

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Inappropriate Lessons: Elementary Schools and the Social Organization of Sexuality

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3v77s1pw>

Author

Boas, Erica Misako

Publication Date

2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Inappropriate Lessons:
Elementary Schools and the Social Organization of Sexuality

by

Erica Misako Boas

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Zeus Leonardo, Co-Chair
Professor Ingrid Seyer-Ochi, Co-Chair
Professor Lisa Garcia Bedolla
Professor Beth Piatote

Spring 2013

© 2013 Erica Misako Boas

Abstract

Inappropriate Lessons:
Elementary Schools and the Social Organization of Sexuality

by

Erica Misako Boas

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

and the Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Zeus Leonardo, Co-Chair

Professor Ingrid Seyer-Ochi, Co-Chair

This dissertation responds to the question: How is sexuality organized in elementary schools? I argue that despite the absence of overt discussions on sexuality in elementary schools, sexuality is *organized* through social processes that are recursively linked to ideology. Due to the widely held belief that “children” and “sexuality” occupy separate social realms, the pairing of elementary schools and sexuality rarely makes an appearance in education research.

The study focuses on teacher treatment of sexuality as it arises in elementary school sites and offers a critical examination of the ways in which sexuality manifests and is managed, organized, contested, and reproduced in urban elementary schools. The dissertation furnishes a critical examination of the ways in which sexuality manifests and is managed, organized, contested, and reproduced in urban elementary schools. The driving argument of the dissertation is that elementary schools organize the meanings ascribed to sexuality by regulating children’s behavior and speech—mainly through punitive measures or by pushing perceived sexual behaviors out of the school—which has the effect of producing normative understandings of sexuality. These actions work in contrast to the idea that “children” and “sexuality” occupy separate social realms, a common belief that has contributed to maintaining a void in education research on elementary schools and sexuality. In this study I further propose that sexuality and gender are organized and structured through enduring systems of race and class. One of the key findings is that while elementary school teachers and administrators do confront ongoing issues of sexuality on school grounds, they have limited strategies to deal with them. As a result, sexuality in its various forms is rendered a problem of social transgression.

Methods for this study include ethnographic focus on one school located in an urban area in Northern California and 15 interviews with teachers, the research data and analysis offer practical and theoretical tools for elementary school teachers, curriculum, and

policy with regards to sexuality. Participant observation was conducted during the 2010-2011 school year in a main fourth grade classroom on average three days a week for the entire school day. The schoolyard during recesses, around the grounds before and after school, on field trips, and during school assemblies, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences were also observed. Continuous and detailed documentation through field notes and analytic memos written during and after each site visit facilitate in-depth analyses of the complex organization of sexuality on school grounds and beyond with a focus on teacher as the main human subjects of the study.

This research demonstrates that sexual ordering is *already* present in all aspects of social life, including spaces like elementary schools where there is an organized silencing of sexuality. Some examples of this are media-driven debates on bullying, sex education, curriculum on homosexuality, and health education in elementary schools. These debates organize sexuality through disciplining efforts that require labels for behavior, frameworks for sexual maturation and development, morality, and normative understandings of the body and mind. Such educational frameworks are based in ideology and produce cultural manifestations, such as dress codes and sex education. The research finds that although sexuality is organized in elementary schools, teachers are under-trained in dealing with the various sexuality-related issues that erupt in schools. They also desire formal instruction in this domain. As a result of feeling unqualified to teach on or discuss sexuality, they default to pushing it out of the classroom and school. Such practices within a liberal framework maintains a culture that is shameful and punishing of sexuality while claiming that it is “natural” and “normal.”

I dedicate this work to my past, present, and future families.

Always.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM.....	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	4
RESEARCH DESIGN.....	5
DEFINING CONCEPTS.....	6
<i>Racializing Latino Children</i>	6
<i>On Sexuality vs. Gender</i>	7
<i>Sexuality as Organization</i>	9
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.....	9
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	10
OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS.....	11
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	13
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	15
THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY.....	16
<i>Foucault: Sexuality, a Theory of Power</i>	17
<i>Regimes of Truth: Sexuality and Morality</i>	17
<i>Heteronormativity and Difference</i>	19
<i>Sexuality and Race</i>	20
<i>Queer Theory</i>	22
SEXUALITY, SCHOOLING, AND SOCIAL & CULTURAL RE/PRODUCTION IN ETHNOGRAPHY.....	23
<i>Ethnographies of Schooling</i>	24
<i>Sex Education in Elementary Schools</i>	25
CHILDREN: VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF INNOCENCE LOST.....	26
<i>Childhood as Social Construct</i>	27
<i>Children and Sexuality</i>	28
CHAPTER 3: METHODS: WORKING TOWARD ETHNOGRAPHY.....	30
A NOTE ON METHODS AND METHODOLOGY.....	31
THE SITE: UNITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....	33
<i>Ms. Lee's Fourth Grade Classroom</i>	35
<i>Ms. Lee, 4th Grade Teacher</i>	37
THE RESEARCH METHODS.....	39
<i>Participant Observation</i>	41
<i>Data Collection Instruments</i>	44
<i>Written Aids</i>	46
CHAPTER 4: SILENCE AS A METHODOLOGY OF SEXUALITY.....	48
'UNCOMFORTABLE REFLEXIVITY'.....	48
SILENCE AS TEXT.....	52

SILENCE OR MOOT ISSUE?	54
SILENCE, VISIBILITY, AND THE POLITICS OF SAFETY	56
<i>The Discipline Assembly</i>	56
<i>Victor Hugs on the Playground</i>	60
<i>Indelible Sex</i>	62
CONCLUSION	64
CHAPTER 5: WALKING THE LINE:	
TEACHERS NEGOTIATING SEXUALITY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.....	66
TORQUING AND ARTICULATING LINES.....	68
THINKING IN LINE: BINARY LINES AND NORMALIZING MISSIONS.....	70
<i>'Not for School': Public/Private</i>	71
<i>'Not Better or Worse, just Different': Dominant Culture/Other</i>	74
<i>'You're so Little. Your Body is Little. Your Brain is Little.': Child/Adult</i>	76
PERFORMING THE LINE: GOOD, HETERO CITIZENS.....	79
WALKING THE LINE: BETWEEN SPHERES.....	82
CONCLUSION.....	84
CHAPTER 6: SANITIZING SEX THROUGH SCHOOLING:	
A PEDAGOGY OF PLEASURE.....	86
CONSTRUCTING A NARRATIVE OF NEED FOR SEX EDUCATION.....	89
NAMING PUBERTY EDUCATION.....	91
THE POLITICS OF SCIENCE AND PLEASURE.....	93
DEVELOPMENT AND DISAPPEARANCE OF PLEASURE.....	95
PUBLIC PLEASURES AND PRIVATE PARTS.....	103
CONCLUSION.....	106
CHAPTER 7: EDUCATION IN DISGUISE: SANCTIONING SEXUALITY IN	
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS.....	108
CONSUMING HALLOWEEN AT SCHOOL.....	109
KATI, <i>THAT</i> KIND OF COP.....	111
MARIBEL AND THE ACCULTURATING FORCES OF HALLOWEEN.....	112
WITCHES, BUMBLE BEES, NURSES, AND (SEXY) COPS:	
GIRLS CONSUMING CULTURE.....	115
EXPLAINING CHILDREN'S CHOICES.....	122
CONCLUSION.....	125
CONCLUSION: FUTURE SUBJECTS.....	127
DISSERTATION IN REVIEW.....	127
ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: MAKING THE CONNECTION.....	129
FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS.....	131
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	133
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	144
APPENDIX B: PARENT INTRODUCTION LETTER.....	146
APPENDIX C: TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER/EMAIL.....	147

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support, insights, patience, and smartness that were shared with me by many over the years I spent working on this project.

I would first like to thank the community of educators, students, and parents at Unity Elementary Schools. Ms. Lee opened the doors to her classroom, prompted me with authentic questions, inspired me to work from my heart, and provided me with friendship at a challenging juncture in my life. The fourth and fifth grade teachers were always welcoming and inviting even on the hardest teaching day – and they were thoughtful and intelligent, a beautiful example of collaborative teaching. I am also grateful to the teachers who gave up precious time after school and on weekends to let me interview them. They shared honestly and openly, taking the study to places I had not even imagined that I would reach.

I had a wonderful Dissertation Committee. I am indebted to Co-chair of the Committee, Zeus Leonardo, who mentored me with even-handed, detailed, and indispensable feedback in my writings and professional endeavors. He gave me room to dabble and play in the world of ideas, with gentle prodding and tugging to help me put thoughts into more comprehensible language. My work has benefited immensely from his guidance. Ingrid Seyer-Ochi, Co-chair, encouraged and pushed me along at the early stages of the dissertation when I felt most apprehensive about the research and the work ahead. She taught me about the good of ethnographic study – building sincere relationships, honest accounts, and rigorous analysis. Her influence is reflected profoundly in these pages. If there are any sections of this dissertation that read poetically or have a literary twinge can only be credited to the inspiration of Beth Piatote, who encouraged me to write well, to write smart, and to write with heart. First, however, must come the courage to write, and this is what I would not have found without her guidance. I am also grateful to Lisa Garcia-Bedolla who provided me with incisive feedback and questions that will benefit my thinking and writing into the future.

My Qualifying Exams Committee supported me as I learned how to engage deeply and methodically with the world of ideas. Challenging and rigorous, I look back fondly at the intense hours of preparing for my exams. The Chair of the Committee, Patricia Baquedano-Lopez, pushed me to grasp the intellectual trajectories and relationships among the many theorists that animated my exams list. Zeus Leonardo, Beth Piatote, and Ingrid Seyer-Ochi comprised a committee that balanced encouragement with rigor.

I am grateful to the Center for Research on Social Change of the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues (ISSI) for their generous financial, professional, and emotional support during the last two years of work toward my doctorate. Deep appreciation goes to Deborah Lustig, David Minkus, and Christine Trost for their tireless reading and re-reading of drafts of dissertation pieces and professional documents. And to Fellows Ellen Moore, Margo Mahan, Ricardo Huerta, Fernando Burga, and Ryan Shelby who were interested and generous readers and supporters of various iterations of my work through the two wonderfully productive years of our program.

After many attempts at finding a consistent and reliable writing group, I was fortunate to become part of a crew who met regularly – oftentimes weekly – to discuss and review writing. I am quite positive that my dissertation would not be done had it not

been for the camaraderie, critical attention, and overall brilliance of Emily Gleason, Kathryn Zamora-Moeller, Susan Woolley, and later, Becky Alexander, my writing group that lasted two-plus years and continues in support and love. They were the first to help me understand and articulate the importance and significance of this dissertation research, and their friendship and assistance drinking lattes and eating pumpkin donuts under the cow will always be part of fond graduate school memories.

Other collectives have also seen me through this dissertation. Many thanks go to the Writing Across Genre class led by the brilliant Beth Piatote. Funie Hsu, Tala Khanmalek, Julie Thi Underhill, Margaret Rhee, Monica Bland, Ashley Brock, Javier Huerta, and Julia Chang all helped me to enjoy writing (and reading) again when I thought it had been lost, an eternal gift for which I am eternally grateful.

Thank you to the Sex and the State Working Group conceived of by Beth Piatote and Juana Maria Rodriguez for exposure to rocking new ideas and inlets and outlets for thinking. I am appreciative of the time the group spent listening to my practice presentations and ruminations on sexuality across time and space.

My work benefited greatly from the Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality. Professors Barrie Thorne and Mel Chen supported me through theory, research strategy, and professionalization. It is my hope that the field of Education will be enriched and enlivened by the training and conversations that took place in these classes.

It is with the greatest affection and humility that I thank my graduate student friend-colleagues who are kind and intelligent at the same time. Funie Hsu, who by no coincidence I am sure, is completing her dissertation at the same time as I am, held me in all the ways that one must be held as a doctoral student. She has been my emotional-intellectual, cat-loving, reader of drafts, listener of complaints, celebrator of achievements support for almost all of these years. I am grateful to Kenzo Sung for being an early nurturer of thinking hard and smart and not taking anything at face value. And I thank Angel Gonzalez for feedback on presentations and ideas and for doing academic work that does and will make a difference.

So much gratitude for my family and family of friends for bearing my prolonged plight through graduate school, for reading drafts and listening to practice presentations, and for meals and gatherings and celebrations and unconditional love. To Petrina Chi for her unconditional love and support. And to Andres Perez for helping me see it all through.

Finally, as I write this page, I am sleep deprived and delirious. I am also beyond the realm of words with the love that I feel for my first daughter, Airi, who was born as I was simultaneously in the final throes of the birth of this dissertation. In a matter of weeks, I will be both a mother and a doctor. Both will be new.

Erica Misako Boas
29 April 2013

Chapter 1: Introduction

While high schools and, increasingly, middle schools are thought to have a clear and significant connection with sexuality, people rarely speak of sexuality as existing in the sphere of elementary schools. Yet, learning and teaching sexuality precedes adolescence. Exploring the sphere of children can teach a great deal about sexuality (Ferguson, 2001; Foucault, 1990; Renold, 2005; Thorne, 1993). Through the realm of children, we can observe the complex ways in which sexuality is expressed and managed. Childhood and sexuality seem to be mutually exclusive categories in the popular imagination, or at least this is a belief to which many people cling. All of the teachers presented in this study revealed that they understood sexuality as developing outside of schools, in homes and in neighborhoods, through exposure to a sex-obsessed popular culture. My research corroborates the findings of others (Cavanaugh, 2007; Fields, 2008; Renolds, 2006; Weis & Fine, 1993), demonstrating that one of the roles of elementary schools is to ensure the elimination of sexuality from the elementary school context, a public domain of children. Thus, it makes sense that elementary school teachers would render the subject of sexuality alien in this space. Paradoxically, however, the intense labor that goes into erasing sexuality from children's lives in elementary schools ultimately produces and organizes sexuality (Foucault, 1990; Renold, 2005). This study attends to the question of *how* elementary schools participate in the organization of sexuality.

Through these proceeding pages, I elucidate how sexuality as processes, practices, discourse, and ideology is organized through elementary schools. I also show that sexuality in turn organizes elementary schools. Guided by a sense of the challenge that comes with trying to define such an elusive category I endeavor to *illustrate* why the concept of sexuality is so difficult to pin down. In other words, the site of the elementary school, a place rarely associated with sexuality in mainstream thought, provides fertile ground for revealing through illustration the nuances of sexuality. In so doing, I show the ways that other categories such as race, class, gender, and religion become entangled with sexuality within the context of elementary schools, an integral part of a sociopolitical system that is founded upon normative frameworks (Foucault, 1990; Rubin, 1997; Ferguson, 2001).

I am interested in documenting, interpreting, and analyzing the quotidian events of elementary school life. I am concerned with the ways in which sexuality flows through this children's realm, often unnoticed, despite Freud's thesis that children were "polymorphously perverse" (Freud, 1995, p. 560) and more recently Bond Stockton's (2009) thesis that childhood is a "queer time". For both Freud and Bond Stockton, education broadly defined is needed to "straighten" these tendencies, offering another rationale for undertaking a study such as this one. Using ethnographic analysis, I seek to demonstrate through lived experiences how schooling serves to organize sexuality so that it becomes discordant with the lives of children.

Background of the Problem

This project offers a critical examination of the ways that sexuality manifests and is managed, organized, contested, and reproduced in urban elementary schools. The

research addresses both a gap in the academic literature as well as a practical problem created when teachers, school administrators, and parents are inclined to deny the presence of sexuality in elementary schools. The driving argument of the dissertation is that contrary to the mainstream social understanding that elementary schools are devoid of sexuality, they in fact organize the meanings ascribed to sexuality. This organization is accomplished in part through the regulation of children's behavior and speech – mainly through punitive measures or by pushing perceived sexual behaviors out of the school – which has the effect of producing normative understandings of sexuality. One of my key findings is that while elementary school teachers and administrators confront ongoing issues of sexuality on school grounds, they have limited strategies to deal with them. As a result, sexuality in its various forms is rendered a problem of deviance, often coded in the language of race, gender, class, or culture.

As I illustrate through my analysis, children and sexuality are constitutive of public schools in the United States. I do not suggest, however, that sexuality is the most significant lens through which to understand elementary schools. My intention is to address a limitation in both research and ideology about the powerful role that sexuality plays in the lives of children, and therefore, in elementary schools. Because sexuality is a fundamental part of human lives, social institutions, and politics, all of which constitute schooling, it also must be part of the education system. Findings from this study demonstrate that while sexuality facilitates many of the daily processes of public schooling and is a part of the everyday conversations at the school site, it is a silenced discourse that has little “official” airtime (Weis & Fine, 1993). Nevertheless, the silence on this issue should not be mistaken for insignificance; these conversations are encoded in a school's spatial design, in unspoken rules, in conversations about race, class, and gender, and in myriad learning processes. An investigation of children in schools simultaneously clarifies and nuances how the cultural production of sexuality in schools constructs “normal” and “desirable” citizens who will, as adults, reproduce sexual hierarchies.

Interviews with elementary school teachers about their perceptions of child sexuality and their participation in the control of sexual behaviors (normative and non-normative) and speech acts have been integral to creating a grounded framework for my study. Within schools, sexuality discourses are embedded in teacher talk, their explanations, and the ways in which they manage their students and themselves. Findings from the study indicate that teachers evaluate and judge behaviors against norms that operate on discursive and material levels to ensure that children perform in ways that reproduce specific social, economic, political and cultural goals. Respondents' sensitivity to cultural difference and discomfort with issues of sexuality lead them to default to notions of sexuality resonant with normative ideals that can be traced to the Victorian era, therefore rendering the middle class norm for children an invisibility of sexuality (Foucault, 1990).

Insofar as sexuality has been a “missing discourse” within schools (Fine, 1993, p. 75), the research opens up a trajectory through which schools, teacher education programs, and research institutions might better understand the role of sexuality in elementary schools. While children and sexuality take the main stage in national discourse in the U.S. projected through debates on sex education (see Fields, 2008; Irvine, 2004, Luker, 2007), cutting edge sociological and anthropological education research on sexuality and children

emerges mostly from the United Kingdom, Australia, and Brazil (see in particular de Assis Cesar, 2009; Renold, 2005; Walkerdine, 1997). Even so, with the exception of Ferguson's (2001) *Bad Boys*, similar research in the United States has largely neglected elementary schools as sites through which to understand sexuality in society even as they have been frequently studied with regards to race, class, and gender (Hochschild & Scovronick, 1995; Kozol, 1992; Thorne, 1993; Weis, 1988). This is not to say that sexuality studies have ignored schools entirely; empirical education research on sexuality and youth has been slowly making its way backward through the K-12 grade levels, beginning with high school but stopping at middle/junior high school (Weis & Fine, 1993; Epstein, 1994; Kumashiro, 2002; McCready, 2004; Pascoe, 2007; Rofes, 2005; Youdell, 2006). The subject of sexuality in elementary schools is an unexposed nexus of problems and possibilities that will provide some new analytical instruments to teachers and education scholars through this research. Elementary schools are unique in that they are, for many children, their first interaction with the state education system. They are, as others who have studied sexuality in elementary schools have shown (Ferguson, 2001; Myers & Raymond, 2010; Renold, 2006; Thorne, 1993), "normalizing" institutions for teaching both academic content and the social norms. The other aspect that make elementary schools unique with respect to studies of sexuality is that, being perceived as a children's realm, they are also understood to be places imbued with innocence (McKay, 1998; Renold, 2006; Thorne, 1993; Thorne & Luria, 1986).

While Foucault's insistence on sexuality as discourse fundamentally changed social theory on sexuality, through ethnographic methods I aim to document how sexuality is also a web of social relationships experienced at various stages of life that can facilitate a grounded understanding of discursive paradigms. I am intrigued by how elementary schools can be theorized as social and cultural institutions that organize the sexual behaviors and speech acts of children, sex/sexuality education, and the ubiquitous dissemination of media representing manifestations of sex/sexuality even as they produce unique cultures and identities. I conceptualize schools as the "marrow" (Stoler, 2006) of social and political life through which ideology is solidified and peoples' experiences are shaped. I attend to this within the context of a Bay Area city, where I explore the production of sexuality in schools with the objective of thinking in new ways about the role of sexuality in elementary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The lack of attention given to sexuality as an organizing principle of elementary schools in general, and children and sexuality specifically, drives this research project. Through my work I demonstrate the importance of bringing social analysis of children's sexuality into the academy. For while we are constantly bombarded with symbols, images and signs of sexuality in our daily lives, but much remains to be understood about how children learn about sexuality, process meanings, inhabit identities, and how elementary schools participate in teaching all of this. The language that inspires and creates sexuality becomes masked behind social norms that prescribe "normal" and "abnormal," and in this, alternative ways of being are subverted within a discourse of heteronormativity, or the institutionalization of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1986) and coerced "appropriateness." Such discourses profoundly influence lives and relations of

oppression, and propagate fear through these regimes of sexuality. Children are not safely excluded from such impact. As Butler (1990) argues, livable lives are those that do not have to be defined by suffering. She argues that the gender/sexuality oppression people face in combination with race and other political categories creates suffering that must first be understood and then somehow mitigated. Schools and children exist within a political, ideological regime that works to deny the intense labor that goes into processes of differentiation. In terms of sexuality, this oppression and differentiation occur on many levels and within various contingencies that need to be unpacked and illuminated to begin a process of ideo-structural change. This project sheds light on how sexual oppression articulates other categories of oppression.

Research Questions

I have been interested in sexuality for quite some time. In high school I became a peer sex educator, and my undergraduate senior thesis, “Mapping Prostitution Discourses: From Feminist Theory to American Studies” explored precisely the terrain revealed through the title. My interest in sexuality, and elementary schools in particular, was inspired through teaching in an elementary school teacher. For eight years I worked in primary schools, for five as a teacher and for another three as a mentor teacher, volunteer, and facilitator of a group of elementary school teachers conducting action research in their classrooms. During this time I witnessed how issues of sexuality vacillated between silence and salience on school grounds. These experiences, fortified by subsequent doctoral studies, have sustained intrigue with the contradiction of silence and palpability on the subject of sexuality in elementary schools. My dissertation reflects this long held intrigue and will inform issues regarding how sexuality organizes, interrupts, and facilitates elementary level schooling by attending to the following questions:

Primary question: How do elementary schools, the actors who inhabit them and the explicit and implicit policies that govern them interact to organize sexuality, ideologically and through social practices?

Secondary questions:

- What does sexuality in elementary schools look and sound like to the adults who work with children?
- How do teachers respond to what they perceive as sexual behaviors and speech?
- How does sexuality articulate with other systems such as race, class, gender, and religion in elementary school settings?

Addressing these questions will later provide practical uses in its contribution to innovations in pedagogy that directly attends to sexuality.

Research Design

This study draws on dissertation field research collected during the 2010-11 school year at Unity Elementary and interviews with 15 elementary school teachers. Chapters 6 and 7 focus solely on Unity, while chapters 4 and 5 build on a combination of observations and interview data. Situated toward the eastern side of a sprawling urban San Francisco Bay Area city, the school's reputation for good, dedicated faculty made it a shining star surrounded by chain-link fences and barking pitbulls pacing their perimeters. That year, the school's approximately 460 K-5 students were made up of 94 percent first- and second-generation immigrant students from Mexico and Central America. 83 percent of the students were designated English Language Learners (ELL). Close to 90 percent of the students received free or reduced price lunch.

Participant observation and open-ended, in-depth interviews were the methods I employed in my study. I observed in one main fourth grade classroom on average three days a week for the entire school day. I was present on the yard during recesses, around the grounds before and after school, on day trips, a camping trip, and during school assemblies, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Continuous and detailed documentation through field notes and analytic memos written during and after each site visit facilitate in-depth analyses of the complex organization of sexuality on school grounds and beyond. Interviews helped inform my observations by providing me with ideas about what to watch for, and they also helped me in interpreting some of the data. I began conducting interviews with elementary school teachers from different school sites in February 2008. During the time of participant observation, I also interviewed five of the six fourth and fifth grade teachers at Unity.

I analyze artifacts from students and teachers as well. Letters, notes home, citations, schoolwork, and artwork comprise the corpus of the artifacts, and in dialogue, teachers will help comprehend the significance of some of these pieces. I collected these artifacts during my participant observation tenure at the elementary school. They are not "contracted" by me; they are snapshots produced in the organic context of the school. I will not make these documents public. I have, however, made copies and taken photographs of these artifacts, and they provide concrete data for the analysis. I further detail my research methods in Chapter 3.

Defining Concepts

Racializing Latino Children

Much of the data for this study comes from Unity Elementary School, which I have previously noted had a school-going population that over 90% Latino at the time of the study. While focus of my study is on teachers' perceptions of students, to the extent that my study centers Latino elementary school children, it seems important to also offer theoretical context for situating these Latino students within a racial framework. After all, teachers are influenced, like the rest of us, through ideologies of our times. This section provides some context for understanding the state of racialization for Latinos.¹

¹ See chapter 7 for a more nuanced analysis of how race and sexuality operate with respect to Latino children.

Located in the heart of a Latino neighborhood, the student demographic at Unity had been majority Latino for over fifteen years. Principal Jimenez was bilingual and conducted all school meetings with parents in Spanish and English, and many of the K-3 grade classes were taught partially in Spanish. By the time the students entered fourth grade, most of them would speak to one another in English, but prior to that, much of the language among friends was in English or in Spanish. Most parents addressed each other in Spanish. While formal instruction was conducted mostly in English, if the language is an indicator, the informal culture of the school was maintained by the Spanish-speaking immigrant families. This aspect of the study – Latino students attending traditional public schooling – requires contextualization with respect to the racialization of Latinos in the United States, and specifically in California.

Like all non-white groups in the U.S., Latinos are racialized as “other” within a system of whiteness that maintains white as dominant and normative (Almaguer, 1994; Anzaldúa, 1984; Rumbaut, 2009; Santa Ana, 2002).² Schools play a significant role in perpetuating this system, and therefore potentially contesting it. The assimilationist project of schooling in the U.S. resonates in Valenzuela’s (1999) argument that schools systematically subtract resources from Mexican-American students. She suggests that contrary to its rhetoric of honoring diversity and providing better opportunities to immigrants than they would have had in their nations of origin, the U.S. school system takes away the assets that Mexican-American students bring to education. Pride and comfort in using the Spanish language and a definition of education that is based in familial and cultural upbringing rather than what is learned in school are two of the ways that schools subtract resources from this student population. Valenzuela’s work offers a way of understanding Mexican-American high school students’ struggles with a system of schooling that is founded on and rewards white middle class values. Such values are reflected in how teachers from my study talk about and explain what they perceive to be sexual behaviors of their students. In chapter 5 I show that teachers explain sexuality through class, reflecting this statement by Ortner (1991) that “the working class is cast as the bearer of an exaggerated sexuality, against which middle class sexuality is defined” (p. 177). Moreover, some of these teachers’ ways of explaining are tied up in a racialized conception of sexuality, also demonstrated in chapter 5, wherein black children (and their families) are perceived as sexually precocious, or hypersexual. Similar perceptions are then demonstrated with respect to Latino as teachers at Unity speak about and explain girls’ choices in Halloween costumes (chapter 7).

Race and class play a significant role in the ways in which white teachers understand and treat the sexuality of their Latino students. While “Latino” is not an official racial category of the U.S. Census, many have argued that Latinos are, in fact, racialized (Almaguer, 1994; Maldonado, 2009; Rumbaut, 2009; Sanchez, 1993). In this sense, the concept of race turns from a taken-for-granted static system of categorization

² Chapters 6 and 7 attend to some facets of race and culture specific to Unity’s majority population of Latino students. Chapter 6 explores, in part, language and power with respect to the sex education program implemented at the school. In chapter 7, I discuss the perception of cultural influence in how students choose their Halloween costumes. In these chapters, the tensions that emerge through the “interpenetrations” (Willis, 1981) of the state institution of public school and the home cultures of the students come into focus.

and reveals it as a *process* of differentiation, categorization, and creation of an essence based on “an ideological construct linking supposedly innate traits of individuals to their rank and fate in the social order” (Rumbaut, 2009). Some teachers at Unity impose an understanding of their Latino students’ sexuality through race. Moreover, because many of these students are first- or second-generation immigrants, their particular orientations toward sexuality are interpreted by teachers through the framework of a home culture that is foreign to (an imagined) U.S. culture (i.e. learned in Mexico or El Salvador, for example, and brought with them to their U.S. schooling).

The cultural factors that are perceived to influence their sexuality, then, are facilitated through “cultural racism” (Goldberg, 1990; Omi & Winant, 1994) wherein race-based discriminations are discursively and practically positioned through notions of cultural difference. These students’ sexualities are comprehended through racialized representations of “Latino-ness.” For example, when Ms. Lee talks about a “courting culture” she surmises is strong in her Latino families where she believes flirtations and heterosexual romantic relationships are encouraged and joked about. In these kinds of relationships, it is assumed from a young age that boys and girls will naturally be attracted to one another. Yet, Ms. Lee disagrees and sees it as her role as a teacher and a feminist to show these girls that there are other identities available to them. In her eyes, she is rescuing them from a culture of hyperfeminine sexuality where opportunities to inhabit alternative identities are limited by culture.

Ferguson (2001) theorizes the interplay of race, sexuality, and gender for Black boys and girls in elementary schools, arguing that they are “adultified” by their teachers. The racialized controlling images of Black adults – hypersexual and violent – are projected onto Black children, resulting in more punitive treatment in schools. In a parallel way, Latino children are subject to racialized and sexualized interpretations of their orientations and behaviors by teachers. Likewise, Latino children are also racialized, representing an idea of Latino-ness. In this, boys are seen as embodying machismo, imbued in them through their sociocultural environments. Likewise, girls are seen as hyperfeminine, performing in a “sexy” and coquettish manner that results in their sexualization (Asencio, 2010; Cepeda, 2003; Chavez, 2008; Rodriguez & Massey, 2008; Vargas, 2009). I demonstrate this in my dissertation.

On Sexuality vs. Gender

As an analytic category, sexuality is often confused or conflated with gender. More than once, when I have told someone about my study, I have been met with a reply such as, “That is so interesting! So, are you looking at how boys and girls are treated differently at school?” I then have to explain to them that my focus is on sexuality, not gender. But, as I have progressed with the research, I have begun to see that there is no way for me to ignore gender because; in fact, sexuality and gender are interconnected.³ For the sake of clarity, however, it is important to be forthright about the objective of this work: I am researching sexuality first and foremost. Focusing on sexuality rather than gender, this research illuminates the way that gender derives from sexuality (Butler, 1990) and is integral to a network of “social and cultural differences ‘that make a difference’ to patterns of inequality and power relations” (Renold, 2005, p. 36). I argue

³ Presumably for this reason Rubin (1997) coined the name “sex/gender system.”

that sexuality is both distinct from yet related to gender. I hold sexuality to be a way of organizing and managing social relations that is mostly “concerned with sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, and the nature of impressions” (Foucault, 1990, p. 108). As Gayle Rubin (1997) pointed out in her influential and controversial essay “Thinking Sex,” gender and sexuality are related and linked, but “they form the basis of two distinct arenas of social practice” (p. 308). For example, lesbians may share commonalities with other women, but they are also differentiated through their sexual preferences, practices, and how they are socially imagined to be different from straight women due to these preferences and practices.

While sexuality and gender are overlapping socially constructed categories with theoretically artificial boundaries, this research intends to capture the operation of sexuality as a system of power, or an organizing principle, analytically distinct from gender. Illustrating the differences between sexuality and gender is an overarching objective for the analytical narrative presented in the length of these pages, yet it is also helpful to foreground the empirical analysis with some theoretical background. I forward a notion of sexuality as taking root in the erotic, or sensual pleasure. In this sense, sexuality also refers to innate or cultural preferences within this domain. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the social construction of masculinity and femininity that is read through bodily performance (Butler, 1990). Connell (1995) provides a useful and thorough definition of gender. She writes:

Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered. In gender processes, the everyday conduct of life is organized in relation to a reproductive arena, defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction... Gender is a social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do; it is not social practice reduced to the body... Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does *not* determine the social (p. 71; italics in original).

The relationship of an “everyday conduct of life” that is organized in relation to biology also offers a key insight into the distinction between sex and the domains of gender and sexuality. Here Connell refers to biology as distinct from the social realm of gender. In this sense, it can be understood that she is writing about sex in at least two significations of the word: sex as intercourse and sex as physiological difference (generally thought of as a dimorphic difference between female and male). Her distinction between sex and gender is that sex is natural and gender is cultural.⁴ The dissertation proposes to explicate a more robust theory of sexuality that attends to notions of the erotic, or a politics of pleasure. This move will further differentiate sexuality from gender. In the following pages, I illustrate the inherent linkages between sexuality and gender while simultaneously showing them to be distinct.

⁴ Feminist theorists such as Butler (1990) and Wittig (1992) argue that the sex/gender distinction that has been upheld is misdirected. Their critiques are based on a concept that differentiating sex from gender can lead to essentializing, fixed, or normative responses to ideas about gender.

On Sexuality as Organization

Theoretically speaking, I build from a definition of sexuality as a social construct. In this sense, it is not a “thing” that an individual possesses or is oriented toward; rather, it is a way of organizing and managing social relations and is mostly “concerned with sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, and the nature of impressions” (Foucault, 1990, p. 108). To be clear, my use of the term “sexuality” is not reflective of sex as an act, sex as biology, or sexual drive or libido, although all of these aspects may inform sexuality in some ways. This study assumes the definition of sexuality as the social and political organization of power in the realm of the erotic. The suggestion that sexuality is organized requires explanation. Most commonly, we talk about sexuality as something we possess, or an aspect of identity, as in sexual orientation (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, non-labeling). While a common understanding of sexuality must be incorporated into a social and cultural analysis, I propose that these mainstream conceptions of sexuality influence its organization in the sense that interpretations and beliefs serve to manage categories. These are ideological underpinnings. Yet, they are also practical in that people organize themselves and are also organized through their practices and identities. For example, in San Francisco, the Castro neighborhood became *the* site for gay political activism in the 80s. Meanwhile, the Tenderloin neighborhood in SF became a site of police surveillance for trans communities where the streets and other venues heavily patronized by trans people were highly regulated and controlled by state powers. According to Stryker and Buskirk (1996), drug dealers and trans people were often round up and brought to the Tenderloin so that they could be more easily policed. This is an example of how bodies are organized with respect to sexuality.

While the dissertation focuses on this aspect of organization, I am also concerned with ideological organization. That is, I ask: how are ideas about sexuality formed and maintained? How can these formations be traced? For this reason, I was interested in exploring elementary schools as sites for sexuality’s organization. Schools are highly organized places, and in elementary schools, one can readily observe clear systems of lines, classroom divisions, age differentiations, teacher-student hierarchies, bells indicating the start and end of distinct periods throughout the day, to name a few. In the context of elementary schools, set against standard rules for conduct and curriculum, the contours of sexuality’s organization become clearer, as I show throughout this study. Yet, here I do not mean to suggest that sexuality is a tightly organized concrete structure. In fact, I argue that the study of sexuality is robust precisely because it is unfixed, fluid, adaptable, and specific to time and place. I use “organization” to signify the histories and patterns of the ways in which people imagine and practice sexuality. The term “organization” encompasses the Foucauldian way of framing management and regulation, but it also points toward the social practices that are embodied in behaviors and identities.

Purpose of the Study

Elementary schools are not devoid of sexuality, as common belief might hold. The overarching purpose of this study is to show that the *idea* that sexuality is the domain of adults, and not of children, is integral to the production of sexuality. I attend to

sexuality as a significant organizing aspect of elementary schools, contrary to the common perception that elementary schools, by virtue of being the realm of children, are absent of sexuality. Such an objective lends to an informative and interesting study of sexuality in elementary schools, the domain of children. While many have not considered elementary schools as important sites for producing sexuality, even if they have, it is likely that they have not deeply thought about this relationship or its implications. As I show that elementary schools play a significant role in the production of sexuality, I also maintain that the process is not clean, innocent, or simple. It is socially and politically organized. A purpose of this study is to provoke change in the ways that sexuality is conceived of and talked about in our society, to help guide us toward a more robust and useful understanding of sexuality as a social force even more powerful than a “thing” we possess. It is an invitation to re-imagine sexuality as a social energy and an organizing mechanism, and to break away from its scientific and moralized conceptions. This work clarifies why thinking about children’s realms together with sexuality helps us to better understand our social configurations and modes of being as adults.

I analyze discourse that creates and maintains common interpretations of sexuality, demonstrating that the discourse of sexuality is very much intertwined with notions of race, class, and culture, which I demonstrate throughout the remaining chapters. I also show that sexuality is simultaneously produced in schools with other social institutions and influences. The study combines on-the-ground fieldwork in schools and classrooms with theoretical innovation. Through participant observation in a Bay Area urban elementary school, interviews with teachers in the school and surrounding area, and research on media discourses, I examine teachers’ perceptions and subsequent management of sexuality on school grounds. In my dissertation I focus on the cultural processes and ideological mechanisms that inhere in schools to construct and organize sexuality. Using concrete examples as starting points in interviews, I attend to the contradictions and cognitive muddles that underscore teachers’ interpretations of sexuality in elementary schools.

Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on adult perceptions of children’s lives. The choice to focus on adult interpretations of children’s sexual behaviors and expressions emerged from two concerns. First, because I am interested in the organization and management of sexuality of children by adult actors and the institutions that they manage, focusing on children’s perceptions would not provide the kind of data I am interested in gathering. While children’s perspectives would certainly enliven the research and add depth, it is beyond the conceptual and temporal scope of this particular study. Second, there are ethical concerns to attempting to understand sexuality from a children’s perspective. I believe that speaking with children on any issue for the objective of research, and much more on issues of sexuality, is an undertaking requiring of proper credentials. At this point in my research career, I neither have the training nor the background to embark responsibly on such a project.

It should also be clarified that I have written this dissertation with focused attention on sexuality as an analytic category. While sexuality and gender are closely entangled categories, and while many of my fieldnotes were directed toward observations

of gender, for the purposes of this study, I prioritize theories of sexuality over gender. I maintain that sexuality and schooling, particularly elementary level schooling, remains missing from the field of education studies. For this purpose, for other reasons that are attended to in these pages, and to the extent that the two can be extricated, the study intentionally emphasizes sexuality. The next section expands on the distinctions and connections between these categories.

Overview of Empirical Chapters

Explaining different social phenomena requires the use of different theoretical tools. A Foucauldian framework for understanding sexuality will undergird the entire dissertation, as detailed in the following chapter. However, each chapter employs a distinct theoretical intervention to help explain the topic that it covers. This overview of the “theoretical toolbox” provides ways of framing each empirical chapter, which follows the Literature Review (Chapter 2) and Methods (Chapter 3) chapters and begins with Chapter 4. In the following, I offer a structural and conceptual roadmap for reading the study.

Chapter 4: Silence as Methodology of Sexuality

By nature, silence is elusive. In elementary schools, sexuality is a largely absent facet of the day, but it is always present. To analyze how silence is an organizing principle of sexuality, and in turn organizes elementary school life, I employ two main conceptual tools in this chapter. The psychoanalytic concept of “the uncanny” (Freud, 2003; Youdell, 2010; Royle, 2003) serves to articulate the affective resonance of the silences that pervade sexuality in elementary schools. It helps to interpret the unknown, or that which “escapes language or representation” to use Deborah Youdell’s (2010, p. 89) phrasing. The uncanny along with Phillip Brian Harper’s (2000) “critical speculative knowledge” legitimize undisguised subjectivity in rigorous analysis. This is a necessary intervention in working through the ostensible silences and erasures that pervade sexuality in elementary schools.

Chapter 5: Walking the Line: Teachers Negotiating the ‘Lines’ of Sexuality

This chapter examines the lines that derive from sexuality in the elementary schools and attends to two questions designed to deepen an understanding of the ways in which sexuality plays out in this context: What are the lines of thought that guide teachers’ interpretations and subsequent management of sexuality in the elementary school? How do these lines provide insight into the ways in which normativity is created? Following these lines can help educators obtain a more robust understanding of how we manage and produce sexuality. The lines that I explore in this chapter are: 1) the boundaries that constrain teachers’ expressed sexual identities and impose an identity of “model citizen”; 2) teachers’ compromise of their own beliefs on sexuality with the (perceived) desires of the state; 3) negotiating the binary of public and private, or the school and home. In this chapter, borrowing a concept from Bowker and Star (1999), I

argue that by following these lines we can see that teachers are “torqued,” or pulled in opposite directions, by their competing identities.

Chapter 6: Sanitizing Sex through Schooling: A Pedagogy of Pleasure

The facade of scientific objectivity masks the politics at work in the official sex education curriculum. As many have asserted, and then demonstrated, school curricula is tightly enmeshed with politics (Apple, 1990, 2006; Ross, 2000; Weis, et al., 2006). As discussed in Chapter 4, schools are institutions of the state, and any information they disseminate must be somehow sanctioned by official or unofficial codes of the government. Given the debates on sex education and the constant reminders that issues arising around sex and schools will bring a locale under intense attention, the very fact that Unity Elementary School offers any sex education is a potentially radical act. At first glance, the curriculum that Unity provides with its focus on physiological and anatomical parts and systems seems objective, and therefore benign. However, as Fausto-Sterling (2000) and others (Alexander, 1994; Birke, 1999; Bordo, 2004; Laqueur, 1992; Martin, 2001) have asserted, the body is highly political territory. Bodies are subject to social and political pressures in ways similar to other cultural productions such as art, literature, and media. The significance is not so much that bodies themselves change; rather, our ideas about bodies are always in flux. Therefore, what and how we learn about bodies can illuminate the ideologies that underpin our knowledge of sex and sexuality.

With its focus on physiology, the sex education curriculum offered by Unity provides a context for revealing 1) the processes by which a sex education curriculum is implemented in an urban elementary school, and 2) the kind of knowledge about sexuality is transmitted through this particular curriculum. In this chapter I suggest that we have much to learn by paying attention to the disassociation of pleasure from the “official” curriculum of sex education as it is taught to elementary school age children. While the politics of pleasure, or *eros*, has been researched and theorized in prior studies (Fine, 1993; Gilligan, 2011; hooks, 2003; Segal, 1994) I show how pleasure as experienced through the body (erotically) becomes evacuated from the sex education curriculum even for children who, by nature, learn kinesthetically through touch and physical play.

Chapter 7: Education in Disguise: Sanctioning Sexuality in Elementary School Halloween Celebrations

Halloween serves as a magnifying glass to examine the operation of sexuality in the institution of elementary schools. The holiday provides a context which shows, materially, that race and class are inextricably tied to sexuality. Examining Halloween celebrations in elementary schools illuminates a nexus of relationships – social, economic, political, and cultural. These relationships lie buried beneath the veneer of fun and play that is popularly imagined as integral to the holiday. With its strong majority Latino student body, a focus on this particular elementary school allows for close exploration of the role of schools in producing normative citizens out of immigrant students. This chapter argues that processes of citizen creation through schooling are abetted by the U.S. consumer market, which strategically targets children (Linn, 2004;

Kapur, 2005; Olfman, 2005; Levin & Kilbourne, 2009). The position of children as subjects of these distinct yet mutually informing projects demonstrates that they have an absolutely significant role in reproducing the nation. These processes, however, are not linear as they are imbued with and facilitated by social, political, economic, and cultural tensions that interplay on multiple levels. This chapter explores four discrete but related aspects of Halloween to show how these elementary school celebrations bring to light the entanglements and articulations of sexuality, gender, race, and class in a culture that creates and exploits children's desires.

Significance of the Study

An ethnographic study on teachers' treatment and negotiation of sexuality, this dissertation focuses on one school, its teachers and students. It illuminates the cultural and ideological operation of sexuality within this school and offers practical and theoretical tools for elementary schools and education policy with regards to sexuality. The research fills a gap in working toward educational equity. Insofar as sexuality, distinct from gender⁵, has been a "missing discourse" within schools (Fine, 1993), the research opens up a trajectory through which schools, teacher education programs, and research institutions might better understand the role of sexuality in elementary schools. When students are harassed, bullied, beaten, and sometimes driven to death over matters of sexuality⁶, research that confronts sexuality at an early stage provides a crucial step toward satisfying schools' institutional role of achieving social equality.

This study provides a missing piece through which schools, teacher education programs and research institutions might better understand implications of sexuality that inform how children and adults learn to be and think in and beyond schools, research glaringly absent from the field of education. While sexuality studies have proliferated across the disciplines since Freud, social and cultural analyses *within* education studies have only begun to gesture toward theorizing child sexuality outside of a developmental or sex education framework. These paradigms have provided an instructive framework and have helped ease the anxieties of educators and families, but they have also contributed to normalizing behaviors and identities, thus creating a class of "other" or "abnormal" children who fall outside of the developmental norm (Rofes, 2005).

New ways of understanding children as power brokers for the nation-state can assist in contesting these normative paradigms that currently dominate perceptions of children and sexuality. Such paradigms operating within elementary schools interpret children who appear to be void of sexuality as being "normal" and those expressing sexuality as "abnormal" and a potential threat to the health of the school. Under this construct, "healthy" children do not display signs of sexuality, and these "healthy"

⁵ By focusing on sexuality as opposed to gender, this research illuminates the way that gender derives from sexuality (Butler, 1990) and is integral to a network of "social and cultural differences 'that make a difference' to patterns of inequality and power relations" (Renold, 2005, p. 36). While there has been much research published on gender and schooling, sexuality has been neglected as an analytic category in this realm. I expand on this distinction later in this chapter.

⁶ Jaheem Herrera, Carl Walker-Hoover, Eric Mohat, Lawrence King, Justin Aaberg, and Billy Lucas are a few of the young people who have committed suicide over sexuality related bullying by peers. In many of these cases, schools are blamed for allowing the bullying to continue.

children are those who make “healthy” nations.⁷ Later in the lifecycle, this translates to ideals of the political/social fitness of the citizenry.

This study will be a significant contribution not only to scholarly research, but it will provide potential benefits to teachers, federal and local policy, families, and, of course, children. As stated earlier in this proposal, elementary school teachers lack information on how to speak on and confront issues of sexuality on school grounds. However, they are made to deal with the subject in various manifestations, and sometimes fatal ones. If teachers do not have opportunities to learn to speak about sexuality in a healthy manner with students, their families, and with each other, then possibilities for harm due to homophobia, transphobia, gender discrimination, and lack of sexuality education in general is far more likely. Elementary schools provide a generative space for better understanding sexuality’s cultural and ideological organization, and they are in need of the resources that this research can bring.

⁷ See Foucault (1988), Ferguson (2000), and Bellous (2002) for more on theorizing the ab/normal binary and its effects on conceptualizing children as innocent victims of a hypersexual, perverse world. As Renold (2005) writes, “[T]he only option available when discussing children and sexuality is within the context of abuse and exploitation.”

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In 2012 news of the suicides of young people victimized by bullying permeated the media⁸. Sexuality, the rhetoric said, was the reason behind this bullying, and schools, it was also said, were to blame for the problem. The injurious and too often fatal consequences of sexual bullying demand immediate intervention at all levels of education. When students are harassed, bullied, beaten, and sometimes driven to death over matters of sexuality, research can be a necessary tool. It can render visible the intricacies of sexuality's organization at an early stage and provide a crucial step toward satisfying schools' institutional role of working toward social equality. Unfortunately, however, due to the widely held belief that "children" and "sexuality" occupy separate social realms, the pairing of elementary schools and sexuality rarely makes an appearance in education research.

At first glance this void may seem coincidental, even natural, but I propose that sexuality is *organized* through cultural processes that are linked recursively to ideology (McKay, 1999; Wallis & VanEvery, 2000). For example, sexual bullying is an expression of violence derived from a sexual ordering that is *already* present in all aspects of social life, including institutional spaces like elementary schools where sexuality has been silenced (Ferguson, 2001; Moon, 2008; Renold, 2006). The perception that children and sexuality are worlds apart is thus clearly contradicted by debates on bullying, sex education, curriculum on homosexuality, and health education in elementary schools. These debates organize sexuality through disciplining efforts that require labels for behavior, frameworks for sexual maturation and development, morality, and normative understandings of the body, all of which are for my dissertation. Yet education research reflects a dearth of information on the subject with respect to elementary schools.

My research is a step toward understanding sexuality more deeply by attending to its operation within schools. The scholarship presented in this literature review provides a context for understanding how elementary schools, the actors who inhabit them and the explicit and implicit policies that govern them interact to organize sexuality, are ideologically constituted through cultural practices. Guided by a sense of the challenge that comes with trying to capture sexuality in writing, I endeavor to *illustrate* why the concept is more complex than commonly thought. In effect, what does "writing" sexuality reveal about its structure, regulations, and contradictions? The location of the elementary school, a place rarely associated with sexuality in mainstream thought, provides fertile grounds for revealing through illustration the subtleties inherent in sexuality for reasons I outline below. Through illustration and the support of theory, I also show that other categories such as race, class, gender, and religion become entangled with sexuality within the context of elementary schools.

Examining sexuality within the context of elementary schools offers a particularly interesting combination. Elementary school life is comprised of various boundaries: e.g., physical, developmental, institutional, and interpersonal. These demarcations provide a backdrop against which sexuality sometimes appears intensified and then at other times

⁸ In 2010 the media teemed with news of children who had committed suicide due to sexuality related bullying. In many of these cases, schools are blamed for allowing the bullying to continue. In 2012, bullying has come close to becoming a national obsession with a major motion picture documentary entitled *Bully* released in March 2012.

seems to “fall away” (Youdell, 2010) or be absent. As I show in this dissertation, people—mostly adults—labor to erase sexuality from the school. I argue, however, that sexuality is always “there,” available to be teased out or ignited, especially within the spaces of elementary schools. I provide a nuanced interpretation of how sexuality operates in and through elementary schools where it is often hiding.

Each chapter of my dissertation draws from a unique set of literature relevant to the particular subject presented. This review presents the overarching conceptual context for the study, bringing together three theoretical areas as they relate to sexuality: *social constructionism; social and cultural productions in schools; and the category of childhood*. Some written studies are furnished with a detailed review of literature and theories anchoring the empirical chapters. My dissertation, however, provides a background by laying out the literature to contextualize the study. In broad strokes, I lay out the conceptual frameworks for the dissertation through review of the literature that I believe has been the foundation to my study on sexuality in elementary schools. My chapters continue to delve into the theories pertinent for the specific subjects of the chapters, taking up nuances where the literature leaves off. Through these three frames, I provide the fundamentals of the theories I employ to illuminate the data. These theories are, to borrow an idea from a conversation between Deleuze and Foucault (1973), “tools” to help build comprehension of social life.

The first section of this chapter introduces the concept of sexuality as social construction and provides a brief history as it sets up the theoretical basis for the study on schooling and sexuality. In this section, I also discuss the importance of race theory as part of a theory of sexuality. The next area on schools as sites of social reproduction focuses on ethnographic works on elementary schools. This section opens up to the larger study of Unity Elementary School. In the last section on childhood, I explore the ways in which children and childhood have been thought in social analysis. Again, I provide some history of the subject as I move into more current literature on the field of childhood.

The Social Construction of Sexuality

Simon and Gagnon, two preeminent sociologists of sexuality of the 60s, asserted in their 1968 document, “If sex plays an important role in the conduct of human affairs, it is because societies have invented or created its importance” (p. 174). According to Irvine (2003), the two historicized and contextualized sexuality as socially produced, creating a niche area for sexuality studies in sociology. If we accept Simon and Gagnon as a turn in the study of sexuality from an individual behavior focus inherent in Freud’s conceptualization of sexuality as a biological drive to an emphasis on sexuality as social construct, it is clear that the impact they made in the field is remarkable. Since the late 60s, sexuality has been studied as a social construction from psychological, historical, anthropological, and sociological traditions (Seidman, 1996). In asserting that sexuality is socially produced, fluid, and achieved (Butler, 1990; Epstein, 1994; Hubbard, 1990; Rubin, 1984; Simon & Gagnon, 1968), scholars and activists (Irvine, 2003) have attempted in different ways to demonstrate the power inherent in the construction of sexuality. These scholars have focused on sexuality because they see it as integral to social sorting, differentiation, and stratification (Foucault, 1990).

Foucault: Sexuality, a Theory of Power

Many have argued that Foucault was not the first to advance the concept that sexuality is a social construct and that the deployment of this message has obscured the genealogy of work that has also informed the social constructionist stance (Stein & Plummer, 1994; Vance, 1991; Weeks, 1998). Simon and Gagnon's research is one such example. Still, I begin with Foucault because the robustness of his theory opens up theoretical space for understanding larger systems of power. That is, Foucault's (1990) *History of Sexuality* provides a model for discursive analysis on other domains of power like race and class. Perhaps Foucault's greatest contribution to the study of sexuality is that he laid down a foundation for a theory of power by examining the socio-historical construction of sexuality.

At root, my research echoes Foucault's intervention into the scientific approaches that dominated sexuality studies. As a starting point, Foucault refutes Freud's assertion that sexuality is inherent in humanity and manifests in biological drives. Rather, for Foucault, it is a social construct and an instrument for the deployment of power that has been created over time through a layering of discourses on sex. It is, in Foucault's words, a "dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, and administration and a population" (1990, p. 103). Sexuality is a discourse that holds within it relations of power while also mediating those relations. And for Foucault, discourse is power. The deployment of sexuality, then, creates an understanding of "normal" and "abnormal" behaviors and practices recursively on interpersonal and social levels. Foucault argues that these intimate relationships produce a distinct middle class, or bourgeois, conception of sexuality in family life that takes on a normalizing power, which regulates the external social life. The discourse of sexuality, therefore, belies a struggle for power.

Sexuality is the locus of struggle for control of bodies and souls, a "regime of power-knowledge-pleasure" (Foucault, 1990, p. 11) that must be understood not as a "thing," a natural human possession toward which an individual is oriented (in the sense of libido à la Freud), but as a "vector of power" (Rubin, 1997). These lines of power produce the conditions of life, creating mechanisms for deciding who is "normal" and therefore deserving of what Butler (1990, 2004) might call "livable life." Foucault argued that through "power-knowledge" (Foucault, 1980), knowledge about populations is gathered to benefit mechanisms of power by regulating life. Life, then, must not be understood as a taken-for-granted given, but rather as constructed through systems of power and control where some people's lives are more directed toward comforts. For Foucault, pleasure is part of the power-knowledge complex because sexuality is one of the key sites for examining such systems, which regulate all lives but normalize the lives of the white, heterosexual, married middle class. In Foucault's theory of the power-knowledge-pleasure regime, those who fall away from this class of people suffer more.

Regimes of Truth: Sexuality and Morality

For Foucault, power is diffuse and malleable, and so it is not necessarily beneficial to name individuals in power, but rather to understand *how* power operates. For him, power operates through "regimes of truth," which can be traced through discourse. With regards

to sexuality, these regimes of truth are based in Christian values, defining for us right and wrong (Foucault, 1990, p. 37). His concept of a “regime of truth” serves as a response against the idea that one Truth exists. Rather, he worked toward the idea that specific power structures, like Christianity, produce discourses that are promulgated and accepted as truth. Hubbard (1990) summarizes it well when she writes:

Western thinking about sexuality is based on the Christian equation of sexuality with sin, which must be redeemed through making babies. To fulfill the Christian mandate, sexuality must be intended for procreation, and thus all forms of sexual expression and enjoyment other than heterosexuality are invalidated (p. 130).

Hubbard suggests that the Christian values underlying our views of sexuality in the west have created contradictions in our morals and our practices, which have resulted in social confusions and conflicts. Seidman (1996) suggests that these conflicts are facilitated by a need for an “absolute authority” (either god or nature) to explain sexuality, when in fact sexuality is at root socially constructed, and therefore neither moral nor biological.

According to both Hubbard and Seidman, we need to do away with the good/bad dichotomy in our discourse about sexuality. Yet, as I show in my dissertation, these statements may be putting the cart before the horse. How can we do away with something that we still do not understand? A major facet of my argument is that we do not have a robust understanding of sexuality, particularly in schools, because it remains in many ways a taboo. This is especially true when it comes to children. These ideas about sexuality are deeply ingrained in western societies, and the United States serves as an example. D’Emilio and Freedman (1988) explain that the early Protestant colonizers in the U.S. drew a clear line between sex for reproduction within marriage and extra-marital sex for recreation (p. 4). Hubbard agrees that these ideals endure. Foucault further explains that this opposing dichotomy of reproduction/recreation was strengthened during the Victorian Era when activities and experiences in the sexual realm became objects of knowledge comprehended through science and confession. The early ideals of sex for reproductive purposes within marriage continue to serve as a moral compass for society today. The difference now is that we have more tools for knowing people’s experiences and activities. Without going into a history that exceeds the scope of this research⁹, it can be argued that western society’s beliefs about sexuality have become hardened over time. They are ideological¹⁰ and embedded in daily practices. And while we banter around notions of right and wrong in our conversations about sexuality, as I will show in this dissertation, our ideas that there is a right and wrong to sexuality in the first place is deeply ingrained into our social and moral fabric.

McKay (1999) writes, “Because sexuality and the societal norms related to it carry such significance for the shape of society itself, sexuality has become the site of considerable social and moral conflict” (p. 20). In other words, we have constructed not only a concept of sexuality, but concepts of sexuality have also constructed us. These concepts precede us and have influenced our values and our relationships with ourselves

⁹ See D’Emilio and Freedman (1988) and Foucault (1990) for comprehensive histories of sexuality.

¹⁰ According to Althusser, ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” and therefore has a “material existence.” It interpellates, or hails, all individuals, and so we are always-already its subjects (109-119).

and others. In my dissertation, I strive to document and analyze the processes whereby sexuality becomes a demonstration of the negotiation, contestation and instantiation of power through observations and analysis of corporeal and dialogic interactions among students, teachers, parents and other adults who inhabit schools.

Heteronormativity and Difference

The language that inspires and creates sexuality is masked behind social norms that prescribe “normal” and “abnormal,” which can be interpreted as another way of delineating right and wrong. Or perhaps, in commonsense terms, there are right ways of being that go largely unquestioned, and there are not-so-right ways of being that stand out and therefore are marked. When it comes to sexuality, some behaviors and pleasures are considered more acceptable, appropriate, proper, normal, and natural, while others are perceived as inappropriate, abnormal, improper, and unnatural. Heterosexuality is probably the broadest example of sexuality commonsensically perceived as “normal” and equated with natural (Foucault, 1990; Rich, 1986; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993). In 1975 Rubin published “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” which together with Rich’s (1980) “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” paved the way for the formation and adoption of what became a key term in queer theory—heteronormativity. Rubin (1975) introduced the concept of a sex/gender system, the “set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (p. 159). Rich (1980) argued that heterosexuality for women especially, far from being “natural,” has been imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by society, making it compulsory. In 1993 Warner used the term “heteronormativity” to describe a sex/gender system predicated on compulsory heterosexuality. Five years later he offered a definition in one of his own articles, which he co-authored with Berlant (1998):

By heteronormativity we mean the institutions, structures of understanding and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organised as a sexuality – but also privileged. Its coherence is always provisional, and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms: unmarked, as the basic idiom of the personal and the social; or marked as a natural state; or projected as an ideal or moral accomplishment. It consists less of norms that could be summarized as a body of doctrine than of a sense of rightness produced in contradictory manifestations – often unconscious, immanent to practice or to institutions. (p. 548)

Heteronormativity as a “sense of rightness” is key to my study. Many, though not all, of the teachers from this study deploy a “sense of rightness” regarding the behaviors they observe in their students and in themselves. Like whiteness for race, it is the taken-for-granted way of life (see Leonardo, 2009). For most of the teachers, heterosexuality is not the only appropriate sexual orientation, but they assume this to be the abiding way.

A study of teacher beliefs that takes place in the San Francisco Bay Area is likely to reflect at least a modicum of liberalism. Although many teachers default to heteronormative frameworks, they are also quick to recognize homosexuality as a possible

way to be. Yet, while this may seem progressive to many, it continues to reinforce a hierarchized binary between the signifiers, heterosexual and homosexual. In her pursuit of antihomosexual inquiry, Sedgwick (1990) argued that the homo/hetero binary has created the taxonomy through which we understand sexuality. She maintains that the “calculus” of the homo/hetero binary has constituted Western culture since the end of the 19th century. Thus, homosexuality as social construct has limited the ways in which sexuality (orientation as either/or) *can be* understood. Sexuality is often viewed in binary terms, which I focus on in Chapters 4 and 5. The hetero/homo binary, even when being gay or lesbian is accepted as a valid sexual orientation, still inscribes heterosexuality as the norm, making homosexuality its other or alternative. Under the rule of heteronormativity, heterosexuality is always dominant, allowing for the most aggregate forms of privilege. And even while there are many ways to imagine sexuality, sexuality seen as different to the norm many times leads to profound suffering, evidenced by the sexual bullying I presented at the start of this chapter. As Butler (1990) expresses, lives prone to suffering are not livable.

Schools and children exist within a larger heteronormative binary system that obscures the intense labor that goes into processes of differentiation, thereby making difference and hierarchy appear natural. In terms of sexuality, differentiation occurs on many levels and within various contingencies that need to be broken down and illuminated to begin a process of ideo-structural change. This project will potentially shed light on how sexual oppression articulates other oppressions. Such discourses profoundly influence lives, create relations based on oppression, and produce fear through regimes of sexuality. Children are not safely excluded from such impact.

Sexuality and Race

Race, like gender, is a category tightly linked with sexuality. For all of Foucault’s contributions to understandings of how sexuality normalizes as it “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes” (Foucault, 1990, p. 183), he leaves quite open the operation of race as a co-creator of sexuality. As Stoler (1995) writes, “Foucault’s history of European sexuality misses key sites in the production of that discourse, discounts the practices that racialized bodies, and thus elides a field of knowledge that provided the contrasts for what a “healthy, vigorous, bourgeois body was all about” (p. 7). In part, this focus on the fitness of the population informs my study.

My study works off the Foucauldian notion of sexuality as a conduit of power that produces normalizing judgments, but it also examines the ways in which race interacts with sexuality in particular place and time to articulate new social arrangements. Other scholarship on schools has followed in this tradition. Ferguson (2001), a school-based ethnographer, demonstrates that the Foucauldian contradiction of children’s sexuality being perceived as simultaneously natural and against nature is deeply intertwined with race. She argues that “normalizing judgments” on children’s sexuality are informed and facilitated by racial constructs. In her study she focuses on African American boys and demonstrates that teachers construct and deploy conceptions of black boys that have enduring effects on their lives. For example, the “controlling images” (Collins, 2000) of black masculinity is of hypersexuality measured against that of normative (read: white, middle-class) sexuality. Ferguson argues that the interpretation of black boys’ sexuality leads to their

“adultification,” making them easier targets for being read as criminals even at a young age. She shows that sexuality and race, along with gender, are co-constructed. Her study provides a model for interpreting the ways in which teachers from Unity understand their Latino students’ expressions of sexuality as rooted in racialized perceptions.

Race and sexuality have, for the most part, been interpreted as separate entities within sexuality studies. Thinkers making up the canon in sexuality studies—Freud, Kinsey, Foucault and Butler—have mostly written about sexuality, albeit in different manners, as a self-constituting unity in itself. Likewise, race scholars in the U.S. have focused mainly on race with little attention to how sexuality informs racial constructs (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Omi & Winant, 1994). While the research necessitates a deep understanding of the particular analytic categories of race and sexuality, they have been well-theorized as unitary realms in academic and activist circles, often abandoning an obvious (and significant) analysis of the interplay of the areas that otherwise remain distinct. As many have shown, however, when race and sexuality are articulated they create a powerful unity that has served to perpetuate structures of dominance (Alexander, 2005; Ferguson, 2001; Nagel, 2003; Stoler, 1995). For example, Stoler’s (1995) work, similar to Ferguson’s, integrates dimensions of race and colonialism with Foucault’s theories of sexuality. While she attributes at least an inchoate analysis of race to *The History of Sexuality*, she sets out to reread the text to show how colonialist constructions of race shaped, and were shaped by, ideas around sexuality. She critiques:

In short-circuiting empire, Foucault’s history of European sexuality misses key sites in the production of that discourse, discounts the practices that racialized bodies, and thus elides a field of knowledge that provided the contrasts for what a ‘healthy, vigorous, bourgeois body’ was all about. (p. 7)

In Stoler’s analysis, the regulation and “will to knowledge” of children’s sexuality is key to the maintenance of these social and historical constructs. This is the “education” of which she speaks. Stoler presents a way to understand how this control operates to produce hierarchical, regulatory structures. These authors, while methodologically and disciplinarily diverse, contend that race and sexuality have operated as an inextricable duo in creating, maintaining and perpetuating systems of oppression.

Women of color theorists may have contributed some of the most groundbreaking work that promotes race and sexuality as mutually constitutive. While thinkers such as Foucault and Butler have carved out a place for critical sexuality studies in the academe, women of color theorists in the U.S. and others following their lead have contributed significantly to social analyses that simultaneously examine race and sexuality (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). These women argued, and continue to argue, for an “intersectional” approach to theorizing oppression (Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1981; Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 1984; Nash, 2008) that is, race, class, gender and sexuality are taken as a power package in order more fully to comprehend the operation of oppression. Each of these domains simultaneously constitutes the other within webs of power. Moreover, these “intersectional” analyses challenged the concept of race, class, gender and sexuality as stagnant and unitary, and instead argued for contextual fluidity of identity. The introductory lines of the Combahee River Collective (1981) describe well the theory of action behind intersectional approaches:

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. (p. 210)

Since the Combahee River Collective Statement, which formalized an introduction to the concept of intersectionality as a counter to metanarratives, theory and research has proliferated around this innovation. Some have written historical accounts that take a race, class, gender and sexuality approach (Almaguer, 1994; Davis, 1983; Gutierrez, 1991; Lowe, 1996), while others have conducted intersectional theoretical inquiries into health disparities (Diaz, 1998; Johnson, 2003). Still others examine the construction of masculinity through the cross-section of race and class (Almaguer, 1994; Gutman, 1996).

Queer Theory

Over the past 20 years queer theory has also produced new lenses through which to view race and sexuality as a unity (Eng, 2001; Ferguson, 2004; Muñoz, 1999; Rodriguez, 2003). Generally speaking, queer theory challenges normative belief systems, practices, performances and discourses and maintains that people are conditioned to think through a heteronormative lens, a form of “social violence” (Eng, et al, 2005)¹¹. However, it has been critiqued for neglecting racial analyses (Johnson, 2003; Sommerville, 2000), much as racial analyses have been criticized for leaving out sexuality (Ferguson, 2004). Those racing queer theory and queering race theory draw from the traditions of the women of color trailblazers named above, respond to the largely white and Euro-centric framework of queer theory and argue that sexuality is constructed in concert with race (Ferguson, 2004). In short, racial projects are simultaneously sexual projects. In addition, as my dissertation shows, they are also educational projects. Take the 1955 case of Emmett Till, for example. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam kidnapped 14-year-old Till, beat him, gouged out one of his eyes, shot him in the head, and then dumped him in the Tallahatchie River where he lay dead at the bottom for three days until his body was retrieved. Stories that he had been flirting with Roy’s wife who owned a grocery store that Till had entered served as the motivation for his murder. This example demonstrates the manner in which race and sexuality become imbricated. Till’s blackness created a sexual threat for these white men, challenging their self-concept of superiority. Resonant with Ferguson’s (2001) analysis, his youth became a reminder that young black men are adultified and criminalized, which lies in contrast to the imagined innocence of white youth. The Emmett Till racial-sexual project functioned also as an educational project in that, like lynchings, it was intended to serve as an example for all black people.

While discourse on Till might employ the term “intersection” to synthesize the conditions of his oppression, this concept falls short in capturing the dynamics of the historical moment from which his terrible fate emerged. A queer of color critique might interpret Till’s case as an example that black sexuality is always measured against a norm

¹¹ For all that queer theory is and has been, this is a cursory and simple definition, but it will be the working definition for the purposes of this proposal.

of white (hetero)sexuality, punished when it attempts to come close. Such analysis cannot be dynamically animated through the term “intersection.” Queer of color critique is broad and interdisciplinary (even if not abundant), and through my dissertation research I seek to engage this way of seeing to upset the white heteronormative paradigms that I suspect shape how sexuality is transmitted in schools.

Sexuality, Schooling, and Social and Cultural Re/Production in Ethnography

Broadly, my research interest is inspired by a desire to comprehend the role of schooling in constructing sexuality. I follow the line of Wallis and VanEvery’s (2000) thesis: “We argue that sexuality (especially heterosexuality) is not only present but crucial to the organization of primary schools, both explicitly and implicitly” (p. 411). Wallis and VanEvery illustrate how sexuality organizes elementary schools through the manner in which girls and boys are told to sit; the management of the differing kinds of information that heterosexual and gay or lesbian teachers can disclose about themselves; and by teaching heterosexuality as an unintended consequence of the standard curriculum, to name a few examples. However, some have expressed that they believe elementary schools and sexuality have very little to do with each other, and there is often a short pause of silence that punctuates conversations about my research. Based on these responses, it seems to me that we are far from accepting that elementary schools are a site of organization for sexuality. For this reason, and for reasons I explore in this chapter and in those following, it remains important to keep schools on the research agenda for studying sexuality. Moreover, it would be beneficial, as Wallis and VanEvery state, for society as a whole to start seeing elementary schools as sites where sexuality is organized.

Situating Elementary Schools

Academic social theory on sexuality and youth has been slowly making its way backward through the grade levels, beginning with high school and stopping at middle/junior high school (Epstein, 1994; Fine & Weiss, 1993; Kumashiro, 2002; Rofes, 2005). Empirical studies in middle and high schools have extensively researched the ways that schools manage sexuality. Yet, elementary schools have been largely neglected as sites in which to study sexuality. Through this dissertation project on the cultural production of child sexuality in and by elementary schools, I intend simultaneously to explore, connect and expand the terrain of social analysis and interrogate implications and consequences of the subject’s neglect. I accomplish this through an exploration of the production of sexuality in elementary schools. In this section I begin with ethnographies that present schools as important sites in the production of social and cultural life. I then focus in on ethnographies of schooling that take on sexuality as an analytic category. These are few.

Schools represent a complicated combination of hope and disappointment, oppression and liberation (Freire, 2000, 1995; Giroux, 2001; hooks, 1994). It has been well argued that public schools are an ideological arm of the nation-state (Althusser, 1971; Apple, 1996; Leonardo, 2004; Varenne & McDermott, 1998; Willis, 1977). As Skinner and Holland (1994) write, “[S]chools, despite their overwhelming potential for shaping minds, bodies and social futures, remain a paradoxical tool of control at best” (p. 273). Following the sentiment of this statement, I trace the ways in which schools as public institutions shape minds and life chances through the transmission of ideas on sexuality that reflect national ideology. This is especially poignant with respect to the school-going population at

Unity Elementary School, which is majority Latino. The work that goes into creating citizens of immigrant students can be seen in the example of Unity, which is likely a kinder, gentler example of processes at schools less aware or caring of this student population. Moreover, with respect to sexuality the racialization of sexuality becomes magnified when explored at Unity, and I attend to this in my dissertation.

Ethnographies of Schooling

A long genealogy of ethnographic works centers the school as one of the major, if not the most important, sites of social reproduction. Social reproduction theory contends: “the social relationships of education—the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students, and students and their work—replicate the hierarchical divisions of labor (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 131). Those writers falling under this category highlight the ways in which schools act as reproducers of class stratification. In his now classic ethnography, *Ain't No Makin' It* (1995), MacLeod provides a thorough account of the lay of the land in social reproduction in schools, covering the major thinkers and the theories they advance¹². These theories argue that schools ultimately reproduce class stratification, but the means by which they achieve this outcome differ in each thinker’s estimation. MacLeod examines “how social inequality is reproduced in the United States” (p. 22) with astute attention to the tension between structure and agency in this process.

At once a response to and an extension of thoughts on education by structuralist theorists such as Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, and Bourdieu, the theory of cultural production expands this terrain as it spins together theories of structure and agency. Weis (1995) writes, “Cultural production enables us to use the insights of structuralists as well as culturalists as we probe how it is that groups construct identities inside specified sites” (p. xi). Thinkers in the tradition of Marxist social reproduction theory have contributed much to a better understanding of social control and the reproduction of the status quo, but what they lacked was a robust interpretation of culture (Holland and Levinson, 1996, pp. 8). Interrogating culture allows for a more intimate understanding of social relationships. Beginning with Willis (1981), many engaged in ethnographic work began to understand that people did not simply reproduce the same culture, but they actually worked to produce new culture through the production of individual and collective identities. Through exploration of the interpenetrations of identities, ideologies and structures, these ethnographers have elaborated on deterministic structuralist social reproduction theories. The unearthing of the complex landscape of meaning-making and action in particular times and places has created a conception of culture that is now largely recognized as not something fixed but recursive, continually being produced and reproduced through cultural actors in and about their speech acts and performances. Thus, schools offer a rich landscape from which to study this production. Willis (1981) writes:

[Schools] are productive as well as reproductive, have specific effects, and cannot be reduced to anything else—and moreover, as we have seen, they work as much through their differences from other regions as through their similarities. Different

¹² MacLeod defines his repertoire of theorists as inhabiting slots on a continuum from deterministic structuralist accounts to those that take into account “relative autonomy of the individual” (11).

school organizations can well have different effects—especially in their degrees of repression, separation of subordinate from dominant *Cultural Production and Reproduction*, and isolation of cultural forms. (Willis, p. 61)

Made up of practices, the production of culture occurs in the interstices of structure and agency as the past and present conjoin through the interrelationship of acts and symbol systems. This is the vertebra of cultural production as theorized in *Learning to Labor* and a significant facet of understanding people in ethnography. Notwithstanding these important innovations, reproduction theories of education are ultimately class analyses and both sexuality and race have only recently gained entrance into the reproductive framework.

The concepts of social reproduction and cultural production have been operationalized in various school-based ethnographies. Recently, a small but growing number of school-based ethnographers have started to center sexuality in their research, seeming to heed Emma Renold's (2005) challenge that there is a "need to address the ways in which the adult world treats, recognizes, regulates, punishes and ultimately creates children's sexualities" (p. 22). Some have documented the construction of gendered sexuality on school grounds (Ferguson, 2001; Pascoe 2006; Renold, 2005). Pascoe's work, for instance, illustrates how masculinity becomes expressed through "sexualized discourse" (p. 5). Still others have emphasized the significance of sexuality education in schools and how it produces specific types of sexualities (Fields 2008; Fine & Weiss 1988/2006; Rofes, 2005). I have looked to these studies to aid in providing theoretical frames and guidance to my own research.

There are a few studies that examine the articulation of race and sexuality on school grounds (Bettie, 2002; Ferguson, 2001; Fields 2005; Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2003). For example, Ferguson (2001) explains that sexuality is seen differently depending on race. She writes that white girls are perceived and treated as sexually innocent while the image for black girls is that of "immanent mothers, girlfriends, and sexual partners of boys in the room" (p. 84). These works take sexuality and race to be of a piece, articulated as the categories play out in real life. I will return to this concept later with attention to the sexualization of Latina girls.

The aforementioned authors, while distinct in focus, generally understand schools as institutions that maintain loyalty to the heterosexual, white, middle-class power structure. Many authors also suggest that schools, in addition to re/producing sexual norms, are spaces of resistance (Giroux, 2003; MacLeod, 2004; Willis 1977). My study employs the concepts of social reproduction and cultural reproduction as tools to make sense of how the daily interactions in elementary schools that cohere around sexuality reveal adherence to these power structures and also where the seeming coherency falls away.

Sex Education in Elementary Schools

Sex education is an area where sexuality has become visible in elementary schools. Emerging from a combination of feminist struggles and progressive education, sex or sexuality education became incorporated into public elementary school curriculum in the 1970s and 80s. Bruess and Greenberg (2008), renowned sexuality education curriculum writers, have noted that in the 90's "there [was] a growing wave of censorship ravaging sexuality education in communities and states around the nation" (p. 58). Today sex

education continues to be a contentious, important, and well-documented subject in education curriculum policy—in fact, aside from the books mentioned above, it is practically the *only* way that takes into account children, education and sex.

In Chapter 6 on sex education, I describe the 5th grade curriculum at Unity, one provided by an outside organization. While I devote an entire chapter on sex education, one hope I have for this study is to destabilize the paradigm of sex education curriculum as determining how sexuality can be discussed and theorized in the elementary school. Findings from my interviews show that while many schools do not implement a sex education curriculum, sexual behaviors in schools proliferate. Sex education, therefore, is not the most common way that sexuality shows up in elementary schools. In fact, if we are to believe the narratives of the ten teachers whom I interviewed, sexual behaviors are pervasive in elementary schools and affect quotidian social and academic interactions among teachers and elementary school students. McKay (1999) contends that schools teach, “the skills, social norms and values that allow us to successfully integrate into society” (p. ix). If this is true, then teachers are the unnamed actors in this statement and the conduits through which sex education occurs. Therefore, teachers, whether guided by a sex education curriculum or not, *do* educate on sexuality through their responses to instances where sexuality becomes visible. I show this dynamic best in Chapter 4.

Children: Victims and Perpetrators of Innocence Lost

The child has become a western obsession. In the academy, various disciplines have taken their turn centering children as their object of study. Popular and academic literature on the needs of children, their physical and cognitive development, social and historical roles and their behaviors has proliferated. In my dissertation research I attend to the work sociological and anthropological research in childhood studies that takes as axiomatic the child as a social/cultural construct. Some of these texts explore the concept of children as victims wherein childhood is understood to be a time of endangered innocent vulnerability that needs to be protected from impending crisis and are the hope for the future (Cox, 1995; O’Connell Davidson, 2006; Postman, 1982). Others illustrate that children are often presented as potentially dangerous, or as animals (Ferguson, 2001; Valentine, 2004). My research on children’s sexuality, therefore, attends to current intellectual directions in the study of childhood, centering on the dichotomy of what Jenks (1996) calls “Apollonian” and “Dionysian” depictions of the child. These portrayals conceptualize children as either vulnerable or innately innocent (Apollonian) or potentially dangerous (Dionysian) (Valentine, 2004). Various anthropological and sociological studies of children build from this binary conceptualization that has become the main dual image of the child in the western imagination (Ferguson 2001; O’Connell Davidson, 2007; Renold, 2005; Scheper-Hughes & Sargent, 1998).

A little known fact that drives my research is that Foucault paid particular attention to the role of children in matters of sexuality. In fact, he had planned for Volume 3 of *History of Sexuality* (1990) to be called *The Crusade for Children (Croisade des enfants)*, but it was never completed (Stoler, 2002, p. 155). Still, social and cultural analyses of sexuality *within* education research have remained scarce. Since little research is published on sexuality and elementary level schooling in the United States, this study takes a necessarily interdisciplinary approach. It draws on theoretical space opened by Foucault’s

trailblazing projects, thus creating an opportunity for scholars interested in moving away from developmental or sex education frameworks and toward theories that may generate relevant social analysis on sexuality. Foucault's (1990) concept of "normalizing judgments," for instance, provides a theoretical tool for analyzing instances reflected in my corpus of data, such as the disciplining of a kindergarten girl for kissing another girl or what constitutes "appropriate" dress, behavior, and speech in elementary schools.

Childhood as Social Construct

In addition to examining these perceptions of children, my dissertation works from the assertion that childhood is a constructed category with meaning socially, culturally and politically rendered (Ferguson, 2001; Halperin, 1989; Renold, 2005). Indeed, the classic work on childhood, Phillipe Ariès's (1962) *Centuries of Childhood*, challenged the notion that childhood is a naturally and universally occurring period of time in a human's life. Ariès maintained that the idea of childhood as a stage of life was established in the West between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries as the divide between the adult world and the child's world grew as class divisions widened. Age groupings inside and outside of schools did not exist as they do now, and inter-generational formations were much more common. Ariès claims that "[I]n medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist...The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult (1962, p.128). Ariès's work has influenced sociological and anthropological studies of childhood; it has "remained a touchstone of cultural and social investigation" (p. 6) writes Fass (2007), and new pathways have been made.

G. Stanley Hall and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, two romantic thinkers who believed in the natural goodness of humans, romanticized a primitive humanity that they believed was inherent in children (McCullers, 1976; Rousseau, 2009). Children, being closer to nature, were therefore closer to innocence, creative imagination, and purity. Many of the intellectuals of the Romantic period, which spanned the end of the 18th century through its beginnings, idealized the bucolic. For Hall in particular, experience in country life was part of moral development, and thus the creation and growth of national democracy (McCullers, 1976). Both Hall and Rousseau urged people away from the corrupting forces of cities and encouraged them to frolic in the country where they would rekindle innocence of a childhood past. Such imaginaries of childhood have influenced the ways in which we contend with conceptions of childhood today. The ideal of children as innocent and pure collides with a seemingly contradictory image of them as savage and beastly. These differing perceptions of children endure today, as I will delve into in more depth below, and are often articulated through a race and class lens (Ferguson, 2001; Stoler, 1995). The idea that children are, at their core, innocent clouds us from thinking more profoundly about children and sexuality. Yet, the notion that children are prone to corruption through external influences, such as growing up in a city without the respite of the countryside, informs a lingering perception of urban childhoods as disposed to sexual precociousness among other depravities. Rousseau and Hall believed that children and their social development was essential to the creation of a strong, moral nation, and their ideals have had strong influence in the social construction of childhood.

Prout and James, sociologists engaged in the field of childhood, take on a social science approach to Ariès's, Hall's, and Rousseau's ideas, asserting that childhood has not always and in every place looked as it does in Western societies now. They argue that the conception of childhood as a social construction is an emerging paradigm. Moreover, they insist that childhood must be studied from the perspective of the child and not with adult needs and categories cast upon it (Ferguson, 2001; Prout, 2005; Prout & James, 1997; Renold, 2005; Thew 2000; Thorne, 1993). They write, "Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults" (p. 8), reflecting the need to create projects that do not negate the worldview of children. Through my research, I deploy the category of childhood from the social constructionist perspective, but I am uncertain that as an adult researcher I could succeed in representing a child's perspective. I would become the "voice" for the children, a filter through which their words and actions are strained. Inevitably, the worldview of the child would become intertwined with my own, an adult perspective on children's worlds. I do, however, seek to understand how the construction of sexuality in elementary schools simultaneously creates and reifies notions of childhood and the child.

Children and Sexuality

Yet while children and sexuality have proliferated across the academic disciplines as analytic categories over the past twenty-five years, research that brings together sexuality, children *and* schooling is almost nowhere to be found. Ann Ferguson's (2001) *Bad Boys* frequently makes it into syllabi on urban education or gender and education here at Berkeley, Emma Renold's book *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities* (2005), and Ann Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire* are three of the few texts that examine elementary schools as a unit of analysis in articulation with children and sexuality.

One area where the sexualization of children is well researched is through the consumer market. While the market is not the elementary school, in Chapter 7 I look to the ways that consumerism and elementary schools are linked. In 1998, Walkerdine wrote, "There is so little research and writing on the subject of young, pre-teen girls and popular culture" (p. 2). Since then, there has been growth in literature about the consumer market and its targeting of children (Linn, 2004; Kapur, 2005; Olfman 2005, 2008) and girls in particular (Walkerdine, 1998; Driscoll, 2002; Harris, 2004; Mitchell & Walsh, 2005; Opplinger, 2008; Spade & Valentine, 2008; Reist, 2010). Much of this literature falls under an alarmist approach to comprehending the phenomenon of the loss of childhood in modernity as well as the oversexualization of children. Such analyses can be found in Olfman's anthologies *Childhood Lost* (2005) and *The Sexualization of Childhood* (2008), Levin and Kilbourne's *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and what Parents can do to Protect their Kids* (2009), and Opplinger's *Girls Gone Skank: The Sexualization of Girls in American Culture* (2008). These works describe a consumer market that aggressively targets girls and makes them into sexual subjects who are almost sure to meet a tragic fate. For example, Olfman (2008) writes in her introduction:

When I witness a little girl who is sexualized, her playful, curious nature is palpable just beneath the surface. But when a girl or boy is not rescued from these soul-destroying scripts, in 15 years they may become, either a young woman with

damaged self-esteem and an eating disorder or a young man who cannot experience sexual pleasure with a woman whose body has not been surgically altered to reflect the pornographic images that he has been compulsively downloading since he was 10 years old (p. 3).

Olfman's language gives away her sense of urgency in this matter as well as her objective to convince readers that there is a world of horror waiting for girls and women if we continue down this path of sexualization.

Other literature, such as *Daddy's Girl* (Walkerdine, 1998), *Seven going on Seventeen* (Mitchell & Walsh, 2005), and *Coining for Capital* (Kapur, 2005), present the sexualization of girls with the objective of contributing to the academic field of gender and sexuality studies. These studies do not necessarily determine an outcome; they represent the sphere of sexuality as one that is simultaneously imposed from the outside onto an innocent soul *and* inhabited from the inside. That is, sexual subjectivity is not simply a passive subjection, but also the work of an active subject-in-the-making (O'Connell Davidson, 2005; Walkerdine, 1998). Such analyses demonstrate the active interplay of structures and agency in the construction of sexuality, providing space for girls to interpret their subject positions and inhabit different sexualities. They are non-deterministic while offering social and cultural analysis and interpretation.

I straddle both the aforementioned areas and begin from the theoretical conception of girlhood as a socially constructed, fluid, and temporally situated category. These areas also, to varying degrees, identify the consumer market as a product of capitalism, a system that is governed through the logics of patriarchy or male domination. In this, child sexuality becomes a palpable commodity, and as I show in Chapter 5, schools are made to deal with it.

Chapter 3: Methods: Working Toward Ethnography

This dissertation is simultaneously an ethnographic and discursive examination of the ways in which elementary schools are implicated in the learning and teaching of sexuality. The project provides nuanced understanding of the organization of the cultural and ideological work that culminates in practices like sexual bullying. Ethnographic details animate the practices that become articulated in social life by interrogating schools' official and unofficial rules, interpersonal relationships, curriculum, and teachers' perspectives. Through ethnographic research, I explore how sexuality becomes a form and product of politics enacted through and within social interaction within schools and beyond. As a matter of method, I employ a "processual approach" (Rosaldo, 1993) to analysis in order to trace how sexuality is organized. Such an approach has the capacity to account for both historical and social macro-processes in conjunction with cultural micro-processes. By attending to multi-scalar processes, this project is designed to illuminate how sexuality is systematically constructed and the contradictions found therein. Much of this organization occurs through a "silenced discourse" (Weis & Fine, 1993) for reasons that I show in this dissertation. To delve more deeply into these articulations of sexuality, silenced or otherwise, I employ ethnographic methods.

The set of research questions that guides this study necessitates interdisciplinary, multi-scalar theoretical approaches and qualitative methods. To interrogate the interplay of culture and ideology, methodological building blocks employed in this study include participant observation, interviews, focus groups, analysis of artifacts, and attention to the political discourse emerging at the time of data collection. In my dissertation I attend to the cultural processes and ideological mechanisms that articulate in schools to construct and organize sexuality. Using concrete examples as starting points in interviews, I attend to the contradictions and cognitive muddles that underscore teachers' interpretations of sexuality in elementary schools. I have thus adopted a "processual approach" to analysis that takes into account historical and political contexts in conjunction with cultural micro-processes to illuminate the operation of ideologies. Such an approach "resists frameworks that claim a monopoly on truth...by showing how a number of factors come together" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 92) within a specific context to produce certain practices and ideological processes—in this case, how sexuality is organized and regulated as a cultural system.

Although largely silenced and erased within elementary schools, discussions of sexuality in education percolate on both local and national levels. With education research in the United States indifferent to the subject of children and sexuality, public political debates at the national level cite elementary schools as key venues for the learning and teaching of sexuality. For instance, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Focus on the Family (FOTF) have tussled over introducing language on sexual orientation and gender into federal education policy on bullying¹³. The debates emphasize *children* as subjects pivotal in achieving the health of the future nation. FOTF's Candi Cushman explained in September 2010 that they "don't want controversial sexual topics introduced to their kids, especially at the kindergarten level." GLSEN's Eliza Byard responded that the nation needs "policy that reflects concrete reality and what kids are dealing with" (Cooper, 2010). Their statements show that although many are hesitant to talk

¹³ The H.R. 2262 Safe Schools Improvement Act amends the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act to include bullying and harassment prevention language.

about children and sexuality, elementary school teachers and students are *already* key actors in national discussions on sexuality. As these discussions on sexuality churn at the high levels of national debate, children and teachers live out the realities in schools every day.

Yet, discourses on sexuality within schools often seem silent or missing from day-to-day elementary school life. Is the audibility of the national debates against the silence and absence from elementary school life a contradiction? Or, is it the product of a certain way of engaging with sexuality, and does it speak to the quality of sexuality itself? My methods reflect attempts to understand how sexuality operates in elementary school life and to construct a meaningful analysis that has the potential to deepen analysis on broader scales. This project is thus attentive to the perspectives of individual teachers through one-on-one interviews, observations on the ways in which sexuality was constructed and transmitted, and some of the manifestations and forces of sexuality in popular culture and media.

A Note on Methods and Methodology

To begin a transition to the empirically based chapters of this dissertation, and more specifically to the next chapter that takes up the question of methodology, a statement: Methods and methodology are not the same. Leonardo (2004) explains that researchers often collapse the two concepts, yet “there are major theoretical and practical differences between [them]” (p. 75). It is not a question of whether one term is used over the other, but how they are conceptually defined. He goes on to say that methodology is a set of epistemological assumptions, and therefore a “position on the question of social reality” that, most importantly, serves to “justify the purpose and project of social research” (p. 75). Even so, methodology and methods are related. Simply put, methods are the practical and technical *how* a researcher gathers data, while methodology is the theoretical and ontological *why*. While I have reserved most of the explanatory details of the dissertation’s methodology for chapter 4, “Silence as Methodology,” this section outlines the epistemological assumptions and questions that motivate this inquiry and serves as an entrée for the study.

A study of sexuality—like any study of race, class, or gender—requires that perceptions of social reality be interrogated for the strong possibility that what we live as “real” is, in fact, socially constructed. In sociological research, this may be stating the obvious, but in my study of the organization, regulation, and construction of sexuality, I go to some lengths to show that the force of sexuality exists even in its apparent absence. This is a methodological as well as methodical issue insofar as it implicates a theory of reality and how best empirically to capture it. As I demonstrate, this absence is socially constructed. The thesis of the following chapter titled “A Methodology of Silence,” is that the perception that sexuality does not exist in elementary schools is itself a product of knowledge. Understanding elementary schools as devoid of sexuality is an outcome of how we have learned to see or not see sexuality within these spaces. The simple fact that my study of sexuality takes place in elementary schools presupposes a social taboo—the combination of children and sexuality. For many, because they do not overtly *see* sexuality in these spaces, they presume that it does not reside there. This is not to say that “seeing is believing,” in fact, I discuss the ways in which bodies and behaviors that are read as sexual

may instead be the excesses of “racial formation” (Omi & Winant, 1996).¹⁴ I thus begin from a point of entry that precedes where many inquiries start. I have endeavored to demonstrate that sexuality does have a place in elementary school life. That my study may seem risky to some requires that I take extra special care to delineate the basic terms of my study. Therefore, from the start, I define and describe the significance of sexuality in social life writ large as well as in the social lives of children. I aim to subvert common sense as it informs our perceptions and definitions of sexuality and to challenge these common conceptions through *critical* inquiry.

A critical investigation compels us to “question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation” (Leonardo 2004, p. 12).¹⁵ If it is emancipatory to transform our way of perceiving and thinking the world, then this is my overarching interest. Through this dissertation, I seek to expose that which many take for granted as common sense. That sexuality is an insignificant facet of children’s lives. That elementary schools play no part in producing and reproducing sexuality; that sexuality is something we possess rather than a social and political force. That only what can be seen qualifies as “real” evidence. That any one of us can escape becoming a sexual subject in some form or another.

“That life is complicated is of great analytical importance,” writes Gordon (2008, p.3) drawing from Hill Collins’ (1990) assertion of the same. To paraphrase, she goes on to discuss all that is unknown to us in our perceptions of what is real. Her project is to show the ways in which we are informed by matter/s, which cannot be seen. What we perceive as real is in fact shrouded in layers upon layers of other information. Therefore, the aim of social science research is not to arrive at objective truth, nor is it to suggest that all opinions matter equally. Rather, it is to deconstruct truth claims that have been used to maintain the power structure so that room is made for other ways of knowing to be heard. As Leonardo (2003) states, “Inquiry is a good venue to observe the dialectical process between objective constraints and subjectivity” (p. 76). Methodologically speaking, this study examines social life as a series of processes wherein subjects make sense of their objective realities, enacting their perceptions in various manners. Yet, participant observation and interviews are the practical methods used to illustrate why it might be beneficial to think otherwise about sexuality and elementary schools. I attend to methodological questions in greater detail in the following chapter.

¹⁴ For example, Davis (1983) writes about the sexualization of black women. Because black women become representative of a racialized sexuality, their white counterparts “pale” in comparison. The sexuality of white women, then becomes commonsensically non-sexuality. The ability to “see” the sexuality of black women is therefore not about the truth of sexuality, but rather about a learned way of seeing. Berger (1973) discusses the politics of visibility, and in many ways, as discussed in this dissertation, sexuality becomes such a politic. The perception that sexuality exists in some spaces but not in others and more for some people than for others is an *idea* that needs to be revealed as otherwise.

¹⁵ I in no way mean to propose that this dissertation will emancipate. However, I do believe that transforming knowledge and the terms of knowledge production is at least one necessary step toward liberation. This is the basis of critical inquiry as Freire (1970/2000) would have had it—that consciousness is changed along with action in a theory of praxis.

The Site: Unity Elementary School

The exterior of Unity Elementary School looks like most other schools in the area – neutral greenish grey paint coats the one story building, grated metal protects the dusty, scratched Plexiglas windows, and chained gates bar entry to those whose credentials, familial ties, or position on the education spectrum deny them access. Walking northerly toward the school’s entrance, to the right, small houses line the street. Almost all are gated or fenced, some with well-cared-for yards, and others in a state of abandon with yards filled with debris, cars, dogs, or chickens. Many of these buildings are homes to Unity students and their families. Sandwiched between a major thoroughfare, a freeway, and train tracks, the school serves as a lively space for the children, families, and staff who come to school each day. Despite its flat, asphalted playgrounds where there is a “no running outside of organized games” rule enforced for safety purposes, and even if children are seen daily “doing bench time” for having received yellow citations, the school manages to maintain a joyful ambiance. This is not simply the joy that one may think comes naturally with a congregation of children; it is a joy that is fostered with intention through the commitment of the principal, Mrs. Ana Jiménez, and the instructional staff to create a school that also serves as a community space. Since most of the students at the school live within a two-mile radius of the school, and because in that two-mile radius there are few welcoming places for families to convene outside the home, Unity Elementary opens its doors to provide this space.

This is evident in the way that parents remain talking in the corridors long after their children have taken their seats in the classrooms. In the two years I spent there, I never saw any parent asked to leave the school premises or kept from entering. The school maintains an open invitation to parents for events and assemblies, and it is common for teachers to intimately know the parents and lives of their students. Ms. Lee provided her students and their parents with her phone number at the beginning of the school year in an introduction letter that went home on the first day of school. She encouraged her fourth graders to call her if they did not understand the homework, if they needed someone to talk to, or if they had an emergency. This seemed exceptional to me; in my five years of teaching elementary school, I gave out my cell or home phone number to parents only on a case-by-case basis and in extreme cases. I preferred to keep as much of my private life separate from school as possible, and this meant that my personal phone would remain inaccessible to parents and teachers. I also feared backlash over discontent with my teaching on the part of students and parents, and my insecurity over this gave me good reason to keep my information private.

Reflecting back on the ways in which insecurity and imagined antagonism of the parents influenced the lines that I established between myself and my students, it is clear that Ms. Lee’s unguarded resolve in sharing this information demonstrates her trust and belief in the role of teachers in creating a learning community. Such a commitment makes possible the transgression of the over-simplified and misguided dichotomy between public and private, and it opens up potential for changing relationships between teachers and students, schools and homes. Ms. Lee’s act of confidence underscores the ways in which Unity builds authentic relationships among its people—through dedication to making the school work positively for all involved. This commitment, however, is always tempered through the imperatives of state mandated testing (Apple, 2006; Ravitch, 2010), which challenge teacher time and energy both inside and outside the classroom. The need to

constantly improve test scores compromises the work of the faculty and students to achieve its potential as a community school.

Upon entering the building, one is confronted with a decision: make a left, and walk through the halls, or go straight through the doors and walk through the yard. Walking through the yard before school or during lunch hours, children are out playing. Before school hours, the children in the primary grades wait with their parents for the bell to ring, while the upper grade students form groups and wander through the yard, if winter, often in a huddle to stay warm. A decision to walk through the hallway means a much quieter welcome. Peeking into the classrooms, teachers are busy setting up for the morning, or perhaps talking with a parent or another teacher. The start of a school day has had a similar feel in all the schools I have ever worked; each day feels new, promising, and yet uncertain. As mentioned, Unity looks similar to schools in the district with a yard that gives over mostly to asphalt and bungalows, at least three of which serve as Child Development Centers separated by a chain-link fence from the school itself but sharing the outside bathrooms. The buildings cluster around the asphalt yard, where there is one patch of green—a child-size soccer field made of artificial turf. One basketball court and a volleyball court keep children occupied during recess times, and some children sporting over-size purple Gametime¹⁶ t-shirts survey the scene to ensure that all runs smoothly on the grounds. Coach Gin can often be seen facilitating play on the foggy yard before school begins. Looking wide awake, he hands out jump ropes and hula hoops to the few children who desire to play in the early morning.

At the south end of the yard sits a stand-alone new building for the fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms. The floors in this four-year-old building are glistening and blue with newness, the classrooms evenly divided, three fourth- and three fifth-grade classrooms. The music classroom is also housed here, too, and so there are often smaller children seen walking through the bigger kids' building on their way to and from music class. This lower floor of the building frequently reverberates with the sounds of drums, tambourines, and the joyfully un-self conscious sounds of children's voices. After recess, the halls fill with children walking to their classrooms, none of them in a single-file line, but all of them directed with purpose. Although they are supposed to be silent and walking in line, this is often not the case, except on the rare occasion when teachers intervene.

The neighborhood in which the school resides is made up of majority low-income Latinos and African Americans living largely integrated. The city in which the school resides claims a high place on the national register for high crime rates of crime. And while the 2010 U.S. Census reports that 35% of the city population is white, white students comprise only 8% of the schools, according to a California Department of Education Report from 2010-11. Because African American children from the neighborhood attend other nearby schools,¹⁷ 94% first- and second- generation Mexican and Central American children comprise the research site. The majority of the children at the school are from Catholic families, attend church, are baptized, and while in elementary school take their first communions. Like many other urban schools, the racial, linguistic, class, and religious

¹⁶ Gametime is a not-for-profit organization that holds a contract with the school district. The group places an employee on one campus who is charged with organizing three main components of play at school: class game time; intramural sports leagues; and out-of-school time programs.

¹⁷ I could find no "official" reason for this fact, except that Unity's emphasis on bilingual Spanish and a strong presence of Latino families and staff may have pushed African American families to other local schools.

backgrounds of the teachers at the school do not match those of the children (King, 2000; Villegas, 1988); 30% of the teachers are Latino, 43% white, and 27% Asian. As Suarez-Orozco (2001) has pointed out, schools are the first point of connection for children of immigrants, and these children comprise one in five school-going students in the United States. This school is thus a significant point of contact for immigrant students and their families assimilating into life in the United States. 87% of the students are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch.

A few years prior, the school changed its name from Williams to Unity as the school district underwent some major structural changes wherein larger schools became separated into smaller schools within the same building. This did not happen at Unity, but part of the broader changes meant that Unity also went through a major overhaul including a name change. In her time as principal, Mrs. Jiménez began focusing more on community building in the school, inviting parents to events and adopting stricter disciplinary measures. This might appear contradictory to some, but the pressures of the standardized tests create a need to tighten the rules while simultaneously figuring out ways to humanize school. This is the task of modern urban schools—they are charged with the next-to-impossible task of raising the test scores of children while cultivating community per the prescriptions of No Child Left Behind.

All but two of the teachers in the south wing at Unity had their start as fully credentialed teachers at this school and have no intention of transferring in the near future, demonstrating its success in creating a supportive learning community for teachers.¹⁸ This is not to say that the teachers are completely satisfied with the school, their jobs, or all the other teachers, but they practice camaraderie and collaboration, which many of these teachers told me they appreciated and had not found in other settings.

Ms. Lee's Fourth Grade Classroom

It is the first day of school, and the fourth graders walk into their new classroom quietly. The sunlight comes through the opaque east facing windows creating a welcoming warmth in the room. The desks are neatly arranged in table groups around a large map of the United States rug in primary colors. Karen Lee, their teacher for this year, greets them sweetly in her soft voice, instructing them to put their bags on the back of any vacant chair and find a seat on the rug.

I had arrived at school in a sweat after miscalculating the distance from the bus stop to the school. Unity was only about two-and-a-half miles from my home, but it meant a trip down one of the main thoroughfares of the city, cutting through three distinct neighborhoods—one, a Vietnamese enclave, the next a mixed African American and Latino one, and finally a mostly Latino area. While none of the neighborhoods is solely of one ethnic group, the changes are apparent in the signage and people afoot. Once off the bus, I found myself in a stretch of road mostly devoid of human foot traffic. Cars whizzed past as I sometimes walked, sometimes trotted down the six blocks toward the school. I worried that I would be late and make a bad impression on my first day.

¹⁸ 100 percent of the teachers at Unity were fully credentialed at the time of the study, with an average of 10 years teaching within the district. This is in comparison to a 96 percent state average and an average of 11 years at the state level (greatschools.com). To give an idea of teacher retention at Unity, all of the fourth and fifth grade teachers at Unity who were there during my research are still there teaching in the south wing.

I had met with Ms. Lee the Friday before school began, and we had discussed expectations for my work at Unity. Ms. Lee expressed that she wanted me to be an integrated member of the small community throughout the course of the year, developing authentic relationships with the students and with the teachers. Of course I knew that there would be benefits and limitations to this. By acting as an authority figure, I might limit potential disclosures from students. However, by not doing so, I might put some students in danger or inadvertently condone hurtful behavior. Ms. Lee and I discussed this. In the end, we decided that we would share, to the extent necessary, the teaching role and authority in the classroom because we both felt that the safety of the children was paramount.

As I printed and cut out words that would be stapled to the word wall, we discussed my five years teaching in elementary schools and my pedagogical strategies for teaching and discipline. I told her that when I was teaching I tried to balance love with strictness, and that I believed misbehavior should be nipped in the bud in a private, non-humiliating way whenever possible. She seemed relieved to hear this, adding that she became “very frustrated” with adults who watch children behaving badly without saying or doing anything. But I also told her that since she was the one who had the official relationship with the school, students and their families, I would always defer to her judgments and decisions. Wondering how sharing power in the classroom would work, and also worrying about the responsibilities that comes with that power, I went home for the weekend finding myself running toward the school on the following Monday.

Arriving at 8:20, I was relieved to find out that school did not begin at 8:30 as I’d thought, but at 8:45. I went directly to my new classroom feeling too rushed to stop by the office to sign in and pick up a visitors’ pass. Ms. Lee was busy organizing the classroom for her new students. We greeted, and she promptly sent me downstairs to make copies of a math assignment that was scheduled for the afternoon. Her classroom looked and felt ready to accept the 22 fourth graders with whom we would be spending the remainder of the year. She went over the class list with me and told me that she was expecting a couple of changes to the list. She reviewed the day’s agenda with me and then disappeared downstairs to make copies. At 8:45 the bell rang, and at 8:47 20 students filed into class. Soon the U.S. map rug was covered in small bodies dressed in combinations of white shirts and blue pants – the school uniform – with hair neatly styled for this special day. However, not all of the kids were in this uniform. Bras showed through some white shirts. Ms. Lee took her position on the chair in front of the whiteboard, and I pulled one up next to her. The new fourth graders looked at us from their positions on the floor, eyes large and expectant, in silence.

Ms. Lee began by counting eight boys and 14 girls, instructing in a manner uncommon to this otherwise commonplace ritual on the first day of school, “If you think you are a girl, raise your hand. If you feel like a girl, raise your hand.” She then did the same for the boys. I wondered if she usually conducted her first role call with such attention to gender, or if she was more aware of gender due to my presence. When one boy realized he was in the wrong class, he stood up smiling, announced that he was in the wrong class, and promptly left. Kids laughed. The students were very quiet and cooperative and attentive to Ms. Lee’s calm and thorough introduction of herself and the procedures for the morning. I briefly introduced myself, telling the students that I would be in the classroom three days a week to help them with anything they needed and to learn about them. When Ms. Lee asked if anybody had any questions, nobody said anything.

Throughout the year, Ms. Lee would frequently comment that she was “in love” with her students, or that she and the class were having a “love affair.” It was true—they were able to develop a unique relationship, where humor and affection were as integrated into the school day as instruction and discipline. Ms. Lee would also describe her students as “innocent” and be concerned that I might not be getting the kind of evidence that I needed for a study of sexuality. I assured her, “Nothing is something,” but we would also talk about the infrequent instances when a notable event occurred around sexuality. In the chapters to come, I will engage these “nothing” and “something” moments through narrative and analysis.

Ms. Lee, 4th Grade Teacher

“I feel really different from how I did my first years. I’ve changed my head a lot. That’s where the change is. It’s my head.” She told me this as she pulled at the ends of her shoulder-length black hair that had been growing out from a short bob for at least the past year.

“How did you do that?” I asked Ms. Lee.

“A lot of praying. A lot,” she responded.

Ms. Lee and I were talking about her experience with teaching and observations of her own evolution. During the second week of school we found ourselves alone and talking at the table by the door of the classroom where we were discussing English Language Arts (ELA) groups because I would be working with them on some days. Ms. Lee reflected on this particular fourth grade class and how she was feeling optimistic about their developing relationship and the possibilities that the year held. She wondered if her calmness and ease with this group was about her growing into her role as teacher, or if it was specifically about this group of students. She would wonder this at various points throughout the year. At this point in the beginning, neither of us could know that she would lose her father and her grandmother in the course of the school year. Through this, she prayed a lot and went to church on the weekends, at times mumbling to herself, “God, please help me get through this” when she and her role as teacher did not seem to be meshing.

She believed in God, she prayed, and she went to church. But, as she explained to me as a group from her church and I congregated in her kitchen designing salt dough ornaments for her church’s 2010 Christmas celebration, she and her friends were not “that kind of Christian.” We had been joking about fundraising for the church, and one of the women there who was in her 50s suggested that they have a date auction where they would auction off people to go on a date. I responded that I would do it, but I wasn’t Christian. They all chimed in that it wouldn’t matter, and that’s when Ms. Lee interjected. Of course, having already spent a year with her in the classroom where she would often ask me about my research, I knew that she was not a conservative Christian. The church to which she belonged to maintained deep, historical ties to marginalized groups in the area, supplying space for organizations that provide resources to these communities, and holding fundraising and awareness raising events. The diverse congregation spans race, class, sexual orientation, gender, and age lines and brings in many who if not for this church would not affiliate with Christianity. Many of Ms. Lee’s friends were part of this community, and she was often busy during her non-teaching hours working with the church helping to organize events, singing with the choir, and participating in the church’s evolving vision.

Identifying as a queer person of color and saying things to me like who says, “I want to have a dinner party where we talk about sex,” Ms. Lee did not fit my ideas of a church-going Christian. But having grown up with atheist parents who are very outspoken against organized religion, my conceptions of Christians are fairly narrow. Having immigrated with her parents when she was an infant and growing up in a working class immigrant Korean family, Ms. Lee was fiercely independent — in her thinking and in her lifestyle. In addition to losing two important people in her family that year that I spent in her classroom, she also bought a house, got a dog, and moved her sister into her house. She had spent much of her youth unhappy and had come to this part of California with a boyfriend when she was just a teenager, and she had stayed. At 36 years old after having dated women for the past ten-plus years, she was considering dating men again, and she spoke with me about this. I only know of the story of her leaving home as a teenager because she shared the entire story with her students during the second week of class as they were working on their biographies. Modeling a writing lesson, she mapped out the story with pictures, beginning from the time she was a baby through the present. She told the students about her family, her friends, her teenage boyfriend, her locations, schooling, and her pets. The students listened to her with rapt attention. Ms. Lee told the story with honesty and clarity, as she would continue to do throughout the year as she taught, praised, and disciplined the students.

Ms. Lee’s background was certainly not one that is characteristic of the stereotypical elementary school teacher in the U.S. However, I believe her non-normative identities and experiences is what made her open to – and curious about – my study in the first place. Even a distinct positionality as a queer Korean American woman who hailed from an immigrant family does not disabuse someone from hegemonic ways of understanding sexuality, as I show in my study. This also certainly applies to my own position as a researcher, as I write about in the following chapter.

Some months into the school year, as we were talking, Ms. Lee and I discussed the topic of disclosing personal information to the students. She wondered what it would take for her to come out to her students, that she wanted to, but she feared repercussions. While she had told her students about her high school boyfriend with seeming ease, she had also commented on how her sexual orientation might influence her ability to teach. She reflected, “I always feel like this...over-protective person like an outsider, right? And then I know this isn’t true, but I do have a voice in my head that says, ‘Well, if they knew that you were a dyke, well, then it would even be worse because it would be, just like whatever you did, people would interpret that¹⁹ as trying to discourage females from being with males.’” This tension would come up for both of us throughout the year, as I will discuss more in-depth in later chapters.

Ms. Lee, her students, the classroom, and its associated activities, have furnished the foundational narratives for this study. The “home” that Ms. Lee provided while I conducted research at Unity allowed me a comfortable place from which I could observe the rest of school life. Her inquiries and conversations helped me to see and interpret that which I might have otherwise passed over. This is to say that she offered not just a physical site for research but an intellectual and reflective space as well. She helped me develop a relationship with Unity, and because of this I was able to draw connections between my observations at Unity and teachers and phenomena from beyond. Her students allowed me to remain grounded in the real lives of children – and to have fun. The other teachers who

¹⁹ Ms. Lee is referring to her reticence at condoning “courting behaviors” in the classroom and school.

inform this study have also helped me to better understand the significance of sexuality in elementary schools. It is through their stories and thoughtful responses that I have been able to think and write this dissertation. While the analysis that awaits in the coming pages is ultimately my own, Ms. Lee, the students and teachers of Unity, and those I interviewed from other schools have been integral to its creation.

The Research Methods

I designed this research to capture the nuanced processes that serve to construct sexuality. As such, this study builds upon a definition of sexuality as “everyday social practice” (Renold, 2005) and discourse (Foucault, 1990), referring to the politics of bodies and pleasure²⁰. With ethnographic focus on one school, Unity Elementary, located in an urban area in Northern California and 15 interviews with teachers from various schools in the same area as Unity (see Table A), the research data and analysis offer practical and theoretical tools for elementary school teachers, curriculum, and policy with regards to sexuality. The challenge in designing research on sexuality and children is how to access and apprehend the discourses and practices of sexuality that occur on different scales (national debates vs. school-specific issues) and at different levels of publicity. So while I interview individual teachers and derive the majority of my data from one school in particular, I also draw from news articles and representations to inform my study, which opens up the “processual approach” referred to above.

In 2008 I had conducted ten open-ended interviews as a pilot study for my dissertation, two of which were with teachers from Unity (Ms. Fender and Ms. Lee). Those interviews provided a strong foundation for creating conceptual categories early on in my dissertation research, and they are part of the 15 interviews that make up the corpus of this data for my dissertation.

As I coded and looked for patterns in interview data, I was able to assess how the subjects which emerged through my interviews could be integrated into methods and methodologies in subsequent research. Interviews allowed me to learn about how teachers *think* about child sexuality and interpret children’s behaviors, something that observation, theory, or historical documents cannot necessarily engage, especially since this is a little-documented subject. Weiss (1994) writes, “We might want to learn not so much about an event as about how it is interpreted by participants and onlookers...Qualitative interviewing enables us to learn about perceptions and reactions known only to those to whom they occurred” (10). While the critical incidents narrated by my teacher respondents provide interesting stories, the ultimate goal for conducting interviews was to learn how teachers understand the events that they confront. Neither observations nor documents alone would have given me access to these interpretations upon which I based my study. Yet, it was participant observation that allowed me to see the ways in which teachers grapple with issues of sexuality on a more consistent basis.

²⁰ This definition precludes a reductive understanding of sexuality as merely about orientations, identities, and sexual acts, although these categories inform sexuality as well.

TYPE OF SCHOOL	GRADE LEVEL	TEACHER NAME	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
Private (K-8)	K	Ms. Gillian	Her home
	4/5 combo	Ms. Helm	Her classroom
Public, regular (K-5)	5	Mr. Hope	His classroom
Public, small school (K-5)	1	Ms. Fender	Her classroom
	4	Ms. Lee	My home
	4	Ms. Bright	Staff room at school
	4	Ms. Keyes	Her classroom
	5	Ms. Moon	Her classroom
	5	Ms. Leslie	Her classroom
Public, charter (K-5)	2	Ms. Cassie	Her classroom
	3	Ms. Jolie	Her classroom
Public, charter (K-6)	K	Ms. Green	Her home
	K	Ms. Grisham	Her classroom
	1	Ms. Bell	My home

Table A: Interview respondent names by school type and grade level.

In the beginning stages of research design, I had entertained the idea of conducting a comparative analysis of elementary schools in an urban area and a rural area. I thought this would yield interesting analyses and allow us to see how social environments might affect perspectives on sexuality. However, as I began to undertake the work of contacting teachers and schools, I realized that for a dissertation project on a subject that was already unwieldy, it was unnecessary for me to embark on a comparative study. In addition, having been an elementary school teacher and having worked with elementary school teachers in various capacities as a graduate student, I already had access to a network of teachers. That is where I decided to start, and that is where I ended. I began by contacting four teachers with whom I had shared classes in the past, some of whom had participated in my 2008 interview study. I intentionally did not contact teachers who were also friends as I hoped to maintain some amount of distance from the respondents. I also chose teachers whom I thought would be open to and interested in my study. Of the four teachers I contacted, three of them wrote back within the week. Each of them explained that he or she was open to working with me in his or her classroom, but all four would have to receive clearance from the principal. I promptly wrote back with and suggested that I could contact the principal myself if that would be helpful. Each responded that she or he would contact their principals. Two of the three contacted me again to inform me that the principal would grant my entrance to the site. I arranged to meet with both of the teachers to discuss my research and their expectations in more detail. Ultimately I chose Ms. Lee and Unity Elementary School because Ms. Lee seemed more interested in the study and also because she seemed to have more space for me in her classroom and schedule. In addition, I decided to work with Ms. Lee because she was experienced as a classroom teacher, and I felt that this would help ground my role as a participant researcher in her class. She had also been a thoughtful and engaged respondent in her previous interview.

Participant Observation

Arguing that sexuality pervades elementary school life and is organized does not suggest that it is always visible. The proceeding chapter on silence explores this issue in depth. For this reason, the events that I describe in the following pages represent the major part of the corpus of data that implicates sexuality. As stated, the operation of sexuality frequently pulsates at a level that is difficult to apprehend, calling for a methodology that can illuminate a dynamic that appears absent. For this reason, in my writing I support ethnographic moments with explanatory theory and interpretation.

Participant observation is an appropriate method to understand present day social relationships that are organized within social structures. As Willis (1977) points out, the ethnographic method allows us to follow the “interpenetrations” of culture, the many ways in which people resist and accept their social positions. In his 2000 book, *Ethnographic Imagination*, he writes, “Well-grounded and illuminating analytic points flow only from bringing concepts into a relationship with the messiness of ordinary life, somehow recorded” (p. xi). An approach which weaves together the “messiness of ordinary life” and theory is necessary in this analysis of the operation of sexuality. It seems especially important since Foucault’s (1990) theory of sexuality as discourse fundamentally changed social theory on sexuality, yet his critics point to the deterministic tendencies of his work, arguing that there is no escape from the dismal state of the human condition (Fraser, 1981; Taylor, 1984). Attention to human processes permits us to imagine release from Foucauldian determinism by attending to real people in real time; it is a method to understand human phenomena in particular context and through complicated social and historical layers. Specific to my research, ethnographic methods illuminate, in a practical manner, how sexuality operates through webs of *lived* social relationships in particular time and place that affect, and are affected by, ideology.

The decision to employ participant observation as the main research method was influenced by those who had used such an approach to conduct school-focused research with what I considered great success (Bettie, 2003; Ferguson, 2001; MacLeod, 1995; Renold, 2005; Thorne, 1993; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1981). These researcher-writers helped me to see how everyday life, when examined at close proximity, makes “the strange familiar, the exotic quotidian” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; see also Weismantel, 1988; Wilson, 1991). The ethnographic lens illuminates as significant that which we take for granted, our commonsense practices and assumptions. Participant observation seemed the way.

I conducted the participant observation component of the research during the 2010-2011 school year. I observed in one main fourth grade classroom on average three days a week for the entire school day. I also observed on the yard during recesses, around school grounds before and after school, on day trips, a camping trip, and during school assemblies, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Continuous and detailed documentation through field notes and analytic memos written during and after each site visit facilitated in-depth analyses of the complex organization of sexuality on school grounds and beyond. Because sexuality in children’s space is thought of as either a taboo or as dangerous (Ferguson, 2001; O’Connell Davidson, 2005; Renold, 2005), it is often found just below the surface of everyday interactions in elementary schools. Thus, focusing intensely on one elementary school opens way for deeper insight into the school’s dynamics because it

fosters more trusting relationships between researcher, children, teachers, and administrators.

Ultimately, teachers, not children, are the main human subjects of this study. After all, they are the human conduits of the state's educational goals. Once one talks to teachers and spends time inside elementary schools as I have, ideals of children as embodiments of asexuality, purity, and innocence inevitably crumble, calling into question taken for granted beliefs about children and childhood. Elementary school teachers, the voice of expertise in this study, affirm that even though sexuality is a salient issue on school grounds it is largely hidden from plain view.

Bearers, instructors, and protectors of culture, teachers are experts on the quotidian details of schooling. As professionals, they must "see" through the eyes of the state and act accordingly; indeed, they must have supervision. This research shows that teachers negotiate their own beliefs about children and sexuality with the requirements of the state. This dynamic became evident in the assertion made by the majority of teachers that I interviewed, to paraphrase: "It's normal and natural, but it's just not appropriate for school." They fell back on this normative frame to rationalize disciplining efforts, which result in simultaneously organizing sexuality and elementary school life. The silences that pervade this socially obscured issue leave teachers untrained, under-qualified, and challenged in addressing sexuality on school grounds. I chose to focus on teachers so that I could glean a better understanding of the capacity of schools in producing sexuality, with teachers as their strong agents. There were practical factors to this decision as well. I simply did not feel comfortable or equipped to speak to children about sexuality. Moreover, I imagined that it would pose a major challenge to be granted approval to undertake research on sexuality with children as the human subjects.

Having made this decision, I found myself with Ms. Lee on the Friday before the opening week of Unity Elementary School helping her put finishing touches on her fourth grade classroom and talking about our respective expectations for the school year. Ms. Lee was clear about how she wanted me to work with her students. As I had taught at the elementary school level for five years, she knew that I came with teaching experience. And because I felt committed to being more than a researcher at Unity, we agreed that I could assist in her classroom with small groups and one-on-one help, as needed. She also explicitly told me that as an adult figure in the classroom, she expected me to intervene in student conflicts and problems. Having already conducted participant observation at another elementary school a couple of years prior, I knew how my position as an adult teaching figure could compromise my role as a researcher. However, with little more than momentary hesitation, I affirmatively accepted Ms. Lee's request that I act as authority figure. While some might balk at such a request, insisting that involving myself in the personal and interpersonal worlds of the students would skew the data, Ms. Lee's condition seemed reasonable to me. My bottom line: because I was acting as a participant in the classroom and because my status as adult automatically lifted me on the school hierarchy, I became accountable for the safety of the students. A responsible adult among children would intervene in some conflicts and certainly those that put any child in physical or emotional danger. Moreover, I knew that over the course of the year I would develop relationships with the students, and some of these would be significant.

Given my past experience working with children in elementary schools, I could be sure that I would become emotionally involved in the lives of the children with whom I was

about to work. As it turned out, the agreement was not as simple as “intervene in student conflicts.” I found that I had to be strategic in my interactions with the children. Take the following interaction between Jared, the only African American student in Ms. Lee’s class, and me.

While Gisela was sharpening the pencils that I’d brought back from Hawaii, Jared was hanging out near us and helping Gisela intermittently with the sharpening job. He looked at the pencil she was sharpening at one point and said, “Uh I don’t like pink. I don’t like pink or purple.” When I asked why, he said, “I don’t like that color because it’s nasty.” In a joking tone I asked, “It’s nasty? Like if you put it on you it’s going to ooze goo all over you?” He replied, “Yeah nasty. Boys don’t like those colors.” I responded, “Some boys do, I’m sure,” to which he replied, “Yeah, some boys. Boys who like to act cute.” I asked him how boys who ‘act cute’ act. Looking at me, he responded, “You know...” and smiled. I explained that I didn’t know and asked what he meant again. He asked, “Well, what do you call boys who like boys and girls?” Turning it around, I asked him what he called that. He said, “Bi...I can’t say the rest.” I wanted to know why he couldn’t say the rest, and he responded, “Because she’s here” and pointed at Gisela, a first generation Mexican designated English Language Learner who had been watching the entire interaction with curiosity, amusement, and some confusion from what I could tell. I asked where he learned about that word, and confidently he told me he had read about it in a magazine. At that point, Ms. Lee called for the class to finish cleaning and to meet her on the rug in one minute, forcing our conversation into suspension. (Fieldnotes, December 2, 2010.)

This interaction depicts the challenge of being both authority figure and researcher because, on the one hand, a researcher hopes that her place in the space neither affects the interactions of the research subjects nor the conditions of research. On the other hand, as an adult figure in the context of an elementary school, I would be delusional if I thought I could simply blend into the environment without affecting it.

In my reflective memo for this interaction with Jared and Gisela, I wrote about wrestling with myself over whether or not to ask him questions that I knew would get me more information regarding Jared’s understanding of sexuality and trying to maintain a distance for fear of being accused of skewing the data. In addition, ethically I felt that continuing a conversation with him about sexuality might pose an ethical dilemma, although I could not be sure what that ethical problem might be besides the obvious point that as an adult in school I should not be talking about sexuality with fourth graders. (See Chapter 5 for further discussion on this topic.) This dilemma represents a moment that I think many novice researchers using participant observation have to confront. In our quest to stay as objective as possible, we have to simultaneously be as honest with ourselves (and our readers) as possible about the fact that we will not “see” everything. This requires something of a science – a science of reflexivity. As Jorgenson (1989) points out regarding the continuing debates around the values of participant observation as a method, “Though no less ‘scientific’ than other research methods, participant observation—in other words—constitutes a *humanistic* methodology, a necessary adaptation of science to the distinctive subject matter of human studies” (p. 7). Still, this adaptation of science regards our studies

as related to science, requiring that we continue this commitment to the field of scientific inquiry. This is so even when ethnographic writing, as Clifford (1986) put it, “suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive,” (p. 6). Tensions between scientific truth and subjectivity lie at the methodical and methodological heart of this dissertation.

In the next chapter, I delve deeper into the challenges of participant observation as a *methodology* that maintains some loyalty to science, especially when employed toward attempts to comprehend something as fluid and inapprehensible as sexuality. But here I am concerned with the participatory aspect of my chosen method—that there is an added challenge in participant observation of being a *participant*. For this reason, whenever possible and appropriate, I bring myself into the analysis because without a doubt, I was part of the conditions. Being transparent about my participation in this research is especially necessary in a topic such as this one. To study children’s worlds and sexuality together presents a challenge of self-representation to the researcher because the subject—and thus the researcher—is easily regarded suspiciously.

Data Collection Instruments

Interviews. I began conducting interviews with the non-Unity elementary school teachers and Ms. Fender and Ms. Lee in February 2008 and continued through to December 2011 with the remaining teachers at Unity. Formal interviews and less structured conversations with teachers, administrative staff, and parents in the school comprise a major part of the research. Since adults ultimately decide how institutions will influence what children know, the limits of their experiences, and the political stakes of these issues, they can also provide the best insight into how these institutions are shaped. These recorded interviews have informed the evolution of the research questions as well as my approach to the observations by helping me to seize upon “critical incidents”²¹ that occur in elementary schools. Teachers’ interpretations have led me to greater insight into the ways in which their own positions as representatives of the state constrain their treatment of sexuality and how sexuality operates in elementary schools. Interviews allow more easily the triangulation of data, inclusion of multiple methods and perspectives (Mathison, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966), and generate analysis toward richer and more complex representation of the phenomenon. Thus, interviews and focus groups provide the benefit of multiple perspectives toward a processual analysis.

For the interviews I conducted in 2008, I spent time creating an interview protocol that would provide me with engaged responses. I was sure to inform each teacher that I had once been an elementary school teacher and that my interest in my area of study had emerged from my experiences as a teacher. Whether this information influenced the teachers I do not know for sure, but I thought that it might help them feel a bit more comfortable with what I perceived to be an uncomfortable subject. I found these teachers by contacting a list of former Masters students who had gone on to get their teaching credentials two years prior. Most of them had found placements in local elementary schools and were teaching. I

²¹ Critical Incidents Technique (CIT) is a method used in applied psychology to troubleshoot human-system problems. Although it borrows the term, my research employs a different manner of engagement with the method. Asking teachers to discuss “critical incidents” with me has been useful in helping teachers to speak on a sensitive issue by providing an inlet into discussion.

wanted to diversify this pool with more experienced teachers, so I contacted five acquaintances whom I knew were teaching in elementary schools in the area to ask for their assistance in finding respondents. Some teachers provided me with names and contact information for teachers, and I followed up with a standardized recruitment email asking potential respondents to inform me of interest. In other cases, teachers sent out an inquiry to their school's listserv. In most cases, one or two teachers responded with interest. I had a good share of refusals and even more that did not respond at all. Although I had hoped to have a sample representing a wider range of locations, I was successful in attaining a range in grade levels, something that allowed me to make some preliminary observations about the nature of sexual behavior and subsequent disciplinary action in the elementary school. Moreover, because I interviewed a couple of teachers who worked at the same school, I was able to see how communication circulates in schools, the ways in which some people are more observant than others on matters of sexuality and children's behaviors, and the uneven nature of memory recall.

During this time of data collection, I conducted ten interviews at various schools of varying demographics within the area. Most of the interviews were done in their classrooms, although two of the teachers came to my home. Each interview lasted between 50 and 90 minutes depending on time constraints and engagement with the subject matter.²² Some teachers, like second grade teacher Ms. Cassie, found that they had multiple stories that related to my topic of study. The interview with Ms. Gillian, a kindergarten teacher at a private school, also held me captivated with my digital audio recorder for close to two hours. However, Ms. Helm's interview, a fourth grade teacher from the same school as Ms. Gillian, lasted just under 50 minutes, which was perhaps facilitated by her warning when we spoke on the phone to set up the interview: "I'm not sure I'm going to be able to help you much." Although the nature of the topic of these interviews gave some length of pause to most of the teachers whom I contacted, once the conversations began, each teacher found that s/he had more stories and analysis than they had thought on the topic of sexuality in their teaching experience.

School Materials. Letters, notes home, citations, schoolwork, and artwork comprise the corpus of the artifacts I collected at Unity. In dialogue, teachers help me comprehend the significance of some of these pieces. I collected these during my participant observation tenure at the elementary school. As Rowsell (2011) writes, "Artifacts and the stories that they sustain hold promise as a research tool to access information that might not be possible through observation, document analysis, even interviews" (p. 332). These artifacts were not "contracted" by me, and so they serve as organic snapshots produced in the context of the school. While I do not have approval to show images of them as part of this dissertation, I do refer to them on a couple of occasions throughout the dissertation. Specifically, I collected a statement on the dress code, the introductory letters home from Ms. Lee, and I kept any notes that students wrote to me. I also took pictures of schoolwork—writings and art pieces—done by students and collected snapshots of graffiti, as demonstrated in the next chapter. These artifacts largely informed my dissertation in a general way, as opposed to making specific appearances. For example, while I collected the introductory letter home, it is not part of my final written analysis, although it did provide me with an overarching "feeling" about the culture of the classroom and school.

²² See Appendix A for the interview protocol on which I based these interviews with teachers. While I did not strictly adhere to the format, the protocol helped me organize the conversation.

Media and Popular Culture. Socio-cultural media analysis provides a background for my analysis of sexuality . As noted in the introduction and literature review, at the time of my study, a couple of major events regarding elementary schools and sexuality made it into the mainstream media. Incidents of suicides purportedly motivated by “sexual bullying” marked one series of events, and the other was the local incident of the children reported to have performed oral sex in a second grade classroom. In Los Angeles, a teacher was arrested on multiple counts of perpetrating sexual abuse on his own students. Each evening Google Alerts searched for “elementary school sex” and collated the news events of the day. I would then peruse the collection for anything that might be pertinent to my study. This is how I learned about the “sex box” that would be used as a learning tool for kindergarten sex education in Switzerland (see chapter 5). Some of the news had very little to do with elementary schools and sex at all, yet I became disheartened and sometimes viscerally disturbed at some of the happenings regarding children and sex in the world. These stories reminded me that although my own ethnographic work for the most part did not capture moments of harm, it could be there at any moment, and I would be accountable for decisions around how to represent the issue. I was reminded that my dissertation topic was far from neutral and has significant political implications.

Written Aids

My field notes. “Field notes are not by any means limited to nuts-and-bolts matters,” Sanjek (1985) reminds the novice and weathered researcher in the field. Further, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), field notes should be comprised of both descriptive and reflective components. My notes were composed of both. I took field notes during and after every site visit and interview, I scribbled them onto my clipboard. I did no recording, audio or visual, of the students at the school. At Unity, it was rare to see me without a clipboard of notes scrawled onto lined paper and then folded up to maintain the promise of confidentiality. At home or in a café after fieldwork, I would transcribe written notes onto my computer. The descriptive parts of my field notes were typed up in plain text, and I would insert reflective components in italics. The reflective aspects of my field notes allowed me to “perceive” my more concrete observations. Often, these reflections merely presented a multitude of questions around behaviors, teacher interpretations, interventions, race, gender, if I was conducting my fieldwork correctly, what else I needed to do, and work through my own reactions and responses to what I observed around me. The reflective portion of my field notes provided space for me to exercise unbridled, shameless subjectivity and allowed me to interpret my subjectivity and include that as part of the analytic memos I also maintained as part of my method.

Analytic memos. I wrote analytic memos at the end of every week. I would read through my field notes and reflections and construct an analytic memo from them. At times these flowed naturally, and at other times they felt like punishment after a long week of work. I had been advised by many scholars who had done ethnographic work that these memos would be “gold” later when I wrote my dissertation. This proved to be true. The memos were the first steps toward analysis, and they allowed me to recall how I had been thinking through the data when it came time for me to put together ideas. I relied on the memos throughout the process of data collection, and they helped guide me through and toward major analytic themes that are found within these pages. The dissertation is full of

passages that have been transposed verbatim from the analytic memos, and I am certain that I would not have been able to undertake such concentrated intellectual work *and* write such a hefty document simultaneously. Ultimately, the analytic memos drove much of the theoretical direction of the dissertation through reflection on the data that emerged as I researched in the field.

In the following chapters, I take these empirical observations documented in my notes and memos and interpret and analyze them. As demonstrated in my literature review, I draw from a diversity of texts to show that sexuality is organized in sometimes predictable and other times unpredictable ways.

Chapter 4: Silence as a Methodology of Sexuality

We can agree, I think, that invisible things are not necessarily ‘not there’; that a void may be empty, but not a vacuum.

– Toni Morrison, “Unspeakable things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature” (1988)

Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.

– Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 194

The relationship between elementary schools and sexuality is unclear at one end, and disregarded at the other. That is, the operation of sexuality in and through elementary schools remains to be understood. In this chapter I suggest that silencing is the favored method behind obscuring this relationship. I examine silencing as an efficacious, productive, and purposeful ensemble of actions in an elementary school. Contrary to what we might think, such silencing works to organize and give life to sexuality. To show this process, I focus on a methodology of silence and then complicate silencing, or the effort that goes into maintaining sexuality as unspoken, with erasure, or the processes that keep it invisible.

‘Uncomfortable Reflexivity’

“Engaging the real is not what it used to be,” writes Lather (2003). Postpositivist approaches to qualitative research challenge positivist paradigms of objectivity, neutrality, and disinterest in the human sciences (Reinharz, 1985; Lather, 1986; Phillips & Burbules, 2000). While indicators for evidence and the analyses that emerge from studies that follow positivist traditions remain necessary and beneficial to research, re-defining that which counts as “real” evidence has contributed to new methods and methodologies for analysis. For this particular topic, I remain self-conscious about what my interest in sexuality, and especially as it relates to children, might draw into question. While there is no “value-neutral” subject (Hesse 1980), the relationship between elementary schools and sexuality is especially suspect because of its inextricable link with claims about morality. Therefore the need to “prove” the existence of sexuality in these spaces feels especially urgent to me. This is true in particular because, for reasons to which I attend in this chapter, sexuality is silenced and erased in elementary schools.

One professor’s comment to me in my early years as a doctoral student has replayed in my mind over the years. As we rode together in the elevator he said, “You must really want to study that if you’re taking it on.” Perplexed and at a loss for the right words, I responded, “Yes, I think it’s important.” Then I experienced an uncomfortable silence until I dismissed myself before exiting the elevator on the second floor. He continued down. His comment kept me up that night and plenty of nights following for reasons that I continue to unravel. I will never know for certain what he intended with this comment, but I do know that it has served as a symbolic expression for other discomforts I have felt as I have become more deeply engaged in this study. Was he simply referring to the challenge anticipated in such research due to its under-studied

state? Was he implying that the challenge actually rested in the assumptions of tawdriness others would surely have about my interest? Was he objectifying me as perverse for desiring to take up this conjunction of children and sexuality? These are all questions that underlie methodological motivations. As this dialogic instance shared in a university elevator reveals, that which is not said, rarely uttered in concrete, literal form, in reference to sexuality haunts this study. Attempting to conduct an ethnographic account of sexuality in elementary schools renders me vulnerable to how I imagine others might interpret my choice. It is an unrelenting demand to find solid evidence in support of sexuality's existence to simultaneously "prove" that I am not being profligate in my scholarly pursuits.

When so much of sexuality occurs on the subterranean levels, to stumble upon concrete examples of sexuality in an elementary school is, perhaps, akin to finding the same in the Vatican. As I sat through class after class, recess after recess, days passing from September to October to December and on without seeing much in the way of sexuality, I began to regret having taken on such a difficult subject for ethnographic work. While recollections of my years as a teacher brought back memories of various instances where I had to deal with overt manifestations of sexuality, time spent at my well-organized research site school revealed to be quite ungenerous to the aspiring ethnographer looking for hints, even, of sexuality.

A month into the school year when, Ms. Lee, the teacher with whom I was working inquired, "Are you finding anything juicy with your research?" I responded "No," that the students in the classroom "seemed very innocent, very non-sexual." With regret over my choice of words I hurried to add, "Well, that's the thing about elementary schools – people think nothing sexual really happens in elementary schools, and in many ways they're right. But when things do happen, they happen in a big way, and there's a lot of fuss about it." With unshakable frustration with myself, in reflection that afternoon as I wrote I tried to put reason to the feeling. But still my field notes reverberate with steady uncertainty and imprecision:

Immediately when I said this I realized that 'innocent' wasn't exactly what I meant, and less so was 'non-sexual.' To say they're non-sexual goes against what I believe about sexuality. Sexuality, following Foucault, is not something a person possesses, but it's a way that sex is given power. So as long as these students exude 'non-sexuality,' then they stay in the favor of the powers that be in the elementary school. (Field notes, September 24, 2010)

Reading these field notes again, I am confronted with a sense of torque, the feeling of being pulled and twisted in different directions. This sensation emerges from what Wanda Pillow (2000) calls a practice of "uncomfortable reflexivity," a necessary intervention and affective consequence of attempting to change the power dimensions of traditional ethnography through feminist methodologies. Confronting a silence, or a void, in something that appears not to be there unhinges torque (Bowker & Starr 2000) and sets it in motion. This moment captured in my field notes illustrates in an instance the torque that I consistently felt during my period of field research. On one hand, I felt pulled toward using this language of innocence and asexuality when talking about children and sexuality. On the other hand, I knew that these commonsense terms did not capture what

I was trying to say. My words, in fact, performed almost precisely the reverse of what I wanted them to do—they recast children’s essence as devoid of sexuality and asserted that the only evidence for my research will be found in “deviant” behaviors and speech acts. “Juiciness,” as I understood it at that time, could only be achieved through the capturing of some example of a titillating, sensationalized event in which children become marked through acts of perceived inappropriateness. In this moment, I could not put into words my own budding understanding (which I refer to as “what I believe” in my notes) of sexuality in relation to children. I felt compelled to rely on the “safe” language for speaking of it even though I thought I believed something different.

In addition, value-laden language frequently accompanies the topic of sexuality. Far from neutral language, Ms. Lee’s use of the word “juicy” suggested titillation, or that I would discover something sexually provocative through my inquiry. By employing “juicy” as a proxy for sexuality, the conversation was already being oriented toward something furtive. The word “juicy” possesses overtly sexual connotations, and her decision to term her question in this manner facilitated a response from me that would already be colored by such connotations. Ms. Lee’s descriptor for my study reflected a way that many people had responded to my research topic. At base, by expressing that my study was somehow “juicy” she confirmed that I was dealing with a charged issue. It also illuminated the influence of language on sexuality. Sensationalized language is a practical mechanism for coping with the discomfort that arises in talking about sexuality. Yet, in the case of the professor’s comment, the language of sexuality was omitted completely from his remark. It is notable that the referent to sexuality and elementary schools was embodied in the pronouns “that” and “it.” However, in both instances I participated in dialogue that, almost by default, resulted in preventing a nuanced conversation on sexuality. It is uncertain whether the conversation was constrained by the threat that suggestive language might pose on interpretations of objectification or the consequence of dynamics that arise between a much younger, bi-racial (Asian American and white) female graduate student and an older, white male professor. Yet, it can be assumed that there was a reason for the professor’s comment and my own equivocation on how to respond. Such silencing illustrates how sexuality becomes discursively organized.

These examples paint a picture of the proliferation of silence on sexuality. It illuminates well Foucault’s (1990) description of silence as “the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers” (p. 27). In addition to what I rename “willed silence” (the things one declines to say), “coerced silence” (forbidden to name), and “compelled silence” (discretion required between different speakers), it is generative to add “naïve silence” to the repertoire, or web, of silences that align to create discourse. Naïve silence is a result of being without intelligible language of the topic at hand, which is a consequence of education broadly defined. These silences, however, are socially produced; that is, they are made through human interaction. Speaking appropriately, being polite, practicing etiquette provide us with the “social skills” that encourage silences. The silences facilitate our relationships, produce cultures, and provide insight into ideology.

In the aforementioned example I was not coerced into silence on the subject of children and sexuality. My naïveté, discomfort, lack of confidence, and language habits created a situation where I was affirming beliefs that even my *raison d’être* for

conducting this research would challenge. My first impulse: to assign labels of “innocence” and “asexuality” to children, thereby affirming this commonsense perception, which seems ironic since the intention of the study was to excavate and overturn this idea of children. Yet I found myself supporting it, demonstrating that intentions alone do not do the work of paradigmatic and ideological change. Thinking about my ungraceful response to Ms. Lee’s seemingly simple question caused me to reconsider my initial hypothesis that adults (teachers) hold normative perceptions of children as innocent and asexual *simply because* they describe them in those words. That is, their words were precise representations of their beliefs. I developed this hypothesis as a result of the set of 2008 interviews I had conducted with elementary school teachers. As Ms. Cassie explained in one interview, “When I look at my kids, I see this innocence, and I see how little they are” (Interview, March 2011). Like Ms. Cassie, almost all of the interviewed teachers used language that invoked innocence and asexuality to describe most of their elementary school students. Throughout the year, Ms. Lee continued to describe her students as “innocent,” and she often sounded apologetic about her students being this way since this could not lead me to the kind of evidence I was surely seeking.

The silence that pervades sexuality in elementary schools, I had initially believed, is inversely related to the absence of understanding or the inability to speak of sexuality in different terms. Silence, in this formulation, reflects a deficiency in analysis or comprehension of sexuality. That is, I took at face value the teachers’ language without considering what my own reflection urged me to think about. Perhaps, like me, they were also locked in a web of silence that evinced a struggle with language, etiquette, or more likely, an uncomfortable combination of the two. Yet ready with all varieties of gender and sexuality studies at my disposal, I uttered reasoned language that contradicted the main thrust of my argument and suggested a causal theory. The theory maintained that this classroom was actually devoid of sexuality *because* the children were innocent and did not demonstrate sexual knowledge through speech or action. The simple realization that silence was not simply an indication of “absence” emerged for me through reflection on my own limitations. These reflections manifested, and therefore relied upon, social interaction.

Silence, in fact, is culturally produced *with* knowledge. In Foucault’s (1990) words it is “an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies” (p. 27). Foucault believed that contrary to the appearance that “the pedagogical institution had imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children and adolescents” (p. 29), it was through silence that discourse on sexuality proliferated. I use the term “silence” over “absence” in this analysis because silence can still be imposed on something whose existence persists even through silence. It gives way to the verb “to silence,” which requires an agent. The same may be arguable for “absence” in the sense that someone can cause something to disappear from the immediate environment. However, silence indicates that the something endures but without sound. In this chapter I am arguing for such a concept of sexuality. It exists through silence. At times, however, I employ the term “absence”, but when I do, I most often accompany it with “apparent” because the absence is perceived through the silence.

In this chapter I discuss the processes through which silence is deployed at Unity Elementary School and through teacher practices to produce sexuality. In doing so, I aim to complicate the concept of silence by examining how those silences, which are

inaudible projections, sometimes may be more precisely analyzed as invisible potencies. I consider how “invisible things” and silences work together to form the contours of sexuality. In this sense, sexuality is not a “thing” in itself but a “vector” (Rubin 1986) of power that need be traced rather than defined. If power is, as Foucault (1979) suggests, “exercised through its invisibility” (p. 187), then it must be investigated through its unseen, absent, and silent expressions. How, then, does one go about reading an invisibility? I take this up in the following sections.

Silence as Text

The right to contribute to knowledge in the social sciences usually requires presenting something “real.” Real evidence, real data, real patterns, real words, real results, real numbers, real people: positivist, material reality. However, Phillip Brian Harper (2000) suggests “that which is not readily perceptible by conventional means” (p. 649) needs interpretive analysis aided by “critical speculative knowledge.” The imperceptible, or the barely audible, he proposes in his address “The Evidence of Felt Intuition: Minority Experience, Everyday Life, and Critical Speculative Knowledge,” is in want of an alternative analytic device, one that allows for the interpretation of indeterminacy. It is through the “hard work of speculation” (p. 644) that minority experience can be rendered intelligible in light of the epistemic invisibility it suffers in academe. I borrow the term “critical speculative knowledge” and employ its affective reasoning to enliven and construe the salience of silence that pervades sexuality in elementary schools.

Harper narrates an episode where a middle-aged white man on a train heading toward Ithaca, New York approaches him to ask if he’d like to join in a card game. When Harper responds no in “perfect English,” the man asks if he is from Sri Lanka. The experience is familiar to Harper, and he gathers that the man simply could not believe that a black man from Detroit would speak “perfect English.” He writes, “What it all *meant*, though, I can’t rightly determine, which is perhaps why the episode still haunts me today” (p. 643). Haunting is invoked to capture that which is unspoken, felt, but cannot be “rightly determined.” Felt evidence can be haunting for different reasons; as Harper points out, his feeling about the character of this man’s thoughts without the ability to justify the assertion gives cause for the memory to spiral back into his psyche over the years. He is discomforted by trying to fit evidence of affect into a system of knowledge production built on material proof and certifiable patterns. The requisite “evidence” of qualitative methods privileges that which is readily legible to a wide audience – direct and articulate language, behaviors that map precisely onto meaning, or the yielding of scientific results. Such a system haunts the Enlightenment-based scholarship of the university, and so it haunts its laborers like Harper, like me.

Youdell (2010) uses “the uncanny” to describe this haunting, the “discomforting return of the silenced familiar” (p. 87). Similarly, I find this concept productive in tracing silence’s work in propagating sexuality. Freud²³ wrote of the uncanny (or the German *unheimliche*, or “unhomely”) as a feeling that something is “strangely familiar.”

²³ Since Freud, many have used “uncanny” to capture this affect and effect in politics, the social milieu, cultural productions, including Marx, Heidegger, and Nietzsche. See the introduction to Nicolas Royle’s (2003) *The Uncanny* for a detailed review of this literature.

Interestingly, the much less frequently used “canny” means “prudent” or “knowing.” In what we consider its English antonym, “uncanny” is a distancing from knowing, something that is, perhaps, ungraspable, supernatural, inexplicable. Uncanny accommodates an affective strangeness and can be understood as a discomfort with the unknown, the unfamiliar. Above all else, it is the resonance of affect, the experience of encountering the strangely familiar.²⁴ Youdell (2010) points out that using the concept in ethnographic analysis on education in particular “seems at once risky and generative” (p. 89). It is risky because attempts to capture the uncanny in ethnographic, “real life” situations poses a problem for the researcher—the inevitable need to “turn to data that escapes language or even representation” (92).

Such moments benefit from the work of Derrida and his concept of deconstruction, which for the purposes of this study, can be simplified through his famous assertion in *On Grammatology* (1967), “There is nothing outside of the text” (*il n'ya pas de hors-texte*). As Lather explains in her conference paper at the 2003 American Educational Research Association, what Derrida meant with this statement is “that there is nothing that is not caught in a network of differences and references that give a textual structure to what we can know of the world.” What is possible to know of the world? This is predicated on what we first think of as real. As Biesta (2010) puts it, deconstruction “is an affirmation of what is excluded and forgotten; an affirmation of what is other” (p. 721). The preceding moments in my research serve as examples of what Biesta characterizes as “other.” That is, sexuality in elementary schools is that which is excluded and forgotten, but to exclude and to forget are active processes. Therefore, the silences of sexuality are fecund. Doing ethnographic research that attends to apparent absences requires tools to decipher the products of silence that occur in the uncanny or “felt intuition.” With its language of ghostly, mysterious, and supernatural, “uncanny” characterizes well the specter of sexuality that looms over elementary schools, thus lending itself to illustration better than definition. To think of sexuality’s form as a specter coincides both theoretically and linguistically with Harper’s concept of critical speculative knowledge – specter/speculative, appear/look. The haunting of the strange yet familiar in both “uncanny” and “critical speculative knowledge” allow for the two to work in conjunction as descriptor and method respectively.

Thinking through processes of silence and erasure with regards to sexuality in elementary schools requires a unique methodology that is attuned to uncanny reverberations in the data. Such analyses, therefore, must also allow for “critical speculative knowledge.” The analysis that follows explores the relationship between safety rhetoric at Unity Elementary School and how it shapes sexuality by examining the relationships between bodies, space, and discipline through processes of silencing and rendering invisible sexuality. As it stands, there is a gap in knowledge about these relationships, and my objective here is to “fill in the content differently” (Gordon, 2008, p. 19) from concluding that silence and invisibility merely signify nothingness. It is

²⁴ Thinking about children, sexuality, and the uncanny together leads right into psychoanalysis, but I would rather extend appreciations to Freud and others and then orient the term toward other ways of seeing. It is not that I do not think psychoanalysis has knowledge to offer and insight to be gained from it, but psychoanalysis has a way of consuming all of analysis, bogging it down, and I would like to stay afloat, while abreast, of Freud’s concepts.

dynamic. And it is the dynamic relationship of silencing and rendering invisible in the production of sexuality that this study brings to light.

Thus, in this analysis I take as axiomatic the necessary function of critical speculation in attempts to understand that which escapes scientific notions of evidence. As Gordon (2008) writes, “In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe not only that everything can be seen, but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption” (p. 16). This “consumption” can be applied to what counts as evidence in traditions of scientific research; as mentioned, we facilely consume that which is recognizable as a product, is marketable, or intelligible by a broad audience. We are much more reticent to accept that which is felt or sensed. But as Gordon points out, “[A] postmodern social formation is still haunted by the symptomatic traces of its productions and exclusions” (p. 17), and it is this sensory haunting that has sustained my interest in this subject for over a decade now. Keeping in mind Morrison’s (1988) statement that “invisible things are not necessarily not-there,” from her tracing the exclusions and productions in social formation will have great implications for understanding the work that goes into silencing and rendering invisible some people, some phenomena.

Silence or Moot Issue?

It seems necessary to deal with the question of whether the silence on sexuality in elementary schools is a sign of its insignificance or importance. My argument: sexuality in elementary schools has the *appearance* of inconsequence. The infrastructure of the silencing of sexuality is so well organized that it makes elementary schools seem devoid of sexuality. Employing a Foucauldian (1990) definition of sexuality as a discursive, and thus instructive, social force, means that sexuality in toto exceeds a common interpretation of sex acts or sexualized behaviors – sexuality should be understood as an active energy perpetually in production and productive of knowledge. In this sense, it is fitting that elementary schools are effective educators of sexuality. Here I suggest that the apparent absence of sexuality in elementary schools is in fact concerted labor that silences much, although not all, of sexuality’s manifestations. My objective is to illustrate how sexuality becomes silenced through key examples. To be clear, I do not posit that sexuality is silent; rather, I show that the process of silencing is one that produces a cultural body of knowledge that we call sexuality, which as Foucault (1990) explains, is “concerned with sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, and the nature of impressions²⁵” (p. 106). For Foucault, this concern manifests through an “incitement to discourse,” which contradicts the commonly held belief of the repressive hypothesis, or that the West continues to be mired in sexual repression. He argues that such a theory of sexuality facilitates the erroneous perception that we have silenced sex and so we must recuperate it by talking about it, and in doing so we will liberate ourselves. Herein belies

²⁵ “Impressions” for Foucault may be synonymous with “senses.” As he is responding to Freud, it is likely that he is employing language used by Freud. In his essay, “The Uncanny,” Freud writes, “[W]e can collect all those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions, experiences and situations which arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness, and then infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from what all these examples have in common.”

the repressive hypothesis: the efforts to recuperate sexuality from repression give rise to discourse, not silence.

Following Foucault, I argue that the pervading silences on matters of sexuality in elementary schools need to be interrogated for their productive effects. Whereas silence may be understood as definitive of sexuality in elementary schools, I suggest that exploring the outgrowths of silence allows for insight into its effects. My data show that silencing sexuality occurs in certain spheres of elementary school life and in specific ways that can tell us about the proliferation of sexuality rather than its suppression. Attempts to squelch manifestations of sexuality within elementary schools, then, do not result in silence per se, but rather in patterns of organization and management that can be traced toward clearer understanding of the operation of sexuality. Foucault (1990) writes, “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (p. 27). The objective of this chapter is to interrogate some of these silences to illuminate their effects, a project dedicated to helping us to change how we think about sexuality.

Elementary schools are imagined as spaces uninvested in sexuality, locations dedicated to protecting and prolonging childhood innocence and purity while developing intellectual and social capacities. However, the apparent absence of sexuality in elementary schools results from ideological effort, a particular deployment of power; it is not a consequence of simply allowing natural processes to occur. This is the labor of silencing, and silencing is the prevailing manner through which sexuality is dealt within K-5 education, that is, of course, until students are deemed ready for sex education, the focus of Chapter 5.

I thus suggest that interrogating silences and voids allows us to understand differently social phenomena, in particular those related to sexuality. Silence, the logic follows, is thus not an absence but a presence of something. Silence stands in for the unintelligible, the illegible by filling in the spaces of the unfamiliar or uncomfortable. The question of how to interpret the unfamiliar, or that which “escapes language or representation” (Youdell, 2010, p. 89) troubles new scholarly inquiries because turning the intangible, a space of intellectual blankness so-to-speak, into something comprehensible is ultimately what makes a an intellectual pursuit worth the trouble. During the course of my field research, I frequently experienced situations where evidence escaped language or a tangible representational form, and I found myself with the frightening reality of confronting what might be seen as major holes in my data. After various confrontations (and some serious wrestling), I now see that the holes *are* the data for much of this project. This is a welcome revelation, but it presents me with an entirely different problem – that of strategic method.

A response to the methodological dilemma of coding data to find which patterns appear, rendering them worthy of analysis, this chapter is dedicated to developing a methodology of silence based in empirics. While silence has been the focus of various sociological and anthropological studies (Gordon 2008; Lather 2004; Pollock 2004; Roberts 2000; Weis & Fine, 1993) and has also been given attention within gender and sexuality studies over the past twenty years (Cavanaugh, 2007; Silin, 2005; Weis & Fine, 1993, 2005), a methodology of silence animated through empirical evidence provides a contribution to traditionally scientific-positivist approaches to scholarly inquiry. And it is a challenge in itself.

It was silence that led me into this inquiry in the first place. As an elementary school teacher, I encountered many instances in which children exhibited what adults read as sexual behaviors or speech. Yet there were limited ways to deal with these issues. They either went unaddressed, or the children were punished. The effects of such actions were silencing; either the behaviors went unacknowledged, or they were pushed away beyond school walls. Upon reflection, I wanted to understand why this was happening, why sexuality was not talked about in the elementary schools in which I taught, yet persisted as an issue with which we all dealt. Although silence provided the initial impetus for my inquiry, after the field work was done, the interviews conducted, the field notes written, I was still left with the question: How does a qualitative researcher go about identifying silence, particularly of a sexual kind? The answer is not straightforward and requires attention to multiple levels of investigation. That is, silence will not emerge as its own clearly defined pattern within data, especially interview data, as it is that which is *not* said, making it all but impossible to “find” silence in the data archive. Transitioning from a “notion,” that is, an idea, to something concrete and evidence-based, a requirement of empirical research, means that I must found my claims in reasoned methodology. In this chapter I thus attempt to make more concrete the abstraction of silence by proposing a theory of silence as text, or something that can be read. This chapter is devoted to interweaving ethnographic moments and theoretical analysis to trace a genealogy of silence in the production of sexuality (e.g., bodies, space, regulation, and pleasure). In this next section I explore how safety discourse at Unity became a measure to pre-empt sexuality from manifesting on school grounds.

Silence, Visibility, and the Politics of Safety

The Discipline Assembly

It is 10:00 AM on a Monday morning early in the school year, and the third through fifth grade students filed into the auditorium/cafeteria by class line. A Monday morning and still the beginning of things, the lines remained relatively straight and uniformly colored in white shirts and navy blue pants (no jeans). The cafeteria tables had been neatly tucked away to make room for half the school to find spots on the recently mopped floor. The children sat with their classes in lines on the floor, leaving an aisle open down the center of the room. Once their classes had been neatly arranged, teachers sat to the side on folding chairs. Children’s voices buzzed through the room as we waited for the Discipline Assembly to begin.

The Discipline Assembly comes at the start of every school year; it is the gathering that reminds returning students about the school rules and provides this information to new ones. During this assembly, the children learn about behavioral expectations, consequences and rewards. In an attempt to “get everybody on the same page,” they are provided information on what is acceptable behavior and what is not, what will not be tolerated and what will happen to them if they do not follow school rules. Following the assembly, in response to my question about what they had learned from this year’s assembly,

Yeni, a student in Ms. Lee's class, commented that it was all stuff she had already learned because "the same meeting happens every year."

Mrs. Jimenez stepped up to the front of the room facing the rows of children seated on the slate blue linoleum tiles. Her small frame appeared large in this setting, I noticed. She began, "Good morning, Unity third, fourth, and fifth graders." A few quiet voices could be heard returning a "good morning" back to her. Mrs. Jimenez did not stop. "This morning I am going to talk about some school rules and things you need to know to be successful at Unity. Very important things." All the students remained quiet. Mrs. Jimenez reviewed expectations for listening to teachers, coming to school on time and every day, showing respect to others, following directions, and completing school work. She explained the dress code: white shirt, dark blue pants or skirts, no jeans or tank tops. Then she moved on to playground conduct.

"No running on the pavement, only on the green top. You can only play on the structure when there is an adult present, otherwise don't go on there. And if there is no adult present in a place, then you shouldn't be there. Don't go anywhere where adult eyes can't see you. This is for your safety; if nobody knows where you are, you could really get hurt. We don't want that. We want you to be safe at all times." Mrs. Jimenez spoke to the audience of children and teachers with stern care. (Fieldnotes, September 13, 2010)

Yeni's comment that the school puts on the same assembly each year rang true for me as well, although I had never been to this particular school's Discipline Assembly. I mean this in the sense that all elementary schools in which I have worked have had something similar to Unity's Discipline Assembly. At the beginning of every school year there are concerted efforts to create a uniform understanding of behavioral expectations – discipline and punishment. Such efforts are of great importance to the organization of school life where chaos and unruliness constantly threaten to erupt from below the surface of organized calm. Not only do these gatherings proffer information to students, but they foster collective knowledge of right and wrong that hold students and teachers accountable for their behaviors and decisions. They also communicate necessary information to students about safety.

Safety is of great concern to schools for clear reasons. Schooling's most clearly purported objective is, after all, about the intellectual and physical wellbeing of young people. The attention to wellbeing cannot be over-emphasized. While the purposes of education continue to be fervently debated (Labaree, 1997; Spring, 1988), the belief that education is a "good" has held constant. Safety, a necessary partner to good, occupies a major part of the benevolent goals of schooling, and if not one of public education's purposes, it is undeniably one of its primary concerns.²⁶ And with good reason, for the

²⁶ Beginning in 1999, the U.S. Department of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services has been providing grants to schools nationwide toward violence prevention through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. Their website reads, "The SS/HS Initiative is a unique Federal grant-making program designed to prevent violence and substance abuse among our Nation's youth, schools, and communities" (<http://www.sshs.samhsa.gov/initiative/about.aspx>).

rules of safety preempt dangerous and undesirable behaviors. That is, they instruct children on how to act in school and beyond, and they educate on sexuality. These rules define space and regulate bodies in space. The politics of space within elementary schools is tied up with the conduct of bodies, surveillance, and control.

Discourse on space and safety, I argue, facilitates the proliferation of silence on sexuality by necessarily focusing on visibility. It does this by pre-empting possibilities for manifestations of sexual behaviors, including speech, as children learn early on that certain behaviors are “inappropriate for school,” thus driving them into the realm of invisibility, and creating grounds for disciplinary action. Herein lies the relationship between silence and invisibility. “Disciplinary power,” Foucault (1979) writes, “is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility” (p. 187). This statement, in combination with Gordon’s discussion of our modern state of technological hypervisibility, reminds us that within social formations much is rendered invisible and therefore excluded, forgotten, or overlooked. In this state we are led to believe that we should be able to see everything that is real, rendering the subsequent exclusion from reality of that which purportedly cannot be seen a political move. From this it is clear that we are ocularcentric, privileging what is visible, which is an effect of power. In an academic world that privileges tangible evidence as proof that something is real, that which appears not to be there is concealed from plain sight and remains under more intense scrutiny.

“Safety” thus becomes a project for punishing inappropriate behaviors in that it sets up a measurable system for distinguishing right from wrong. If sexualized behaviors are, as teachers claim, “normal” and “natural,” then it is fairly certain that they will creep up and become expressed on school grounds. The school, in anticipation of untoward expressions, prepares itself with a cache of assessments and punishments to regulate conduct. This is not to say that schools create policies around safety with issues of sexuality in mind, but insofar as schools are institutions of normalization, part of which is learning proper conduct, and part of proper conduct is learning how to control the body, especially as a source of pleasure, then “safety” in elementary schools instructs ideas concerning sexuality. Children learn sexuality in school. However, safety instructions provide a way for this education to happen without any direct language about sex ever uttered. This is significant because rules on safety and their deployment, of which this Discipline Assembly is an example, is foundational to the construction of sexuality. Students thus understand the following that 1) all actions must be visible; 2) invisibility is punishable; 3) invisibility is equated with hiding certain behaviors (like kissing, touching oneself or others in “private parts”, which I discuss in another chapter); and 4) if they want to perform acts without teacher knowledge, then go to places where teachers cannot see them.

Constructing the knowing person. Mrs. Jimenez was doing nothing special on that morning; schools across the nation and probably throughout the world go to great lengths to ensure that rules are followed in the name of safety, and rules about space are given much importance. But creating physical boundaries for children serves to construct moral boundaries as well; by establishing some spaces on school grounds as off-limits, Mrs. Jimenez also provides children with knowledge about morality. Equipped with this

information, when children cross the physical boundaries set by Mrs. Jimenez and enforced by the adult staff, they are already in danger of imminent punishment. The expectation that children know and understand the rules deprives them of an alibi: ignorance. By gathering the children and their teachers into one place to deposit knowledge of proper conduct into their heads, a major step to discipline has been achieved. Children and adults alike have been instructed on where they are permitted in school. They necessarily will be responsible for keeping their bodies within these lines.

Pillow (2000) writes about how “architectural discourse” operates through rendering invisible “surveillance, self-surveillance, and regulatory practices” (p. 207) that cohere in spaces. She cites Game’s (1991) discussion of the “practices of space,” which are the “practices a place makes possible or closes off” (p. 207). Disciplinary power that is deployed through such discourse can thus be read as invisible text; such are the rules of space, which operate through silence while simultaneously facilitating silence. Architectural discourse, then, is entangled with spatial practices, and together they have great implications for this study of sexuality. Architectural discourse provides ways for the adults in the school to speak of proper bodily conduct without the mere mention of sexuality. By talking about safety and space, children learn important information about boundaries.

Effecting spatial boundaries is integral to, and contemporaneous with, constructing knowledge. Here I am not suggesting that children should live entirely without boundaries. Rather, I am describing how I see the function of spatial boundaries at Unity. Spatial boundaries teach boundaries of bodily conduct. That which exceeds these boundaries – and therefore this knowledge – gives rise to alarm and threatens what we hold to be normal and thus acceptable. These excesses can then be understood as “uncanny” moments, which result in alienation, or a distancing of children from non-childlike behaviors. In Freud’s words, such acts are uncanny because they are “related to what is frightening – what arouses dread and horror” (Freud et al, 2003, p. 219). In other words, a cognitive disconnect occurs when children cross the physical and behavioral lines that have been imposed upon them, especially when related to sex because we maintain such strong attachments to our concepts of children as innocent and pure, which means that their behaviors should help constitute them as non-sexual beings. Constructing physical boundaries within elementary schools helps to ensure that such breaches will not occur; the idea that children should not engage in sexualized activities already informs the demarcation of spatial boundaries. Marking some spaces as off-limits further establishes that children should not enter these spaces. However, when they do, adults are reminded that children possess the capacity to engage in sexual behaviors, thus resulting in “uncanny” acts – ones that are “concealed and kept hidden” (Freud et al, 2003, p. 132) yet materialize even when they are discouraged, threatening the appearance of social order. The discourse of safety presented in Mrs. Jimenez’s lecture aims to deflect sexual behaviors away from school grounds, thus preventing the need to confront them in a direct way. In this example, architectural discourse, or the rules that govern space, regulates knowledge of corporeal conduct – that is, sexuality.

The role of knowledge is central in the production of sexuality. Once the rules of space have been taught and deployed to the student body, it can be assumed that the children *should* understand them. Therefore, any breach of the rules can be considered grounds for disciplinary action. For children who know what they are doing and are

cognizant of the structures within which they operate, the possible consequences of their actions can be justifiably punished if they break the rules. And the commonly held belief in schools is that they should be. Those children who display behaviors that show that they do not are not self-conscious of them are repeatedly disciplined until they either stop the behaviors or leave the school. However, they are distinguished from those who break the rules. There are students who are perceived as consciously undermining school rules and those who do not comprehend them, and these two types of transgressors are treated differently. The following instances demonstrate how perceptions of children's knowledge of space facilitate the regulation of sexuality.

Victor Hugs on the Playground

"Side hug!" Ms. Lee told the boy who clung hugging her waist while we were out on the playground at recess one morning in November. She turned to me, "Have you met Victor?" She pointed to the child who had moved his face to her side and was looking up at her smiling, his newly forming teeth a bit too large for his small face and making him appear rabbit-like.

Victor Ramirez looked up at me with large, sparkling eyes. "Hi," I responded.

"Victor, this is Ms. Boas. She is a teacher in my classroom," Ms. Lee explained to him in her usual upbeat, friendly, and teacherly way.

"Hi," Victor regarded me. Then he turned back to Ms. Lee. "Hi," he said to her. She responded in kind, following with, "Why don't you go play; it's your recess. Let me talk to Ms. Boas." With a quick "Ok!" and a squeeze of Ms. Lee's waist, Victor was off running toward a group of girls.

Ms. Lee turned to me, "Remind me to tell you about him. He's a third grader. He would be interesting for your research. I'm always having to remind him, 'Side hug!' because he comes and it's like 'Womp!' face right here." She motioned toward her breasts. "Very inappropriate," she commented, laughing. I laughed too. (Field notes, November 9, 2010)

That was the first I had heard of Victor, but over the course of the year it became apparent that he was a well-known figure in the school. He was one of those children about whom all the teachers in all grades know because of his record of "inappropriate" behaviors and outgoing personality. According to the teachers, none of these behaviors were flagrant violations or abusive, but they were characterized as "crossing the line" and "too close" mainly because of the way he hugged too tightly. Also, since he had grown to the right height over the past year, he was now too close for comfort to the teachers' breasts. Victor's hugs and touching were always for female teachers, and he was the subject of disciplinary corrections but not necessarily punishment. Nobody seemed to know what to make of this boy who seemed to lack awareness about his actions, but everyone wondered what motivated these behaviors. He was the innocent child who appeared ignorant of some basic social norms, different but not corrupted. Part of what

made him non-threatening and unpunishable is that his behaviors were out in the open rather than hidden. Teachers think differently about behaviors that are consciously hidden and those that are openly conducted but breach social norms, as is the case with Victor. They distinguish “knowing” children from those who appear ignorant, as the section below demonstrates.

Children who know that what they are doing is “wrong” are seen as potentially corrupting forces in elementary school. Self-consciousness is the line that differentiates children who know from those who (ostensibly) do not, thereby constructing knowledge as a moral issue. In the following interview excerpts, teachers explain that children breach the fine line between appropriate and inappropriate when they knowingly hide behaviors.

Ms. Cassie: I think that if you know that you’re doing something that should be done in private, there’s an issue there. So definitely kids behind closed doors doing anything under clothing is absolutely unacceptable for me. The element of curiosity is where my tolerance lies, but when it comes to acting out things that you good and well know you shouldn’t be doing, and I know that you know because you’re hiding somewhere doing it, that’s where I draw the line. For several reasons, one because I know that they’re going against what they know is right.

Ms. Fender: Even the fact that they were hiding in the closet, they kind of know that it’s not what they’re supposed to be doing in school.

Ms. Gillian: I think, you know, the holding of hands. I even think kissing is appropriate, you know, if you’re at home or if you’re with your friends. I don’t think it’s appropriate at school but you know, my daughter kisses her friends and I think that’s totally appropriate. I don’t stop it. I think it’s inappropriate when, like if you say, you know, you cannot kiss at school and they just feel like they have to kiss at school. I think when they hide and do it, I think something might be going on there, not always going on in a bad way but you know, I think hiding and doing things is not good.

EB: Like?

Ms. Bell: You know, if you’re behind the play structure and you’re kissing or whatever, I think that’s fine, that’s appropriate. But I think if you’re like, ‘Well let’s go hide in the bushes and kiss because they’ll see.’ I don’t know if these parents put on them that kissing is bad or something like that but I think these kids have been told over and over not to do it especially at that age (6-8 years old). They pretty much follow the rules, and if they can’t follow the rules, maybe something else is going on. Because most kids want to do the right thing, and most kids want to please their teachers. And sometimes, I think, kids just don’t know. They’ve never been told that maybe you can’t kiss somebody at school. You know, that kind of stuff.

Space and knowledge in the above examples are linked. In these instances the teachers demonstrate richly through their explanations that not all behaviors are interpreted equally but are instead based on their perceptions of how knowing a child is. Only an educated child has the opportunity to be a moral child. Therefore, those who metaphorically (and literally in Ms. Jordan's case) kiss on the play structure, a school sanctioned area, do not necessarily understand that what they are doing is considered wrong. However, if they knowingly venture into the bushes to kiss, clearly they are out-of-bounds. Children must first learn what the material and behavioral boundaries are, so that then when they cross the boundaries they can be held responsible for their actions. Hiding, after all, is a self-conscious action. On the other hand, the more children follow rules, the more spatial boundaries become invisible. Yet, constructing these boundaries as invisible requires great amounts of labor. In the next section, I examine the labor that goes into maintaining sexuality as invisible through an example where sex refuses to be erased.

Indelible Sex

Someone had written

having sex in the hall
Sandra and Gus

It was on the blue wall that divided the stairwell. On the other side of the divider were the words "you sake eggs."²⁷ Walking down from the classroom to recess, a group of girls saw it scrawled in pencil. Someone had apparently tried to erase it because eraser dust lined the "V" in "having." Eva read the words out loud and told me that Sandra was in Ms. J's 5th grade class. I asked how long the words had been there, and Rina answered that they'd appeared three to five days before. They then told me that Mrs. Jimenez had asked about the words and if anybody knew any information about who had written it. They also told me that she said if they were scared to tell, they could write a letter with information.

Later, on the yard, the girls started to tell Ms. Lee about it. Ms. Lee responded with, "Sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll?" The girls clamored to report the details to her, but they couldn't quite recall the exact words that they'd seen on the wall. After playing around with the words a couple of times, finally Alana recalled, "Having sex tonight. Gus and Sandra." Ms. Lee responded, "That's so silly. Well, maybe out of respect to Sandra, you all could erase that." Alana then pulled out an eraser that had Carlos's name on it. She laughed and said, "It was the eraser closest to me!" Ms. Lee replied, "Oh, you were so eager to erase those words that you just grabbed any eraser?" Alana laughed and responded, "No, I got the eraser for something else."

²⁷ These words were probably intended to read, "You suck eggs." In Spanish, the translation for "balls" as in "testicles" is "huevos," which literally translates to "eggs" in English.

During lunchtime while I was walking up the stairs to the classroom, I saw that someone had newly written “sex Sandra.” Ms. Lee and Martha were in the room when I arrived, and I told Ms. Lee that the person had struck again. Martha overheard us from across the room and asked what had happened. She then asked if she could go see and erase it. She left and came back less than a minute later. Ms. Lee asked what it said, and Martha replied, “Ummm...” it looked like she was sounding out the words. She came closer to Ms. Lee’s desk and said, “It said, Sandy or Sandra...” Ms. Lee then asked if it was too embarrassing to repeat. I asked if she’d erased it, and she said that she had forgotten her eraser. Ms. Lee then turned to me and said, “This is interesting. It’s good for your research.”

When the school day ended, kids rushed out of class. But no sooner than half the class was gone, a couple of kids came running back, shouting, “It’s written in black now. Someone wrote it with a Sharpie!” I went out to the stairwell to take a look, and saw that someone had since written

Sandra Gus
sex have

Ms. Lee came, looked, and quickly disappeared. I took a picture and went back up to the classroom to find Ms. Lee, but she wasn’t there. When I went back into the hall I saw that she was talking to the 5th grade class in their room next door to hers. I went back into the classroom and got a sponge and wet it with water. Back in the stairwell, kids stood watching as I attempted to wipe away the words. Carlos told me, “I think you have to use paint. I think you have to paint over it.” I believe he was right because nothing was disappearing. (Field notes, February 3, 2010)

This example serves as a metaphorical reminder of the labor that goes into erasing sexuality from the walls of elementary schools. Written first in pencil, the haunting of sexuality was literally written on the walls. Even after multiple attempts to erase the words, they showed up again, and finally in indelible ink. Knowing that it would soon be painted over or erased, I took a picture of it as proof that it once existed there, in between the upper and lower floors of the south wing of Unity Elementary School.²⁸ Like my picture, this study serves to capture the ways in which sexuality operates in elementary schools, fleetingly, ghostly, through the continual effort to silence and erase it from the structures of the institution. It is not supposed to exist there. Teachers, principals, and students alike all know it, yet it persists. Once erased, school continues in its goodness until something happens again that reminds everybody that primary schools are not the innocent and pure places that they seem to be, that they ought to be, that we hold them to be in our imaginations. Even if the people in the schools do not necessarily “sex have,” sexuality proliferates, and mostly through the deployment of silence and erasure.

Through this incident, boundaries become illuminated. First, this student (or students) pushes the rules of school by writing on school property. Second, she or he

²⁸ Unfortunately, I cannot show the photo of the writing as doing so would betray the real identities of the students.

pushes the rules further by challenging notions of children as innocent and pure. Finally, the student continues to push these boundaries by returning to write the same words on the wall even after they had been erased. Moreover, by “writing” sex on the walls, the distance between silence and visibility becomes bridged. That is, language, without which silence could not proliferate, becomes erased and reappears repeatedly by the hand of at least one stealth child. In effect, the written message is silenced through erasure, but the entire second floor at Unity had already seen the writing on the wall.

Conclusion

Civil rights politics have hinged on a dichotomy between silence and voice. “Silence” is used regularly in social critique to describe the position of the subaltern, oppressed, victimized, and marginalized subject. In studies of education, the silent ones are those whose perspectives are suppressed to benefit the hegemony of the school system, which structures success and failure through the appearance of an unintentional disparate distribution of resources, awards, and punishments. To sustain such a system of inequality, some people must be silenced lest the system that serves the powers in control come undone. This is Weis and Fine’s (1993) conceptual thrust in their germinal, widely read, and oft-cited collection *Beyond Silenced Voices*, one example of how the problem of silence becomes mobilized and politicized in education discourse. In the introduction to this volume, they argue that there are “policies, discourse, and practices that enable the *structuring of silence*” (p. 1; italics in original). To combat these structures of silence, they contend, the “voices of those excluded” (p. 1) must be heard.

Unsilencing, coming to voice, or speaking out, become political projects akin to disabling current configurations of unequal power. And it makes sense—in a liberal democratic society, voice is necessary. If power operates through the suppression of some perspectives and experiences to the advantage of others, then to counter that suppression, voices carrying the messages of those subjectivities must be amplified. So goes the logic of politics: he whom is heard has power. Because the modern western world with its masculinist fetish for competition, innovation, and material productions claims not to privilege silence, there is little to quarrel with in this logic.

Perceived as passive and inert, silence has become only a shadow of voice’s power, an inverted but incessant stain on what would otherwise be democracy’s full fledged actualization. With voice absent and therefore devoid of power, silence becomes Lacanian lack wherein it desires to be endowed with a “properly speaking” subject, a self, an *I* (Lacan, 1991). Much attention has been paid to this quality of silence, but I have taken interest in silence’s productive capacity—agentic, as those who do social and cultural analysis like to call the thinking, acting subject. Rather than preventing modern progress, I explore silence’s productive qualities as an animate energy. How does silence move? That is, how does it perform, and how does it motivate? What must happen in order for silence to take effect? What does silence open up for us? How is silence a relationship in itself, and also the result of relationships? Foucault (1990) deems silence “a new regime of discourse” (p. 27), its role indispensable to sexuality’s social forms. How silence operates on the grounds of elementary schools is nonetheless difficult to capture. In part, this is because silence is a ghost. Like a phantasm we sense its presence, we see its impressions, we fear its power, but it is elusive, uncanny. Living with cultural

forms that privilege speech, words, and text, grasping silence ethnographically, methodologically, and analytically presents a challenge. In Derrida's (1995) words, "Every discourse, even a poetic or oracular sentence, carries with it a system of rules for producing analogous things and thus an outline of methodology" (p. 200). I present here a methodological offering for interpreting and analyzing that which appears to be absent or silent, whether it is willed or secured through traditions and processes habitually excluded or forgotten.

That day in the elevator when the professor asserted, "You must really want to study that to be taking it on," I felt a silencing unease that has remained with me until now. I have returned to this moment at various times over the past five years in attempt to understand the source of this discomfort. My efforts have resulted in what Pillow (2003) writes about as "uncomfortable reflexivity – reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (p. 188). Such is not a disabusing reflexivity that alleviates one of the privileged position inhabited as an omniscient narrator of subjects. That is, I can never fully know the people in my study, nor the subject of sexuality, much less represent them so that my audience can know them in full. Absences, voids, and silences will haunt this subject. However, to expect and accept discomfort in reflection opens up space to inquire about phenomena that is largely left unconsidered, like sexuality and elementary schools, precisely *because* it is uncomfortable. Discomfort becomes palpable in elementary schools when sexual subjects manifest, and this was true for me as an elementary school teacher when I had to confront such instances. It also happens, as it did on this day in the elevator, in the university.

The desire to understand the complicity of elementary schools in the production of sexuality continues to compel my exploration, as I endeavor to see myself as a participant in this production – of sexuality and of this research – as unsettling as the road may be. I do not believe that this professor intended harm in his statement, but its effect resonates with social practices and perceptions that render the study of sexuality, and especially those that have to do with children, as a threat to the civilized pursuits of the academe. Cavanaugh (2007) asks in her conclusion, "After all, who does research on sex, particularly in the educational milieu, without moralizing or condemning what many people take to be obvious sexual transgressions and improprieties?" (p. 192). The meanings implicit in this question haunt my inquiry, render academics with similar interests vulnerable to scholarly exclusion, and limit knowledge production at all levels of education.

Chapter 5: Walking the Line: Teachers Negotiating Sexuality in Elementary Schools

In appearance, we are dealing with a barrier system; but in fact, all around the child, indefinite lines of penetration were disposed (Foucault, 1990, p. 42).

Yeah, I strongly believe it's a balance between communicating the values of the society through the school at large. But those are not always clear and then also respecting family values even when you don't necessarily know what they are. That's kind of always in the back of my mind, and I tend to—I feel like I tend to be on the conservative side. But maybe the fact that some kissing is okay with me means that's actually maybe some teachers would never allow this. Maybe I am a little less conservative. I don't know. (Ms. Grisham, Interview, March 23, 2008.)

What would elementary school be without lines? Parents line up to fill out paperwork to enroll their kindergartners into schools before (sometimes long before) the start of the school year. Yellow buses and cars line up outside of the school building to drop off children at the beginning of each day. Children stand in lines awaiting the arrival of their teachers as the first bell rings, and they likely sit in lines on the rug or in desks as they receive instruction. They line up again each time they go out to recess or lunch and each time they come back into the classroom from the yard. In assemblies they sit in lines and walk to their classes in lines. There are also the lines upon which grades, the concept of “age appropriateness,” and instructional levels rely. These lines of human development are oriented toward a naturalized progression of learning and socioemotional stages.²⁹ We think of such lines as a mark of order. Lines epitomize organization; they are neat, manageable and safe. They signify boundaries, and teachers depend on them to keep order at school. At the end of the school day these lines dissolve into something less systematic, less knowable, looser, until the opening of the next school day. But what happens when lines blur, as they do in the following excerpts, into something unusual to an elementary school day? Something like kissing, perhaps?

Mr. Hope: Once I was walking up to the other field, and the kindergarten class was lined up against the fence as part of the PE activity. And there was a g--. Oh, I can't remember if it was a girl or a boy. But one of them was all up on the other one kissing them.

EB: What were you thinking at that moment?

Mr. Hope: Oh, you mean when I first saw it? To be honest, I was like, ‘Damn!’ You know? I can't remember if it was the boy or the girl now, but I was like,

²⁹ Jean Piaget's (1997) stages of cognitive development and Erik Erikson's theory of socioemotional development hold the foundations of educational theory in elementary schools. These theories maintain that there is a natural development of human growth that progresses in stages through life.

‘Whoa! That kid’s all up on that other one.’ You know what I mean? They were like, ‘Mmmmm’ [makes kissing gesture], and I was like, ‘Whoa! I didn’t know they did that kind of thing in Kindergarten.’ [Laughs.] (Interview, March 28, 2008.)

Likewise Ms. Green, a white kindergarten teacher in her mid-30s who has been teaching in public charter schools for four years, shows bafflement at the sexual behavior she observes in the classroom.

It’s like they’re doing it subconsciously or something. I don’t know. I’m just like, ‘Let’s keep our bodies to ourselves. Don’t lay on top of each other, you might hurt each other.’ It’s not like they’re even aware of what they’re doing. But it’s weird how they will do, little kids who I don’t think have ever seen someone have sex or even really know what it is, what I would consider to be sexual things. I don’t think they have any awareness that this is a sexual thing. But I’m also just a lot of time wondering in my head, like, ‘I wonder if there is really a young awareness of sex?’ (Interview, March 2, 2008.)

These are not isolated examples. Teachers I interviewed, like Mr. Hope and Ms. Green, demonstrate that sexuality takes a nebulous shape in the social imagination – we think we grasp it until we begin to try to unravel it and discover that it unravels us instead.

Attempts to understand sexuality through the realm of elementary schools, then, provides quite a challenge. It is a topic rarely thought to be a meaningful aspect of elementary school life and is largely absent from the official discourse on and in elementary schools. However, having spent years working in elementary schools, and after speaking with many teachers on the subject, it is clear that sexuality is a palpable, living energy in elementary schools. This energy, while diffuse, becomes visible by establishing lines that organize elementary schools and the management of contentious subjects, like sexuality. Teachers demonstrate that we adults, like the kindergarteners about whom Ms. Green speaks, do not “even really know what *it* is” when we talk about sexuality. Teachers’ explanations illuminate the fluidity, fragility, and uncertainty that saturate sexuality, especially as it pertains to elementary schools.

In this chapter, I pay close attention to the language that is actually invoked to talk about sexuality. Therefore, it takes a different tack from the previous chapter about silences. Accordingly, this chapter is an interpretive representation of narratives and thoughts such as Mr. Hope’s and Ms. Green’s about sexuality that were conveyed to by teachers who work in elementary school spaces. I propose that examining how teachers manage sexuality on a day-to-day basis provides insight into the processes of nation-making. Indeed, one of the main purposes of schooling is to create good citizens (Leonardo, 2007; Spring, 1988; Tyack, 2003), respectable, disciplined bodies and minds that will vote, work, and reproduce new good citizens. Teachers are thus charged with instructing their students on how to behave and think appropriately, and elementary school teachers are first in line to begin this process. With regard to the topic of sexuality, teachers feel pressure to uphold state interests of reinforcing the lines between appropriate and inappropriate sexual conduct, divisions that are enmeshed in conceptions of good citizenship, public life, natural and normal child development, and race, class, and culture. Yet, many teachers also worry about how their students’ families will

interpret their pedagogical choices. Such lines can be traced through teachers' statements on sexuality.

This chapter begins with an explanation of "lines" as a metaphoric analytic tool. Lines can be torqued, and they can articulate disparate tendencies into an apparently coherent pattern. I then explore three categories of binaries that teachers employ as they explain their views on sexuality in their work life: public/private, dominant culture/other, and child/adult. These binaries illuminate the ways in which sexuality serves to differentiate between proper subjectivities and potentially improper ones, regulating bodies and minds toward future possibilities as citizens of a nation. On the topic of citizen creation, the next section focuses on the ways in which teachers attempt to uphold impressions of themselves as model, heterosexual citizens. The final section examines the challenge it is for teachers I interviewed to walk all of these lines.

Torquing and Articulating Lines

To be very clear, I am not arguing that these binary lines are static. I suggest that by paying attention to the deployment of these lines, we may better understand sexuality as a fluid social and political energy rather than a "thing" that is biological.³⁰ The quote taken from my interview with Ms. Grisham clearly illustrates the ways that teachers grapple with how they manage sexuality in their schools. Paying close attention to teacher engagement with the lines of sexuality can also help complicate theories of social reproduction (Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Chomsky, 2002), which posit that teachers, synonymous with agents of the state, are subject to carry out the aims of the dominant power structure in the machine of the capitalist state. In short, I want to represent the thought processes of teachers as they navigate the dangerous "lines" of sexuality. These processes open a window onto the ways in which teachers experience and understand their interactions with sexuality in elementary schools, and they show us that sexuality is unwieldy and irrepressible.

To begin, a note on lines. For the purposes of this analysis, I employ a concept of a line that is understood as organized, directed, and straight.³¹ The metaphor of a line provides a guiding image to illustrate how teachers organize sexuality in their workaday lives. Sexuality, a fluid social energy functions in contrast to a line, as shown in the way that even attempts to define it prove elusive. In fact, the analytic category of sexuality, perhaps *because* it is so unwieldy, allows us to see through and past what might otherwise be presumed to be straight lines. There are few "straight" answers in teaching, in human development and in sexuality, at least in part because dialogue about sexuality is maintained as, in Ms. Green's words, "wondering in [the] head."

Therefore, it is not simply the lines to which I attend, but the "torquing" that accompanies attempts to walk the lines of sexuality. In their explanation of "torque," Bowker and Star (1999) examine how the lives of tuberculosis patients become "torqued"

³⁰ Given the plethora of social constructivist work on sexuality, I realize that this statement seems primitive in the realm of sexuality studies. However, also given that commonsense conceptualizations of sexuality found in mainstream magazines, film, books, and television promote the Freudian concept of sexuality as libido and do not encourage the Foucauldian idea that sexuality is an organizing principle, I believe that there is still much room to show how sexuality is a social construction, especially as it pertains to education.

³¹ Delving into a complex mathematical definition of lines in Euclidean geometry would not serve the intent of the analogy, which is to simply a metaphorical device to give imagery to the work of teachers in organizing sexuality.

through interpenetrations of the modern structures of categories and the particularities of personal lives. They write that tuberculosis patients experience “a twisting of time lines that pull at each other, and bend or twist both patient biography or processes of metrication” (p. 27). For the purposes of this chapter, I adopt and adapt this concept by applying it to sexuality.

The “torque” created by sexuality, then, is a consequence of its power. Exploring its attendant negotiations will help clarify how sexuality is both malleable *and* a feature of social structure. In fact, these characteristics together imbue sexuality with power and constitute power as sexual, at least in some forms. Therefore, interrogating how teachers are torqued through processes of sexuality provides a conceptual tool for deeper comprehension, sometimes apprehension, of the relationship between individual rational sense-making and institutional demands and consequences that derive from this relationship. I suggest that the tensions found in teachers’ statements reveal the complexity of sexuality, its instability and its force. Because sexuality is an energy compelled by ideology and ensconced in social practices, a simultaneous push and pull ultimately creates sexuality. But what is being pushed and pulled?

Sexuality must then be understood within the structural and ideological ensembles of complex social lives and examined within what Bowker and Star (1999) term a “background landscape” (p. 187). This landscape, they write, “is a nested set of contingent possibilities and structural features which in turn act upon the shape of [a] trajectory” (p. 187).³² The background landscape provides a useful conceptual schema for interpreting sexuality’s formation on a micro-scale in relation to a broader landscape of historical institutional structures. That is, in order to better understand sexuality we should, at the very least, be able to identify some of the structural features that help to shape it. In interrogating the lines of sexuality, I do not then mean to suggest that sexuality is a trajectory, or a uni-directional track. It is far more unwieldy than this. Yet, teachers’ statements help demonstrate that sexuality is often imagined as something linear, and through subsequent actions on the part of teachers instructing in schools, these directions further inform the possibilities and limitations of sexuality.

Sexuality is an articulated phenomenon, embroiled and constituted by other social categories within history. I have already argued that sexuality is a social construct and that sexuality, race, class, gender, and other categories of oppression intersect. They are always already entangled; the task at hand is to trace the intimate contours and tensions of their articulations. I have explained in the introduction that articulations are structured unities that do not exist *a priori* to history. Having already set up the historical terms of this project largely through a Foucauldian framework, in this chapter, I am interested in examining how sexuality, race, and class become articulated through teachers’ understanding of their students’ sexual expressions.

I borrow the concept of “articulations” and apply it somewhat loosely as a beginning to understand the “complex unity” of power that Althusser explicates in his book *For Marx*, and Hall (1980) expands upon in “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance.” For Foucault (1990), the history of sexuality is imperative for understanding the regime of knowledge/power that now constitutes what we know as sexuality (e.g. the proliferation of the “repressive hypothesis” itself). Current productions in sexuality are informed by this history and do not exist outside of it. Ethnographic methods allow us to see how social productions occur. Teachers’ commentary shows that

³² In their study, Bowker and Star interrogated patients’ trajectories of tuberculosis and the ways in which social and political forces acted upon it to shape it.

the management of sexuality in schools is a result of how they think about sexuality and their students. These thoughts are historically situated, not necessarily in their spoken words, but in how their thoughts are informed. The torquing of “lines of thought” implicated in teacher talk on sexuality illustrates the articulations that ultimately maintain and reproduce normative sexuality, facilitating a more robust conception of its management and production.

These are the lines of sexuality that teachers walk. When teachers talk about sexuality in the elementary school, they tread the fragile lines of race through use of colorblind language to make sense of sexuality. Teachers, like most of us, constitute heterosexuality through speech and action, and walk the straight line in support of heterosexuality and heteronormativity. They also participate in promoting a trajectory of human development in which individuals move through a linear progression of childhood to adolescence to adulthood. They occupy the line of the liminal space between the public and the private spheres; they mediate both bodily and ideologically between the school and the home. Collectively, these lines become oriented toward a “normalizing mission,” (Chatterjee, 1993) with aims to create “normative” children; that is, schooling directs students toward heterosexual, white, middle-class norms and values.³³ Yet normalizing missions are not straightforward projects; they are full of contradictions. The following sections illustrate how teachers ultimately participate in normalizing processes despite the torquing they experience with regards to sexuality.

Thinking in Line: Binary Lines and Normalizing Missions

When talking about sexuality, teachers speak through lines. They make sense of sexuality by conjuring up imagined social binaries. They provide a sense of predictability and uniformity necessary to the school day. The reification of particular binaries that emerged from the interviews illuminates the perceived dichotomous relationships of public/private and child/adult, and these become commonsense frameworks for understanding child sexuality even as the explanations teachers offer undermine the fixedness of the oppositions. This study, then, allows us to see how the category of sexuality illuminates the project of maintaining binaries, which are regulated and reinforced by teachers and schools in support of prevailing conceptions of normal. It is an attempt to link what might otherwise be considered banal to larger scale ideological and discursive projects. In the following section I attend to these two main dualisms highlighted in the interviews which are both negotiated through constructs of “normal” (Foucault 1990). While these particular dualisms have been well attended to across disciplines, my concern in this section is to illustrate how they become reified, put to use, and made socially significant with regards to sexuality and elementary schools.

³³ Foucault (1990) discusses the regulation of children’s sexual behavior through the intervention of doctors and teachers. He writes that the sexual behaviors of children became a “prop” that supported efforts to define that which was allowed visibility and that which would be relegated invisible (42). The control of children’s bodies, however, did not have the aim of eradicating sexual behaviors in children; on the contrary what this management allowed for was the proliferation of a powerful “medico-sexual regime” with children as its support and the family as the object. In effect, this produced “indefinite lines of penetration” that enabled the construction of the acceptable and unacceptable as children and adults alike crossed these lines (Foucault, p. 42).

‘Not for School’: Public/Private

The home-school connection³⁴ is a significant area of education studies. Research concerned with education does a great deal in attempts to bridge this perceived divide. Much of the research is based on the assumption that homes and schools are distinct spheres, but attention to the relationship between the school and home confirms that schools *and* homes are nodes of the normalizing project. Schools and homes mutually contribute to the political project of nation-making insofar as these public and private spheres act in tandem to shore up political ideologies to maintain national cohesion. But cohesion comes at the price of including certain subjects of the nation-state into its project, while excluding others.

Some of this nation-building process takes place in schools, what Althusser (1971) earlier called an “Ideological State Apparatus” or ISA. Take, for example, the following interview excerpts: Ms. Green, a kindergarten teacher, supplies rationale as to why she believes kissing to be inappropriate for the school context. And Ms. Grisham, another kindergarten teacher, explains why she established a “no kissing policy” in her class after repeated incidents of children kissing became a distraction to others (Ms. Grisham, Interview, March 23, 2008). Ms. Green indicates why she tells her students that their actions are inappropriate:

It’s not something that school is about. Kissing and hugging and doing other things like that are for home or somewhere else. Not for school. Even if one of my loved ones was at school, I wouldn’t sit there and kiss on the workplace or at school or...um...anything around nakedness. If they’re showing their underwear. I tell them that’s totally inappropriate. And I feel like other things I’ve told them are inappropriate for school are touch. If anything physical is happening between two kids with any parts of their bodies, like, you know, their butt, or like their private. Or if another kid was touching another kid’s nipple. I would feel like I would have to teach them that that’s not appropriate. Like parts of the body that are just, like, you know, I’m not going to tell that to another kid if they’re touching the kid’s foot. You know? Unless they were doing it in a way that was like, ‘Maybe that’s sexual!’ It’s not to me, so, like, I don’t know. (Interview, March 2, 2008)

Ms. Grisham: I know kids come in [to Kindergarten] with all kinds of behaviors that they do just because they’re little kids. But they have to learn that in school, or in any public place, they can’t do that. They just can’t, you know? (Interview, March 23, 2008)

Ms. Cassie: [Girls] can’t be all sexy and stuff running around the classroom. (Interview, April 8, 2008)

³⁴ See *Funds of Knowledge* (2005) by Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti for an in-depth look at the ways in which the home-school connection may be thought. Discourse on the home-school connection currently proliferates.

In these teachers' statements there is a clearly defined division between the school (public) and the home or "somewhere else" (private). Recall Mr. Hope's assertion, "That kind of stuff is normal, but it's just not appropriate at school. That kind of behavior just doesn't belong in school." Ms. Green, Ms. Grisham, Ms. Cassie and Mr. Hope illustrate that schools should be sexless spaces, distinct from the home or "somewhere else." Ms. Green and Ms. Grisham make explicit the line between the school and the home.

The statement exemplifies Althusser's argument that the modern ISA is upheld through a coupling of schools and families; it demonstrates that when the connection between the school and home is improper, teachers draw a clear line between them, pointing to spaces outside the school where inappropriate learning occurs.³⁵ Consequently, the responsibility for those children who are behaving improperly at school lies, at bottom, with home life; the home is to blame when children do not succeed. Problems with children in school lead teachers to look to the home as both the cause and their correction, and the culprits are largely low-income parents. Althusser's analysis provides a macro level perspective, which maintains in question what occurs on the ground between schools and homes to maintain the ISA.

To justify blaming the home for failing to teach their children proper conduct, teachers must first draw a distinct line between the home and the school. They look to behaviors that transgress norms of the school. Sexual expressions provide a clear window through which to categorize these behaviors. Teachers reported that students in their schools kiss, touch or speak with sexualized language, and each of them leaned on the notion that school is a public place wherein sexual behaviors are inappropriate. While such an understanding of these behaviors seems reasonable, the point I seek to make is not whether the teachers are right or wrong, but rather to show the ways that sexuality clarifies the perceived line between homes and schools. Yet, paradoxically, the category of sexuality also challenges this binary. That is, when children behave in particular ways in schools, the messages that schools impart to the children regarding this behavior will also logically be taken into the home and vice versa. That teachers frequently see and regulate sexual expressions *in* schools demonstrates that sexuality *is* a major issue *in* schools and is not simply something that happens or is learned in the home, thereby illustrating that these binaries are less stable than we think.

But binaries are useful constructs in the maintenance of the status quo because they allow for categorization, albeit through convenience, and encourage predictable behaviors. If binaries aid in creating and perpetuating categories which support hierarchies of power, then sexuality can help to deconstruct the myth of binaries by illuminating the power dynamics and relationships that inhere in our modern social assumptions, as can be seen in these teachers' words. Binaries are epistemologies, the ways through which we take for truth that we know that which we know. The western ontology of the "taxonomic gaze" (Stoler, 2006) renders natural knowledge based in categories, taxonomies, classifications (Foucault, 1990) that serve to differentiate and sort people into mostly static hierarchies of power. A social system relying upon hierarchies of difference – race, class, gender and sexuality (to name just a few) – depends on human categorization.

These epistemological projects support dualisms and are mainly concerned with matters of difference. These differences inform and direct the ongoing construction of

³⁵ Although Althusser's is a theory of class relations, the point that schools are machines of the ideological state has application for sexuality and gender analysis in education. See Connell's early work *Gender and Power* (1987) for discussion of structural analyses of gender and sexuality related to this topic.

social binaries and their consequences. The public/private binary is integral to the formation of the social system, and therefore, of national ideology. Historically, the issue of privacy in the United States has been inextricably linked to questions of freedom, and the importance of freedom to the nation cannot be understated (Gilliom, 2001). Fraser (1990) argues in her extension and critique of Habermas's (1991) ideas on the public that women and poor people in particular have been excluded from the public sphere. For Habermas, post 1800s the public sphere changed from an authoritarian public to one driven by rising rates of literacy and therefore became defined by a more democratic participation. Yet, Fraser maintains that even while the public sphere became more inclusive for educated white men, it continued to be built upon exclusions of all women and poor men of racialized ethnicities (p. 63). Fraser's work explains that poor people quite literally cannot afford middle class privacy or rights to self representation, and that discourse on poor people becomes the right of a new elite public. For women and the poor, the public and private spheres become conflated.³⁶ Due to constraints of space and surveillance (Coleman & McCahill, 2011; Lyon, 2003), for poor people, "home" does not offer the luxuries and privacy of middle and upper class homes. Teachers' conceptions, imagined and real, of the home lives of their lower-income students belies this contradiction of home as private space.

The public/private division permits homes to be constructed as simultaneously separate from, and linked, to schools, as is portrayed in Ms. Cassie's imaginings of her student's home life. Constructing the school/home relationship in this way allows for families to be blamed for social failures (separate), and it also permits school agents to enter into the home (linked). In a case regarding another male student, Ms. Cassie tells me that she was constantly in touch with this boy's mother and that they had, together, come up with a behavior modification strategy in which he was not allowed to hang out with his friends if he misbehaved in school.

I've had to talk to with his parents about this student really needs to learn boundaries. You know what gets taken away from him that's been completely effective? His mom just won't let him kick it with all the boys in the hood that are talking about 'your teacher's a fox.' And 'come over to my house and let's watch MTV all night.' Like they should not be watching 'Flavor of Love.' I should not hear third graders going 'Flavor Flav!' and you're looking at women with all their business hanging out and 20-year-old women macking on one 50-year-old dude who used to rap in '85. Like, it's just gross. (Interview, April 8, 2008)

Ms. Cassie's interpretation of her student's behavior hinges on the belief that his mislearnings occur in the home. Her statement that he "really needs to learn boundaries" is *apropos* in this analysis, as she explains that he does not know the boundaries between the public and private spheres. Ms. Cassie is disgusted by the fact that she hears third graders ventriloquating at school, the child's public realm, images they see on "R-rated" television. To remedy the problem, at Ms. Cassie's urging, she and the boy's mother create a disciplinary plan demonstrating reach of the arm of the public institutional sphere

³⁶ Consider the use of home visits by teachers and social workers to predominantly poor households. Moreover, living in a "small apartment" with multiple people creates a bodily proximity not experienced in more spacious (and expensive) accommodations, and the closeness of apartment units creates a loss of privacy. In this, and probably many other ways, privacy is "afforded."

into the private sphere. When Ms. Cassie's student is no longer allowed to fraternize with the boys in the neighborhood, her student behaves more appropriately for school. However, the relationship between his punishment and his behavior is not necessarily that the negative influences are gone; it is the effect of threat of punishment on behavior. Therefore, the punishment is ultimately effective in changing the child's behavior, but the influence can be assumed to remain available when he behaves within the boundaries set forth for him by the school/Ms. Cassie.

While Ms. Cassie implores her student to learn the boundaries between public and private life, she crosses into the private sphere of the home to shape conduct in the public sphere, thus confirming the intimate relation between the two spaces. In her study of Gabriela Mistral the creation of the schoolteacher in Chile and Mexico of the first half of the 20th century, Fiol-Matta (2002) points out that the "mother-teacher" became an integral state sponsored agent in the national project of "the management of sexuality for the health of the state" (p. 43). This mother-teacher provided the moral guidance through schooling and disciplining of the family through home visits to "increase the chances of controlling the unpredictable variable that was the mother" (p. 44). In the service of creating "healthy" citizens, the family becomes integral to state projects deployed through teachers wherein the home lives of children become suspect. The suspicious ones, however, are not usually white, middle-class children, but poor children of color. Racial lines, too, become significant in the management of sexuality. Interestingly, then, schools become an extension of family where teachers becoming stand-in daytime parents and refer to students as "their children" or "kids and their classrooms as a family. However, this school family is homologous with a particular family, a white, middle-class family.

'Not Better or Worse, just Different': Dominant Culture/Other

As I have been arguing, normalization occurs through processes that depend upon the distinction of categories. The skewing of these categorical lines, so far public/private and child/adult, bring into clarity demarcations of difference. When we attend to some of the comments that invoke culture as a demarcation of difference, we can see how the normalizing mission does not only take as its pretext sexuality, but it also operates on a cultural (read: race and class) level. As Ms. Lee put it, "[T]here might be differences in culture, and I wouldn't want to impose my beliefs on the kids or make parents upset and have them come in all angry" (Interview, March 14, 2008). In attempts to understand the sexual behaviors of the students at his school, Mr. Hope finds some conclusion in a cultural explanation:

It's like people have an idea of kids, you know, the whole like 'ew girls, ew boys' thing. But it's not really like that, actually. I mean, boys and girls in elementary school from what I've observed do generally congregate together and play games together that are a little different. And there's a lot of, there could be a lot of discussion about if that's...culturally...if they're raised that way. If it's culturally, you know, embedded in them as they grow up. (Interview, March 28, 2008)

What becomes coded in speech as "different culture" in most of the interviews is another way that teachers draw upon dichotomies to demonstrate a distinction from the norm. However, in an era of "color-blindness" (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Leonardo, 2007; Pollock,

2005), or “laissez faire racism” (Bobo & Smith, 1998) we have learned to talk about race without using the term “race” even as race continues to structure people’s realities and outcomes. Omi and Winant (1994) argue that we live in a post-Civil Rights “color-blind” society wherein race is not seen as having explanatory power for inequalities. Bonilla-Silva deems this “the new racism” and explains how color-blind racism is an extension of the culture of poverty framework which invokes cultural difference, often described in compassionate ways, as an explanation for inequalities that cohere along racial lines.

If we can, in fact, understand culture as a proxy for race, then these teachers’ explanations show that race and sexuality are linked in the minds of teachers. Teachers explained that they see cultural differences and sexual differences as linked. Ms. Lee comments:

This is tricky ground. This is someplace where I kind of check myself a lot. It seems like sexual behavior, or a courting behavior is condoned by families that I wouldn’t. But, it just is about different culture, different experience, different expectations. I don’t know. Not better or worse, just different. (Interview, March 14, 2008)

Ms. Lee articulates in clear terms that she is challenged in her attempts to account for cultural difference in their interpretations of behaviors. Ms. Lee grapples with her own responses to her mostly Latino students’ expressions of sexuality. She perceives the families of her students as facilitating a “courting behavior” where heterosexual boyfriend-girlfriend relationships are encouraged and the norm. While Ms. Lee explains that she does not agree with the practice, with a raised consciousness in cultural sensitivity, she also tries to be accommodating of it in her moral judgments. Her reflections tell us that sexuality and race are mutually constituted, as does Ms. Josie, a third grade teacher:

The culture of the families have different ideas about sex and sexuality, and I wouldn’t want to do anything in my classroom that would offend them or make them angry or uncomfortable. I think that there are already a lot of differences when they come to school, so this one would be a hard one for them (Interview, April 8, 2008)

The normalizing mission of the elementary school, as demonstrated through its treatment of child sexual subjects, is to create citizens that can be differentiated based on behaviors characterized as deviant or inappropriate. Multicultural education (see Banks, 1993) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) have become a requirement of public education in public schools in much of the Bay Area and other urban settings. Despite the fact that teacher hiring criteria target candidates who possess knowledge of these areas and demonstrate cultural sensitivity, Leonardo (2009) reminds us that public schools in the U.S. continue to support the racial ideology of whiteness. The norm of whiteness is situated within the institution of schooling, and it is by that standard that students are measured. The logics that facilitate success and failure are of a racial nature, evidenced in the hierarchy of achievement among the races (Berlak, 2009; Hunter & Bartee, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera & Wing, 2008).

I make this point to arrive at another related one. That is, if the politics of whiteness perpetuate differential outcomes of schooling, then racial difference is a salient

issue in education. Teachers are ever conscious of these differences, as shown by the statements of Ms. Lee, Mr. Hope, and Ms. Josie. Perceptions of racial difference explained through culture, they also show, are informed by perceived differences in sexuality. They thus shed light on how race and sexuality are articulating categories. I am arguing not solely for an analysis of race, but rather an interactional analysis wherein race and sexuality become of a piece, inextricable also from class. Deviations from sexual norms become articulated with racial and class difference. Whiteness, coded in these teachers' language of "difference" becomes the norm referenced standard not only for academic performance outcomes (Leonardo, 2007, 2009) but also for how sexuality becomes expressed and read in schools (Ferguson, 2002).

The educated citizen has a proper orientation to sexuality, and lives in line with the rules, unspoken and official, that govern the elementary school. These rules are the rules of the dominant, governing culture, that which Delpit (2006) calls the "culture of power." Important parts of the governing structure, the state institutions of elementary schools reflect systems of power. Through their normalizing projects, elementary schools work to maintain order and create healthy citizens, as has been seen in teachers' comments regarding appropriate public and private behaviors and ideas about racial difference. Returning to Ms. Cassie's statement that third graders should not be watching Flavor Flav and identifying her as a "fox," reminds us that another binary category underlies these teachers' views. Her concern with what a third grader should and should not be doing highlights the binary of child/adult that pronounced in the interviews.

'You're so Little. Your Body is Little. Your Brain is Little.': Child/Adult

The child/adult dichotomy rests on an assumption of linear development and difference. The categories adult and child are social constructs that serve political projects. The assumption that children are (and should be) essentially different from adults emerged, as Phillipe Aries (1962) established in his eminent work, *Centuries of Childhood*, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries as class divisions widened. He argued that childhood is a social construct. For him, Western conceptions of childhood are ideological creations that serve adult preoccupations.³⁷ Childhood, it then follows, is not a "natural," universally occurring phase of life; it is created, in context, toward political, economic, or social goals (Prout & James, 1997). In this way, "culture, morality, sociability is written on children in an unfolding process by adults (who are seen as fully 'developed,' made by nature) in institutions like family and school" (Ferguson, 2001, p. 80). And as adults, "we look to 'the Child' to give meaning and coherence to our lives, to tell us who we are and what we hold dear, to provide a bulwark against the encroaching tides of change..." (O'Connell Davidson, 2007, p. 10). Thus, adults depend on the maintenance of the separate category of child to give direction to our lives. As Weeks (1981) puts it:

The moral panic crystallises widespread fears and anxieties, and often deals with them not by seeking the real causes of the problems and conditions which they demonstrate but by displacing them on to 'Folk Devils' in an identified social

³⁷ Conceptually, childhood is perceived as a developmentally natural period of life distinct from adulthood. In this period, young people are supposed to be disabused of the corruptive burdens of adulthood.

group (often the ‘immoral’ or ‘degenerate’). Sexuality has had a peculiar centrality in such panics, and sexual ‘deviants’ have been omnipresent scapegoats. (p. 14)

These quotes taken together suggest that controlling, indeed inventing, sexuality in children equips adults with a semblance of control over social life. It thus becomes apparent that one of the main organizing principles in maintaining the line between child and adult is sexuality.

Maintaining a clear line between child and adult creates circumstances under which children whose behavior is perceived as adult gives rise to alarm. The following statement by Ms. Cassie, a second grade teacher at an urban public elementary school, for example, illuminates the challenges of thinking about children in relation to sexuality.

I know that as girls we’re taught to act a certain way, that there are ideas about what’s sexy that girls have to, or are supposed to, live up to. So, you know, I’m not going to let boys touch girls in ways that they’re not supposed to, and I’m not going to let girls let them. I tell girls straight up that they can’t act like they’re 19 when they’re eight. They can’t be all sexy and stuff running around the classroom.

(Interview, March 23, 2008)

Cassie’s comment suggests that an eight-year-old child who is acting as she is “supposed to” cannot exude the type of sexuality that she is describing. Such behavior is reserved for adults, a common perception of children with respect to sexuality. Transgressions of this sexual binary smack of danger, and thus require intervention in the eyes of teachers. Children who do demonstrate sexualized, “adultified” (Ferguson, 2001) behaviors are deemed in need of rescue or are dangerous.³⁸ Children are easily molded into stereotypes of victimized childhood because they are seen as passive and helpless.

According to O’Connell Davidson (2007), “The Child” as a social category is deployed to promote moral sentiments of altruism and care, which rely on ideals of children as in need of rescue and protection.³⁹ Yet, as she writes, “this fetishized view of ‘childhood’ as a state of dependency, innocence and vulnerability is difficult to sustain, especially when children themselves often refuse to cooperate with it” (p. 22). That children may sometimes demonstrate sexual knowledge, and this as an ever-present threat, belies the common conception of children as innocent and pure. In the last example, Ms. Cassie’s 8-year-old girl student requires intervention, an end to her sexualized self-representation, and Ms. Cassie provides rationale: “They just can’t.” Her matter-of-fact tone which belies a language of “law” and prohibition, illustrates that admonishment of girls’ self-representation as sexual should be commonsense, in line with the taboos of the day. In this statement she convinces both of us that she is correct. Indeed, Western schooling has always been concerned with proper presentation of the

³⁸ In no way do I intend to assert that intervention should not happen under circumstances in which children have been sexually abused or harmed sexually. However, as O’Connell Davidson (2007) and Weis and Fine (1993) point out, the mainstream way in which youth sexuality has been theorized is through a narrative of victimization. This project seeks to undermine the notion that this is the sole way in which sexuality and young people can be thought.

³⁹ See also P. Aries (1962), A. James & A. Prout (1997) for socio-historical accounts of child rescue narratives.

body, especially for girls,⁴⁰ as demonstrated in the ongoing debate over dress codes and uniforms. Her rationale relies upon the line that distinguishes between child/adult.

Ms. Cassie's statement evokes rescue narratives that have normalization as their aim. The rationale for these normalizing missions is also contingent on the reification of the child/adult binary made more transparent through issues that cohere around sexuality. Sexuality illuminates the difference between a "normal" child and one that may not be properly asexual. Children who are "too knowledgeable" at a certain age, like the child described by Ms. Cassie, possess an understanding of sex that is seen as too adult, or not keeping within the lines of childhood.

Therefore, a girl who is "running around the class all sexy" does not exemplify appropriate child behavior—"sexy" is reserved for adults—and this is the rationale behind Ms. Cassie's educational intervention. That the boy in her classroom learns inappropriate sexuality from watching adult TV provides Ms. Cassie with a rationale for why this child exhibits disruptive and inappropriate sexual behaviors—his source of knowledge corrupts the child/adult binary. Ms. Cassie continues:

It's really a double-sided thing because I remember being little and I remember being curious and, you know, sort of my sexual development are the things that I, you know, I had a boyfriend when I was little you know like all kind of different stuff like that so it, when I look at my kids and I see this innocence and I see how little they are and how little their bodies are, that's what grosses me out because I see them and I'm like, "You're so little. Your body is little. Your brain is little." That's what makes me sick. Like the idea of kids doing something sexual makes me sick because I just, the thought of you doing something when your body and your mind isn't ready is hurtful. I don't want them to experience anything damaging and inappropriate, you know, I think that things that you do with your body can really damage your soul and your mind if you're not ready for that, and that makes me nervous. (Interview, April 8, 2008)

Ms. Cassie's line of thinking reflects the ideology that provides rationale for civilizing missions that compel child rescue interventions. She is sickened by the idea of children displaying what she perceives as sexuality that is premature, and she also finds it "hurtful." She is nervous about the consequences of children engaging in certain behaviors. Her language evokes the tone of child rescue.

Child rescue interventions, which appear to be benevolent manifestations of humanitarian care, underscore the ideology that directs corrections in human behaviors. Charged with the task of correcting behaviors deemed deviant or inappropriate, teachers carry out the tasks of present day civilizing missions of child rescue interventions, which could more accurately called "normalizing missions" in the context of public schooling. These normalizing missions rely on ossified notions of difference, which are maintained

⁴⁰ As she speaks of the dynamics between boys and girls in her classroom, it is clear that Ms. Cassie sees girls as requiring protection and care from the victimization by pencil-wielding dangerous boys. Ferguson (2001) has written about this relationship—girls' proper conduct disciplines boys' untamed and potentially violent sexuality. She posits that femininity is constructed as "victimizable and requiring protection, as well sexualized" (43).

through ever-unstable binaries, such as that of adult/child. The “taxonomic state,” which Stoler (2006) uses to describe our ontology of categorization, equips us with ways of making natural differential treatment based on what we believe to be good and right for children, for society, to wit Ms. Cassie’s comment that premature sexual experiences could damage souls and minds.

Correcting behaviors seen by teachers as sexual establishes which acts are considered inappropriate, a process which Ms. Green explains in detail. The process allows the children committing the acts, and those watching, to construct a repertoire of behaviors that should or should not be performed or spoken, as the case may be. The act of disciplining, and especially of calling on the parents to participate in tandem with teachers, has as its core a normalizing mission. Therefore, children who do not exhibit adultified sexual behaviors are seen as well-adjusted, normal children not in need of rescue (Ferguson, 2001; O’Connell Davison, 2007). Yet, the very fact that so much intense labor goes into managing sexuality, reifying the lines between child and adult, and pushing perceived sexual manifestations into the private sphere demonstrate that human life is torqued by sexuality and its attendant categories.

Performing the Line: Good, Hetero Citizens

I have been arguing for an understanding of sexuality that is ideologically built upon notions of race and class. Moreover, I have proposed that a study of elementary level schooling can help shed light on this conceptualization. I have put forward an Althusserian approach to ideology as a basis for the theoretical framework although he promoted a class-based theory of ideology. His theory of ideology especially as it pertains to schools and families in maintaining the class-based ISA can also be used also to support a theory of the relationship between sexuality and the state. Imagined as benevolent and pure public spaces but informed by and instructing of “an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology” (Althusser, 1971, p. 156), elementary schools are normalizing institutions that labor to maintain a façade of neutrality. The idea that such a state project could be void of ideology seems a far reach; yet this is the work of ideology under advanced capitalism, which interpellates people into its power. As Leonardo (2009) states, ideology in the Marxist sense serves a function and has consequences (p. 109).

While I do not intend to develop a Marxist/Althusserian framing in this chapter, I do think this work on ideology proves useful in understanding how schools drive what Warner (1993) was first to name “heteronormativity,” which can generally be defined as “heterosexual culture’s exclusive ability to interpret itself as society” (xxi). It is summed up by Wittig (1992): “To live in society is to live in heterosexuality” (p. 40), and encapsulated in Rich’s (1980) concept “compulsory heterosexuality.” Heteronormative ideology, then, wears a mask of neutrality *because* it stands for society, for dominant culture, that which is right and true in reproduction and human relations. As they talk about and perform their perceived proper roles in elementary schools, and despite experiencing the torquing of contradicting ideals and beliefs, teachers represent themselves as neutral actors: heterosexual citizens. Ms. Lee, although she self-identifies as “queer” and “dyke”, has not let her students know of her sexual orientation.

Just as teachers constantly watch their students, teachers know that their students and the parents of their students are also watching them. They are public servants, and in the service of creating citizens they are themselves expected to model good behavior. As

Ms. Cassie asserts, “Teaching requires me to be at my best, requires me to lead by example and me to make good choices you know? There’s, you know, things come up in life and I’m like, ‘Well you know in the future you have to make good choices,’” (Interview, April 8, 2008). When traced through the words of teachers, “good behavior” signifies proper speech and bodily conduct, which ultimately creates imaginings of “the teacher” as an asexual, or at least a heterosexual, figure. These imaginings depend upon a set of beliefs that includes ideals of heterosexuality, chasteness and purity of teachers, and elementary schools as spaces devoid of sexuality. This is not to say that all teachers believe in such ideals; rather, these are socially held beliefs that adults negotiate and navigate as they work in schools. Following the speech and behavior choices teachers make to model good social practices illuminates how teachers perceive their influence on shaping sexuality through the use of language and their bodies.

In the following example, Mr. Hope tells a story about having witnessed second graders kissing one another at the end of lunch recess when the rest of the students were lining up to return to the classroom. Mr. Hope, a young, white fifth grade teacher who also coaches the soccer team and has a few years of teaching under his belt. His school’s racial demographic does not match that of the surrounding area; while the school is one of the more racially and socio-economically diverse ones in the district, the surrounding neighborhood is affluent and majority white. This is one of the few schools in the district where there is “a lot of buzz about the school in the white community and the African-American community” (Interview, March 28, 2008). The school attracts parents from across the city because of its reputation as an academically strong public school.

Mr. Hope’s reservations about sharing when I arrived at the school to interview him belied the willingness he showed in the initial email correspondence. It was not surprising then that we began the interview not with a question from me, but with him asking me what I was looking for. As I explained my project and objectives to him, he looked skeptical, and finally confessed that he might not have anything to share. I pushed on, meandering through my standard questions and examples, and eventually he began to recall incidents wherein sexuality became overt. He told me about an email that was circulated after a computer class where the students were learning how to write emails. A girl had written an email to another girl student that read, “I’d like to fuck _____.” Then he talked about another time when a boy adamantly wanted to go with one of his girl classmates to take out the recycling and how he suspected that if he had allowed it, rumors would have erupted and caused problems in the class.

Over the course of the hour-long interview, he repeated that his concern was not about what students might do, but with what parents might think or have to deal with if they found out; he did not want to overstep the boundaries of their domain of care. Here it becomes clear that Mr. Hope’s fears as well as other teachers who expressed feeling similarly threatened, are not only about sex but also about notions of impropriety and the related consequences. Such an expression reflects Althusser’s theory of ideology, which draws from Lacan’s (1956) notion of the imaginary (Althusser, 1971, p. 246). Although they diverged in many of their beliefs, for Althusser and Lacan the “real” was concealed through the symbolic, or language and signifiers. That is, reality precedes and resists representation and can only be re-created through a symbolic order. These fears expressed by elementary school teachers about impropriety are, insofar as they are not about the event itself but about consequences, imagined. Yet they are constitutive of sexuality as a set of discourses and practices that maintain ideology.

Mr. Hope's approach was to be pre-emptive by creating the conditions that would discourage students from engaging in certain activities, as in the recycling instance, or ignore certain behaviors, as he explains below:

I mean, I think that's natural two kids kissing because they like each other, and so I told their teacher, 'Um, I saw your students kissing over there. Just thought you might want to know.' Because I thought he should know, not because I wanted the kids to get in trouble. That kind of stuff is normal, but it's just not appropriate at school. That kind of behavior just doesn't belong in school. I mean, I wouldn't kiss my partner or hug for an extended period of time in the halls or in the classroom, so I figure students shouldn't either, right? I mean, I wouldn't want them to think that that's what we do in a public place. I want to model good behavior, and I don't think kissing and that kind of thing is good behavior for kids to see at schools. (Interview, March 28, 2008)

As I presented in the preceding chapter, Mr. Hope explained that he chose not to say anything to these students because he did not think that such behavior warranted the level of attention that he would bring to the matter if he had said something to them. With this excerpt, I want to call attention to some other aspects of his statement: issues of surveillance and policing; making fast judgments on what is natural and appropriate based on measurements of time and place, and what is not; imaginings of his own power of influence; and finally a judgment of what is supposed to happen at school. Mr. Hope's decision to tell the second graders' teacher illustrates, quite simply, the impulse to wipe schools clean of overt manifestations of sexuality, a process of purification. As he asserts, the desired result of telling the students' teacher is not punishment, but regulating and disciplining bodies on school grounds through collaborative efforts of teachers, presumably with the hope that the children will eventually learn to manage their own public, sexual displays. This regulation is coupled with how Mr. Hope, in an imagined situation, would conduct his own body by not kissing or hugging for an "extended period of time." His reasoning is clear; he understands that what he does with his body in school, or any public place, is read and judged by children. In addition, it is important that he perceives his own prudence as a barometer for appropriate conduct. Since he would not kiss or hug for an extended period of time in the public and professional spaces of the school, students should learn that this is unacceptable. His judgment of what constitutes "good" public behavior is, at least in theory, transmitted to the students at the school. It is significant here that Mr. Hope's use of "public" reveals that he perceives himself as a public figure, one whose choices have potentially profound effects. Yet as we see, this hyperregulation results in sexual irruption.

As Mr. Hope points out, teachers perform as models for children and such modeling has much to do with how they manage their own sexuality. Because teachers are representatives of the state, they must embody the type of citizen that the state desires. However, if they want their students to do the same, teachers believe that they are not supposed to exhibit sexuality. The self-regulation of their own bodies, usually acts of creating images of themselves as asexual, instructs their students. Yet, in their efforts to hide sexuality, they succeed in maintaining heterosexuality inasmuch as it is the default sexuality.

Heterosexuality as normative and acceptable sexuality is evident in the following statement by Ms. Lee, who responds to a question about a female student's repetitive sexualized behaviors.

I always feel like this over-protective person like an outsider, right? And then I know this isn't true, but I do have a voice in my head that says, 'Well, if they knew that you were a dyke, well, then it would even be worse because it would be, just like whatever you did, people would interpret that as trying to discourage females from being with males.' That's just a lot of baggage from stuff. Reading, experiences, and stuff like that. And I know that that's not true of me personally, but it does make me cautious, and it does make me double-check myself in terms of what do I say, or what does that sound like? How could it be interpreted? (Interview, March 14, 2008)

Both Ms. Lee and Mr. Hope present the situation of many teacher respondents—sexuality is consistently on their minds, informing how they manage their bodies, interact with their students, and how they interpret students' behaviors. They are cognizant of ways that, in their positions as teachers, sexuality facilitates the regulation of their own bodies and speech. That is, they negotiate their own possibilities and limitations through the prism of sexuality, which they weigh against the judgments of the parents and the state.

Walking the Line: Between Spheres

Okay I don't have a lot of experience with six year olds but thinking of myself as a six year old or, you know, just as a teacher my initial response is I for sure would want to let their families know what was going on because I think that, I think that having communication between parents and kids around sort of a sexual nature and things like that, I think its very, it goes family by family and its definitely not something that I would want to impose my own values on so it would be important to me that the parents and I were in good communication around how that should be dealt with but as far as from just a personal and teacher standpoint, I mean I would, it makes me nervous to think about that. (Ms. Cassie, Interview, April 8, 2008)

Public elementary school teachers walk the unmarked heteronormative line as they simultaneously straddle a major division between the school and the home. As actors in state institutions who instruct and care for children, they are inevitably intertwined in the lives of these children during the school day and beyond; their power in schools reaches into homes. Althusser explicates the significance of transgressing this perceived binary. For Althusser, schools are indoctrinating entities that carry out the dictates of the bourgeoisie, dictates that sustain them as the ruling class; they “constitute the dominant Ideological State Apparatus” (p. 157). But indoctrination is not carried out by schools alone; he asserts that it is not solely the school (although the school is the main ISA) but the “School/Family couple” that plays a “determinant part in the reproduction of the relations of production...” (p. 157). This determinant part is the inculcation of ideology, and it is best done through a conflation of the school (public) and home (private).

In other language, McKay writes that schools instruct us in “the skills, social norms and values that allow us to successfully integrate into society” (1998, p. ix). If this is so, then teachers are the unnamed actors in this statement and the conduits through which students learn ideology. They are actors who serve as bridges connecting the school and the family. Therefore, teachers’ actions and speech can provide insight into the social operation and proliferation of ideology, processes well captured through ethnographic methods that attend to micro-processes in local sites. Through interviews with teachers, we can also identify *which* skills, norms and values society privileges; they provide us a “way in” to exploring the processes through which society then goes about distinguishing who is permitted to inhabit these values. Mr. Hope’s assertion that he “wouldn’t want [kids] to think that [kissing] is what we do in a public place.” And in another interview Ms. Josie, a third grade teacher, asserts, “But they have to learn that in school, or in any public place, they can’t do that” (Interview, April 8, 2008). The interviews point to patterned responses when children demonstrate behavior that is considered inappropriate sexuality.⁴¹ Through these examples, the conflation of space, sexuality, and age illuminate processes through which teachers decide how to involve the children’s homes. The first thing most teachers say they do is speak with the child exhibiting the behavior, as demonstrated by Ms. Green’s instruction on appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for school:

Um, and I feel like in terms of what I feel like I’ve told kids, like, “This is inappropriate for school.” Um, I’ve told them kissing is inappropriate for school. Even though I’ll tell them there’s nothing wrong with it, it’s ok, but school is not the place for that. Because it’s not. I wouldn’t kiss, you know. (Interview, March 2, 2008)

There is then an informal conversation with parents to correct the undesired behaviors of the children, as noted in Mr. Hope’s interview:

First, I would talk to the student to try to figure out what was going on. And, you know, then I would let their parents know. And I would try to let their parents know in a non-punishment judgmental kind of way. (Interview, March 28, 2008)

When Ms. Green asserts, “Kissing and hugging and doing other things like that is for home or somewhere else. Not for school” (Interview, March 2, 2008), like the others, she avers that a perceived boundary exists between the public and private sphere for sexual expressions that should not be transgressed. Such an unspoken rule becomes official when they become punishable, like the “no kissing policy” that kindergarten teacher Ms. Grisham mandated in her classroom after two girls kissing each other became a distraction (Interview, March 14, 2008). As Ms. Josie points out, noticing and talking about sexual expressions by children require that teachers interact with parents (Interview, April 8, 2008).

⁴¹ Many teachers admitted that there were times when they did not say anything at all to that which they categorized as sexual behaviors. Usually these behaviors were classified as “natural” by the teachers and therefore not in need of correction. Yet, there were other times when teachers confessed that they turned away because they didn’t want to deal with the ramifications. See the chapter ‘Silence as Methodology.’

In another instance Ms. Cassie talks about a male student who was poking girls in the bottom with pencils and making “sexual sounds” during class time:

I’ve sat down with him personally and talked with him about, there’s obviously areas on peoples’ bodies that you’re not allowed to touch. I know that his mom and dad have had those conversations with him. I know that he lives in a small apartment with his mom and step-dad. And as a child I remember hearing my mom have sex. I mean, I think that especially as an eight- or nine-year-old, very familiar with what that sounds like. If you talk about low-income families and parents are always at work, and children are going home to kick it by themselves for a while, and they’re turning on that TV, or they’re listening to “Superman that Ho” on the radio, you are getting that exposure.
(Interview, March 8, 2008)

A comment like Ms. Cassie’s shows that teachers are eyes that see into the private sphere of the home, but because they cannot see everything that happens, they are left to interpret the remaining possibilities. Ms. Cassie perceives low-income, racialized families as exposed to inappropriate education. Because she has had experiences that may be similar to those of her low-income students, she can empathize with them, and it supports her assertion that poor children are improperly educated. But as a teacher, she is in the position to correct the perceived dysfunctions of the home through the power bestowed by the state.

Thus, sexuality not only operates as a mechanism for differentiating “appropriate” behaviors from those that are not, but it also defines which spaces and what time we should manifest sexuality. These distinctions are grounds for the public institution of schooling to enter into the private sphere of the family. In more severe cases, or with “probable cause,” teachers are mandated by law to report questionable behavior to Child Protective Services (CPS). Through this “line” as well, teachers become participants in the (perceived) private sphere of the home. Mandating reporting requires that teachers become the “eyes” of the state and as such do the state’s work in regulating the private sphere (i.e., “**supervision**”). This is a heavy, and very real, responsibility. While I do believe that “moral panics” are manufactured to incite fear around the threat of corrupting children through sexuality, real dangers exist and persist for children regarding sexual abuse and violence. As eyes of the state, teachers are interpellated into a system that sees public sexual behaviors in school as dangerous and thus give cause for alarm, becoming an extension of the state’s work in surveillance of poor families even when they do not desire. They are asked to make “moral” decisions on sexuality and interpret a system that furnishes them with little formal training. As a result, they straddle the perceived division that demarcates the public and private spheres. They are in a strategic position to regulate both the state and the domestic spheres, or they walk the delicate line between the state (public) and the home (private). In doing so, they must also negotiate the meanings of childhood and sexuality, two categories that rely upon enforcing binaries.

Conclusion

By attending to *how* sexuality is dynamically constituted, we may be able to better understand what Foucault (1990) meant by sexuality as “discursive power,” what Rubin

(1997) signified in stating that sexuality is a “vector of power,” and how Renold (2005) invites us to re-think sexuality and urges us to comprehend it as “everyday social practice.” Sexuality highlights cultural and political tensions that play out in our real and imagined worlds, and certainly in the context of schools. As McKay writes, “Because sexuality and the societal norms related to it carry such significance for the shape of society itself, sexuality has become the site of considerable social and moral conflict” (p. 20). Consequently, teachers are in a precarious and challenging position as thinking, critical actors in state institutions. They must constantly “walk the line” when dealing with the controversial issues that surround sexuality because it is not a socially accepted aspect of elementary school practices. I thus hope to clarify how sexuality is organized and produced through schools by observing how school actors become torqued when attempting to walk the imagined and enforced lines of sexuality.

But as Foucault (1990) reminds us, attempting to achieve “normal” is a laborious project that is “bound to fail” (p. 42). So whether or not educators agree that normalization should be a main purpose of schooling, the processes that ensure that some children come out recognizably “normal” while others are identified as deviant can be blamed neither on the children nor their parents. Normalizing missions require highly involved political and social labor, rooted in historical processes, and they have consequential outcomes. Therefore, to accept the role of schools as normalizing institutions, we must also accept them as institutions that serve to differentiate through dualisms and punitive tactics to identify deviance. This is not to say, however, that teachers are simply cogs in the machine of the state. They think, act, and are torqued by the structural/institutional demands of their positions with the state in negotiation with their own beliefs.

The aim of this chapter, and of my entire dissertation, is to reveal the organization and management of sexuality. As has been shown, there is little room for teachers to talk about sexuality as part of a sanctioned discourse, which means that discussions about sexuality are pushed to the peripheries of the school day, and into the private sphere. From the interview data presented in this chapter, of which there is more to follow, it is evident that teachers do not feel equipped to respond confidently to issues of sexuality in elementary schools. Thus, one of their main recourses is to push it out of school to the greatest extent possible. Moreover, because the concept of sexuality lacks concrete definition in common parlance, many of us often speak of sexuality without an agreed-upon understanding of its meaning. Ms. Green’s comment, for example, that the sexuality of children often remains as “wondering in the head” articulates the amorphous quality of sexuality as a constant struggle to comprehend and put words to it; sexuality’s tensions and challenges are evident in our vocabulary. For teachers who see the significance of sexuality in elementary school life, institutionally they cannot enter into a conversation without risk of confusion or punitive repercussions. As a result, they experience torque through their encounters with an institution that is quite punitive in its dealings with sexuality. Therefore, rendering visible some of these “lines of penetration” is necessary because only then will the silence and secrecy that now constrains our social condition be opened to (re)construct ways of being (and therefore knowing) that may cultivate more freedom. After all, lines show us how significant order is to our lives.

Chapter 6: Sanitizing Sex through Schooling: A Pedagogy of Pleasure

“That summer I got hired and told Mrs. Jimenez one thing about fifth grade that I thought was really important is talking about puberty.” Ms. Moon explained all this to me as we spoke after school in her classroom on a November afternoon. She had been recounting her student teaching days at Unity. She described the dynamics between boys and girls in the fourth grade class in which she had been working. She told me that there had been recurring incidences of boys touching girls “inappropriately” and a lot of talk about crushes. The next year she was hired to teach many of those same students as fifth graders.

I told Mrs. Jimenez, I was like, ‘Look, all the stuff that happened, if you want me to teach for fifth grade, I’m coming into the fifth grade and I want you to know that I want to teach puberty in fifth grade. It’s part of fifth grade in the health standards. I know it’s not a priority for most places, but considering the track record of these students...’ – I’d seen these students for two years [as a student teacher] – and the community that we work in, I think it’s really important for the students to get exposed to accurate information about what’s happening and the changes and how to deal with it. Mrs. Jimenez agreed, so that’s the year that we actually started the puberty classes. (Interview, November 13, 2010)

She continued speaking, revealing that sex education, although part of the state mandated curriculum, is infrequently taught. Teachers at other schools within the same district confirmed this fact. One school no longer taught sex education because the teacher who taught it to the entire fifth grade of her own initiative left the school, and the teachers who remained on the site were reticent to teach it. At Unity, the fifth grade teachers invite an outside agency to teach a four-day curriculum, which they call “puberty education” and not “sex education.” I will return to this distinction later in the chapter.

Not surprisingly, the district is inconsistent about implementing sex education at the elementary school level. Given the massive budget cuts the district has faced over the past few years, the administrative problems and controversies⁴², attention in public media for its apparently insufferable disorganization and corruption, it is easy to see why sex education in the elementary schools would not be a major concern. Nor is it likely that the district would want to be in the limelight, yet again, for a subject so politically volatile. Clearly, they would be treading on “embattled” terrain (Irvine, 2002; Fields, 2007), as shown through the ongoing national conflicts regarding sex education. One example of such a conflict occurred shortly following the focused media attention to the suicides of children who had been victims of sexual bullying.⁴³ Although it is largely a “silenced dialogue” (Fine & Weis, 1993) within elementary schools, debates surrounding sex education percolate on both local and national levels, as presented through the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network and Focus on the Family debates.

⁴² To name the specific controversies would disclose the district’s name.

⁴³ Jaheem Herrera, Carl Walker-Hoover, Eric Mohat, Asher Brown, Seth Walsh, Justin Aaberg, and Billy Lucas are a few of the young people who have committed suicide over sexuality related bullying by peers. In many of these cases, schools are blamed for allowing the bullying to continue.

The sex education debate and its history have been well researched, documented, and analyzed, attesting to its long-standing relevance to and significance in political life. Maurice Bigelow's 1916 book, *Sex-Education*, made the case for sex and sexuality education as a necessary scientific contribution to the social hygiene movement.⁴⁴ Like the sexologists of that era, Bigelow heralded science as truth and believed that by turning sex into a science, we would come closer to understanding ourselves as a society and thus closer to reaching "man's" potential. Bigelow argued that compulsory education on sex and sexuality would help achieve what the sexologists believed was a "rational understanding of our true sexual nature" (Weeks, 1985, p. 72). But as Weeks points out, "[T]he findings of sex research and theorizing have been allowable when they have been compatible with an acceptable discourse, usually that of medicine" (1985, p. 78). The sex education debates show that even the sexologists could not contain sex under the aegis of science, depoliticized in its camouflage of truth. On the contrary, as Foucault (1990) tells us, sexuality is political, a socially constructed ensemble of power that regulates populations based on systems of differentiation and categorization. Medical science is the dominant official discourse on sexuality.

Debates on how to go about educating young people on sex reveal just how high the stakes are. Irvine (2002) describes the shrill emotions expressed over how (or not) youth should be taught about sex. She reminds us, "Sex education battles are not incidental to the political regulation of sexuality. They are central" (p. xx). Sex is political, and the science of sex has not left the stage of how we come to know sexuality. Far from it. But making sex into a science allows for the political edge to fall away, to soften. It is through a veneer of science that sex can be rendered a pedagogy and brought more safely into elementary schools. The science of sexuality glosses over racial, class, cultural, and embodied differences to teach, objectively it appears, what a fifth grader should know about sex. For a fifth grader, adults emphasize protection over pleasure.

The facade of scientific objectivity masks the politics at work in the official sex education curriculum. This is not to say, however, that science is apolitical. As many have asserted and demonstrated, school curricula are tightly enmeshed with politics (Apple, 2004; Harding & O'Barr, 1987; Martin, 2000; Ross, 2000; Weis et al., 2006). As I discussed in Chapter 4, schools are institutions of the state, so any information they disseminate must be sanctioned by the government. Given the debates on sex education and the constant reminders that issues arising around sex and schools will bring a locale under intense attention, the very fact that Unity Elementary School offers sex education at all is, on some level, a potentially radical act. At first glance, the curriculum that Unity provides with its focus on physiological and anatomical parts and systems seems objective, and therefore relatively safe. However, as Fausto-Sterling (2000) and others (Alexander, 1994; Birke, 1999; Bordo, 2004; Laqueur, 1992; Martin, 2001) have asserted, the body is highly political territory. Bodies are subject to social and political pressures in ways similar to other cultural productions such as art, literature, and media. Ideas about bodies are always in flux. Therefore, analysis of what and how we learn about bodies illuminates ideologies, particularly the medicalization of the body.

With its focus on physiology, the sex education curriculum offered by Unity provides a context for better understanding 1) the processes by which a sex education

curriculum is implemented in an urban elementary school, and 2) the kinds of knowledge about sexuality that is transmitted through this particular curriculum. Through this exploration, it becomes clear that there is something to learn about the absence of pleasure from the “official” curriculum of sex education as it is taught to elementary school age children. While the politics of pleasure, or *eros*, has been researched and theorized in prior studies (see hooks, 1994; Weis & Fine, 1993), in this chapter I show how pleasure as experienced through the body becomes evacuated from the sex education curriculum for children. In the classroom, “feeling good” becomes taboo, illustrated by the fact that those words were not once uttered throughout the entire week of puberty education, which I discuss in this chapter. The stakes are high when adults talk to children about pleasure. Take, for example, the sex education curriculum introduced in kindergarten classes in 2011 in Basel, Switzerland. The “sex box”, a kit that comes with the curriculum includes a vagina made of fabric and wooden and fabric penises (Figure 1 and Figure 2). These items are used to show the mechanics of sexual intercourse, and explanations of pleasure are part of the spoken curriculum. The pedagogic rationale for including this information in sex education for children is, according to Basel education minister Christopher Eymann, that children should learn early on “that sexuality is something natural. Without forcing anything upon them or taking anything away from their parents” (White, 2011).⁴⁵ Their other main concern was to teach children how to differentiate between “good” touch and “bad” touch. Yet the response to the curriculum in Europe and in the United States demonstrated that many people cannot fathom such small children learning about physical, erotic pleasure.



Figures 1 & 2: In August 2011 Kindergarten classes in Basel, Switzerland received sex education kits that included models of genitalia in fabric and wood.

With these tensions at the root of this chapter, I explore the discourse of sex education in two ways. First, I present elementary school teachers’ verbalized perspectives on sex education in their schools. Second, I focus on the actual language used in the sex education curriculum presented at Unity. I begin by examining the creation of a narrative of necessity for sex education at Unity Elementary School and how

⁴⁵ Like LifeSiteNews, from what I could tell, much of the reporting on the Swiss “sex box” appeared in online journals of Christian-based faith.

race, class, and culture are used discursively to construct an argument in favor of elementary school level sex education. I then analyze the explicit and implicit politics in calling “puberty education” what is more often referred to as “sex education.” Naming the curriculum “puberty education” opens up a certain kind of learning trajectory, one that is based firmly in science, and given the historic dichotomy, cleanses physical, physiological, sexual pleasure.⁴⁶ I focus the following section on the creation of the science/pleasure dichotomy. Finally, I show how the instructor-led classroom discussion reinforces a public/private dualism that is aligned with the science/pleasure binary. In this equation, science becomes an appropriate public discourse while pleasure remains private.

Constructing a Narrative of Need for Sex Education

I asked Mr. Hope, a fifth grade teacher at Twain Elementary School, if the teachers offered sex education at his elementary school. This school, across the city and up the hill from Unity, served a demographic different from the homogenous Latino one at Unity. Upon entering Twain, although the faces of the students of the students of color reflected what would often be associated with “urban” schooling, the grounds of the school itself had an appeal distinct from that of Unity. First, located on a hill, it furnished a view of the existing area that would rival any designated lookout point. Greenery and flowers adorned the school grounds, and the windows were devoid of any bars or gates. After school hours, children in the after-school program could be seen sitting around the picnic tables *outside* of the school. One would not see this at Unity where children were kept within the confines of the school walls as much as possible. I thought that a school as organized as Mr. Hope’s would certainly offer sex education. I was (mostly) wrong. According to him, in the past one of the fifth grade teachers volunteered to teach the curriculum. As Ms. Moon explained, puberty education is part of the fifth grade California content standards. Mr. Hope told me that in the past one of the fifth grade teachers who no longer taught at the school used to coordinate and implement the sex education curriculum. She left a few years ago but had returned two years ago to teach the short course again. Mr. Hope explained:

Beth Andrews was a fifth grade teacher for years here; she used to teach sex ed and she’s supposed to come and teach my kids sex ed for a week, not all day but for a certain time a day or week because the kids just want it and that she’s really good at it and used to do a good job of it. And so I need to keep in touch with her about that. It was going to be next week and it’s still good but we’d have to get the permissions tomorrow (Interview, March 2008.)

Mr. Hope’s rationale for providing sex education for the students is that they want it. Interestingly, at the outset of our interview that stretched just beyond an hour, he told me that he was concerned about the topic and whether or not he would have anything to

⁴⁶ In this chapter, I delineate sexual pleasure from the pleasure of fun or laughter. When I refer to “erotic” pleasure, I am consciously connoting a sexual bodily pleasure. I do, however, realize that some pleasures such as giggling, running through the playground, or subverting a moment by making fun of it could be defined as erotic pleasure.

share regarding his students and sexuality. He revealed that he had not run into too many incidents that he would characterize as “sexual” in his tenure as a fifth grade teacher, that his students seemed pretty “normal,” and that he did not think any of their note passing or crushes were inappropriate. For this reason, it is not surprising that his reason for providing sex education to the students would be because “the kids just want it” while seeming fairly lax about its implementation.

In contrast, Ms. Moon’s reasoning for bringing in sex education is that the Unity students *need* it. As she elucidates, “Considering the community that we work in, I think it’s really important for the students to get exposed to accurate information about what’s happening and the changes and how to deal with it.” As Ms. Moon was the teacher to take initiative to bring a sex education curriculum to the school, it is her narrative that makes the difference between a school where sex education was once absent and one where it is provided. As a student teacher at Unity, Ms. Moon had observed that the fourth grade class she shared with the mentor teacher was “pretty rambunctious.” The following year she was again a student teacher in the fifth grade class, so many of the students that she had taught in the fourth grade were with her once again. “They had a lot of issues in terms of wanting to touch each other,” she recalled. I asked her to elaborate. “Like poke girls in the boobs or something...boys would try to grab girls. There was a lot of drama that year,” she responded. Her hypothesis that Unity students needed sex education was proven true when, at the end of one of the one-hour workshops, the fifth graders were given time to write questions anonymously to the instructor on small pieces of paper. One of the questions asked, “What if somebody is touching you and you don’t like it but you are afraid to tell somebody?” The instructor responded that if someone was touching another person in an uncomfortable way, it was not okay and the student shouldn’t be afraid to tell someone. She then extended an invitation to any student to talk to her in the hallway after class. The student who had written the question went to talk to her, and it turned out that her uncle had been touching her chest and buttocks. After Ms. Moon had discussed this incident with the sex education instructor, she brought it to the attention of Ms. Jimenez who called a meeting with the mother of the girl who had written the question. According to Ms. Moon, the mother was shocked and very upset.

Before the family had been asked to talk to the teachers and principal, Ms. Moon had discussed the situation with a teacher who had been at Unity for many years. Ms. Moon recalled that the teacher had explained, “I’m really sorry, but I hate to tell you that’s not going to be the only time you’re going to have to deal with this. It’s a lot more common than you think and it’s good that she brought it up and came forward with it.” When she recalled this story, Ms. Moon had also relayed to me that she believed that the students at Unity were likely exposed to more sexual abuse than children from middle-class backgrounds. Her rationale for inviting Planned Parenthood into the school, then, was to help abate these problems before they occurred by providing students, and especially girl students, with the resources and tools needed to confront such issues

Compelled by the idea that sex education can protect against the kind of harm endured by her student, Ms. Moon invited Planned Parenthood into the school. The structure of the curriculum allowed for the girl to bring her problem to the attention of adults who could act on her behalf. Without a doubt, this is a positive effect of providing this sex education resource. Yet, as Fields (2008) points out, sex education curriculum is most often provided as a means for protection from social and familial dangers that are

thought to be lurking outside of schools. In the case of Unity, it is also this apparent threat that motivates the curriculum. Clearly, the need is there, but what might be compromised in her approach? And what are the assumptions that underlie a rationale like Ms. Moon's?

Naming Puberty Education

The names we give to social life reveal underlying motivations. For example, Unity calls its sex education unit "Puberty Education," a clear demarcation from sex or sexuality education. To call this curricular unit "puberty education" signifies a focus on the body and its changes in young life. It thereby shifts attention away from sex or sexuality, dodging potentially dangerous terrain of bringing sex into elementary schools, something that could easily be interpreted as inappropriate and unacceptable. But as Bigelow (1936) shows, debates about whether or not the terms "sex" and "sexuality" should be employed to talk about the thing itself have existed for (at least) the last century. He writes, "I believe that those interested in the search for solutions of the vital problems of sex should quietly but systematically work to include the words "sex" and "sexual" in the dignified and scientific vocabulary needed by all people to express the newer and nobler interpretations of the relationships between men and women" (p. 7).

The decision to call the course "puberty education" cannot be understood outside of a politics of language. It struck me that whenever I referred to the unit as sex education, Ms. Laura would respond by calling it "Puberty Education." She did not do this to correct me necessarily, but I took note of her insistence on referring to it in this terminology. In the minds of the teachers, and I do suspect in the intentions of Planned Parenthood as well, there is a distinction between the two. An emphasis on puberty also inadvertently refers to a temporal moment rather than a preparation for life. That is, puberty education is less about sexuality than it is about a period to get passed and move beyond, a transitional moment. Ms. Moon provided the following insight into introduction of puberty education at Unity:

We started three years ago, and we've gone through three cycles. We contacted Planned Parenthood, and it turns out they do the workshops for free. So they'll come in for a course of four days, four one-hour workshops. People are like, 'So you're doing sex ed in fifth grade now?' I was like sex ed is actually in middle school, fifth grade is puberty, like getting your period and what it's like to grow hair in different places and just voice changing. It's not as serious as you think it is. I mean, they do bring up a lot of questions about it, but the basic curriculum is just body changes, which is appropriate for their age (Interview, November, 2010.)

Ms. Moon explains that in the fifth grade, sex is not part of the curriculum that Planned Parenthood provides. With its public political history of abortion rights and comprehensive sex education advocacy, Planned Parenthood has become associated with overt progressive politics on sexuality. She made it a point to differentiate between the biological, physiological, developmental focus of puberty education and the more social, controversial, and "serious" aspect of what is associated with sex education. The focus of

puberty education on developmental anatomy and medical discourse is clearly stated within the first few minutes of the puberty education instructor, Ms. Elizabeth's, interaction with the class.

Ms. Elizabeth: Hey everyone! So my name is Ms. Elizabeth, and I work for a clinic. Does anyone know what a clinic is? What's the definition for a clinic? [She writes her name on the whiteboard and then points to a boy a boy who is raising his hand.] Yes?

Jose: Like a hospital?

Ms. Elizabeth: Yeah, it's like a hospital. Right. Yes?

Gerardo: Where you can talk to a doctor?

Ms. Elizabeth: Yep, so folks can go and talk to a doctor. You can also get medicine. And we also have a clinic where people can get information. And I work for the education department where you can get information. My job is to go to schools and make sure that people have information about their bodies and about their health. And so we're going to be talking about that stuff. But I know you guys have already talked about body systems, right? What kinds of systems have you talked about?

With the facilitation of Ms. Elizabeth, the class tells her that they have studied the digestive system and the respiratory system. She explains to them that they are going to "learn a little more about different body parts, and specifically what those different body parts have to do with this word..." She writes on the white board:

puberty

as she says it aloud, continuing:

Ms. Elizabeth: What's that word? Does anyone know what the definition of 'puberty' is?

Gerardo: When your body changes?

Ms. Elizabeth: Ok, it's when your body changes. All right...and how does the body change?

Karen: You're getting older?

Ms. Elizabeth: All right, yes, so you're getting older, your body's changing. What ages do these changes start? At what age?

A student guesses “ten,” and Ms. Elizabeth agrees, and she goes on to explain that for some people bodies start to change at ten years old, but for others the changes might begin sooner or later depending on the person. I include this excerpt because it is the introduction to the entire curriculum, framing the content for the next four days. It is significant that the first points Ms. Elizabeth makes is to tell the students that they will be learning about developmental changes in the body: knowledge based in medical science.

As discussed, the term “puberty” denotes biological processes, and unlike the words “sex” or “sexuality,” it does not conjure up an image of the erotic. Moreover, that most of the students at Unity are native Spanish speakers and learned English at some point during their time in elementary school, puberty is likely a brand new word to them, one for which they have not yet developed schema. Thus, teaching about “puberty” as opposed to “sex” allows for instruction to begin from a clean slate. While “sex” certainly possesses a biological, medicalized aspect (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Laqueur, 1990), for children it is likely that they associate sex with something taboo and titillating before they think of science. Using the word “puberty” provides assurance that the focus of the curriculum will not be misunderstood. And given the media’s critical attention to sex education, calling the curriculum “puberty education” is a political act as much as it is diversionary, directing attention to the science of the body rather than pleasure.

The Politics of Science and Pleasure

The politics of pleasure reverberated throughout the Clinton Administration. At the December 1994 United Nations World AIDS Day Jocelyn Elders, the first African American and second female Surgeon General of the United States, was asked whether masturbation might be taught as a way to prevent AIDS. She responded, “Masturbation is something that is part of human sexuality and is part of something that perhaps should be taught.” She was met with fierce reaction. A week following, in a move saturated with irony given his subsequent sex scandal, President Clinton fired her for “values contrary to the administration.” At a conference sponsored by the National Sexuality Resource Center and the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality that met just over a decade later, she remarked on sexual health, “It’s about procreation, yes. But it’s about pleasure. And it’s about protection. And we need to make sure that people are aware of all three, and that we know how to do those things” (NSRC press release, 11/2/2006). The idea that pleasure should be an integral part of teaching young people about sexuality pushed the envelope for many Americans.

For many, elementary school children learning a curriculum of pleasure in school threatens even more sharply the ideal of asexuality in childhood. To combat this, the children in Ms. Moon’s class are offered a sex education that is based almost entirely in science. Only ten minutes into the first puberty education lesson, Ms. Elizabeth was already talking about reproduction, explaining that boys make sperm, and girls make eggs, and when they come together, a woman can become pregnant and have a baby (i.e., removes pleasure from the picture):

That’s one of the changes that happens to people when they go through puberty, is that their bodies are starting to make these two new things, these two new cells. And so that might make some changes for folks, too. For boys it means that their

bodies are practicing making sperm, and they might have wet dreams, which means that they're asleep and this fluid – sperm – comes out when they're asleep.

Writing about middle school sex education lessons, Fields (2007) comments, “In a time-honored tradition, public school sex education teachers divorced discussions of puberty and bodies from discussions of sexual activity. The focus, remaining on the consequences of sexual behavior, avoided discussions of the behavior itself and evaded all mention of the physiological experiences of pleasure” (p. 114). The imagined relationship between science and pleasure is one of mutual exclusivity; by emphasizing science in sex education, the potential of bodily pleasure is expurgated, and consequently so is possible corruption and controversy. Yet, by proceeding along this spectrum, pleasure remains eternally titillating, just out of reach: taboo. Moreover, it continues to be perceived as threatening to disrupt the lives of young people. As long as pleasure is understood as taboo, it will continue to hold a sexual charge.

Scientific explanations of sex wield power in elementary school classrooms, as shown in the following instance. About a week had passed since the graffiti in the hall incident described in Chapter 4, and on this day in mid February, Ms. Lee introduced a new research project in the morning meeting. Needing to run downstairs to retrieve the class set of computers, she left me in charge of facilitating the meeting, instructing the students on the question of the day: What animal are you interested in doing an informational report on? With Ms. Lee gone, I began keeping a written list of the animals on which the students wanted to write their reports. The list included mostly commonly researched animals: leopards, cheetahs, dolphins, koalas, and tigers. When Ms. Lee returned, she perused the list and intervened, “These animals are all very interesting, but a lot is already known about them. Maybe you should think about other kinds of animals you could research, animals that might be more interesting because not so much is known about them.” She continued, telling them that they would be responsible for finding information on their animal’s habitat, diet, and physical characteristics. She paused, and then went on, “Reproduction. I might as well just say it. Animals, when they reproduce, we call it mating. And some animals have very interesting ways of mating.” Partway through Ms. Lee’s explanation, I heard a few kids quietly say, “Ewww,” but she kept going, either not hearing how the students had responded or ignoring them. She calmly described how the anglerfish has an interesting way of finding a mate⁴⁷, and the students’ faces revealed expressions of rapt attention.

Later Ms. Lee and I talked about this lesson. She told me that she was proud of herself for how she discussed the reproductive process in a “matter-of-fact” way. She asked, “I wonder why they feel that they have to pretend to be grossed out?” I shrugged, and she followed, “I think it’s because they feel they have no choice in it. They can’t make a decision about it for themselves,” reasoning that if the students are taught about sexuality from a scientific perspective, then they will be able to see that sex, or reproduction in this case, is not something dirty. They will have the facts, and they will have language to talk about sex. Equipped with language, they will be able to see it as part of a process of life, and they will be able to develop an informed perspective on it. As it stands, in the fourth grade, the power to talk about sex and therefore the ability to

⁴⁷ Just after birth, the male anglerfish finds a female and bites her, attaching to her by digesting her skin. He then releases sperm into her as he atrophies, ultimately disappearing until only his testes remain.

ask questions and understand it in an analytical way is not afforded to children. From Ms. Lee's perspective, providing students with a scientific explanation is a way to provide them with the power to think and make decisions for themselves.

Given the interest observed during her description of the angler fish, this is likely true. However, it begs the question of teaching about pleasure and the power that may lie therein. In a potentially controversial gesture, Allen (2005) argues in the conclusion of her book *Sexual Subjects* that pleasure should be an integral part of the sex education curriculum:

Leaving out the sensual body in sexuality education and only portraying a de-eroticised and medical physiology denies young people information about an essential component of sexuality. Including information in sexuality education about the potential pleasures of embodied sexual experience should be young people's right. Without this information about what feels pleasurable and what doesn't, young people and especially young women, have minimal knowledge upon which to base their decisions about engaging in sexual activity. [T]here may be some additional value in sexuality education promoting sexual embodiment in which young people are taught to value the sensual experience of their bodies rather than to ignore it. To do this however requires that they have access to information which acknowledges their bodies as sensuous and potentially pleasure-feeling (pp. 171-2).

Allen's subjects are teenagers, and there are certainly differences between the understanding of sexuality of teenagers and that of children. Yet, it is interesting how her analysis may apply to those ten-years-old and younger. Much of the unofficial teaching of sexuality in elementary schools is focused on instructing children how to demonstrate proper conduct that erases bodily pleasure. As the children grow older, sexualized behaviors disappear from school grounds. Allen discusses how medicalized physiology becomes the proper way of knowing sexuality in a high school in New Zealand. Across the country, at Unity Elementary, in much the same way, knowledge of physiological pleasures becomes trumped by scientific knowledge. Ms. Lee's pride in explaining the mating processes of animals as well as the puberty education focus on bodily processes reveals this to be true. Teachers instruct children on how to appropriately use their bodies, to hide pleasure-inducing activities, and *if* they talk about sex, to talk about it in a scientific manner. This is the focus of the next section.

Development and Disappearance of Pleasure

In this section, I provide examples of how we maintain silence on sexuality, with particular attention to the silencing of pleasure in sexuality curriculum through a discourse that emphasizes medical science as the proper language for sexuality. Foucault (1990) wrote about this, naming the knowledge system of sexuality "scientia sexualis," or the science of sex. This was in contrast to "ars erotica," or erotic art. In other times and places, he argued, sex as an object of knowledge was dealt with in terms of sensual pleasures. The medicalization of sexuality, on the other hand, is part of making sex into science, in effect silencing the discourses of pleasure. In other parts of my study, I have

explored how silence operates in elementary school through the coding of language, by ignoring comments, explaining to children that sexuality is a topic for home, not for school, and through discipline and punishments with rewards for those who are read as innocent. Here I focus on the imposition of silence on pleasure, or to be more exact, the silencing of a discourse of pleasure.

When I sat down with Mr. Hope, a fifth grade teacher, one spring day after school to talk with me about his thoughts on sexuality and elementary level schooling, he was ready to explain:

Kindergartners do all kinds of crazy things. As they get older, society and their families train them about social norms and kindergartners, first graders, second graders even maybe – as you go younger they are more and more impulsive and they're less and less restrained. They are less and less conditioned and less and less inhibited, and I think that just kind of happens as you go younger and younger. And, I mean, that's just the way it is. I'm not sure whether it's a good or a bad thing. That's just the way it is. (Interview, March 8, 2008.)

The effort that goes into teaching children that certain behaviors are inappropriate for school is realized in the diminishing rates at which children display these behaviors as they age. Proper conduct, however, is learned. Students must internalize teachers' constant instruction regarding which behaviors are deemed inappropriate for school. Similar to many other teachers, in response to my question about how to handle a behavior such as kissing in school, Ms. Grisham points out:

There is quite a lot of touching and kissing, not usually lip kissing, but more affectionate cheek kissing and whatever. And so what I have seen among kids in kindergarten is I have seen boys be super affectionate with each other, hug, kiss on the cheek. And I don't comment – it's just part of how they interact. I definitely know that by third grade that never happens. How I have responded is I have said to the student, 'Kissing is for home, not for school. It's not bad, but it's something we do at home, and we are not to kiss at school.'

She also described an incident where she overheard one of her kindergarten students say something about pretending to have sex.

I pulled her aside and said, 'Do you know what that means?' And she didn't answer. And I said, 'Do you want to ask me any questions about it?' And she said, 'No.' And I said, 'Okay, well, sex is something for home. It's not for school.' (Interview, March 23, 2008.)

I make these points again to demonstrate that learning conduct of the physical body is not something that happens only in high school or middle school. Elementary schools are significant sites for regulating pleasure. Take the following interview excerpt demonstrates this:

Ms. Grisham: I am struggling this year. I have a whole bunch of kids who sit on the rug and pull their shirt up just like to stimulate themselves or have something to do because they're having a hard time paying attention, and I don't want them to be doing that, either.

EB: Is this the first time you've had that?

Ms. Grisham: But I don't punish them for that.

EB: Yeah.

Ms. Grisham: It's the first time I have had it as like a trend –

EB: Okay.

Ms. Grisham: -- among quite a few kids.

EB: Yeah. So what do you say to them?

Ms. Grisham: Put your shirt down.

EB: No reason. No –

Ms. Grisham: But it's been – and then I have some kids who are testing. I mean they will look right at me and do it.

(Interview, March 23, 2008.)

In this example, Ms. Grisham deals with this spat of shirt lifting by her kindergartners. As she describes, the students are “stimulating” themselves because they need something to do. In this sense, pleasure does not necessarily take on an erotic, or sexual, form. It fills the time. However, the children continue to lift up their shirts, and do so collectively and sometimes rebelliously. Such behavior shows that they have internalized the message that this conduct is inappropriate in Ms. Grisham's classroom, yet they find something appealing about doing it. In Ms. Grisham's estimation, they do this to stimulate themselves. Such logic reveals that, at least in her eyes, there is pleasure in this act; it is at least more pleasurable for them than the official curriculum of the moment.

Yet, pedagogically Ms. Grisham finds it unsound and does not want them to lift their shirts. Her rationale, she soon tells me, “There is always in my mind, you know, like a parent could walk in at any time and what are they going to think if there is a little girl sitting there with her shirt up? And so there is a certain amount of self protection I need to have.” The pressure to evacuate what might be construed as sexualized bodily pleasure from the classroom emerges from fear of other people's judgments. After all, such a behavior is perceived as inappropriate because it is imbued with a kind of physical pleasure that is at odds with the official curriculum that is based on a mind/body binary wherein the former is favored. In schools, the body becomes a barrier for learning – it

must be disciplined through repetitive conduct in the classroom, during recess the excesses of energy must be drained so that the mind can function properly. Indeed the body is repressed through exercise of the mind.

The body becomes a site of contestation when reference to bodies is done in a way that may be perceived as bawdy. Ms. Grisham recalls one boy student who screamed the word “vagina” in class on a couple of occasions. This boy would also repeat, “My boobs are aching” at random times, and in another incident a student’s mother came to ask Ms. Grisham to change her son’s seat because her son had complained that the same boy had “told him something about spiders crawling up the vagina.” Ms. Grisham talked to the boy about his language use, and she eventually called in the boy’s parents for a conference, where the parents argued about how much television they should allow him to watch. Through these disciplining measures, the adults succeeded in teaching the boy about the kind of behavior that was acceptable. At least this is what the adults hoped he would learn. In kindergarten Ms. Grisham’s students learn about sexuality—the contours of what is appropriate and inappropriate comportment and language. The mind, in addition to the body, is then disciplined. There are even proper ways of talking about bodies that must be learned.

Five years after kindergarten, in the fifth grade, if they are presented the curriculum, children will learn through an official venue what happens to their bodies during puberty. If their curriculum is like the one learned by the fifth graders at Unity, they will be given list upon list of scientific terminology meant to replace slang. They will be asked to say the words without laughing, in a matter-of-fact manner. Any pleasure that they may derive from such a lesson will be focused on intellectual accumulation. Fields (2007) writes:

Claims to science and neutrality help to defuse community concerns about the possibility that discussions of bodies, puberty, and sexuality threaten to corrupt young people. These depictions contribute to a classroom curriculum that makes several assertions: there are facts about sexuality; the teachers’ role is to communicate those facts; and it is students’ responsibility to learn the facts. (p. 123)

Such a formula is manifest throughout the puberty education curriculum at Unity, and the following example illustrates how this happens. When Ms. Elizabeth asked the class to tell her words that mean “penis,” she received a few.

Ms. Elizabeth: Ok, and then over here, this front part, what is this called? [She points to the groin area.]

Memo: The penis? [Laughter from whole class.]

Ms. Elizabeth: The penis! Right? Can everyone say ‘penis?’

Whole class: Penis!

Ms. Elizabeth: All right. Can everyone say ‘eyes?’

Whole class: Eyes!

Ms. Elizabeth: Can everyone say ‘nose?’

Whole class: Nose!

Ms. Elizabeth: Can everyone say elbow?

Whole class: Elbow! [Diminishing voices.]

Ms. Elizabeth: Can everyone say penis?

Whole class: Penis! [Quieter still.]

Ms. Elizabeth: Why does it feel difficult or strange to say that word? Anybody know?

Susana: Because usually it might be a word we use for boys’ body parts?

Ms. Elizabeth: Usually it might be because it’s for a boy’s body. What else?

Ariana: Because you might say it differently.

Ms. Elizabeth: You might say it differently. What are some other ways that people might call this body part? [Student voices talking.] This part of the body [She points to the penis on the cut-out male anatomy that she had hung up on the whiteboard.]. The penis. What are some other words for it? [Student voices talking.] This part, right here. [She points again.]

Memo: Um, the pencil? [Laughter from students.]

Ms. Elizabeth: The pencil. Yeah, some of you might call it the pencil. What else?

Memo: The dollar.

Ms. Elizabeth: The dollar? Ok, interesting. What are some words in Spanish that people might call it?

Boy from class: The culo. [Laughter.]

Ms. Elizabeth: Well, the word – did I hear the word ‘culo?’

Boy’s voice: Yeah.

Ms. Elizabeth: Ok, the word ‘culo,’ that tends to be the word that’s talking about the bottom, or the butt. Right? [Laughter from class.]

Ms. Elizabeth: Sounds like people might have heard other words for penis.

Memo: [Laughter from class.] Pito. [Laughter more loudly.]

Ms. Elizabeth: Ok, banana or something. But, you know, how many people can think of different types of words but a lot times you don’t actually know what the proper term is. Right? So this is actually talking about the penis, right? [Laughter and quiet talking from class.] Um, ok, moving on. Ok, so, these are sometimes called the...

Memo: Penis! [Laughter]

Ms. Elizabeth: ...the testicles or the testes. Right? Now these body parts, this is where sperm starts out. And sperm are little, tiny, microscopic cells. They only way you can see them is if you have a microscope. Testicles are next to the penis. Anybody know any words for those?

Boy’s voice: Balls.

Ms. Elizabeth: Balls.

Memo: Huevos?

Ms. Elizabeth: Huevos.

Boy’s voice: Pelotas?

Ms. Elizabeth: Pelotas. Ok. Sometimes people call them eggs, too. But, keep in mind...what?

Memo: M&Ms.

Ms. Elizabeth: Ok, yeah, maybe you call them M&Ms.

Memo: Skittles.

Ms. Elizabeth: All right, so, those are body parts that we know a lot of words for, but we don’t know the proper words for them, right? So we’re going to learn what those words mean when we go over that. And a wet dream is also something that happens to boys when their bodies change. And that’s something that happens at night when sperm comes out. Now sperm -- Sometimes people wake up in the morning and they realize ‘Oh!’ sometimes they think that they’ve wet the bed or they’ve peed the bed. That’s something

that happens to most people when they go through puberty. When people are going through puberty, sometimes for boys it might be a sticky liquid that they might notice in their underwear or in their pajamas when they wake up. This is clear, or it's white. That's very normal, okay. It happens when someone's in puberty. It just means that their body is practicing making sperm and practicing pushing sperm out. Okay? That's called a wet dream.

The focus on proper terminology demonstrates the emphasis on science and the move away from what would be considered an “informal register” (Payne, 2005, pp. 27-35). The role of schools in cleansing the cultural excesses from the minds of its students has a long history. Bigelow (1936) asserts, “The most significant step in the movement for sex-education in the United States was the organization of the American Social Hygiene Association in 1913” (p. 2). He explains that the term “social hygiene” movement in Great Britain and the United States is “limited to problems which have their origin in, or are associated with, the physical, mental, and social relations of the two sexes” (p. 3). Although he writes about the early 20th century, Bigelow's descriptions remain pertinent to present day offerings of sex education. The intense emphasis on biologically dimorphic body parts (Lugones 2007, p. 190) and their functions for purposes of reproduction are supported through the learning of scientific, “proper” language. The students are asked to provide a list of the words they know for body parts in both English and in Spanish as the instructor encourages them to provide more. In the end, however, there is a single correct answer. It is the “proper” scientific term, and it is in English: e.g., “penis” and “testicle” in the above exercise. The goal of this curriculum is to teach a cleansing language of sex that privileges science. And if science is imbued with power, even more so is science in English. This is the implicit lesson that Ms. Elizabeth taught to these fifth graders in May 2010. The act of asking the students to expose their own language and then cleaning it up with proper terms is a procedure with direct relevance to the social hygiene movements of the early 20th century.

In the following exchange from the same lesson, Ms. Elizabeth asks students to discuss female anatomy.

Ms. Elizabeth: What changes on the girls' bodies when they go through puberty?

Boy's voice: The chest.

Ms. Elizabeth: The chest? Yes. Has anyone heard words for what those body parts are called? What are those called?

Memo: Boobs.

Ms. Elizabeth: Boobs. Sometimes people call them boobs. What else do people call them? Titties. Chichis. Have you heard of that one?
[Lots of laughter.]

Ms. Elizabeth: Okay, but what's the scientific word for that part of the body?

Memo: Chest.

Ms. Elizabeth: Chest. There's one that starts with a 'b' too.

Memo: Oh, breast.

Ms. Elizabeth: Breast! Oh yes. Good. That's right!
[Laughter.]

Ms. Elizabeth: So this kind of brings something up because a lot of times people have heard, like, 'chichis' and things for breasts. But a lot of times people don't know what the actual scientific words are, the proper words. And if you have questions about these words or you want to look in a book, it's important. You're not going to find anything under 'chichis.'
[Laughter.]

Ms. Elizabeth: You're going to find something that has a little more information under breasts. So it's important to learn these new words, these scientific terms, so if you have more questions, and you want to look it up, you can look it up.

Facts. Scientific facts. Not pleasure. At least not of a sexual nature, although the students appear to find pleasure in the lesson itself, indicated by their laughter. Facts are what students will need to be able to further research should questions arise. Such is Ms. Elizabeth's rationale for learning "scientific terms" in puberty education. Even when instruction turned to topics related to pleasure, Ms. Elizabeth emphasizes science. While she gave the students physiological information on wet dreams, which is important since wet dreams for boys could be a disturbing surprise, she left out any remarks on the related pleasurable sensations that might accompany an orgasm. Later, after thoroughly investigating male and female anatomical processes, Ms. Elizabeth defined "orgasm" for the fifth graders. "Tingly," "interesting," "relaxing," and "positive" were words that she used to describe the sensations that accompany orgasm. She never used the word "good" or even "nice." The only place where she references any kind of "good" feeling is in the puberty workbook that accompanied her instruction:

Orgasm: A tingly feeling in the private parts or the body that might feel good. It can happen for a male or a female. For a male, semen might come out at the same time. For a female, more vaginal fluids might come out.

Bodily pleasure is present in this definition. Yet, even when pleasure is made overt, it is still presented as an uncertainty, as exemplified in the use of the auxiliary verb "might." Outside of school, it is rare that orgasm is associated with anything *but* a good feeling, and it should be added that "good" would be an understatement for many people. Moreover, the "or" in the first sentence depicts the "private parts" as something separate from the rest of the body, as if these are two different units.

At this point I am compelled to intervene in my own analysis to share a bit of context. The fact that Ms. Elizabeth can come to Unity's fifth grade classrooms and

provide any information on reproduction and orgasm is a radical act in itself. Irvine (2002) explains that for conservatives of the 1980s, adding to the already prevalent idea that talking about sex makes young people “go out and do it,” they began to allege that talking about sex *is* sex. For them, sex talk is equivalent to sex itself, so to rid schools of sex, schools must also be rid of talk about sex. The suggestion is that speaking about sex arouses sexual desires in children, thereby corrupting their “natural modesty” (p. 132). Recognizing that the conservative/liberal debates around sex education are the current major political battles, the Unity puberty education curriculum has its own merits. However, physiological science becomes *the* way of teaching sexuality because it is safe. To maintain this level of political safety in the curriculum, allusions and initiations to physical pleasure must be purged from sex education.

The comments made by Mr. Hope and Ms. Grisham show that the elementary school level of schooling is a fertile place for learning about sexuality with such instruction beginning in kindergarten, at the very start of formal education. Here children are taught that physical pleasure is a private matter and should not be part of school. Granted, this may be a simple point. However, if we take Allen’s assessment of the state of sex education seriously, then the pedagogy of pleasure in elementary schools must also be intently considered. How do we learn the politics of pleasure? These teachers whom I have interviewed and observed show us some of the ways, and for the most part these ways involve erasing eros from the site of school because it is uncomfortable terrain for the public sphere. In the next section, I focus on how science becomes a public discourse while pleasure remains private.

Public Pleasures and Private Parts

As I have discussed in other chapters, sexuality as we know it is maintained through an ideological and practical dichotomy based in ideas on the separation of public and private life. While I have examined this binary through different framework – teachers’ conceptions of appropriate displays of sexuality, how sexuality plays out in Halloween costumes and performance, the place of silence and erasure from the public realm of school – the data presented in this chapter reveals how the public/private binary becomes encouraged and sustained through classroom dialogue. The final section of this chapter examines the delivery of information on puberty by adult instructors juxtaposed with the desired knowledge of the elementary school students. The marked contrast between the official, “scripted” curriculum of puberty education and the anonymous questions asked by the students is indicative of, and further reinforces, the divide between public and private discourse with regards to sexuality. Yet, in a more nuanced manner, male parts and pleasures become *more* public through the dialogue that ensues. In the following excerpt, Ms. Elizabeth responds to anonymous questions that she has instructed the students to write down on small pieces of paper and put into a container to be read and responded to aloud.

Ms. Elizabeth: We’re going to stop right here, and we’re going to take time to ask secret questions. So everyone should have either a white or a yellow piece of paper at their desks. And these are for secret questions. So if you have a question about what we talked about today or what we talked about yesterday

about the girls' body or about pregnancy or about puberty or any questions that you have because you saw something on "Family Guy" or "South Park." They have a lot of jokes about relationships, so it might be a good way to have some of your questions answered because they make a lot of jokes about puberty, especially on "South Park." So if you don't have a question, I would like to write one fact, one fact that you learned today. And when you're done, I would like you to fold your paper in half. And these are secret, so don't show your question to anyone but you. Then I'm going to come around and collect them, ok? [Passes out small squares of paper.] I'm going to read them out loud now. I'm going to try to answer as many as I can, so I have about fifteen minutes. That's good. Here's a comment. Testes make sperm. And a question. What are boners used for? So a boner...what's a science word for it? Anybody know?

[Children talking. A few seconds pass.]

Ms. Laura: Erection

Ms. Elizabeth: Erection.

[Children talking.]

Ms. Elizabeth: An erection means that someone gets tingly feelings in their private parts, the penis gets a little bit bigger, a little bit stiffer. And for girls, there's something that also happens for girls. This means that there's also a part of the body that gets bigger. For girls this is called a 'clitoris.' That's a part of the body that also has tingly feelings for girls. Well, what are they used for? Well, sometimes when people have erections, that's a sign that their bodies may be getting ready to push sperm out. That's a sign that their body might be getting ready to push sperm out. Not at all times, but sometimes it might be a sign.

Memo: What if it happens at school?

Ms. Elizabeth: Good question! Sometimes it does. Sometimes it might. And if this happens for some people it's important for folks not to make fun of them because it might make them feel embarrassed just like if a boy has an erection, or if a girl gets their period at school, it's not okay to make fun of them, either. So if someone gets an erection, sometimes people might try to count backwards from one hundred to try to keep the mind off of it because usually it can leave in a couple of minutes, and for some people maybe in a couple of seconds. It might start to go down. For some people if they have to get up they might carry their backpack, they might try to carry their sweater in front of them. Or they might try to tuck it somewhere in their underwear. But it really depends on that person. It is something that might happen at school, it might happen at home, it might happen when you're walking around. And it does

happen to girls, too. But for girls it's not as noticeable because the parts that change are more on the inside of the body than on the outside for girls.

Memo: How do you know it's sperm?

Ms. Elizabeth: How do you know it's sperm? Because it's a sticky, white fluid and if it comes out, when it comes out it might have a feeling that is very interesting for someone if it comes out. For some people it might be a feeling that is very positive for them. It might feel very relaxing when that fluid comes out. If it happens at night, sometimes people don't realize that it happened. If it happens during the day, usually that's because someone is either masturbating or having sex. And if they're doing that, then they'll know that that fluid is coming out because they'll be awake.

Again, there is a noticeable absence of language that directly addresses pleasure in Ms. Elizabeth's explanation of erections and clitorises. She uses neutral words in the context of sex such as "positive" and "relaxing" to describe pleasure.

Here, however, I want to call attention to the way in that the question and answer activity is designed. The underlying assumption implicit in the structure of anonymous questions is that students will be more comfortable asking questions in a secretive, anonymous manner. This seems especially important in Ms. Moon's example of the girl who used the forum to find information about her current experience with sexual abuse. With this, I do not mean to minimize the need for such a forum. However, in addition to the explicit content lessons of the anonymous question and answer session is the implicit lesson that some questions are better left private. Curiously, however, after Ms. Elizabeth asked the second question, one student began asking follow-up questions in front of the entire class, disregarding the design of the activity. While keeping questions anonymous was never stated to be strictly enforced, the student's willingness to ask questions in a public manner suggests that there may be more room for open dialogue than is assumed by the anonymous question and answer format. Such a format is based on the assumption that students will be more willing to ask their burning questions if they do not have an identity attached to it. It provides an opportunity for students to come forward with problems they may be facing, as in the case of Ms. Moon's student referred to early in this chapter. Yet, this structure also reinforces the binary of what is acceptable as public discourse and private discourse. Creating a system wherein students' questions are made more private is not just a safety measure, but it is also educative in the sense that it teaches children appropriate speech and the appropriate time and place for it.

Foucault (1990) writes that such a structure parallels the "confession of the flesh" (p. 19), which is a "multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about" (p. 18). This institutional "incitement to discourse" had as foundational "an expurgation – and a very rigorous one – of the authorized vocabulary" (p. 17). The activities and structures presented in the puberty education curriculum demonstrate the active shaping of the discourse of sexuality. Scientific words are given power, and the students are encouraged to ask questions and share what has been transpiring in their minds. Moreover, it is

notable that the terms and voices afforded the most attention are those that have to do with male pleasure.

Memo, who was vocal over the course of the four-day unit, is the one who takes what is presented as private issues and makes them public, thereby subverting the process of secrecy of the question and answer session. In so doing, not only do his voice and concerns dominate the space, but Ms. Elizabeth is compelled to respond to him. She begins to explain that the clitoris is the female equivalent to the penis in that it becomes erect and “tingly.” She then asks what a clitoris is used for, but instead of pausing for answer, she continues by saying that erections are signs that sperm is ready to be pushed out. The dialogue does not return to the topic of the clitoris, and with regard to female anatomy, Ms. Elizabeth mentions the potential humiliation of getting one’s period at school as a situation similar to having an erection. She then adds that because the clitoris is hidden, it will not be noticed by the public even while it may act similarly to a penis by becoming erect. In addition, the clitoris’s only function is to provide pleasure, which further creates a problem for Ms. Elizabeth. The subject of pleasure, then, is focused almost exclusively on male pleasure, which brings it closer to the fore of public pleasure and leaving female pleasure for privacy and secrets. In the above example, female anatomy and female pleasure are eclipsed by Memo’s persistent questions regarding erections. Already contributing to the diminished significance of female anatomy and pleasure is the visibility of the penis when erect, the physiological position of the penis as outside of the body, and the obvious secretion of sperm during orgasm or wet dreams, all of which were afforded the majority of attention during the course of the curriculum. This example is demonstrative of the public emphasis on male private parts, which is an illustration of how masculinity becomes and remains hegemonic in the public sphere.

Conclusion

The sex education unit at Unity Elementary School provides a window onto the official and sanctioned sexuality curriculum in a public elementary school. In this chapter, I have sought to illustrate how the curriculum maintains an objective of erasing “home” knowledge of sex by replacing it with cleansing language of scientific sex. As a result, pleasures associated with sex become sanitized—or at least acceptable—with the ultimate message being that pleasure is appropriate as long as there is an official knowledge system to go with it. Throughout the week, students translated internal thoughts into (English) words and voiced them to the class for the instructor to interpret, re-phrase, and respond to aloud.

The sex education lessons illustrate that correct sexuality education is best implemented by an informed, matter-of-fact, caring professional who will teach proper, scientific language to replace less proper knowledge that has accumulated in the minds of the students over time and in spaces of the other. The question and answer session offers insight into processes through which students can make their thoughts known to be handled by a public official. The idea that such topics should remain anonymous because they are somehow shameful persists, maintained through a structure of giving voice and ultimately being liberated through official, scientific language that, once excised of its contaminating elements, is ready for public use. However, as this chapter demonstrates, children subvert the enforcement of a public/private binary as well as the intent of the

instructor to maintain a proper public language of sex. The samples of the lessons presented in this chapter belie schooling's attempts to sanitize sex through appropriate education, a contemporary project clearly rooted in historical educational practices and ideologies.

We may thus begin to think of sexuality as discursive space where politics and beliefs about what is normal, appropriate, and clean converge. This becomes especially clear in the realm of elementary schools where the ideals of Western childhood interact with processes of growing up in a world where images and talk of sex teach us that sex is linked to pleasure. When sex comes to school, however, it is purified through a language of Western medical science, thus silencing pleasure as an official discourse. Medical science over pleasure as curriculum is imposed and maintained systematically, privileging ways of knowing that ostensibly come from the mind and not from the body. To change this system of knowledge would require that we make knowledge deriving from bodily senses an acceptable part of the curricular discourse on sexuality *in addition* to information about medical science. To do this with children, then, would mean to treat their actions that derive from pleasure as a source of knowledge for understanding sexuality as expressed by children, and therefore better understanding our own. Integrating a discourse of pleasure into a curriculum of sexuality education for children would be a move toward a new pedagogy of sexuality.

Chapter 7: Education in Disguise: Sanctioning Sexuality in Elementary School Halloween Celebrations

Sexuality on display during elementary school Halloween celebrations stands in stark contrast to the silence that more commonly shrouds it in this institutional space. Given the pervasive silence that surrounds sexuality in elementary schools, Halloween provides a rare opportunity to explore its public manifestations. Schools sanction overt displays of sexuality and transgressions of certain school norms on this day. A time of celebration, it is perceived as a festive event for children, innocent and fun. Yet, because Halloween is the one school day where sexuality is sanctioned to be on display, it literally becomes a spectacle. While the day is unique in this sense, Halloween serves as a magnifying glass to examine the operation of sexuality within the institution of elementary schools, bringing into view the institution's negotiation and navigation of sexuality. Halloween celebrations in elementary schools expose sexuality in unique ways.

Examining Halloween celebrations in elementary schools brings to light a nexus of social, economic, political, and cultural relationships that I have focused on throughout the dissertation. On Halloween, these relationships lie buried beneath the veneer of fun and play that is popularly imagined as integral to the holiday. As I have explained, schools are places that teach young people social norms. In this chapter, I pay particular attention to the ways in which socialization through schooling is abetted by the U.S. consumer market, which strategically targets children (Kapur, 2005; Levin & Kilbourne, 2009; Linn 2004; Olfman, 2005). The position of children as subjects of these distinct yet mutually informing projects demonstrates that they have an absolutely significant role in reproducing the desires of the nation. This chapter, with its focus on a single day, appears to be a "day in the life" story as I zoom in on the Halloween festivities celebrated at Unity. However, the intention is simultaneously to present a "life in a day" by showing how macro social, political, and economic factors are manifested in specific place and time.

This chapter hones in on a single school day, closely analyzing specific moments captured throughout the day, but it is a day for which students and teachers prepare for a long while. This approach allows for the relationships among teachers and students as well as the relationships among social and economic forces – sexuality, acculturation into the United States, and the consumer market – to become more sharply illuminated by magnifying how they play out in interactions, conversations, and embodied practices. My purpose is to examine how Halloween as it is celebrated in an elementary school illuminates the entanglements and articulations of sexuality, gender, race, and class in a socio-economic system that creates and exploits children's desires. Focusing on four discrete but related moments during Halloween that took place at Unity Elementary, I explore the ways that these articulations interplay with the forces of consumer culture that are increasingly targeted at children (Kapur, 2005; Levin & Kilbourne, 2009; Linn, 2004; Olfman, 2005), and girls in particular (Driscoll, 2002; Harris, 2004; Walkerdine, 1997). Capitalizing on existing gender constructs, many products sold to children produce and reproduce norms of femininity and masculinity. Such constructions of gender are intertwined with the sexualization of bodies, which is most poignant in

representations of girls' bodies (Levin & Kilbourne, 2009; Olfman, 2005; Opplinger, 2008; Reist, 2010).⁴⁸

I seize on a break from the normal school day activities by attending to the tensions that arise on Halloween with regard to sexuality. Because of its intense emphasis on academics, this holiday at Unity Elementary School stands in contrast to the other days. Once lunchtime hit and the costumes came out, all academic activities came to a halt. To capture a sense of the dynamic complexities of this holiday that I seek to illuminate, in this chapter I present specific aspects of Halloween as they manifested in the school. The first section is the story that led to my interest in exploring expressions of sexuality during Halloween. In the second section, I show that the consumer culture that buoys Halloween celebrations is a major acculturating force in elementary schools. The third section is devoted to examining how gender is, for girls in particular, co-constructed with sexuality. Finally, I present the teachers' interpretations to show how sexuality is also constructed through conceptions of race, culture, and class. These interpretations of sexuality are bound up in consumerism, which manufactures desire, especially those desires of the acculturating immigrant students that populate Unity Elementary School. Moreover, I demonstrate that the consumer market is inextricably linked to expressions of fantasy and desire, illuminating sexuality's relationship with capitalism.

On Halloween, I was with Ms. Lee's class, as usual. However, during the actual parade I separated from them to observe the entire K-5 school as they walked around the block and back into the school for the Halloween rally. I did not dress up in full costume, but I wore a witch's hat that came with an orange wig that I had bought at a chain drug store near my house. I spent the day talking to the students and teachers, singing with them, and taking pictures. I had been looking forward to documenting and observing the Halloween festivities because the previous year a teacher had commented on the "sexy" costumes that some of her girl students had chosen. This roused my attention to the potential of Halloween to shed light on the operation and organization of sexuality in elementary schools. Having been an elementary school teacher for five years, I had participated in various Halloween celebrations. Memories of being a student also inform my interest in and analysis of this subject. During the course of my study, I referred back to events that I had experienced as I examined the political discourse that emerged throughout the time of data collection and writing, and in this chapter I also follow the consumer market in Halloween through documentation and analysis of images from seasonal "pop-up" Halloween specialty stores and Halloween websites.

Consuming Halloween at School

This chapter sutures together two main bodies of literature: analyses of Halloween and scholarship on girls and consumer culture. Interestingly, while Halloween has garnered much media attention, has made it into Thorne's (1993) ethnographic account of

⁴⁸ While consumer forces affect both girls and boys, I focus on girls because the economic-social system has historically capitalized on the commodification of women's bodies in ways that men's bodies have not been. I do not mean to assert, however, that men's bodies are never sexualized. It has been well documented and argued that men's bodies, and especially those of men of color, queer, and othered men, have been and are currently subject to sexual exploitation and commodification. This is to say, however, that in a male-supremacist society, girls' and women's bodies are more frequently and more overtly objectified for the purposes of social control and economic advantage.

elementary level schooling, has been analyzed for its impact on gender (Belk, 1990; Levinson et. al., 1992; Nelson, 2000; Thorne, 1993) and its influence on sexuality explicated (Rogers, 2003), no published scholarly work has specifically focused on Halloween's relationship with sexuality, nor how analyzing Halloween specifically may deepen our understanding of school-assisted processes of assimilation. For this reason, it is necessary to build upon and stitch together literature across disciplines and theoretical perspectives, contributing to a more robust understanding of Halloween's role in propagating consumer culture through elementary schools.

Socio-historical studies on Halloween and holidays provide necessary background for contextualizing this study (Rogers, 2003; Skal, 2003). Within this field of work, there has been some, albeit little, attention paid to analysis of the holiday as consumer ritual (Belk, 1990; Rogers, 2003; Schmidt, 1997). Rosenbloom's (2006) short newspaper articles on gendered and sexualized costumes is representative of the kind of short descriptive mainstream pieces that link Halloween to these constructs, while Nelson's (2000) "The Pink Dragon is Female" examines Halloween costumes for children and their potential contribution to gender stereotyping. To my knowledge, Nelson's study is the only scholarly article that specifically explores the relationship between gender and Halloween, and none takes up its relationship to sexuality. Her study classifies 469 costumes into the following categories: feminine, masculine, and gender-neutral. She finds that of the costumes only 41 fall into the gender-neutral category with 195 masculine costumes and 233 feminine ones.

In her 1997 book, Walkerdine wrote, "There is so little research and writing on the subject of young, pre-teen girls and popular culture" (p. 2). Since then, there has been growth in literature about the consumer market and its targeting of children (Kapur, 2005; Linn, 2004; Olfman 2005/2009) and girls in particular (Driscoll, 2002; Harris, 2004; Mitchell & Walsh, 2005; Opplinger, 2008; Reist, 2010; Spade & Valentine, 2008; Walkerdine, 1997). Much of this literature falls under an alarmist approach to comprehending the phenomenon of the loss of childhood in modernity. Such analyses can be found in Olfman's anthologies *Childhood Lost* (2005) and *The Sexualization of Childhood* (2009), Levin and Kilbourne's *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and what Parents can do to Protect their Kids* (2009), and Opplinger's *Girls Gone Skank: The Sexualization of Girls in American Culture* (2008). These works assume a consumer market that aggressively targets girls and makes them into sexual subjects who are almost sure to meet a tragic fate. For example, Olfman (2009) writes in her Introduction:

When I witness a little girl who is sexualized, her playful, curious nature is palpable just beneath the surface. But when a girl or boy is not rescued from these soul-destroying scripts, in 15 years they may become, either a young woman with damaged self-esteem and an eating disorder or a young man who cannot experience sexual pleasure with a woman whose body has not been surgically altered to reflect the pornographic images that he has been compulsively downloading since he was 10 years old. (p. 3)

Olfman's language gives away her sense of urgency in this matter as well as her objective to convince readers that there is a world of horror waiting for girls and women if we

continue down this path of sexualization. Other literature, such as Walkerdine's *Daddy's Girl* (1997), Mitchell and Walsh's *Seven Going on Seventeen* (2005), and *Coining for Capital* by Kapur (2005), present the sexualization of girls with the objective of contributing to the academic field of gender and sexuality studies. Such studies do not necessarily determine an outcome and represent the sphere of sexuality as one that is simultaneously imposed from the outside onto an innocent soul and inhabited from the inside. That is, sexual subjectivity is not simply a passive subjection, but also the work of an active subject-in-the-making (Walkerdine, 1997; O'Connell Davidson, 2005).

While there are far more nuances among the studies of consumer culture's influence on constructing girlhood, these are the areas that I largely straddle. Both areas understand girlhood to be socially constructed, fluid, and temporally situated. To varying degrees, they also identify the consumer market as a product of capitalism, a system that is organized around the logics of patriarchy, or male domination. Together, these theoretical pieces show the ways in which consumerist desires for costumes and candy mix with the commercialization of sexuality and gender in childhood as Halloween "migrates off the streets and into the malls" (Schmidt, 1997, p. 303). In addition, I seek to demonstrate how consumerism also informs race and sexuality in processes of acculturation as manifested in schools.

Kati, *that* Kind of Cop

"There were some risqué costumes," Ms. Lee related to me about Unity's Friday Halloween celebration the following Monday as we perused the pictures she had taken. "Kati had told me that she was going to be a police officer," Ms. Lee recalled. "But when I saw her on Halloween, she was *that* kind of cop." I smiled, understanding the reference to the "sexy" sort of cop that I had seen become popular in Halloween costumes over the past few years. We examined the picture together, commenting on the "break" from the masculine, austere cut of the standard navy blue uniform. With cap perched atop her head, Kati, a nine-year-old girl of Mexican descent, wore a midriff revealing navy blue bikini sized tank top, a matching navy blue pleated miniskirt, and over-the-calf black boots. A longer white undershirt covered her rounded belly from under the bikini top – an addition and not part of the costume package. The pudgy body of a nine-year-old appeared dissonant in these clothes. In the picture, Kati stares away from the gaze of the camera, perhaps watching her schoolmates as she often did. However, this time her face glimmered with bright fuchsia lipstick and silver, shimmery eyeshadow from eyelid to brow.

This image remains clear in my mind. It was uncanny to see a fourth grade girl dressed this way, even on Halloween. It is difficult to put into words exactly what is "not right" about it. The short bikini top, to start, wraps tightly around a to-be-developed chest, announcing the fact that there is nothing look-worthy there – yet. Somehow, the bikini provides a cue for us: it tells us that bikinis are supposed to cover the bare minimum (the breasts), but on a girl it signals that the body has not yet developed the parts that are supposed to fill a bikini. It serves as a placeholder, a reminder that in not too much time this body will look different. The white tank top underneath the short navy blue bikini further reveals a consciousness of the pre-pubescent body as someone decided that the bikini tank would not be worn on its own and no bare midriff would be shown.

The tall boots and miniskirt, a fashion not associated with girls but by women popularized with go-go dancers of the 60s, appear odd on a girl of nine. Moreover, she is a police officer, a figure usually associated with masculine authority and state power, which contrast starkly with the overt gendered sexualization of her costume.⁴⁹

Kati's costume may be humorous and fun for some while it disturbs others. But either way, it provokes questions about the sexualization of children, and of girls in particular. She is not a unique case. On Halloween, girls across the United States choose what they want "to be" on this day and into the night. When I asked Kati how she had come up with the costume, she told me that she had chosen the costume herself because she thought it was "pretty" and "cool." She had gone to the store with her mother, and they'd picked it out together. Halloween was fun, she explained to me, because she liked to dress up, have a Halloween party at school, but mostly she liked going trick-or-treating with her cousins because she *really* liked candy.

Kati provides standard reasons for choosing the police uniform costume and for enjoying Halloween. Many, though not all, of the girls in the class chose "pretty" costumes, or at least costumes where they could embellish their faces with make-up, wear lacy tights, put glittery goop in their hair or on their skin, and use hairspray to keep the correlating hairstyle in place. These are Halloween customs in which girls participate throughout the country. Some teachers commented on the "sexy" costumes that many of the girls chose to wear and the girls' expressed desires toward a hyperfeminine look on Halloween. A couple of the teachers, Ms. Lee and Ms. Alexander, explained the phenomenon through a racial-cultural framework, which I detail later in this chapter. The teachers understood students' choices as being part of a larger cultural context that influenced decisions on costumes and self-representation. While culture is certainly inextricable from factors that influence children's choices, as I maintain, this is only a part of the nexus of influence that informs how and why we make particular choices in our processes of becoming.

Maribel and the Acculturating Forces of Halloween

Like elementary schools throughout the U.S., Unity held an annual Halloween parade and celebration. Weeks before October 31, students and teachers were already talking about their plans for the day and evening – what costume they would wear, where and with whom they would go trick-or-treating, the rules their parents set for them on that night, and how much candy they predicted they'd acquire. They asked me many times if I would be there that day, to which I replied that I couldn't wait.

I arrived at Unity just after the lunch hour had begun. In the hall I ran into Ms. Leslie consoling Maribel, a fourth grade student, whose eyes shone red and wet from crying, because she hadn't brought a costume to school that day. The girl's father was there, having come to school to take her home. Ms. Leslie, showing care in her matter-of-fact way, explained the options. "*No necesitas un disfráz. Puedes ir al desfile sin disfráz – está bien. O te puedes ir a casa. Es tu decisión.*" Maribel hugged her father as he stroked her back, and Ms. Leslie continued. "*Nos vamos a divertir, pero es tu decisión.*"

⁴⁹ I hesitate to call this Kati's representation because it is unclear who chose this costume for Kati, and also, for reasons that I will soon go into, these costumes are marketed and created by commercial businesses. It would be misleading to suggest that the female cop costume is Kati's own choice in representation.

(You don't need a costume. You can go to the parade without a costume – it's ok. Or you can go home. It's your decision. We're going to have fun, but it's your decision.) The girl nodded, paused, turned to her father and said quietly, "*No me quiero quedar.*" (I don't want to stay.) The father nodded back, turned to Ms. Leslie, thanked her with a smile, and left holding Maribel's hand.

Maribel's response to Halloween, her father's involvement in it, and the dialogue among the three people in the snapshot above show cultural distance that becomes magnified during an event such as Halloween. A time that is supposed to be fun and celebratory exacerbates pressures to belong, and it would be difficult to achieve belonging on Halloween without a costume. But Maribel did not have one, so instead of joining in spite of this, she chooses to leave school, and her father agrees with her decision. In fact, many students at Unity did not bring a costume to school that day, and although these students decided to stay in school, they also did not participate in the festivities with the same exuberance as their costumed counterparts. Students who were dressed up compared their costumes, discussed who they were and why they had chosen that personae. They ran and skipped through the parade, while the minority of children not in costumes appeared less enthusiastic, standing at the end of their class lines, showing fewer smiles.

I was not surprised to see many costumeless Unity students on Halloween day.⁵⁰ The school's majority population of recently immigrated families, most of whom come from rural areas of Mexico and Central America, may have been unfamiliar with the customs of the day. Celebrated across the United States, Halloween is a major, if unofficial, North American holiday.⁵¹ Interestingly, there are few signs that Unity celebrates Día de los Muertos, the Mexican holiday honoring the ancestors who have passed. Unlike other schools in which I have taught and worked, schools with fewer Latino students, there are no *calaveras* or altars honoring the dead or the tradition. Yet, hundreds of costumed Unity students, teachers and parents parade through the school and around the block, dancing to Michael Jackson's "Thriller," sharing and eating candy. The costumes on display are distinctively part of the U.S. holiday of Halloween, if for nothing

⁵⁰ There was also a small group of Jehovah's Witness and strict Evangelical Christian families that opted out of the entire school day.

⁵¹ Rogers (2002) explains that while contemporary Halloween rituals originate in Christian festivals honoring all souls as early as 650 AD (p. 23), Halloween as the solidly North American holiday and commercial enterprise that we now celebrate did not begin until the 1920s (p. 78). Given the majority Latino new immigrant population at Unity, it is appropriate to briefly provide some background on the relationship between Halloween and Día de los Muertos. While it does not seem necessary to reproduce the long and complicated history in this chapter, Jasper and Turner (1994) write that in the Southwest U.S., the tradition of Día de los Muertos and Halloween are increasingly becoming linked celebrations (p. 134). Halloween, or "All Hallow Even," the evening before All Saints' Day, is related to Día de los Muertos, or All Souls' Day. While many distinctions exist between Halloween and Día de los Muertos (see Jasper and Turner, 1994), one of the major differences between the northern and southern regions of the Americas is the invocation of religion. Halloween has become a secular celebration in which the spirit world is represented mainly through costumes.⁵¹ On the other hand, Día de los Muertos honors the dead with altars and offerings, trips to familial graves, and memorials. Día de los Muertos is a holiday primarily informed by the living descendants' sense of responsibility to the spirits of their dead (Jasper and Turner, 1994, p. 135), whereas Halloween is a tradition born of "rascality" (Rogers, 2002, p. 78) and revelry (p. 78-90) even if the two holidays share Christian origins.

else, because they are mostly ones found in Halloween stores that pop up throughout the country toward the end of summer (Nelson, 2000).

This ritual takes place across the U.S. in the months leading up to Halloween. Beginning as early as July, temporary Halloween stores open up in vacated shops, inviting people in to buy costumes, decorations, candy totes, and candy. It's big business this children's holiday. And it has increasingly become one for adults. Signs in some Halloween stores read: *Adult only section – No children under the age of 18 allowed*. Yet, contrary to popular belief, Halloween has not always been a holiday for children. Rogers (2002) explains that the trick-or-treating ritual exploded in the postwar era and gained momentum in the 1950s. As a result, the consumer market has benefited from the public attention to Halloween. As Rogers demonstrates, representations of Halloween infiltrated the mainstream media with stories and movies that capitalized on the public scares of Halloween where razor blades and poison were found in the candy of trick-or-treaters. Businesses have used the popularity to sell, in great volume, their Halloween goods. Far from the innocent and fun children's holiday that appears to be merely about candy and costumes, contemporary Halloween practices are mired in contradiction. With its consumerist motivations, market imperatives largely drive today's Halloween rituals where commercialism heavily influences the expression of fantasy and creativity that is perceived as a major part of the celebration (Nelson, 2000; Rogers, 2002). Clearly, as a holiday when children can indulge in creative fantasies and sweets the ideal of Halloween is complicated by greater social and political forces. The conflicts that arise throughout the U.S. regarding schools' rights to celebrate the holiday provide ample examples of Halloween's fraught relationship with schools. Schools serve as places where enduring social, political, and cultural tensions can be closely observed.

The annual festivities at Unity parallel those that happen at schools throughout many parts of the country. In the U.S., Halloween is largely thought of as a children's holiday even though all histories of the festival depict it as an adult tradition (Belk, 1990; Rogers, 2002; Santino 1994; Skal, 2002). Rogers (2002) suggests that the rise of Halloween as a children's festival is directly related to its major place in schools, and writes, "Halloween parties and parades at school are an important fixture for the fall term, one of the first large festivals that children might experience outside their home environment" (p. 160). And this is true from what I have seen. On no other day in the school year does the entire school organize a trip outside of the school's gates and doors. The elementary school I attended in San Francisco and the schools at which I've worked have all engaged in similar events during Halloween. So close to the beginning of the school year, candy and costume manufacturers display their goods near the Back-to-School sections of major stores like Target and Walmart. Children have become the target market of this multi-billion dollar industry⁵² (Rogers, 2002, p. 160). In the section that follows, I delve deeper into Halloween as a consumer ritual. However, the point here is that becoming American for these children also seems to mean becoming integrated in this country's consumer culture, and this is facilitated by schools, albeit unwittingly.

The students at Unity, most who come from families who recently immigrated from Mexico and Central America, exuberantly embrace this holiday at school, and the majority of the children go trick-or-treating on Halloween night. The force of school in solidifying what is also a family ritual should not be underestimated. It is difficult to

⁵² Rogers puts the 2000 product sales for Halloween goods at \$2 billion, up from 1998's \$950 million.

imagine a child who could not resist a day where school work is put aside, tricks are tolerated, the standard dress code is replaced with costumes, make-up is encouraged, and candy is permitted. But as we saw, Ms. Leslie's student chose not to participate, overwhelmed by the fact that she had no costume. While the reasons for this were unclear to me, it occurred to me that for children like Maribel, whose parents do not speak English and are unfamiliar with the customs of the U.S., this holiday is one of many instances of acculturation into ritual, and the pressures to participate become sources of anxiety.

At Unity, most of the students wear store-bought costumes from either a Halloween store or the nearby Wal-Mart, illustrating that Halloween is a commercial holiday, like most other U.S. holidays (Schmidt, 1997), driven by consumerism—buying things becomes integral to having fun, and consuming gender is part of the entertainment. Sexuality here becomes tied up in the production of femininity. In the following section I explain how the “carnavalesque” (Bakhtin, 1941) feeling of revelry and an experimental world that becomes Halloween is manufactured and consumed through sexuality. I do this first by showing how corporations capitalize on children's desires, largely by reproducing gender. Then I show how gender, specifically in the case of girls, is sexualized through product marketing. Halloween, then, becomes a major boon for an industry that commodifies sexuality.

Witches, Bumble Bees, Nurses, and (Sexy) Cops: Girls Consuming Culture

After the incident with Maribel, I greeted Ms. Leslie and told her that I admired her costume even though I could not yet tell what she was trying to achieve.

“Hey Ms. Leslie. I like your dress, but who are you supposed to be?”

“Hello?!” She responded with her typical sarcasm. “Look at my feet.” She did a little shuffle with her feet. White ankle socks poked out from red Mary Janes. Suddenly the light blue and white plaid dress and braids made sense. “Ah, you're Dorothy,” I declared. As we walked toward the upper grades wing, she told me that the fourth grade teachers had each dressed up as a character from the *Wizard of Oz*. I peeked inside the classrooms where I saw a witch-dressed adult reading to a rug full of kids in costumes. Parents dotted the perimeters, leaning on desks, or sitting in the short chairs. Ms. Leslie and I walked onto the schoolyard and into the new building that housed the fourth and fifth grades. Excited, the kids clamored in the halls even though the normal rule was that they enter after the bell rings. Ms. Moon and Ms. Sharp, two fifth grade teachers, came out of the classroom in Hershey Kiss costumes made of silver fabric gathered at the neck and flowing out to a hula hoop bottom. The student teacher was also dressed as a Hershey's Kiss, and together their paper tags read “trick” “or” “treat.”

Once I arrived at Ms. Lee's classroom, she was nowhere to be found. I decided that I should use the time to visit old students, but as I was opening the door to leave the classroom, a couple of boys came in. I asked them if Ms. Lee knew that they were there, and one replied, “Yeah, she's downstairs.” I went down to Ms. Montely's room to see her. Instead, I found the Tin Man. And in place of Ms. Montley, I found the Cowardly Lion. Ms. Lee and I walked upstairs to her classroom, and I complimented her on her costume, a silver spray painted thermal shirt and jeans under a silver box with a big red heart painted on it that she wore over her chest and torso. Later, after Ms. Lee's Tin Man

costume went unrecognized by her entire class, I realized that the *Wizard of Oz* was completely unfamiliar to most Unity students. Then, Ms. Lee and I would discuss whether this was a generational or cultural issue. Based on recent experiences working in elementary schools, I concluded that this lack of familiarity represented cultural, rather than temporal, distance.

Ms. Lee told me that she had been so busy running around that she hadn't even had time to eat. She pulled out her lunch just as the bell rang, so we started down the stairs. There were no kids in line when we got there, but Miguel was the first to show up. He gave me a big hug when he saw me. It was time for the kids to get into costume. All the boys who had brought costumes were some variation on the angel of death or the *Scream* movie character, and all of them wore masks and no make-up as part of the costume. The girls were much more varied, representing a bumblebee, a doctor, a witch covered in spider webs, a wizard, and another witch. The girls applied make-up and black hair dye on each other as I talked to the students about their costumes and Halloween plans. In her usual way, Mayra was in charge of the make-up and she meticulously and tenderly applied it to the spider web witch's face, reminding me of my own first adolescent bonding experiences with make-up and girlfriends. By the time Mayra had finished, the witch was embellished with dark black eyebrows, black eyeliner lining her eyes, and reddish-black lipstick covering her lips. "You are really good at doing make-up," Ms. Lee complimented Mayra.

"I like how she does make-up," the witch, named Lila, responded. "Hers looks so nice." Mayra had applied her own make-up in the bathroom. Her chestnut brown hair pulled back into a tight ponytail and thin, straight bangs cut to her eyes, the swirls she had drawn from the edge of her eyes outward to the top of her jaw line and end of eyebrow were exposed. This make-up design complimented her bumblebee costume: a yellow and black striped tank top, a headband adorned with a daisy and two antennae, a black lacy double layer tutu with a yellow ribbon running along the bottom hem, black tights and black Mary Janes. Later she strapped on a pair of wings to complete the look. I wondered how often these fourth grade girls had the sanctioned opportunity to put on make-up as a group, especially at school. Halloween, it seemed, offered this chance.

At 1:30 we went out to the parade. Each class lined up behind a sign designating their classrooms. Most of the kids were in costumes, although some were not. Many of the girls had princess costumes or witch costumes. There were a few she-devils. I recalled that Ms. Lee had said that some of the girls' costumes were very risqué in the past, which repeated this year. One student she-devil with fishnets stood out along with two women on the playground. One was a police officer with a short skirt and a low cut shirt, and the other carried a toddler in a Tinkerbell costume. A medical nurse, she dressed in a black mini skirt with a Red Cross emblem asserting itself against the black. Later, I will discuss the conversation Ms. Lee and I had about these two women.

The parade left the school grounds and marched halfway around the block, the students a dazzle of colors in mostly store bought costumes. One girl wore a lacy black and purple witch dress, another a superhero in a shiny magenta top and skirt with matching sunglasses. I watched the parade go by, noting the pre-gendering of the costume choices. As Nelson's (2000) study showed, if children purchase their costumes from retailers, gender is almost always part of the package. Once all classes were back in line, Mr. Gin, the music teacher, announced that they were going to dance. Tammy, the

school counselor, and he asked the group of fifty to one hundred parents with their pre-elementary school children to back up against the wall. The music began, with Tammy in red leather Thriller jacket and black Michael Jackson hat. She struck a pose, which the students were supposed to follow. The first attempts at the dance did not go well, but eventually they performed it to satisfaction. At the end of the group dance when they had individual students dance on the cardboard square, a few students went up to showcase their break dance moves. Then, we went back to the classroom. The day was over, and the students began going home, the teachers preparing themselves for a “Halloween hangover” the following Monday.

At Unity and at schools throughout the U.S., Halloween retains elements of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1941). School rules are put aside for the sake of fun. The dress code of dark pants or skirts, no tank tops, no jeans, goes unenforced. On Halloween, girls wear strappy tops, go to the bathroom in groups to get ready, stand outside the classroom without teacher supervision as they apply make-up to one another, and they bring candy to school and eat it even though on most days the no candy rule is strictly enforced. A feeling of disorderliness and misconduct pervades the school day even if the structure of the day has been well organized by the teachers and administration. The school, like other schools across the U.S. and not unlike the Catholic church during Carnival and Mardi Gras, sanctions the “slackening” of rules and order (Lyotard, 1984) on Halloween and is an example of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984). In his study on humor and sarcasm in social life, Bakhtin wrote about ritual spectacles where the rules of society were temporarily put on hold. These rowdy events served to release social repression and allow for people, particularly the lower classes, to mock and engage in mirth. The carnivals afforded mass decompression. While Bakhtin distinguished between the carnivals of old and those of today, a “carnivalesque” atmosphere (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 218) where social mores are suspended to make way for revelry pervades Halloween.

As during these festivals, the expression of sexuality also becomes more apparent during Halloween, especially for girls, for corporations target their wares at gendered subjects, making Halloween a major marketing opportunity. For girls, sexuality is clearly part of the deployment. Costumes for girls are highly sexualized starting from a very young age. The combination of the carnivalesque feeling of Halloween and the strong role of the consumer market results in little girls manifesting a sexuality that seems beyond their years, beyond school rules, but well within the logic of capitalist patriarchy⁵³ where women’s bodies are sexualized toward the objective of economic profit and social control.

Halloween has transformed from a religious holiday to a festival of revelry in the 19th century. The 1920s saw the holiday become one targeted at a consumer population, coinciding with the rise of a social perception of the child as innocent, pure, and in need of adult protection (Kapur, 2005, p. 23; O’Connell Davidson, 2005). Zelizer (1985) writes that expelling children from the labor pool meant that their monetary worth became tied to transforming them into consumers. Children were not yet a target audience of the market (as cited by Kapur, 2005). Rather, adults were made to believe that showering children with gifts was an important way of demonstrating affection.

⁵³ See Hartmann (1976) and MacKinnon (1982) for some of the foundational works in socialist feminism where this term was coined.

Following World War II and the growth of television, both children and parents became a focus audience for advertising. A 1997 *Business Week* article put children's direct purchasing power at \$20 billion with children under fourteen influencing their parents to spend another \$200 billion (Kerwin & Leonhardt, 1997). Clearly, children comprise a huge potential market for multinational companies.⁵⁴ In this sense, they are treated like their adult counterparts, as consumers with purchasing power. While the products advertised for them are not precisely the same as those targeted for adults, as Kapur (2005) points out, many children's products are "straightforward replications of adult products for children with essentially no difference between the two other than packaging (p. 30). In addition, many of the products aim to "adultify" children. For example, selling cosmetics to girls is one of the most obvious strategies for achieving this. Such products clearly demonstrate that gender is a major force for the market – girls are sold Barbies, Bratz dolls, make-up, and Betty Crocker mini kitchen sets while boys get GI Joes, Transformers, and action figures of all varieties. But for girls, because of the way gender operates, overt sexuality is also marketed to them.⁵⁵ Halloween brings this relationship to light, as evidenced through Kati's cop costume.

A heavy navy blue shirt and pants, black combat boots, and black belt comprise the standard uniform for a cop. The police officer is traditionally thought of as a masculine figure, a position of authority that has only recently become more open to women. Kati's police officer costume for girls is clearly representative of the standard uniform in color; in addition, the identifying badge and cap make it unmistakably a cop uniform. The short tank top and skirt, however, serve as an unsubtle giveaway that this costume was made for a female. The upshot is that males simply are not supposed to wear such clothing. Remarkably, the feminization of this costume is achieved through overt sexualization by exposing Kati's body in ways that become legible as sexy, even when placed on a nine-year-old girl's body. The uncanny juxtaposition of such attire on a girl gave cause for Ms. Lee to comment that Kati was "*that* kind of cop." Immediately I knew to what "*that* kind of cop" referred.⁵⁶

For girls, gender continues to be reinforced through more traditional codes of pink, flowers, and frill. As Maine (2009) writes, citing the American Psychological Association's (APA) 2007 report, the sexualization of elementary school age girls is on the rise with the toys and clothes available to girls becoming increasingly "sexy" (Olfman, 2009, p. 68). But what does this mean? Is it enough to describe and assert that Kati's costume sexualizes femininity? That her costume is sexy and objectifying? Clearly, this is subjective terrain, and any interpretation is by definition partial. It is tautological to characterize these costumes as sexy, yet it is difficult to interpret phenomena from the cultural inside. As Foucault (1990) never tires of reminding us, sexuality cannot be defined *a priori* to social and political forces; it is created through social practice and is wrapped up in politics. In this way, interpretations of sexiness are also bound up in how a society understands and lives sexuality and in complicated ways:

⁵⁴ Children also continue to provide labor for these companies overseas as global capitalism encourages monetary growth by any means necessary, including the exploitation of child labor.

⁵⁵ Boys' sexuality is also marketed but takes the form of strong and violent characters.

⁵⁶ In this statement, Ms. Lee's "*that*" signifies sexy and symbolizes the social derivation of the signifier. I understood what she meant by "*that*" because we understood the context of our conversation (sexuality as manifested during Halloween) but also because of the ubiquity of sexy cop costumes for women during Halloween.

sexy is as sexy is interpreted. However, deeming a Halloween costume “sexy” violates a taboo, or at least its haunting, by U.S. standards. Moreover, are to be sexy and to be sexualized different? Olfman (2009) writes that the sexualization of childhood is a social phenomenon that is done *to* children. She claims that it is “a consequence of cultural values, beliefs, norms, and practices that treat children as if they are sexually mature because of the outward trappings of wardrobe, makeup, or precocious puberty” (p. 2). While an objective reading of Kati’s costume is therefore impossible, what remains significant are the patterns of social formation that can be observed. For example, Kati’s costume was not unique in its exposure of flesh or its adult-like theme. On that Halloween many girls wore fishnets, lacy material, strappy, tight and midriff-revealing tops, and make-up. These encompassed the “risqué” costumes to which Ms. Lee referred in our conversation about Halloween. However, as will be shown later, an explanation for the sexiness of Kati’s costume is attributed, at least in part, to an understanding of Latino culture.

In 2006, the *New York Times* ran an article entitled, “Good Girls go Bad, for a Day” in the Fashion & Style section. In it, Adie Nelson, author of “The Pink Dragon is Female: Halloween Costumes and Gender Markers” (2000) is quoted as saying that “girls’ costumes are designed in ways that create the semblance of a bust where there is none.” The temporal developmental gap demonstrated through the dissonance between Kati’s child body and the clothing she had chosen to don for Halloween is not unique to her. It is not a phenomenon unique to Unity, either. Rather, the Halloween costume she chose, bought, and then put on is only one of millions manufactured for girls’ bodies to exhibit on this day. A trip to any Halloween store will render clear that sexy costumes for girls are abundant among the options. Or, an internet search can provide an ample sampling of the costumes available to children. I chose the following three examples from partycity.com (retrieved June 8, 2011). These costumes, in different variations, are common and ubiquitous – the police officer, the nurse, and the geisha (sometimes called “Madame Butterfly”).



These three costumes represent some of what is currently being marketed to girls, and while the “Kimono Cutie” costume comes sized for girls five-years-old and up, all of them fit sizes 8-10, which means that they will fit, on average, a nine-year-old girl. These costumes, however, do not coincide with our image of little girls’ clothing – short skirts and heels are mostly associated with clothing for adults. Moreover, the girl models in these shots hold their bodies in the “unnatural” positions of female adult models. Their hips jut to the side, chests thrust slightly forward with backs arched, one hand on waist or hips. The body is accentuated, and like the products themselves that are marketed to children (Kapur, 2005), these girls are made up to look like women in miniature. The images are prescient because for every girl costume, an adult counterpart exists. The adult versions may present an elevated sexiness, but juxtaposing the images is striking.



Observing these images in juxtaposition, the sexualized adult costume is, for girls, simply in miniature. Again, as in the case of Kati, it appears that these girls' costumes serve as placeholders for becoming women. But, if the girls' costumes are adultified versions in miniature, the placeholder is not only about the representation of women that the girls want to inhabit. It is also about inhabiting the fantasy of adult fantasies. So the girls' desires to become women are also desires to become a fantasized type of woman in addition to the character the costume replicates. Like performances in child beauty pageants, on Halloween many girls "become" sexualized, adultified fantasies of their possible future commercial selves. Yet, the question of choice remains. Are girls, as Mulvey argued in 1975, victims of a capitalist patriarchy whose inescapable male gaze turns them into consumers of themselves as commodities? I turn now to a look at

explanations offered by Ms. Alexander and Ms. Lee, whose perspectives align more with those of Mulvey.

Explaining Children's Choices

I visited Ms. Alexander's classroom following the school's Halloween celebration. The students had gone home, the class cleaned and cleared, lights dim on a late afternoon in the fall. Ms. Alexander had taken off the defining features of her Scarecrow costume – straw hat and hay that had poked out from her oversized blue denim shirt. We began talking about the costumes, and she remarked that Latino culture gives kids much more exposure to and knowledge about sexuality than she had when she was a child. She said she was ignorant of sexuality. When I asked why she thought that Unity girls chose sexy costumes, she made the point that the costumes are not necessarily their choices because they are store-bought and not about creativity and their imagination. Ms. Alexander recalled her own upbringing again and went on to explain how her mother always made her costumes, pondering aloud how her mother was able to make all the costumes that they desired. She stated that there is a discrepancy in resources between her family background and those of her students. Here Ms. Alexander draws upon cultural and class difference to analyze why the girls at Unity choose, or as she explains, are given, revealing, sexualized costumes.

From what I could see, no Unity students wore costumes made at home. "It's what's available to them," Ms. Alexander explained regarding the choices in costumes that Unity students, and girls in particular, had made for their Halloween costumes. Ms. Alexander is a white teacher in her early 30s from an upper middle-class family. She thoughtfully considered the reasons for the distance that she perceives between her students and herself, explaining that class and culture are key factors that influence expressions of sexuality and gender. Here she reveals a perception of the market in Halloween costumes that caters to a sexualized, hyperfeminine taste found in abundance at local Halloween pop-up stores, Wal-Mart, and other department stores that sell Halloween goods.

In Ms. Alexander's logic, her female students are locked into specific variants of sexual and gender expression because this is what consumer culture makes available to poor children. These episodes resonate with Walkerdine's ideas in the sense that she understands her girl students' choices as being determined by structural class forces. She writes about the significance of fantasy and desire in popular culture's representation of girls. After Walkerdine (1998) asserts that images of an eroticized "child-woman" (p. 165) are ubiquitous, she follows by refuting Mulvey's claim that the male gaze fixes femininity and thus defines female desire. In Walkerdine's view, female desire is never fixed; it is constantly being constructed. Walkerdine (1998) paraphrases Mulvey's thesis, "There are no fantasies that originate with girls, only those projected on them. All that girls can do then is to hold up for analysis the fictions and fantasies through which they are formed. Patriarchy wins...and there is no escape" (p. 166). Critiquing this argument, Walkerdine responds to the perception that little girls are, even more so than their adult women counterparts, exploited when they are represented as sexualized child-women, writing, "I have always felt that it has been misunderstood by feminism, which has

wanted to blame working-class girls for a femininity which they could not leave behind” (p. 167).

Ms. Alexander’s commentary illustrates Walkerdine’s (1998) statement, “Class, then, plays a central role in the regulation of femininity, and the production of Otherness” (p. 171). Yet, an analysis of race remains missing, just as it is in Walkerdine’s early work. Ms. Alexander draws upon clear differences between her students’ and her own upbringing. Her words do not possess a direct moral judgment about right and wrong. She did not overtly assert whether she thought the girls’ costumes are good or bad choices. But it is clear that she is uncomfortable with the limits of expression available to low-income girls on Halloween and the ways in which Latino culture shapes concepts of gender and sexuality.

I also spoke to Ms. Lee at the end of the day. She asked how my research was going, and I responded that I thought Halloween was really interesting, that I was thinking about writing an entire chapter on the day. I asked what she thought about the costumes this Halloween, and she told me that some of the costumes on display would not have been tolerated at a middle-class school, that kids would be told that they were inappropriate. We discussed the two women in the cop and medical nurse costumes, and Ms. Lee said that if the principal with whom she had worked at Fairfield Elementary School (a middle-class school about a mile-and-a-half away) had seen them on her campus, she would have told them that they needed to leave the school. She then commented that she is not sure if it is culture or class that makes the kids at the school so “hypergendered.” She talked about how only the boys play soccer, basketball, and volleyball on the playground even though the spaces are open to everyone. Ms. Lee concluded, “They bring in what they learn from their homes.”⁵⁷ She explained that within Latino culture there is more of a “courting culture,” where girls are more feminized and boys more masculinized at an earlier age, and where early sexualized flirtations are encouraged.

The women in the cop and nurse costumes had arrived together for the Halloween parade that day, and I assume they were the students’ relatives. The nurse carried a toddler dressed up in a lavender and white fairy costume. They walked around taking pictures. It never became clear to me which student(s) they had come to see, but they appeared at ease in the hullabaloo of the festivities, both Latinas in their late twenties. It is worth describing their costumes, which were similar but for a couple of small details. The nurse costume was black with the detail of a white cross inside a red circle hanging from her skirt and stitched into her black medic cap. The uniform was a t-shirt and a mini-skirt. She wore nothing to cover her legs, but the high heeled boots she wore rose to a couple of inches below her knee. A plastic silver police badge marked the navy blue cop uniform. A t-shirt and three-tiered mini-skirt clung tightly to the young woman’s body. She wore black stockings under her skirt and also had black high-heeled boots. Both women’s t-shirts revealed their cleavages, demonstrating dissonance with the white, middle-class culture of U.S. elementary schooling (Delpit, 2006; Ogbu, 2004), which holds that children should not be exposed to such displays of the body, especially within the bounds of the school (Boas, 2012).

⁵⁷ I discuss the explanatory framing of the relationship between schools and homes throughout my dissertation. I explore the ways in which teachers perceive the students’ home cultures as corrupting an otherwise benign and innocent school culture.

The explanations regarding difference that Ms. Lee and Ms. Alexander draw upon to account for the sexualized and gendered spectacle of Halloween at Unity rely on perceptions of race and class. In their analyses, race and class are implicated in a concept of culture. It is Unity's culture that allows for some girls to remain in their risqué costumes during the school day when, according to Ms. Lee, they would have been sent home had they been at Fairfield Elementary School.⁵⁸ This same permissiveness tolerates the adult nurse and police officer costumes at the school instead of telling them that their costumes were inappropriate and to go home. Whether the difference is class or culture is a telling one, but before delving into explanation of what it reveals, it is important first to explore the use of "culture" here and its relationship to race.

Culture and race are linked categories. The conversations that occurred at Unity around Halloween illuminate their connections and interdependency. Ms. Alexander and Ms. Lee speak of Latino culture, and in many cases, culture is used as a proxy for race. In this color-blind era (Omi & Winant, 1990; Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Wise, 2010) race is treated as taboo even if its discourse and practice is alive and well, ensconced in both social institutions and public language. As Bonilla-Silva (2009) explains, race discourse operates under the guise of cultural terms, resulting in practices of racism that cannot be spoken in precise language. Race becomes cloaked in the language of culture – a cultural explanation for difference is based in a racial concept. For this reason, Ms. Alexander can say "Latino culture gives kids much more exposure to and knowledge about sexuality than I had." Here she signals racial difference through language that specifically cites culture.

These teachers' statements demonstrate the intricacies and complications of discourses on race and culture. For Ms. Lee and Ms. Alexander, their use of "culture" is one that derives from a view of culture based in traits and attributes. It can be said, then, that Latino culture becomes racialized even if "Latino" is not an official census race category. The racialization of Latinos is a move away from understanding race as a static category and toward a conception of it as a "fluid, dynamic, historically specific and geographically contingent relation and process" (Maldonado, 2009, p. 1019).

As a major group of the school-going population in California, Latinos are treated as a racial group, spoken of as a racial group, and politicized as a racial group. So while "Latino" may not be an official category of race, its members are racialized, or discursively positioned as a racial group. Yet, cultural practices, customs, beliefs, and the histories ingrained in each of these aspects become understood through a flattening of what would otherwise be vicissitudes of culture, culture that "is experienced ambivalently and in multiple and conflicting ways" (Yon, 2000, p. 7). A more complex notion of culture would serve to create deeper understanding of racialization and its attendant ideological roots. Culture and race become like a knot, structurally entangled and visibly inextricable from one another on the surface. The examples of these teachers show that race and culture are deeply intertwined in social understandings, both fluid and hierarchical, and neither adhering to a single truth.

The racialization of sexuality becomes palpable in Ms. Lee's comparison between the treatment of sexual manifestations during Halloween at Unity and imagined at Fairfield. Assumed cultural differences are embedded in these comments – in the ways

that the Latino population at Unity engages in Halloween, and in the distinctions between expectations at a middle-class white school and at Unity. The teachers' statements regarding sexuality and gender and Latino culture are reminiscent of popular depictions of Latinas. Their comments on the hypersexual costume choices of the girls and women at Unity resonate with images of Latinas that proliferate in popular media. Scholarship on Latina/o popular culture interrogate relationships between media and public policy representations and popular beliefs (Asencio, 2010; Cepeda, 2003; Rodriguez & Massey, 2008; Vargas, 2009). Vargas (2010) discusses the origins of "hegemonic hypersexual representations" (p. 121) of Latinas in popular media, explaining that the image of the hypersexual Latina has deep historical roots and a far reach. Such representations inform "the popular belief in an inherent link between Latina corporality and hypersexuality" (Cepeda, 2003, p. 221). The perception that Unity students and their families are culturally predisposed to hypersexual expressions is informed by popular depictions.

While it remains a question for Ms. Lee, the idea that race, culture, class, and sexuality are mutually informing relations resonates in her statement, "I'm not sure if it's culture or class that makes the kids at school so hypergendered." While Ms. Lee speaks of gender, she refers to the overt sexualization of the young girls' costumes, illustrating a couple of points. First, sexuality and gender become entangled in their expressions. Second, sexuality, much like race in a society that purports colorblindness, is a loaded term especially when applied to children. Because children, and elementary school age girls in particular, are not supposed to "have" sexuality, even using the term in association with them becomes taboo. Ms. Lee and I had not discussed the frilly princesses that had pranced around the playground that day nor the pink skeleton costumes that were embellished with a frayed pink tutu. We were clearly discussing the "sexy" costumes, the ones that children and adults alike would have been kicked out for wearing had they been at a school of a different dominant culture and class.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered a narrative of Halloween at Unity Elementary School and sought to demonstrate how sexuality and gender intertwine and how these become entangled with race and conceptions of culture. These articulations play out during Halloween, a holiday that has become increasingly a consumer holiday through the years. Clearly, the consumer market, which targets children as a major market sector, capitalizes on gender, sexuality and race to sell its wares. Halloween does not exist in a vacuum – it has evolved over time, and the manifestations of fantasy and desire on this occasion reflect the changing contours of sexuality. The same goes for childhood. While teachers use cultural frameworks to explain the costume choices that their girl students make, it is clear that these choices are also structured and organized by a U.S. commercial market that limits and directs consumer desires. On Halloween, these desires manifest in the costumes that the elementary school students literally parade around in. The pressures to conform to a certain self-representation are illustrated in Maribel's resolution to go home instead of participating in Halloween activities without a costume. For Maribel and other immigrant students at Unity, the materials of self-representation on Halloween are also choices to "try on" U.S. cultural practices.

The strong role of elementary level schooling in facilitating the becoming of a consumer of American culture cannot be denied. In effect, school is where the girls in Ms. Lee's class are able to share in the excitement of purchasing and then putting on makeup together. It is also made evident through Unity's decision to ritualize Halloween over Dia de los Muertos, which is furthermore a choice to conform to the consumerist holiday that Halloween has become. These first- and second-generation immigrant children are learning what it means to be an American, a process largely facilitated through schooling. On Halloween it means participating in a consumer ritual that, for most of Unity's students, requires that they participate in consumer rituals. In turn, U.S. consumer culture shapes sexuality, demonstrating the existence of a complex relationship between elementary schools and the construction of sexuality.

Conclusion

This dissertation has addressed the ways that sexuality is organized through and within elementary schools. The primary question guiding this inquiry has been: How do elementary schools organize sexuality, ideologically and through social practices? This question has driven my study of sexuality within elementary schools. Focusing on teacher perceptions and actions, I have provided a route toward understanding how sexuality operates through discourses and practices within elementary schools. This final section of the dissertation reviews the major findings of the study and concludes with future directions for research in studies of elementary schooling and sexuality.

Dissertation in Review

Participant observation at Unity Elementary School and interviews of 15 elementary school teachers furnish the empirical methods at the base of this study. Data derived from these methods, interpretation, and analysis have helped me to arrive at responses to the primary research question above as well as the following questions:

- What does sexuality in elementary schools look and sound like to the adults who work with children?
- How do teachers respond to what they perceive as sexual behaviors and speech?
- How does sexuality articulate with other systems such as race, class, and gender in elementary school settings?

In addressing these questions, I have shown that the power of sexuality resides largely in its capacity to remain invisible to the vast majority. This is especially true in elementary schools, the sphere of children. For this reason, I have chosen elementary schools as a site from which to explore this elusive domain as it provides a place to explore sexuality not as sex but as fluid politics, an organization of power and pleasure. I have suggested that attempts to understand sexuality differently requires that its very definition become problematized, that we abandon notions of sexuality as sex or sexual propensities. Through these chapters, I have endeavored to illustrate sexuality as a set of processes, practices, discourse, and ideology that affect the social organization of people and power in the realm of the erotic. The erotic is that which constitutes – or is *imagined* to constitute – pleasure.

I have further argued that the principle organizing mechanisms of sexuality in elementary schools are silence and erasure. Sexuality is produced and organized through efforts to eliminate signs of it from elementary schools. It is not that sexuality disappears in these spaces, but it proliferates otherwise in ways that may go unnoticed much of the time. This can be seen in the example of the student from Chapter 4 who scrawled “having sex in the hall Sandra and Gus” and “Sandra and Gus sex have” on the Unity stairwell. In this instance, attempts by Ms. Lee and her students to erase the words from the walls was met with an escalating level of interest, culminating in her increased agitation. At the end of the day, after the words had been written in indelible ink, she entered Ms. Moon’s fifth grade classroom where Ms. Lee believed the culprit to be and delivered a lecture on respect and appropriate behavior. Here, sexuality emerges as an effect of resistance to

power, and its erasure is stubbornly thwarted, compelling Ms. Lee to devote attention to it against her desires to keep it light, as evidenced in her diversionary response to her students that the writing was “silly.” Ultimately, Ms. Lee’s authority is successful in squelching the action, but it is uncertain if her students have learned anything more than her threat. The students and teacher are caught in a morality performance, but the motivations, reasons, meanings, and impacts of the publicized act go unaddressed, trumped by Ms. Lee’s admonishing reaction.

The learning process is propelled through practices intended to keep sexual expressions from the school. They are premised upon ideology that frames a healthy childhood as non-sexual. Elementary schools are charged with maintaining this status quo. Therefore, it follows that Ms. Lee’s lecture propagates a discourse that has at its base this particular moral stance, an example demonstrating how sexuality becomes organized but also how it organizes. That is, socially there are the students who acted appropriately by expressing concern and even working to erase the words from the walls. There is also the perpetrator of the act who did wrong. Then there is Sandra, whom Ms. Lee saw as the main victim, and also Gus. Ultimately, all of the students in Ms. Moon and Ms. Lee’s class received a lesson on appropriate sexual behavior.

The “writing on the wall” example serves to illustrate the processes, practices, discourse, and ideology that drive sexuality in our culture. The response by Ms. Lee and some of her students to erase quickly the graffiti and to ferret out the perpetrator seems like a reasonable direction to take in the context of elementary level schooling. Yet, it should be noted that the rationale of such a response, and our own uptake of the response, lies in a culturally bound conception of how sexuality should be taught and learned. In Chapter 5 I drew from interviews to illuminate the thought processes and practices that teachers use to address sexual behaviors and expressions in their work with children. I have shown that teachers “walk the line” when confronted with issues of sexuality in school. There is no official training on sexuality for these teachers, and so they depend upon their own life experience, illuminated by ideology, when addressing behaviors and expressions that they perceive as sexual. Ultimately, to the best of their ability, these teachers push out signs of sexuality from the school because it is such a complex issue with real consequences. The silence and erasure of sexuality is thus maintained.

Silence and erasure of sexuality take on a different dimension when they become overt and unavoidable in elementary schools. The second pair of empirical chapters takes this up. In the case of Unity’s puberty education curriculum, the focus of Chapter 6, the language of Western science and medicine in English becomes emphasized as the correct and proper terminology for sex and sexuality, replacing students’ home and familiar language. The spoken language of pleasure is also extirpated from the repertoire of appropriate vocabulary as students are transmitted the message through the official puberty education curriculum that their common terms for sex and sexuality are undesirable.

In the final chapter on Unity’s Halloween celebration, I show that the labor of silencing and erasing sexuality from elementary schools is in vain as sexuality remains integral to social, cultural, economic, and political spheres that exist within and beyond schools. Moreover, they seem to proliferate. Efforts to eliminate expressions of sexuality from schools are impotent because schools are inextricable from these systems, which is illustrated by Unity’s participation in Halloween events like parades and contests where

children are encouraged to dress in costume. Most accessible to the students at Unity are store-bought costumes that reflect the sexualized gendered trends of the day – coquettish femininity for girls and violent masculinity for boys. The teachers interpret the girls’ costumes as more overtly sexualized, and they provide explanations of their students’ choices in costumes using language that reveals their beliefs about culture, race, and class.

The responses of the teachers, I have argued, reflect their social positions as agents who represent the state and are also agentic individuals. The teachers represented in my study do not blindly follow protocol. Instead, many of them deeply consider the implications and impacts of their responses but are puzzled and compromised by their personal, political, and professional commitments. In interviews, the majority of teachers grapple with interpretations of student behaviors and demonstrate deep reflection on their own beliefs about issues of sexuality. Ultimately, however, their actions must be carefully weighed against potential punishments or protests by administration, other teachers, or parents that could arise if they sway out of line. They are constrained by ideological structures held in place by these interconnected networks of people. In the end, teachers labor to push sexuality out of schools, which illuminates how hegemonic sexuality – sexuality that serves an adult investment in childhood innocence and their perceived non-sexuality – is maintained in the realm of elementary schools.

Critiques of childhood innocence have been taken up by many scholars (Ferguson, 2001; Fields, 2008; O’Connell Davidson, 2005; Renold, 2006; Robinson, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Thorne, 1993; Walkderdine, 1998). The notion that children are innocent and therefore in need of protections, is the focus of attention of mainstream discourses on children and sexuality. Yet, I argue that there is more that needs to be known about the relationship between sexuality and children to better understand the operation and organization of sexuality. One of the major aims of this dissertation has been to explore beliefs and practices of sexuality as culturally and socially produced, to make grey what we hold to be true about sexuality. Yet, this has not been my only objective as I am also aware of, and sensitive to, some of the terrible and real problems for children that exist within the realm of sexuality, such as child sexual abuse and exploitation.

On Child Sexual Abuse: Making the Connection

The literature on child sexual abuse is abundant, especially in the field of psychology (see especially Bagley & King, 1990; Finkelhor, 1981, 1984, 1986; Smith, 2008), and most of it warns of the threats and risks of child sexual abuse (CSA). Because media is rife with depictions and news of CSA, and because childhood and sexuality is a taboo subject, it can be difficult to think about children and sexuality without imagining CSA. CSA is an issue that I have not covered in this dissertation because an overarching aim for this study has been to push the envelope of mainstream frameworks of sexuality. This is not to say, however, that I do not consider CSA an important topic worthy of study. It certainly is.

As I wrote about in the literature review, CSA is one of the main frameworks in the popular imagination for understanding the relationship between children and sexuality. This is largely due to the cultural belief that children should be devoid of sexuality. It is believed that those children prematurely exposed to sex become contaminated. It is also believed that children who precociously expose sex are the perpetrators of unhealthy

contamination. The desire to maintain children beyond the reach of sexuality demonstrates that we think of it as a threat to children. For this reason, much literature has been produced that warn of the risks of sexual abuse and exploitation. Chapter 7 reviews some of the protectionist literature on the sexualization of girls, which reflects the tendency of literature dealing with children and sexuality to interpret children as victims when it comes to sexuality. Although my dissertation is in some ways a manner of providing other frameworks and perspectives in response to the work on CSA, my intention is not completely to ignore it. I understand that the literature and activism serve vital purposes. This section discusses the connection between CSA and the purpose of my particular focus on sexuality.

Media is filled with examples of CSA that occur in elementary schools. On January 31, 2012, the Los Angeles Times ran a story titled, “L.A. teacher charged with lewd acts on 23 children,” beginning the surge of coverage of Miramonte Elementary School teacher Mark Berndt’s trial and the subsequent challenges that shook the school and district and became national news. By March 19 of the same year seven more LAUSD staff had been charged with sexual molestation. Pictures of Berndt proliferated, and news coverage of related events was constant. A moral panic (Rubin, 1997) ensued, but the issue was not new. These types of incidents happen with frequency, and although it is not the emphasis of my dissertation, I would like to take some time to address the phenomenon of child sexual abuse and how it relates to my dissertation.

The “Adverse Childhood Experience Study” conducted by the Centers for Disease Control between 1995-1997 states that approximately one in three women and one in six men have reported being sexually abused as children⁵⁹ (Felitti et al, 1998), putting the total number at 20.7% of all adults. These numbers are reason for concern. However, I believe that attempts to prevent CSA do not address some of the core issues of these problems, which requires examination of the fundamental belief systems that undergird these practices of abuse. To understand this, we must first have a better understanding of the ideological underpinnings of sexuality in our culture and the vehicles used to propagate them. This is one of my dissertation’s main intentions.

One of the most robust, rigorous, and visionary praxis-based methods to address CSA that I have encountered comes from an organization called GenerationFIVE. Their overarching mission is to eliminate CSA in five generations, or by 2125, through a methodology called “Transformative Justice.” Transformative Justice aims to end cycles of violence by addressing CSA through individual and collective accountability, healing for the survivor of abuse, and transformation of the abuser, community, and social conditions that perpetuate violence.⁶⁰ Principles of Transformative Justice reject revenge-based models of response, such as imprisonment and criminalization, and instead seek to humanize all involved through equity, accountability, and collective action. Within this model, changing responses to CSA requires re-education away from the norms of violence that are sustained through intersecting systems of oppression.

Focus on GenerationFIVE’s work is not intended to promote their organization but rather to offer a practical re-framing of CSA, a main way of interpreting relationships

⁵⁹ The Centers for Disease Control define child sexual abuse as “An adult or person at least five years older ever touched or fondled you in a sexual way, or had you touch their body in a sexual way, or attempted oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you, or actually had oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you.”

⁶⁰ See www.generationfive.org for more information on the organization’s work.

between children and sexuality. By addressing the issue as a systemic rather than individual or pathological-based problem, GenerationFIVE's treatment of the problem implores us to think about how we come to learn sexuality. In doing so, it also asks us to imagine a society where sex and sexuality are not seen primarily as threats. This means, at least in part, that the relationship between childhood and sexuality would also be reconceived. For example, teaching children to identify and know their own pleasure would affirm a kind of knowledge of self that is, both intentionally and inadvertently, not currently permitted by most adults inside or outside of schools, as I illustrated in Chapter 6. Teaching shame around pleasure means that its discourse becomes a private matter at best, and therefore, so does discourse on displeasure. This can have grave effects. Children learn that talking about sex is inappropriate, uncomfortable, and unacceptable.

The realm of sexuality in general, and the provocations of sexual violence more specifically, need far more exploration. What can be known now is that the sexual abuse of children persists even with the implementation of policies like Megan's Law and the National Sex Offender Registry. Punishment is our paradigmatic recourse, causing numbers of incarcerated persons to grow, and those targeted are majority men of color. While my study offers an exploration of sexuality within the institution of elementary schools, the research also aims to effect change in how sexuality is interpreted and organized with the hope that new ways of thinking about sexuality can create healthy changes in broader society.

Future Research Directions

In future research I seek a greater emphasis on issues of race and ethnicity in schools as I expand studies on the articulations of race, gender, and sexuality. I will continue examining the complex relationships between social actors and institutions by exploring the ways that families of differing racial and class backgrounds perceive the role of school in teaching sexuality. A simultaneous expansion of my current dissertation project as well as an independent contribution to the field of the sociology of education, my new research area will help teachers, administration, policymakers, and parents understand the stakes of raising children in the complex webs of institutional spaces. While home-school connections are often made important in educational discourse, a need for understanding how schools and homes *mutually* inform each other continues to exist. This is particularly true for subjects, like sexuality, where schools assume sexuality education to be the domain of the home, as evidenced in interviews I conducted with teachers. However, sexuality is taught unevenly across home settings. Schools are seen as institutions that level playing fields, and this is no different for sexuality education. I would like to explore how families of differing racial, class, and national backgrounds understand the role of schools in sexuality education.

Another area of future research will address comparative international perspectives. Working from an inchoate hypothesis that the definitions themselves will change across cultural, political, and linguistic contexts, I will continue to investigate the organization of sexuality. In my dissertation, I have written about the new sexuality education program introduced to kindergartners through the public education system in Basel, Switzerland. The curriculum asks teachers to be explicit with their students about biological science *and* pleasure. This operates in contrast to the sexuality education that is

found – if it is found at all – in the United States. Teachers in the U.S. are comfortable teaching about sexuality mainly from a biological, scientific perspective; as a result, conversations and behaviors that manifest pleasure are silenced. I am interested in the cultural and historical underpinnings of such distinctions.

In another example, in a 2011 Canadian public opinion poll⁶¹, 69 percent of Canadians favored discussing pleasure in sexuality education curriculum, while this was true of only 46 percent of U.S. Americans. I aim to study another national school system through ethnographic methods to understand further the constitution of this difference by also attending to the nuanced influences of race and class, as they are expressed and interpreted in different countries. Through this theoretical and practical study, I will continue examining the interpenetrations between social actors and institutions by exploring the ways that teachers comprehend and teach sexuality. This research area will help teachers, administration, policymakers, and parents understand the stakes of raising children in the complex webs of institutional spaces they must negotiate.

From a practitioner and researcher perspective, the issues that surround sexuality will continue to be significant in elementary school life. As stated, many teachers have expressed their desires for curriculum that can provide guidance on these issues on a practical level. A book project, which will be based on my dissertation study, will address issues of sexuality on both a theoretical and practical level and will be useful to both teacher practitioners and researchers. What needs to be understood are the myriad social influences that converge and become salient around issues of sexuality within the school. I seek to address robustly both aspects through future research that builds upon this dissertation project.

⁶¹ AngusReid Public Opinion. (2011). “Americans, Canadians, and Britons Disagree on Sex Education.” Retrieved December 10, 2012.

Bibliography

- Alexander, M. J. (2005). *Pedagogies of crossing: meditations on feminism, sexual politics, memory, and the sacred*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Alexander, M. J. (1994). Not just (any) body can be a citizen: The politics of law, sexuality and postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas. *Feminist Review*, (48), 5–23.
- Allen, L. (2005). *Sexual subjects: young people, sexuality and education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Almaguer, T. (1994). *Racial fault lines: Historical origins of white supremacy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/la frontera*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Apple, M. W. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of childhood: A social history of family life*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Asencio, M. (2010). *Latina/o sexualities: Probing powers, passions, practices, and policies*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Bagley, C., & King, K. (1990). *Child sexual abuse: The search for healing*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Rabelais and his world*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Banks, J. A. (1993). The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(5), 4–14. doi:10.3102/0013189X022005004
- Belk, Russell W. (1990). Halloween: An American evolving consumer ritual. (Marvin E. Goldberg, Gerald Gorn, and Richard W. Pollay, Ed.) *Advances in Consumer Research*, 17, 508–517.
- Bellous, J. (2002). Children, sex and sacredness. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 7(1), 73–91.
- Berger, J. (1973). *Ways of seeing*. New York, NY: The Viking Press.
- Berlak, H. (2009). Race and the achievement gap. In W. Au (Ed.), *Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for Racial and Cultural Justice*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1998). Sex in public. *Critical Inquiry*, 24(2), 547–566.
- Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bigelow, M. A. (1916). *Sex-education: a series of lectures concerning knowledge of sex in its relation to human life*. New York, NY: MacMillan.
- Birke, L. (1999). *Feminism and the biological body*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Boas, E. (2012). Walking the line: teaching, being, and thinking sexuality in elementary schools. In E. Meiners & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Bobo, L. A., & Smith, R. (1998). From Jim Crow racism to laissez-faire racism: The transformation of racial attitudes. In W. F. Katkin, N. Landsman, & A. Tyree (Eds.), *Beyond Pluralism and Group Identities in America*. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: an introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bond Stockton, K. (2009). *The queer child: Or growing sideways in the twentieth century*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2009). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (Third ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Bordo, S. (2004). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, western culture, and the body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bordo, S. (1987). *The flight to objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and culture*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (2000). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1977). Social reproduction and cultural reproduction. In J. Karabel & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and Ideology in Education*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bruess, C. E., & Greenberg, J. S. (2008). *Sexuality education: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Butler, J. P. (2004). *Undoing gender*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Cavanagh, S. L. (2007). *Sexing the teacher: school sex scandals and queer pedagogies*. Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press.
- Cepeda, M. E. (2003). Shakira as the idealized, transnational citizen: A case study of Colombianidad in transition. *Latino Studies, 1*(2), 211–232.
doi:10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600023
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Coleman, R. & McCahill, M. (2010). *Surveillance and crime*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (Revised, 10th Anniv., 2nd.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Combahee River Collective. (1981). A Black Feminist Statement. In C. Moraga & G. Anzaldúa (Eds.), *This bridge called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press.
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person, and sexual politics*. Stanford University Press.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cooper, A. (2010, September 2). Do anti-bullying laws push gay agenda? *Anderson Cooper 360*. CNN. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/video/?/video/us/2010/09/02/ac.school.bully.cnn>

- Cox, R. (2002). *Shaping childhood: Themes of uncertainty in the history of adult-child relationships*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. doi:10.2307/1229039
- Davis, A. Y. (1983). *Women, race, & class* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Vintage.
- De Assis César, M. R. (2009). Gênero, sexualidade e educação: notas para uma “Epistemologia”. *Educar em Revista*, (35), 37–51. doi:10.1590/S0104-40602009000300004
- Deleuze, G., & Foucault, M. (1973). The intellectuals and power: A discussion between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. *Telos*, 1973(16), 103–109. doi:10.3817/0673016103
- Delpit, L. D. (1996). *Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: New Press.
- D’Emilio, J., & Freedman, E. B. (1988). *Intimate matters: A history of sexuality in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1995). *Points . . . Interviews, 1974-1994*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Diaz, R. M. (1997). *Latino gay men and HIV: Culture, sexuality, and risk behavior*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Driscoll, C. (2002). *Girls: Feminine adolescence in popular culture & cultural theory*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Eng, D. L. (2001). *Racial castration: Managing masculinity in Asian America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.
- Eng, D. L., Halberstam, J., & Muñoz, J. E. (2005). *What’s queer about queer studies now?: 3/4 What’s Queer about*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Epstein, D. (1994). *Challenging lesbian and gay inequalities in education*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (Erik H. (1995). *Childhood and society*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Fass, P. S. (2007). *Children of a new world: Culture, society, and globalization*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the body: gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. Basic Books.
- Ferguson, A. A. (2001). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of black masculinity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., & et. al. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. *American Journal of Prevention Medicine*, 14(4), 245–258.
- Ferguson, R. A. (2004). *Aberrations in black: Toward a queer of color critique*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fields, J. (2008). *Risky lessons: sex education and social inequality*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Fine, M. (1993). Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. In L. Weis & M. Fine (Eds.), *Beyond silenced voices: class, race, and gender in United States schools*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Finkelhor, D. (1981). *Sexually victimized children*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

- Finkelhor, D. (1984). *Child sexual abuse: new theory and research*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Finkelhor, D. (1986). *A sourcebook on child sexual abuse*. New York, NY: SAGE.
- Fiol-Matta, L. (2002). *Queer mother for the nation: The state and Gabriela Mistral* (1st ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of "acting white." *The Urban Review*.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1: An introduction*. (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage.
- Foucault, M., & Kritzman, L. D. (1988). Sexuality, morality, and the law. In *Politics, philosophy, culture: Interviews and other writings, 1977-1984*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Fraser, N. (1981). Foucault on modern power: Empirical insights and normative confusions. *PRAXIS International*, (3), 272–287.
- Freire, P. (1995). *Pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Freud, S. (1976). *The complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud (The Standard Edition) (Vol. 1-24 Volume Set)*. (J. Strachey, Ed.) (1st ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Freud, S. (1995). Three contributions to the theory of sex. In A. A. Brill (Trans.), *The basic writings of Sigmund Freud*. New York, NY: Modern Library.
- Freud, S., McLintock, D., & Haughton, H. (2003). *The uncanny*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Fields, J. (2008). *Risky lessons: Sex education and social inequality*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, C. (2011). *The birth of pleasure: A new map of love*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Gilligan, C., & Lyons, N. (1989). *Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilliom, J. (2001). *Overseers of the poor: Surveillance, resistance, and the limits of privacy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition revised and expanded edition*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Gonzalez, G. (1999). Segregation and the education of Mexican children, 1900-1940. In J. F. Moreno (Ed.), *The elusive quest for equality: 150 years of Chicano/Chicana education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households and classrooms* (1st ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Gordon, A. F. (2008). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination* (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press.
- Gutiérrez, R. A. (1991). *When Jesus came, the corn mothers went away: Marriage, sexuality, and power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gutmann, M. C. (2006). *The meanings of macho: Being a man in Mexico City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Habermas, J. R. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. (T. Burgen & F. Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hall, S. (1988). *The hard road to renewal: Thatcherism and the crisis of the left*. London, UK: Verso Books.
- Hall, S. (n.d.). Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance. In P. Essed & D. Goldberg (Eds.), *Race critical theories*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Halperin, D. M. (1989). Is there a history of sexuality? *History and Theory*, 28(3), 257–274.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.
- Harding, S., & O’Barr, J. F. (Eds.). (1987). *Sex and scientific inquiry*. University of Chicago Press Journals.
- Harden, B. (2004, October 31). Halloween hits streak of bad luck in school: Wash. City joins others to ban costumes, parties. *The Washington Post*, p. A03.
- Harper, P. B. (2000). The evidence of felt intuition: Minority experience, everyday life, and critical speculative knowledge. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 6(4), 641–657.
- Harris, A. (2004). *All about the girl: Culture, power, and identity*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Hartmann, H. (1976). Capitalism, patriarchy, and job segregation by sex. *Signs, Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation*, 1(3), 137–169.
- Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2004). *The American dream and the public schools*. Oxford, UK & New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Holland, D., & Skinner, D. (1996). Schools and the cultural production of the educated person in a Nepalese hill community. In B. A. Levinson, D. E. Foley, & D. C. Holland (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Hubbard, R. (1990). *The politics of women’s biology*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Hunter, R. C., & Bartee, R. (2003). The achievement gap issues of competition, class, and race. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(2), 151–160. doi:10.1177/0013124502239389
- Irvine, J. M. (2004). *Talk about sex: The battles over sex education in the United States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Irvine, J. M. (2003). Introduction to "Sexual scripts: Origins, influences and changes." *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(4), 489–490. doi:10.1023/B:QUAS.0000005263.56276.9c
- Jenks, C. (2005). *Childhood*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Johnson, E. P. P. (2003). *Appropriating blackness: Performance and the politics of authenticity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Johnson, T. S. (2008). *From teacher to lover: Sex scandals in the classroom*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Jorgensen, D. L. (1989). *Participant observation: a methodology for human studies*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Kapur, J. (2005). *Coining for capital: Movies, marketing, and the transformation of childhood*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Koschoreck, J. W., & Tooms, A. K. (2009). *Sexuality matters: Paradigms and policies for educational leaders*. Landham, MD: R&L Education.
- Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities: children in America's schools*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Kumashiro, K. (2002). *Troubling education: "Queer" activism and anti-oppressive pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lacan, J. (1956). *The language of the self*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Lacan, J. (1977). *Ecrits: A selection*. (A. Sheridan, Ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co Inc.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2001) *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Verso.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491. doi:10.2307/1163320
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3–12. doi:10.3102/0013189X035007003
- Laqueur, T. W. (1992). *Making sex: Body and gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lather, P. (2003). Applied Derrida: (Mis)reading the work of mourning in educational research. Presented at the American Education Research Association, Chicago.
- Leonardo, Z. (2003). *Ideology, discourse, and school reform*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Leonardo, Z. (2004). Critical social theory and transformative knowledge: The functions of criticism in quality education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(6), 11–18. doi:10.3102/0013189X033006011
- Leonardo, Z. (2007). The war on schools: NCLB, nation creation and the educational construction of whiteness. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 261–278.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Levin, D., & Kilbourne, J. (2009). *So sexy so soon: The new sexualized childhood and what parents can do to protect their kids*. New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc.
- Linn, S. (2004). *Consuming kids: The hostile takeover of childhood*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Langhorne, PA: Crossing Press.
- Lowe, L. (1996). *Immigrant acts: On Asian American cultural politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 186–209.
- Luker, K. (2007). *When sex goes to school: Warring views on sex--and sex education--since the sixties*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co Inc.
- Lyon, D. (2003). *Surveillance as social sorting: Privacy, risk, and digital discrimination*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Lyotard, J.F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mac an Ghail, M., & Haywood, C. (2003). *Men and masculinities: Theory, research and social practice* (1st ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- MacLeod, J. (1995). *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood, expanded edition* (1st ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Maldonado, M. M. (2009). “It is their nature to do menial labour”: the racialization of “Latino/a workers” by agricultural employers. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32(6), 1017–1036. doi:10.1080/01419870902802254
- Martin, E. (2001). *The woman in the body: A cultural analysis of reproduction*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher*, 17(2), 13–17. doi:10.3102/0013189X017002013
- McCready, L. T. (2004). Understanding the marginalization of gay and gender non-conforming black male students. *Theory Into Practice*, 43(2), 136–143.
- McCall, L. (2001). *Complex inequality: Gender, class and race in the new economy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McCullers, J. C. (1976). G. Stanley Hall's Conception of Mental Development. In A. Skolnick (Ed.), *Rethinking Childhood: Perspectives on Development and Society*. Boston, MA: Little Brown & Company.
- McKay, A. (1998). *Sexual ideology and schooling: Towards democratic sexuality education*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: a sourcebook of new methods*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Mitchell, C., & Reid-Walsh, J. (2008). *Girl culture: Studying girl culture: a readers' guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Moon, D. (2008). Culture and the sociology of sexuality: It's only natural? *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 619(1), 183–205. doi:10.1177/0002716208320242
- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). *This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of color*. Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.
- Morrison, T. (1988, October 7). *Unspeakable things unspoken: The Afro-American presence in American literature*. Presented at the Tanner Lectures on Human Values, University of Michigan.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen*, 16(3), 6–18.
- Muñoz, J. E. (1999). *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Nagel, J. (2003). *Race, ethnicity, and sexuality: Intimate intersections, forbidden frontiers*. Oxford University Press.

- Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89(1), 1–15. doi:10.1057/fr.2008.4
- Nelson, A. (2000). The pink dragon is female. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 24(2), 137–144. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2000.tb00194.x
- Noguera, P. A., & Wing, J. Y. (2008). *Unfinished business: Closing the racial achievement gap in our schools*. John Wiley & Sons.
- O’Connell Davidson, J. (2005). *Children in the global sex trade*. Boston, MA: Polity.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of ‘acting White’ in Black history, community, and education. *The Urban Review*, 36(1).
- Olfman, S. (2005). *Childhood lost: How American culture is failing our kids*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Olfman, S. (2008). *The sexualization of childhood*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oppliger, P. A. (2008). *Girls gone skank: The sexualization of girls in American culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.
- Pascoe, C. J. (2007). *Dude, you’re a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Payne, R. K. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highlands, TX: Aha! Process.
- Phillips, D. C., & Burbules, N. C. (2000). *Postpositivism and educational research*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Piaget, J. (1997). *The moral judgment of the child*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175. doi:10.1080/0951839032000060635
- Pollock, M. (2005). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Postman, N. (1994). *The disappearance of childhood*. New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc.
- Price, J., & Shildrick, M. (1999). *Feminist theory and the body: a reader*. Taylor & Francis.
- Prout, A. (Ed.). (2005). *The future of childhood*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Prout, A., & James, A. (1997). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Reist, M. T. (2010). *Getting real: Challenging the sexualisation of girls*. Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press.
- Renold, E. (2005). *Girls, boys, and junior sexualities: Exploring children’s gender and sexual relations in the primary school*. London, UK: Psychology Press.
- Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Signs*, 5(4), 631–660.
- Robinson, K. (2008). In the name of ‘childhood innocence’: A discursive exploration of the moral panic associated with childhood and sexuality. *Cultural Studies Review*, 14(2), 113–29.
- Rodríguez, H., & Massey, D. S. (2008). *Latinas/os in the United States: Changing the face of América*. New York, NY: Springer.

- Rodríguez, J. M. (2003). *Queer latinidad: Identity practices, discursive spaces*. NYU Press.
- Rofes, E. (2005). *A radical rethinking of sexuality and schooling: Status quo or status queer?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Rogers, N. (2003). *Halloween: From pagan ritual to party night*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Rosenbloom, S. (2006, October 19). Good girls go bad, for a day. *New York Times*.
- Ross, A. (2000). *Curriculum: Construction and critique*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Rowell, J. (2011). Carrying my family with me: artifacts as emic perspectives. *Qualitative Research*, 11(3), 331–346. doi:10.1177/1468794111399841
- Royle, N. (2003). *The uncanny: An introduction*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.
- Rubin, G. (1975). The traffic in women: Notes on the ‘political economy’ of sex. In R. R. Reiter (Ed.), *Toward anthropology of women*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Rubin, G. (1997). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory on the politics of sexuality. In R. N. Lancaster & M. di Leonardo (Eds.), *The gender/sexuality reader: Culture, history, political economy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sanjek, R. (1990). *Fieldnotes: The makings of anthropology*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Santino, J. (1994). *Halloween and other festivals: Death and life*. Memphis, TN: Univ Tennessee Press.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (1998). *Small wars: The cultural politics of childhood*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Schmidt, L. E. (1997). *Consumer rites: The buying and selling of American holidays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Segal, L. (1994). *Straight sex: Rethinking the politics of pleasure*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Seidman, S. (Ed.). (1996). *Queer theory sociology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Shapiro, M. S. (1981). *Child’s garden: The kindergarten movement from Froebel to Dewey*. Baltimore, MD: University Park.
- Silin, J. G. (1995). *Sex, death, and the education of children: our passion for ignorance in the age of AIDS*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (1968). Sex talk: Public and private. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 25(2), 173–191.
- Smart, B. (1994). Michel Foucault: Critical assessments. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Smith, M. J. (2008). *Child sexual abuse: Issues and challenges*. New York, NY: Nova Publishers.
- Somerville, S. B. (2000). *Queering the color line: Race and the invention of homosexuality in American culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Spade, J. Z., & Valentine, C. G. (2007). *The kaleidoscope of gender: Prisms, patterns, and possibilities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press

- Spring, J. H. (1988). *American education: an introduction to social and political aspects*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Stein, A., & Plummer, K. (1994). 'I can't even think Straight': 'Queer' theory and the missing sexual revolution in sociology. *Sociological Theory*, 12(2), 178–187. doi:10.2307/201863
- Stoler, A. L. (1995). *Race and the education of desire: Foucault's history of sexuality and the colonial order of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.
- Stoler, A. L. (2002). *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Race and the intimate in colonial rule*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Stoler, A. L. (2006). *Haunted by empire: Geographies of intimacy in North American history*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Stryker, S., & Buskirk, J. V. (1996). *Gay by the bay: A history of queer culture in the San Francisco Bay Area*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.
- Taylor, A. (2010). Troubling childhood innocence: Reframing the debate over the media sexualisation of children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(1), 48–57.
- Taylor, C. (1984). Foucault on freedom and truth. *Political Theory*, 12(2), 152–183.
- Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Thew, N. (2000). Race, class and gender. In J. Mills & R. Mills (Eds.), *Childhood studies: A reader in perspectives of childhood*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tyack, D. B. (2003). *Seeking common ground: public schools in a diverse society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Valentine, G. (2004). *Public space and the culture of childhood*. London, UK: Ashgate Pub Ltd.
- Vance, C. S. (1991). Anthropology rediscovers sexuality: A theoretical comment. *Social Science & Medicine*, 33(8), 875–884.
- Vargas, L. (2009). *Latina teens, migration, and popular culture*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Walkerdine, V. (1998). *Daddy's girl: Young girls and popular culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wallis, A., & VanEvery, J. (2000). Sexuality in the primary school. *Sexualities*, 3(4), 409–423. doi:10.1177/136346000003004003
- Warner, M. (1993). *Fear of a queer planet: queer politics and social theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Webb, E. J., Campbell, D. T., & Schwartz, R. D. (1981). *Nonreactive measures in the social sciences* (2nd ed.). Houghton Mifflin School.
- Weeks, J. (1981). *Sex, politics & society*. Oxford, UK: Longman.
- Weis, L. (1988). *Class, race & gender*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Weis, L., & Fine, M. (1993). *Beyond silenced voices: Class, race, and gender in United States schools*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Weis, L., McCarthy, C., & Dimitriadis, G. (2006). *Ideology, curriculum, and the new sociology of education: Revisiting the work of Michael Apple*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Weismantel, M. J. (1998). *Food, gender, and poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes*. Longrove, IL: Waveland Press.

- White, H. (2011). "Sex box" for Swiss kindergarteners has genitalia toys: Will teach sexuality is pleasurable. *LifeSiteNews*. Retrieved August 26, 2011, from <http://www.lifesitenews.com/home/all-stories-on-date/2011/08/25>
- Wiley-Blackwell. Skal, D. J. (2003). *Death makes a holiday: A cultural history of Halloween*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Willis, P. (1981). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, E. (1992). *The sphinx in the city: Urban life, the control of disorder, and women*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Willis, P. (2000). *The ethnographic imagination*. Boston, MA: Polity.
- Wise, T. (2010). *Colorblind: The rise of post-racial politics and the retreat from racial equity*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishers.
- Wittig, M. (1992). *The straight mind and other essays*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Youdell, D. (2006). *Impossible bodies, impossible selves: Exclusions and student subjectivities*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Youdell, D. (2010). Queer outings: Uncomfortable stories about the subjects of post-structural school ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(1), 87–100. doi:10.1080/09518390903447168
- Zelizer, V. A. R. (1985). *Pricing the priceless child: The changing social value of children*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Intro:

The purpose of this interview is to hear from you about your experiences with the operation of gender, race, class and sexuality through your teaching practice. As a graduate student whose job it is to read and write, I am well-acquainted with theories of gender, race and class, but what is lacking in publications on education is how teachers engage with these issues, understand them and talk about them. I am interested in the ways you think and talk about these issues, and I appreciate you being here to share some of your ideas and experiences with me. I hope you will be as honest as possible throughout the interview, and if at any point you feel uncomfortable, please ask for what you need.

Before I begin, I just want to make sure that you understand that any information you provide, as outlined on the consent form, will be kept as confidential as possible. I will do everything in my power to ensure that all records and documents are kept private. Do you understand what has been outlined on the consent form? Do you consent to this interview?

Explanation of process:

I will begin the interview with you providing a bit of background on your teaching experience. In the next set of questions I will ask will be about critical incidents you've encountered in your teaching. This will provide the substance for the interview. Some of the questions will require you to think for a bit, I'm sure, so don't be scared to take some time to think things through. The last set of questions deal with your interpretation of some of the events you describe to me in the second part of the interview. If I have any remaining questions after conducting the interview, would it be ok to contact you for a shorter follow-up interview?

Part I: Background Questions

1. For how long have you been teaching?
2. Which levels/grades have you taught and where?
3. Why did you decide to teach?
4. Who has been the greatest influence in your teaching?
5. What has been the demographic of your students?

Part II: Gender, Race, Class Q's

1. What is your understanding of gender? How do you define it?
2. What is your understanding of race? How would you define it?
3. What is your understanding of class? How do you define it?
4. What are the ways that you think of each of these (gender, race, class) with respect to your teaching/classroom?
5. How does gender manifest in your classroom/teaching history?
6. How does race manifest in your classroom/teaching history?
7. How does class manifest in your classroom/teaching history?

Part III: Critical Incidents

1. Can you tell me about a time that gender became a salient issue in for you? A time that you really began to think about gender dynamics in the classroom?

APPENDIX A

2. How about race? Class?

Probe on the incidents:

3. How might have race come into play in this incident? Class?

4. Do all three ever come into play together?

Ask about more incidents.

5. Do you have anything to add here? Any thoughts/ideas that came up for you as you were talking?

Part IV: Concluding

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. It is quite possible that I will have follow up questions for you. Would it be possible for me to be in contact with you in the future if questions do arise?

APPENDIX B

Parent Introduction Letter

August 31, 2010

Dear parents and caring adults of Ms. _____'s class,

Greetings! My name is _____, and I will be working with Ms. _____ and your children this year. I am very excited about this opportunity to be a part of this classroom and school community.

I am currently a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley conducting research at _____. I was also an elementary school teacher for five years in Hayward and Oakland and taught 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th and 6th grades. My commitment to the improvement of public schools, teaching and learning, and academic research has led me to _____. I hope that I will be a valuable asset to this classroom and to the school community as a whole.

As mentioned, I am joining Ms. _____'s classroom to conduct research toward a doctorate in Education. In my study I examine gender—how it operates and is perceived by adults and children alike. I am interested in elementary schools because in my teaching experiences, I have found that schools play consistent and significant roles in forming ideas about gender in children. I will be in Ms. _____'s classroom from the first day of school until the last, and I look forward to learning with you and your children throughout the year.

When you see me, please do not hesitate to introduce yourself, converse, and ask any questions you might have. I hope I have the chance to meet each of you soon!

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B

31 de Agosto 2009

Queridos padres de familia,

Saludos a todos! Mi nombre es _____, y estaré trabajando con sus hijos en la clase de Señorita _____ este año. Estoy muy entusiasmada con la oportunidad de ser parte de esta clase y de la comunidad escolar.

Actualmente, estoy estudiando para obtener un doctorado en Educación en la Universidad de Berkeley, California. Estoy conduciendo una investigación en _____. Tengo cinco años de experiencia como profesora de primaria en las ciudades de Hayward y Oakland. Fui profesora de 1ero, 2do, 4to, 5to, y 6to grados. Estoy comprometida con el mejoramiento de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en las escuelas públicas. Espero ser una valiosa adición para esta clase y la comunidad en su conjunto.

Como mencioné anteriormente, estoy uniéndome a esta clase para completar los requerimientos de mi carrera. Mi investigación estará dirigida a examinar las diferencias de género y cómo éstas son percibidas tanto por adultos como por niños. Estoy interesada en la escuela primaria porque a través de mis experiencias como profesora, he descubierto que la escuela primaria juega un rol significativo en la formación de ideas acerca de las diferencias de género en los niños. Estaré en la clase de Señorita _____ desde el primer día de escuela hasta el último, y espero aprender mucho de los niños y de ustedes a lo largo del año.

Por favor no duden en aproximarse para conversar o formular preguntas. Espero tener la oportunidad de conocer a todos y cada uno de ustedes pronto.

Sinceramente,

APPENDIX C

Teacher Recruitment Letter/Email

Dear _____,

Greetings! I hope this message finds you very well with the end of the school year in sight. Are you still at [[school name]]? I'm looking for a research site for the 2010-11 school year, and [[school name]] seemed like an interesting and progressive school when I went there to interview you last year. You might recall that my research is on the production of gender/sexuality in the public elementary school, and next year I'm hoping to start participant observation in a Bay Area school.

My hope is that while doing my research I will also be able to provide support to the school. As you know, I taught for some years before taking the grad school leap. I really miss being in the classroom and working with children. So I'm hoping that this next phase of my grad school project will allow me to work in a truly helpful way at a school while undertaking research that I think is extremely important not just to academic scholarship, but to schools and therefore broader communities. I plan to participate as fully as possible in the everyday going-ons of the school day (and beyond, of course)! Given what you and I talked about in the interview and the forward-thinking quality of [[school name]], I think your school would be a really great fit for the research I plan to do.

That said, I wanted to send out this initial email to get a feel for the possibilities out there. What do you think? Please let me know if you think there may be any potential of working/researching with [[school name]] next year. We can then talk more in detail about how to proceed.

Take good care,

Erica

Erica Boas
Doctoral Candidate
Social and Cultural Studies
UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education
eboas@berkeley.edu
510.251.2243