy. (p.2)

It is clear, then, that this system of neoliberal thinking and accountability is coming at the cost of authentic identification, and I believe that my thesis demonstrates further that this is more so affecting educators with marginalized identities.

I was bothered by the fact that there was a numerical “score” for, what was essentially, my appearance, choice of clothing, shoes, makeup...and so on. To me, this makes fully apparent the constructedness of professionalism and the incentivization or pressure of adherence to it - even if/when it counters markers of our own identities or intersections of identity. We adhere to or divert from these expectations physically and with great consideration, through the manifestation of “proper” or “improper” ways of being, doing, or being seen in the physical sense. The expected codes of conduct relative to appearance in the field of teaching, I feel, are often coded racism, transphobia, homophobia, classism, ableism, sexism and more. Schools are “microcosms of the larger society” more specifically, “schools are microcosms of the communities they serve and thus often reflect the culture and values of the dominant group in the school” (Elia, 2014b, p. 38). The ideas reflected by the administrators above, then, are reflective of the dominant values of our culture. Educators cannot dodge responsibility either, as they play a critical role in schools.

We must interrogate the function of these codes, or this term - “professionalism.” Bourke, et al (2013), say that there:

is an abundance of literature on professionalism, with many attempts to provide a definition, and even more government-led agendas calling for higher degrees of professionalism in education. However, what professionalism is, how it can be defined and by whom, are still sites of struggle within the education sector. (p. 84)

It is in this inability to truly define professionalism that is insidious, in that everyone participates in it or must resist it with potential risk. Professionalism, as a vague term, often results in the definition deferring to cultural norms of acceptability, like Butler's matrix.

Bourke, et al (2013) argue that "professionalism is a social construct and, therefore, teachers play a key role in what they resist and what they accept" (p. 9). Teachers' continued insistence upon depersonalized modes of teaching, or their complicit adherence to the concept "professionalism" regardless of its alignment to their own identities, has resulted in the further maintenance of dominant discourse, which is the "key site for the social construction of meaning and, as such, what people do in discourse overrides changes initiated at other levels," (Sisson & Iverson, 2014, p. 218). For example, to illustrate a collective experience of this educator professionalism as restrictive, one day, fellow coworkers and I were discussing concerns regarding how to present ourselves in various contexts as teachers. All women participating in the conversation believed that the standards were higher in regard to attention to physical appearance. We all thought about what we were wearing, what our hair looked like, our makeup, our shoes... etc., and whether we would all be considered "professional" enough almost daily. This was in direct contrast to all of the men in the room who related little, if at all to these experiences. It would be unlikely that the men would relate, due to the fact that many of these experiences are cultural and normed for women - the school is simply reinforcing them through "professionalism" discourse, a discourse with power that Foucault (1980) would say is:

exercised simultaneously through this right and these techniques and that these techniques and these discourses, to which the disciplines give rise invade the area of right so that the procedures of normalisation come to be ever more constantly engaged in the colonisation of those of law. I believe that all this can explain the global functioning of what I would call a society of normalisation. (p.107)

The lack of conversation around the gendered differences of “professionalism,” and how they interrupt daily processes and thinking reinforces its normalizing power. Despite this lack of overt discourse or challenge, when a group of self-identified women and men discuss the topic collectively, they illustrate quite contrasting experiences.

5.7 Not Straight? Then, It’s Too “Personal”

A member of upper management and I were having a conversation about a female teacher in the United States who had been reprimanded for saying something about her wife to her class, revealing her lesbian orientation. Early on in the conversation, she responded with, “teachers should not be talking about their personal relationships anyways, it is unprofessional.” She said this, despite having just talked about her husband and children with me merely minutes prior to this. I pointed out that I believed that this would not be a concern/issue if the woman had said “husband” in this context – and that because of this, it was not an issue of professionalism, but discomfort with particular sexual identities being made visible.

One day, while teaching one of my art courses, I mentioned something about my “partner” in class, and a student looked at me stunned for a moment, then asked me, “why do you say partner?” She then turned to another student in the class, and asked “does that mean she’s gay?” Her peer denied the label, as if on my behalf, stating that I have a boyfriend (as he was seen with me at a school social gathering). He informed the student that I just used the word partner instead of boyfriend. I told the students simply, that I say partner because it includes everyone. What I did not add was that, as someone who is bisexual, I say partner. This conversation went back and forth a bit between the two students. I told the students that I did not want to reinforce “boyfriend/girlfriend” as the only “normal” sexuality. This led the first student to say, “but boyfriend/girlfriend is normal.”

I was teaching an art course, and a few students began recounting their experiences of the recent April Fool’s day. They began telling me stories about

their friends fooling them, or the reverse, them fooling their friends. Of all the stories told, one stood out the most to me. One student told me that his best friend had revealed to him that she was bisexual. He was shocked and hesitant to believe her “confession,” though he expressed that if it were true, he would support her. Despite his claim of support, he maintained that she was just messing with him and would not fully accept it as a reality. She finally gave into revealing that this was, in fact, just an April Fool’s joke. I pressed a bit with questions like “why would that be an issue?” and “what if this were true about her, or even someone else that you know?” He claimed he would support her, but that he would be shocked.

In these moments, I opted to avoid “outing” myself in order to avoid the punishing effects of the ensuing surveillance, as I was situated, by my own students and management, as outside of normal, as abnormal or *other*. I was *debated* (Meyer, 2005) positioned on both sides of the dichotomy between “straight” and “gay,” and my identity was erased/hidden in the process. I was struck by the administrator’s comment, because prior to this, the administrator had just been talking about their heterosexual partner and children, and I had heard them on several occasions mention their family casually. To be perfectly honest, I have sat across from heterosexual coworkers who have talked about trying to conceive, and this was and is considered perfectly acceptable conversation. It is important to reflect on existing power differentials and their impact, as this person was a member of upper management, one who had power in relation to my job security and I could see (through passing/presumed straight/erasure) what their position on this matter was already. This person is relaying the message to me that they interpret the code that sexual minorities should not be made visible, and this is an interpretation that puts me at risk.

The issue was clear: this was not about what is “personal” for *all*, but what is seen as “personal” for *some*. Just as bisexuality and its lack of inclusion or direct attention is not “just semantics” (McAllum, 2014) neither is this use of vague phrases/terms like “too

personal” or “unprofessional.” I knew, in these instances, that the problematic was that the sexual/romantic identity in question was non-normative, or simply, not heterosexual. The discomfort of any sexuality outside of heterosexuality is too much for some people to face, as it sits outside of the normative structure imposed by the previously mentioned heterosexual matrix. I was again faced with this confrontation or debate around my position in the matrix as I was as a child. In these instances, I was made aware that bisexuality was unintelligible, it was not the norm and therefore was too “personal” or “unprofessional.” In other words, the sexual identities in question did not fit normative constructs for determining intelligible and legitimate partnerships and, therefore, disrupted the quiet comfort of the heterosexual matrix. In this respect, the heterosexual matrix functions both discreetly and indiscreetly as a regulatory system. Not only were subjects being positioned as others in relation to the heterosexual other, but discipline and power took the form of punishment, silencing, othering, and as such speaks to Foucault’s insights into power as a network of relations in both of these instances (for myself, the punished educator, and anyone else who is relevant to the asserted categorizations of “unprofessional” or not “normal”).

Our adherence to norms is always being evaluated and assessed, as Foucault (1975) explains:

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are

combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance. (p. 184-85)

In order to maintain “professionalism,” one is expected to remain comfortable in their displacement, the presumed default as:

the judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements. (Foucault, 1975, p. 304)

If assumptions are made about one’s sexuality, they are expected to maintain the normative presumption – *not* correct it. In all of these scenarios it was clear that there was a problem with the ‘personal’ based on the mere fact that the sexual identity in question did not fit the heteronormative and heterocentric frame of intelligibility. This meant that a conversation related to my own identity was interpreted as “unprofessional,” and it led me to second-guess revealing or discussing this aspect of myself further, resulting in my complicit participation of bisexual erasure. Jones and Hillier (2014) identified the concern through research that there is a “trend [...] toward subsuming bisexual students within their broader data on ‘LGB/LGBT’ youth [...] rather than to create distinct statistics on them” (p. 56). This erasure takes place through direct exclusion (lack of

visibility - ex. Gay-Straight Alliance) or through this inclusion through exclusion (being combined into LGBT discourse). Bisexuality may not fit into the dichotomy of gay or straight, but most importantly, it is not straight (which is the norm - as the heterosexual matrix defines).

If I am with a man, I am viewed as “straight” and discouraged from clarification, just like being with a woman forcefully places me into the category of “gay.” In either scenario, my true identity is denied. Bisexuality is often an invisible identity encouraged to remain that way, and sometimes even enforced to remain that way through these subjective, implicit codes of conduct. In this scenario, my boss’ implicit code was revealed explicitly, and there was clear bias present. I was being governed at this moment, and I was subsequently governing myself in the process, keeping their words in mind when faced with this *debate* between the students regarding my use of the term “partner.” In both of these moments I allowed for others to assume my sexual identity, and therefore I performed outside of myself and within the categories they placed me, simply through silence and omission.

As I have discussed in chapter 3, Meyer (2005), a bisexual educator, says that in the moment of revealing to her class her bisexuality she became *debatable*. Educators are consistently micromanaged and constructed through codes of conduct (both visible and invisible). This governance results in the performativity of a narrowly defined concept of “professionalism” which serves to hierarchize identity categories; bisexuality is a category deeply impacted by this process. In a recent *Professional Advisory* publication released by the Ontario College of Teachers (2017), the restrictions of possibility for

educator individuality, separate from the concept of the “professional” self, is exemplified:

There is a distinction between the professional and private life of a teacher. Ontario Certified Teachers are individuals with private lives; however, off-duty conduct matters and sound judgment and due care must be exercised. Teaching is a public profession. Canada’s Supreme Court ruled that teachers’ off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students, is relevant to their suitability to teach. Members must maintain a sense of professionalism at all times – in their personal and professional lives. (p. 2)

This selection lays claim that there exists a “distinction” between the personal and professional but is then followed by the contradictory enforcement of a rule that educators *must* maintain “professional” at *all times*, consequentially disallowing for any real “distinction” between the two. Professional codes of conduct are often written in such a way which allows for enforcement based upon the subjectivity of those in power. Essentially, the codes of conduct are visible and invisible - existing both *within* and *outside of* the contract based upon the interpretation of those who enforce them.

The students are a part of the apparatus that police the way that I behave, as illustrated by these moments, and even more interesting - I am complicit as well through my own self-governance.

In relation to the experiences of non-heterosexual educators, Msibi (2019) states: Teachers who engage in same-sex relations remain largely marginalised in schools, often having to adopt creative ways of identity management in order to cope with, and challenge, homophobia in work environments that are often

unsupportive of their sexualities [...] This persistent marginalisation is largely because schools remain key production sites for heterosexuality – with both learners and teachers who deviate from compulsory heterosexuality being on the receiving hand of homophobia [...] Teachers in particular are vilified due to an expectation of asexuality in the workplace [...], with many choosing to keep their same-sex identities and practices private. This regulation and “compartmentalisation” of identities (Hooks 1994) robs learners of obtaining a full education, often forcing same-sex “desiring” teachers to find creative ways of introducing same-sex curriculum content in their schools. [...] Same-sex desiring teachers do not just exist as victims in heterosexualised schooling spaces. Indeed, same-sex desiring teachers resist homophobia and heterosexism while simultaneously seeking for legitimacy, recognition and inclusion. (p. 1-2).

There have been several studies conducted that highlight “the importance of identification with role models in creating the foundation for subsequent identity development” (Rich & Schachter, 2011, p. 220). When youth are exposed to people that reflect particular facets of their own identity, through representation, and subsequently, normalization (or an attempt at), it affords them the validity of their identity. But when the institutional coded pressures contribute to educator complicity in the erasure or marginalization of their very own identities, through the performativity of “acceptable” or normative constructions, then results of larger scale erasure and stigmatization become apparent.

Currently, as it stands, the goals of equity and inclusion within schools are directly in opposition to the existing (visible and invisible) codes of conduct and strict governance

related to educator identity. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2009) released a document titled, “Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy.” The document defines diversity as “the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society,” and states that equity “does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences,” and finally, that through inclusive education “students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment” (p. 4). So, if students see themselves in their surroundings, and if equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences, then why do institutions homogenize educators through strict codes of conduct related to behaviour, attire, identity and relationships?

If educators are discouraged from being themselves, then students will not be privy to the multiplicity/diversity of representation that they deserve, and ultimately exposure to particularized identity (as a result of control/reconstruction) becomes an important contributing factor to shaping their worldviews and individual understandings of personal identity. The current structure does not allow me to be a representational figure in the classroom for students who identify in the same way. Bisexuality is one of the most invisibilized or erased groups within LGBT research in education, and within school discourse. Bisexual educators, and by association and influence, students, are being disadvantaged by the system that erases, stigmatizes, and ignores our identities. Educators need to feel more included and comfortable in revealing this aspect of their identity and to avoid performing outside of it; to make this happen, the structure itself needs to shift and schools need to work on creating new, encompassing strategies of inclusion and equity that consider *all* within the structure.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter provides the enactment of the autoethnographic study through a series of vignettes and critical incidents that served as a basis for my critical reflections on teacher professionalism as a regulatory regime and its effects in my own life as a white, bisexual female teacher. In drawing on theoretical insights from my reading of Foucault and Butler in addition to significant literature in the field, I have illustrated how various intersectional dimensions and aspects of my own identity have played a significant role in my understanding of my subjectification as a professional and its implications for challenging current intersecting systems of oppression related to white, heterosexual and class privilege. In the following chapter I provide a summative overview of the research findings and future implications in moving beyond the thesis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a summative overview of the thesis and end with one final autoethnographic vignette in which I reflect on the implications of my study in moving beyond the thesis.

6.2 Summative Overview

In this thesis I was concerned to examine ways in which the institutionalized definition/expectation of “professionalism” or “professional conduct” in schools exclude bisexuality or contribute to particular marginalizing perceptions and practices of bisexuality through undertaking an autoethnographic study of my own experiences as a teacher. As illustrated in the thesis and in the literature review, there exists external and internal pressures to adhere to particular conceptions of sexual identity within schools - and this pressure affects non-heterosexual educators as well as students. Compulsory heterosexuality/heteronormativity is cultural knowledge, and as my reading of Foucault (1980) highlights, this knowledge becomes a sort of power exercised through a network of power relations in schools. When non-heterosexuality *is* included, it is often binarized, and because of this bisexuality *is*, more often than not, non-existent. When it *is* existent, oftentimes it is due to the attention paid to it as a result of its subversion from the heterosexual matrix (Butler), when it is then problematic.

When we, as bisexual people are visible in schools, these concepts essentially cause us to become debatable and debated by the system and its actors. Non-heterosexuality is seen as “too personal” by educational administrators because it *has*

been relegated to the personal culturally and historically - it is expected to remain out of sight and out of mind due to its lack of adherence to the matrix of 'intelligibility.' To act as a professional in regard to my bisexuality, is to, perhaps avoid its visibility and to accept the automatic assumption of heterosexuality placed upon me. Educator "professionalism," is, therefore, exclusionary of bisexuality and contributes to particular marginalizing perceptions and practices of bisexuality. My own autoethnography detailed in the thesis enabled me to critically reflect on the regulatory effects of such a heteronormative adherence to educator professionalism.

I also highlighted the extent to which educator "professionalism" reaffirms and perpetuates binarized conceptions of gender, male dominance and patriarchy. Through employing autoethnographic vignettes I illuminate how the pressures of the binarized heterosexual matrix in professionalism standards and expectations revisited for staff on a continuous basis. I also expose the extent to which patriarchal dominance and ideological thinking is prevalent in schools, with many of us entering the field performing expectedly the notion of 'teacher' that we have been sold - whether it is consistent with our identities or not. Authoritative leadership is something to be admired and is often encouraged by teachers or teacher candidates who demonstrate a lack of dominance (even by way of posturing and physical embodiment).

Cultural constructions of masculinity have long associated men with dominance, and it is clear that in education, this approach is still hierarchized as a valuable teacher embodiment. It is important, however, to note that it is, truthfully, only acceptable for particular subjects. Women who take on traditionally conceptualized "masculine" traits or ways of being are not often regarded in the same manner as men who embody those

traits, as illustrated in the analysis and in the earlier methodology chapter. Despite the stringent codes that have many of us critically reflecting thoroughly through our every word and action, our appearances or mood, white heterosexual men seem to be able to, through their positionality disregard concerns of professionalism. Overall, my thesis has made evident that educator “professionalism” reaffirms and perpetuates binarized conceptions of gender, male dominance, and patriarchy.

I have also illuminated in the thesis how educator “professionalism” reinforces perceptions of class-based differences or the normative expectations of class performance/passing. Schools often make use of dichotomized “us” and “them” language when addressing class (“we” are fundraising for “them”). This automatically defers anyone who is not “we” to “them.” From one's realization of low-income status, to the realization that others are aware, comes differential treatment, most often in a negative sense. This treatment produces a sense of conflict for a student, where shame may become entangled with pride. Identification with your own background as a student may be something that you are simultaneously proud of and ashamed of because of the cultural diminishment, stereotypes, and devaluations involved. The “widely held conviction that well-kept business clothes, stylish cars [...] were crucial to higher social status was symptomatic of the growing cultural emphasis on material goods as signals of success” (Foster, 2005, p. 45). Unfortunately, this conviction has not gone away, and it reveals itself in neoliberal spaces like schools, through rhetoric, language, social interactions and explicit and implicit codes of professionalism.

Class passing, and therefore classism, has been culturally normalized. Everyone, regardless of status, is expected to class pass as daily performativity/performance, much

like Butler's notion of gender performativity. Class passing is especially encouraged for everyone in professional fields of work, and the expectations of class performance is equally expected of teachers, despite their material circumstances or background. Educator "professionalism" promotes and dictates culturally constructed middle-class ways of being as normed and as 'intelligible' (Butler) - refer to classifications such as Ruby Payne's *Hidden Rules Among Classes* for an example of these cultural codes or "cues"; it is even Payne's suggested solution to poverty (students are encouraged to "act" middle-class in order to succeed). Educators are expected to dress, talk, and act in particular ways, ways that further contribute to reinforcing perceptions of class-based differences and this performance further promotes normative expectations of class performance or class passing for all.

Lastly, my autoethnographic study generated insight into the ways in which educator 'professionalism' contributes to the continued maintenance of a racist, white supremacist culture inside and outside of schools. The thesis highlighted the ways in which professionals of colour experience heightened expectations of professionalism as they are expected to work harder than their white counterparts (Msibi (2019), Kendall (2020), Oliver & Oliver (2016)). An educator of colour is expected to do as much white passing as they can. Matthew Morris (2018) entered the field this way, but eventually shifted in his thinking, and has since diverted for the power of autonomy and an unapologetic visibility. My own experiences illuminated insights into how whiteness has been constructed as a cultural norm, one which the vague term "professionalism" often defers to.

However, performing whiteness is not expected of me, much like it is not expected of the white male educator introduced in my vignette in section 5.2. Performing whiteness *is* expected, and diversions from it are likely “watched for” in educators of colour. Even students of colour demonstrate their awareness of these cultural and professional expectations. In a situation where a student of colour expresses these ideas, like those in vignette 5.4, I can only provide so much encouragement. The power of Matthew Morris (2018) in the classroom, someone who looks more like them, dresses more like them and embraces it within a professional context is invaluable and necessary.

In the text, *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990), states that “sexism, homophobia, and racism, the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color is an ‘expulsion’ followed by a ‘repulsion’ that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation” (p. 182). In this thesis I have provided an understanding of how these hegemonic practices, through the repudiation of certain bodies, is further reinforced by performed teacher identity and enacted in response to discourses of educator “professionalism.” Ultimately, what my autoethnographic study revealed was some insight into the extent to which discourses of educator “professionalism,” and their embodied enactment contribute to constructing/reinforcing hierarchies of identity which are imbricated in a set of intersecting power relations involving gender, sexuality, class and race.

6.3 Implications – Moving Forward

I know that I need to continue to push myself further into my own discomfort, and I need to do better to be the educator that I entered the field to be. As a starting point, this year I “came out” with active intention as an educator for the first time. First, I came out in a virtual staff meeting where I was presenting on LGBT2SQIA+ Terminology and Youth Mental Health, then I came out through Twitter on International Day Against

Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia “publicly.” Twitter is a space where a lot of colleagues, students and more follow me in comparison to my other social media platforms, so I felt it prudent that my message be shared there. Finally, I also came out for the first time to a class of mine (in a unit on Tattoo Art and Cultures, where I talked about the meaning behind an upcoming/planned tattoo of mine). It was a wonderful community experience, particularly because there were students who opened up about their own sexuality in the class (bisexual and pansexual students). As a result, I believe that it only made students feel more connected to me, as they simply knew something else about me.

The concept of professionalism in the field of education is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. The vagueness of the term, the difficulty in being able to solidly define the term, is largely the success of its insidious power. Due to its vagueness, it often defers to cultural norms of acceptability or dominant identity as a means of being understood or constructed. Just like the power of a singular narrative being told to the masses, erasing all “others” by way of content/curriculum, the passive embodiment of ‘professional teacher’ too carries significant weight in our educational institutions, whether public or private. Gunzenhauser (2012), for example argues that “by normalizing a dominant ideological perspective, schooling functions to conceal and repress alternative and dissenting perspectives” (p.84). This idea can also be applied to the concept of coded and measurable professionalism in teaching practice.

Within a current neoliberal model of education, where students are viewed as future contributors to the economy, Gunzenhauser contends that “high-stakes accountability policy has led to normalizing disciplinary practices that are problematic for the constitution of subjects” (p. 23). Foucault (1980) attests to this reality and its entrenchment through power into normalcy:

Well, very simply - given that the human body had become essentially a force of production from the time of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, all the forms

of its expenditure which did not lend themselves to the constitution of the productive forces - and were therefore exposed as redundant - were banned, excluded and repressed. These kinds of deduction are always possible. (p. 100)

Through my autoethnographic accounts, I am suggesting that the discourse and expected adherence to the concept of professionalism is a disciplinary practice that is problematic for the constitution of subjects, in that it continues to silence, marginalize, erase, undermine, devalue already oppressed groups of people. The reality for many, is that strict adherence to the expectations of professionalism as a teacher comes at the cost of losing one's identity in significant ways.

I suggest, in a similar vein to Matthew Morris (2018), that we revise our models and paradigms to shift away from the current neoliberal model where accountability measures further enact oppression:

When we revise our paradigms for education to reflect more inclusive practices through strategies like differential assessments of learning, dissolving narrow school policies like dress codes, and re-creating teaching strategies and methods that put student's realities, cultures and experiences at the center, we will see an altered and more practically improved landscape for public education (p. 95)

This connects us back to the importance of educators as potential role models, and therefore the importance of hiring practices as just one step in the right direction, even if/when it comes at the "cost" of dominant people's privilege. Teachers often stand in as mentors or role models for students; they are representational figures that have influence in constructing normative identities, distinguishing between those which are "acceptable" and "unacceptable." Rich & Schachter (2011) "emphasized the importance of

identification with role models in creating the foundation for subsequent identity development, [and still] much of the recent discourse on teachers as role models is embedded [...] in discussions regarding teacher effects on student identifications and identity” (p.220). As a matter of fact, it is necessary to diversify all spaces where dominant ideology and identity continue to influence and persuade. As educators, we all must contribute though, and we can first begin this work by reflecting on our own identities and imbued status or privileges. As hooks (1994) states, “making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy” (p. 39).

Morris (2018) claims that:

Teaching is about creating connections with students in order for them to learn material, tools, and ideas that will foster self-esteem, self-worth and ultimately allow them to become successful into adulthood. But before they begin to “work” for you, you have to bridge a gap between yourself and the student in order for them to actually do the work necessary in the present moment that will lead to an eventual prosperous relationship they will have with education. (p. 91-92)

But, as illustrated throughout the analysis of my autoethnographic vignettes, this is easier said than done within the given system of norms governing professional conduct and performative embodiment for teachers, but this does not mean that it cannot be done. Codes of conduct, teacher training courses and texts, administration, and more may tell us not to do things like this *or* to be incredibly cautious, to keep a distance from students, to remain “neutral,” to do things like power poses because it is rational. As Kitchen and Bellini (2018) state:

Like all professionals, teachers have an obligation to maintain a boundary between themselves and their students. This is not to say that teachers should not be friendly and welcoming, but that they must always remain professional. It has been well said that teachers may be friendly with their students but are not their friends. Students have their own friends. (p. 9)

Anthias (2012) argues that we require looking at the institutional actors and “social locations [such as institutions of education] where the dialogical articulations produce an amplification of inequality and disadvantage [...] examining both the specific combinatories that produce systemic inequalities and their transformatory potential” (p. 14). What is required is a shift toward a transformational model of education, one where assertive resistance is enacted. Assertive resistance, as defined by Bourke, et al (2013) “is concerned with teachers asserting their own professional confidence and competence [...] and] encourage[s] critical reflexivity of both themselves [teachers] and of the practices they are subjected to” (p. 7). I am not going to change things by my mere presence, but the visibility of non-dominant identities and identity formation in spaces like schools is important. As Bourke et al (2012) state: “The autonomous and reflexive professional is more likely to enact and sustain the discourses of quality teaching than the one who simply follows government mandated performative discourses with a tick-box mentality” (p. 9-10). I would encourage all educators to reflect on the performativity of their identity in schools and the political significance of this especially for their students in schools.

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