A queer geography of a school:
Landscapes of safe(r) spaces

Mel Freitag

A whole history remains to be written of space –
which at the same time would be a history of power
– from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little
tactics of the habitat.

– Michel Foucault, 1986

What does it mean to queer a schooled space? When queers are physically visible in schools, how does that change the power relations and relationships within it? Researchers in the field of Human Geography have explored physical spaces that are "queered" – the gay ghettos – such as the gay bar, neighborhood, or city.[1] While celebrating these gay spaces, and markers such as the safe space triangle sticker that allies in schools in the USA utilize to mark their offices as places where LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) students can "go" to feel comfortable, or at least not bullied, that does not always mean that queers feel safe(r) in those spaces. Also, if one space is marked safe, what happens to the other

---

[1] Rushbrook, 2002.

unsafe spaces? Do they stay intact, and if so, is that to the detriment of all students? Therefore, it is imperative also to define what a safe or safe(r) space is, and then why they should exist at all. According to a recent nationwide survey conducted by Joseph Kosciw, Emily Greytak, and Elizabeth Diaz,[2] nine out of ten LGBTQ-identified youth state they have been harassed and bullied in their schools. This is unacceptable.

One option in particular for queer subjects is to construct, live, and utilize these "queered" cities, neighborhoods, and schools. A physically separated "gay space" could be a countersite for other, more privileged landscapes and narratives. For example, geographer Dereka Rushbrook takes Michel Foucault's idea of "heterotopias" and defines it as "places that hold what has been displaced while serving as sites of stability for the displaced",[3] which I will use as a framework in this article. Much of the literature on queer geography has been on isolated or commercialized spaces, neighborhoods, cities, workplaces, bath houses, media, drag shows, sex workers, and more recently on immigration, transnational politics, public health, and globalization.[4] The level of inclusivity of a school, for example, is traditionally a space that holds potential economic and social power for underrepresented students, including but not limited to queer-identified individuals.

Queering a school: Is it possible?

Safe schools are not and should not be limited to exclusively queer-identified students. Although queer-identified students are in these safe spaces and in fact do "feel" safer, it is because of the

---

[2] Kosciw, Greytak and Diaz, 2009.
[3] Rushbrook, 2002, p. 185.
[4] Brown, Lim and Brown, 2007; Johnston and Longhurst, 2010; Willis, 2009.

practices, strategies, curricula, and policy decisions that the schools make in and outside of the classroom. I argue that it is possible for a heterosexual-identified student to in fact feel "safer" in a queer space. There is a gap of work on heterosexualities, and as long as queers are discriminated against, "queer spaces will remain something that," to borrow Spivak's phrase, "queers cannot not want."[5] In this article, I would like to argue how and why schools should be queered, and not only with exclusively queer-identified subjects. For the purpose I have done fieldwork at the Unity Charter School, as a space and opportunity for this space to be produced. Unity Charter School produces a model not only to build a safe(r) space for queer-identified subjects, but for all students.

Queering these architectural sites of power could also point to how even material spaces, or maybe especially material spaces that are more formal and institutional – schools – can and do become "queered". Without reproducing sexual identity politics that singles out one student against another, I will analyze what practices and curricula are used to queer a school.

School context and data collection

For purposes of comparison, it is important to acknowledge that currently, there are two known schools that are queer-positive in the United States. I will later discuss how the policies and climate at Harvey Milk is similar and different from Unity school, where I conducted my fieldwork. Harvey Milk High School in New York City is one of the two only schools in the United States that explicitly states that all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, "deserve a safe and supportive environment."[6] The

---

[5] Oswin, 2008, p. 100.
[6] Hetrick-Martin Institute, 2013.

second school that I will define as queer-positive is Unity Charter School. The Unity Charter School is a public school located in Great Lake City, which is a large, urban metropolis with over 560,000 residents in the Midwest. Through Unity's definition of what constitutes safety in a school, their (dis)location from heteronormative schools will play a crucial role in re-defining their own queer geography - and also complicate the idea of physical, psychological, and social safety within and outside of those walls and boundaries.

Unity and Harvey are the two only known schools where the mission is explicitly to address bullying and students who have been bullied in their previous schools. Unity and the Harvey Milk High School are somewhat unique in the United States in that they are part of the larger public school districts in their cities, which means that they are able to enroll any student who wishes with no additional fees.

According to the Great Lake City School District's website, the district is one of the largest in the region with over 80,000 students and 29 high schools. Unity Charter School's demographics reflect much of the same racialized diversity as the district. The following statistics are racial and gendered categories that are pre-determined by the school district as a whole, and is not necessarily reflecting how the Unity students self-identify.

It is important to understand the demographic and academic context of the school to lend a broad perspective and to highlight how the intersections of race and socioeconomic status influence and interplay with sexual orientation. Of Unity's current 163 students, 52% are African American, 20% are Hispanic, 26% are White, and 1% is Native American. Although the racialized

categories are linked to the United States census categories and race is a social construction, it is important to note the racialized diversity of Unity students.[7] One reason may be to compare it to the White teachers at Unity, and what factors have contributed to not hiring teachers and staff of color. Furthermore, 58% of the students identify as female and 42% as male.[8] The irony is that these pre-conceived categories of race and gender are prescribed by the district, and currently there is no categorical box for transgender students, for instance. Although Unity is well aware that many of their students identify as transgender, there is no district-wide or school-specific statistic for that population. In addition, the state-wide reading, language and math scores at Unity were comparable to the average of the school district at large. The school is racially and ethnically diverse and also has a high percentage of special education students and English Language Learners, but their numbers are very close to the school district's as a whole. In addition, many of the students are from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and the school itself is within one of these identified communities.

The mission of Unity school is to provide a safe space for students who have been bullied and harassed in their previous schools. Although the school's reputation is being the "gay school" to the outside community, the school does not explicitly state that they only enroll LGBTQ or nonheterosexual students. It is important to note that factors such as the students' race, socioeconomic status, family backgrounds, and learning and physical disability status also put the students at-risk for bullying. As discussed later, the reasons students were bullied many times were because they were marked as "different," or outside of the norm of whiteness and heterosexuality. Although this study focused on sexual

---

[7] Great Lake City School District website, 2010-2011.
[8] Great Lake City School District website, 2010-2011.

identification or lack of sexual identification of its students, these other factors braid into the students' identities and communities as well.

Charter schools are smaller schools that still remain in the public school system, but have more autonomy when it comes to decision-making in regards to school policies, procedures, hiring practices, curricular strategies, and discipline. Historically, charter schools have been formed around a specific theme or focus, such as science and technology, fine arts, or honors courses. Unity is unique in that its focus is not exclusively about an academic subject, although the mission is clear that one of the school's goals is to be academically challenging. Based on interviews with the teachers and students and my own hallway and classroom observations, the curriculum and pedagogy, for instance, are not much different than other small schools in the area, both private and public. Unity's test scores, attendance rates, graduation rates, and many of the other indicators of what makes a "good school" according to many of the policymakers are similar to its other educational counterparts.[9]

Using narrative inquiry[10], over a six month period, I conducted 21 individualized life history interviews with twelve current Unity School students, six teachers, one "lead" teacher, one social worker, and one school psychologist. I also conducted numerous classroom and hallway observations. The students identified as female, male, and transgender, and their sexuality identifications were more diverse than the LGBTQ categorical box as discussed previously. Of the twelve students interviewed, five students presented as White, two as African American, two were Latino, one was Native American, and two were multi-racial. Ten of the

---

[9] Great Lake City School District website, 2010-2011.
[10] Clandinin and Connelly, 2000.

twelve students were seniors and two were juniors. By being in the hallways, offices, and classrooms of the school, I was able to build relationships with them and ask them to have a conversation with me during their lunch hour or free time before or after school.

After transcribing every interview, I then used both inductive and deductive analyses to find themes, patterns, phrases, and stories that cut across all of the interviews. All of the names of the participants, the school, and the city are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the subjects, the institution, and the context of them.

The school as a whole is well accustomed to media and research attention alike. In fact, I met two separate researchers from different states at Unity during my time there. During one of my full days at the school, one of the teachers pointed out: "what would [Unity] be without a resident researcher?" This question illustrated not only the amount of local, state-wide, national and international attention the school has received, but also that the staff, teachers, and community are probably aware of how different their school is from others around the U.S. and outside of it.

As a queer researcher, my assumption was that I would gain leverage with the students because of my sexual orientation as an out lesbian. Although I mentioned my identification in a few interviews, it did not seem to matter. Before the study, I naively assumed that I would simply come out as a lesbian and we would proceed to have an in-depth conversation about all of the participants' experiences of being LGBTQ. Because of my identification alone, I assumed I could build more trust in the researcher-subject relationship. Since many students did not

come out, or chose not to identify, I had to change my questions and adapt to this newly found, perhaps more uncomfortable space.

Some of the strongest supporters of Unity Charter School, its students and teachers, identify as straight. On the other hand, just because an individual identifies as queer, does not mean that they automatically queer a space when they enter or reside in it. Many queer-identified individuals may even, intentionally or unintentionally, want to "fit in" to the heterosexual matrix.[11] Queer spaces, then, are distinct from LGBTQ spaces. Imploding the binary between queer and non-queer subjects occupying a space, then, is crucial to understand what it means to queer a space. Therefore, a queer space or geography transgresses binaries such as hetero/homo or man/woman in order to go beyond normativity.

A definition of queer

In order to use queer geography literature as a framework for how safety and community are defined in the Unity Charter School, it is important to define queer and then queer geography in these contexts. First, I use the term queer as both a subject-identifier and a politic, as defined by US-based education researcher Marla Morris.[12]

Queer-identified students lend room for the in-between sexuality-identifiers, including polyamorous, pan-sexual, or un-identified. Many of the students at Unity did not identify as LGBTQ, even though the school is labeled "the gay school" from outside their community and even in the media. When asked what their

---

[11] Butler, 1993.
[12] Morris, 1998.

identification was, many of them chose not to identify at all. This lack of identification by many of the youth, regardless of age, social class, race, or other factors, was not simply because they wanted to resist the label of the "gay school." In fact, many of the students I talked to took pride in their school, and insisted that it was not just a "school for gay kids," but rather that those sexual identification markers did not matter. The teachers echoed the same sentiment when they argued that the school does not necessarily have students who are "unique" or had different problems or stories from students at traditional schools. The difference, as I will discuss later, was how they responded and listened to these stories. In this way, the institutional policies and teacher practices specifically were perhaps more out of the norm, or queer, than the students themselves.

The second definition of queer is when the term is used as politic, a verb, a state of mind, an action, and a way of being. Queering is about re-defining the traditionally-held norms, binaries, beliefs, values, institutions, and structures.[13] Therefore, a queer-positive school can and does enroll queer-identified students, but the purpose, policies, and culture of a queer space can go well beyond what the sexualities are of its subjects. Recent work in the field of queer geography defines a queer space, then, as dissident, progressive, resistant, and claimed, but also challenges the very "privileging of sexuality [markers] above all processes of identity formation by considering queer subjects as simultaneously raced, classed, and gendered bodies".[14] Further, space is not naturally "straight" or heteronormative, but rather constructed, "actively produced and (hetero)sexualized."[15] According to Eve Kosofsky

---

[13] Morris, 1998.
[14] Oswin, 2008, p. 91.
[15] Binnie, 1997, p. 223

Sedgwick and Michael Warner, even people who identify as heterosexual may not be heteronormative.[16]

When queer subjects enter into heterosexualized spaces, it reminds people that these streets, malls, motels, and schools have been "*produced* as heterosexual." [17] Phil Hubbard further explains in "Here, There, Everywhere: The Ubiquitous Geographies of Heteronormativity" that everyday, 'normal' space, then, is "perceived, occupied, and represented as heterosexual"[18] and that "non-heteronormative heterosexuality would be based on not privileging heterosexual identity over other categories." [19] Non-heteronormative heterosexuality, would have a place in queered spaces, that is, these types of allies can and do belong in queered spaces. This notion of heterosexuals "belonging" in queer(ed) spaces, which often times seems contradictory, was a challenge throughout the study. That is, originally the proposal was to research a space where queered subjects resided, but the more students I interviewed, the more I came to the realization that I would have to re-frame one of my major questions: "are you LGBTQ, and then, was that identification the reason you were bullied?" The old question assumed that the student would identify within the LGBTQ categories, and since that was not the case, it changed not only my definition of their sexual orientations, but also my definition of what populations the school served and how they served them.

---

[16] Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993.
[17] Bell and Valentine, 1995, p. 18.
[18] Hubbard, 2008, p. 644.
[19] Johnson, 2002, p. 301.

Notions of safety and pedagogies at Unity

We need to look seriously at what limitations we have placed in this "new world," on who we feel "close to," who we feel "comfortable with," who we feel "safe" with.

- Minnie Bruce Pratt, 1984

What makes Unity different from other initiatives such as Gay Straight Alliances (GSA's)? One of the distinctions between Unity and other schools is that its mission is to enable students who are able to communicate, not judge, and explore or "try on" their own identities, religious beliefs, and sexualities. The traditional solution to the question in schools in the US and Canada "what do we do with the gays?" has largely been to create GSA's, or Gay Straight Alliances, which are generally student-run groups within larger high schools.[20] These are intended to be a "safe place" for queer-identified youth to go, and they often sponsor various activities, social outings, and programs to support queer-identified students and their allies. However, even though Gay Straight Alliances have been supported and successful in many schools, some members of GSA's have struggled to gain respect from school administrators, parents, and other students.

American Geographer Christopher Schroeder points out that GSA's run the risk of becoming "complicit with heteronormativity. With a fragmented and much more manageable queer youth population and with minimal influence from queer adults, the school becomes much more efficacious in its (re)production of docile bodies."[21] Vancouver-based Lori Macintosh further pushes this notion of teaching

---

[20] Macintosh, 2007; Mayo, 2004.
[21] Schroeder, 2012, p. 647.

"antihomophobia curriculum" in schools, and argues that "we subsequently assume that it is homophobia that must be understood, leaving heteronormativity as a live incendiary device." [22] If educators continue to create these "Band-Aid" solutions or add on a day or class to talk about the "Other" LGBTQ kids, we miss turning the table on teachers to examine their own positionalities and learn how to engage with and facilitate conflict in the classroom. This argument reflect many of the queer practices inherent in Unity, and further contests how queer theory as it relates to education and schools is not just about learning about queer subjects.

Since there is such a strong prevalence and recent surge of GSA's throughout many high schools,[23] much of the outside community wonders why there needs to be a separate "school for the gays." However, this label, as the students and teachers informed me, does not accurately reflect Unity's mission. Although Unity engages with and creates queer programs, policies, and curricula, as stated before, not all the students or teachers are queer-identified. I argue that a school can be queered regardless of the sexual identifications of the teachers and students residing within it. The idea of safety for whomever enters the school's door, then, becomes a central theme, and it is a work in progress.

Mary Louise Rasmussen examines the idea of safe spaces by calling on Foucault's definition of heterotopias. Rasmussen looked at Harvey Milk High School's policies, and argues that Harvey Milk High School, much like Unity become "heterotopias of deviation." [24] That is, in order to exist, these schools must create spaces that "illuminate the exclusions produced by wider

---

[22] Macintosh, 2007, p. 36.
[23] Schroeder, 2012.
[24] Rasmussen, 2006, p. 165.

social and educational relations of power. These relations of power continue to be simultaneously contested and reinscribed by the people who construct the heterotopic spaces." [25] She names these "spatial dividing practices" and points out that many of the teachers and administration would argue that these students have nowhere else to go, which many of the teachers and administration echoed at Unity. In fact, simply by being a student within Unity's walls, these students are marked as different.

Laura, the school social worker at Unity, shared that a lot of people from outside the school think this is an "alternative school," that is, a school separated for the "troublesome" students, i.e. the ones with multiple disciplinary problems, pregnant students, or students who have criminal records. Unity's mission is not to support students who are "troublesome," but rather students who are different and want a space to explore their identities, as any adolescent would. She also spoke about "individual choices" as they relate to physical and emotional safety, which is true for many teenagers, regardless of their queer identification. When asked to define what a "safe school" means, she replied:

> Well, there's physical and emotional safety. Ideally, that's what we're striving for. You know, I think it's always a work in progress. I think people's individual choices can make themselves unsafe - and we try to address that. Whether it be plugging them into resources outside of school or working with resource people in school. Our own work - I mean, everyone kind of wears a counselor hat. That doesn't happen in other schools. Are we perfect? Absolutely not. We try to be proactive, though. I think that makes a difference. We're a work in progress. Because everyone has "stuff".

---

[25] Rasmussen, 2006, p. 169.

Unity also provides social services and case management, or refers students to external community resources. This is reflected in the space of the school. When I first entered Unity, it felt more like a community centre. Students were in the hallways, in the classrooms, teachers were present. However, the space itself felt different from a school. Many of the students also agreed that Unity didn't "feel" like a school, but more like a home, a family, a comfortable place, and a place of belonging. Foucault echoes this by arguing that "space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power."[26] Unity reflects much of the inherent power struggles, and as the social worker pointed out, Unity itself is a work in progress. "We're not perfect" is a phrase I heard a lot during the interviews, even though many schools do come to the school to observe the practices and community building there, and even attend training sessions for restorative justice circles and other ways to create a safe(r) community. The space is intentionally created by its teachers, staff, and students, but people are aware that inter-school bullying still exists. That is not what makes Unity different. What makes Unity different from other schools is their response to bullying; their ability to listen, respond in a thoughtful way, facilitate conflict, and mentor their students to do the same.

Much of the media focuses on physically separated spaces for students who are discriminated against in school, stating that it is an "extreme solution" to bullying and harassment in the regular public schools. When I asked Terri, the lead teacher and founder, about these comments that separating to support is a radical solution to the problem, she responded:

---

[26] Foucault, 1984, p. 252.

> I don't think that's what it's about at all. Like I think that the bigger schools could do a lot of things that we're doing now. I mean one of the first things that I would do if I was an administrator of a bigger school would be go and start talking to students about what they wanted…not just student government students who are always part of everything, but really pulling in groups who are traditionally underserved or ignored…listening to them and trying to implement some of the things they say. Because their – *their issues are real*. And it makes a difference like when you see that they are part of that community, too, then they'll work to keep it strong.

As I interviewed the teachers and staff at Unity, I began to ask not only what their definition of a safe space and safe school was, but also what other elements of this school were unique, and could be perhaps transferred to all other public schools to address bullying. I chose the following excerpts to discuss further because they begin to construct a definition of what it means to be a queered school. Interestingly, the school does not have any explicit anti-bullying workshops for teachers or students; and does not say the word "bullying" or "LGBTQ" in its mission or even on the posters that state the school's objectives posted on nearly every door of every classroom. [27] Instead, words like "community," "welcoming," and "safety" are used to describe the school.

One of the first differences I noticed about the school was before I even entered into its doors. On the school's website, there was no principal listed. I was looking for someone to contact for my research study, but I wasn't sure who was in charge. Then, I noticed that Terri, one of the teachers, had "lead teacher" next to her name. I wasn't sure what that meant, and I remember thinking that maybe the principal just was not listed. However, when Terri returned my message and confirmed that I could visit,

---

[27] See Appendix A.

I suspected that she was in fact the leader of the school, but she chose not to have "principal" next to her name. Later I realized that this first encounter accurately represented the school's democratic culture and intentional community. After asking Terri about it in the interview, she echoed the school's mission for democratic governance, and that she has always believed in shared decision-making:

> I don't make decisions and give them out to people. I'm going to bring it to the community and we're going to vote on it. We're gonna discuss it and you know – if I'm making assumptions, people will call me on it right away.

This culture of trust, team-building and community is not just part of the mission statement; the teachers and staff live it every week during their 3 hour staff meeting. They participate in "circles," which is actually a ritual that is adapted from "restorative justice circles." Restorative justice is a concept that is often used in the criminal justice system in the United States for finding alternative methods for the criminal to repay or "restore" his or her debt to the community in which he or she hurt. For instance, for a minor crime, instead of serving time in prison, the convicted person may volunteer at the local homeless shelter or apologize to the families he or she hurt.

The restorative justice circles in the school are used for alternative discipline measures, but also a way for students and teachers to connect and dialogue with one another. The circles are one of the defining features of the school, and they are taught and used explicitly in a restorative justice class that many of the students take throughout their time at Unity. Even though many of the students are enrolled in the restorative justice class, other students can request a formal "circle" if they are having a conflict with each other. I participated in one of these circles during one of my

classroom observations. At first I thought I would just sit in the back of the room and observe, but I quickly realized that I was going to have to be an active participant. The lights were off, and about ten students were sitting around a circle, along with two teacher facilitators. There was a candle lit in the middle of the room, and there was a "talking stick" that the teacher facilitator had. When we opened, she said "we're just going to start off today with a check in and go around and see how everyone is doing." She had given me a few materials to read before about these "circles," so I knew what to expect. Still, it was a little uncomfortable at first to be put in the position of "checking in" as the researcher. How should I respond to this? What was I feeling? What was I doing here?

I was surprised about the candor of many of the students to talk about their issues, their stories, and their feelings in the middle of the day at school as they passed around the talking stick one by one. If this had been a support group, for instance, it would not have seemed out of place, but for some reason it did in a "school" environment. When it came to my turn, I was honest. I talked about how excited I was to be here, but I was tired from the drive. Previous participants also talked about their upset about the recent unsuccessful recall of the governor since it was the day after, and so I felt compelled to talk about my perspective on that issue. One of the students admitted that she did not know much about what was going on, and asked us to explain it to her. The nonverbal communication during the "circle" was just as critical as the person talking. The students made eye contact, asked follow up questions, nodded, and genuinely cared about what one another was saying.

I was glad that I participated in this circle because it is the foundation of Unity charter school. When I later interviewed

Jennifer, the restorative justice teacher and facilitator, I asked her what one of the main differences was between Unity and other schools. "We listen to students' stories." This was echoed in many of the other teacher interviews as well. The teachers also participate in their own "circles" during the staff meeting – sometimes they serve as a quick check-in, and sometimes they go for more than 45 minutes to address deeper issues and maybe even conflict within the teacher and staff community. In addition to the formal restorative justice circle class and the teachers "circling" during their staff meetings, Terri also has observed students "circling" on their own time, in the hallways and outside of class. "We do it for both community building…if the conversation starts out with people interrupting each other…somebody will go, OK, hold on, hold on, we need to pass a talking piece." The students circle "automatically."

Community

When Laura, the school social worker, first gave me a tour of the school, she said it was interesting that the students who were truant stayed in the building. In her 23 years of being in the school district, she had never seen students staying in the school – the bathrooms, the hallways, outside on the grounds – when they were supposedly "skipping." This is one of a few first indicators that this school was different – not only in its mission and practices, but also in the students' behavior. My initial response was: why are these students skipping at all? But when looking back at the attendance and truancy rates, I remembered that this school was similar to the many of the other district's schools, both small and large. The more compelling question, then, was why were the students staying the same place where they were "supposed to" be in school? Why would they want to

stay there if they were not in class? Would they not want to go somewhere else? Somewhere like home?

According to Sue Kentlyn in her article regarding domestic labor practices in gay and lesbian homes in the United States specifically, she discusses how sacred the notion of "home" is for gay and lesbian adults in her study, many of whom cannot and do not go back to their home of origin because of a very real fear of rejection. For gays and lesbians, Kentlyn defines home as a "place of belonging, intimacy, security, relationship, and selfhood."[28] One of the most interesting pieces of that definition is the notion of home as a place to "be yourself." Most heterosexual-identified people, or more importantly people who present as traditionally male or female, most likely do not make the distinction between "being themselves" in public versus private places and everything in between, simply because they are accepted in many location that queer subjects historically have not been. For queer subjects, however, the notion of performativity and where they can feel "safe" to be who they are hinges on where they are standing, many times quite literally. For instance, one of the transgender-identified, male to female students who chose her pseudonym, "Exotic Barbie," shared that she "had to dress like a boy" at her previous school. This made her feel uncomfortable, and so she used to never go to that school. At Unity, however, Exotic Barbie presents and dresses as a woman, and even though she still chooses to "dress like a boy" at family barbeques and other spaces, at Unity, she feels safer enough to always accurately express her gender.

Lisa Weems discusses how many times school is imagined to feel like home, as many of the participants iterated during my conversations with them. She argues that instead of imagining

---

[28] Kentlyn, 2008, p. 335.

school as home or even school as prison, perhaps home as camp is a better metaphor. [29] Camp is a retreat, a positive location, where students are separated from their traditional homes, but also a place where a new home, a new community can be formed. Perhaps this community, this camp or classroom, could be more comfortable and arguably safe(r) than some students' actual homes. Since the classroom is a contested space already with historical, cultural, social, political, and psychological discursive practices, [30] it is important to conceptualize how schools and classroom spaces are reproducing heteronormativity and hegemony, or are places of resistance to these gendered, sex, and sexualized norms. Thinking of school as camp still conjures up collective positive memories of respite and support, but also keeps the institutional practices, some of them mandated by the local and state governments in mind as a backdrop of the story. Because school and the classroom more specifically are contested spaces, this distinction is important. Still, many of the students at Unity used the word "home" and not "retreat" or "second home" or even "camp" to literally describe how they felt in that location.

In fact, instead of defining Unity as their "second home," some of them said that their relationships at Unity were closer than their home relationships. Some of the students who I interviewed were currently homeless or living in a group-home, and so going to Unity was the first physical place they want to "go to." Further, Terri echoed this by talking about how excited students are the days before school, and even post to Terri's facebook page about how excited they are to come back, and how much they missed her and everyone. Bobby, a gay, African American student

---

[29] Weems, 2010.
[30] Lefèbvre, 1991.

at Unity, knew about Unity during elementary school, and always knew that he would be going to Unity once he was in high school.

> B: It's like they already knew what I was when I got there, so it was like torment and torture, so throughout those years I'm hearing my teachers say, "Oh, well, there's hope for you there." Like when you get to high school, there's a school, [Unity], it's for people like you, you know what I mean? It's a safe haven. It's a home….
> M: So you knew about it for awhile.
> B: For awhile before I actually got here, and I strived and got out of middle school and kept my head up because I knew I would come here. And, um, this would be like home.

When I asked many of the students what they would have done if Unity had not been an option or did not exist, they said that they would have dropped out, been homeless, or even been dead. This space, then, becomes more than a school, although many of the teachers reminded me that this is in fact a school – a public school – which means there is the reality of grades, state test scores, funding, and renewal contracts for the teachers and the school itself. Although Unity looks like a school, it is much more than that. It is a community. Does a community have to "happen" or be created a separate space? A separate school building? There may be another way to think about how these types of communities could infiltrate into larger schools and spaces. Marc Augé defines non-places as places where there are not necessarily just brick and mortar walls, but rather a discourse of belonging, and places to build community. Augé argues that we need to "relearn how we think about space," [31] perhaps creating a hybridity between places/non-places and instead of looking at them like binaries, they are more like "palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly

---

[31] Augé, 1995, p. 29.

rewritten".[32] Augé not only argues that we need to rethink what it means to have space and place, but also how non-places function in/around "real-life" or "in real life" spaces like schools. Queer spaces would be both non-places and places simultaneously. If we define these spaces as non-places, it may mean that more meaning making and identity construction can "happen" here. Queer identities must have places and non-places to breathe, and these environments, as stated before, may be the place to do it.

"Who does that?" Terri said when I asked her if she ever expected to be "doing this" ten years ago. "Who starts a school?" This seemingly simplistic question resonated with all the other students' stories about Unity as home, Unity as family, and Unity as a welcoming, accepting, and very different place from their previous schools or experiences.

Creating an identity of solidarity

We must not see any person as an abstraction. Instead, we must see in every person a universe with its own secrets, with its own treasures, with its own sources of anguish, and with some measure of triumph.

- Elie Wiesel, 1995

Unity School sits behind a parking lot in a low-income, high-crime neighborhood of Great Lake City. Most of the students take the bus from other areas of the city, and receive bus passes every day from the teachers. Directly next to the Unity school's building is a middle school for the arts, and some of the Unity students have had bullying issues with middle school students. In

---

[32] Augé, 1995, p. 64.

fact, Terri, the lead teacher at Unity, told a story of Unity solidarity. A few years ago, some of the middle school students from the arts school nearby ran up to the Unity building and said they wanted to "touch" the stairs of the gay school. They ran back to their school, laughing, and continued to shout, "gay school!" as they were running away. Terri noticed what they were doing, and walked outside up to the middle school students in the parking lot. She asked a few Unity students to come with her. Terri and the Unity students asked the middle school students what they were doing, and they responded that they were just messing around. She told them that they were not "the gay school," but rather a school that accepted everyone, including gay people. Terri and the Unity students also gave the middle school students a pamphlet about the school's mission and goals. Unity school has also experienced picketers protesting the school itself, and she has used the same strategy as she had with the middle school students from the arts school. Terri has decided to make the reputation of the school and administrative policies not just her "problem" or decision, but rather constructed a culture of school-wide responses and decision-making.

For instance, many of the students decided what media could and could not be allowed in the school. Terri told a story of how CNN wanted to come and interview some of the students on during the first week of the school's existence eight years ago, and the students said no, we're not ready. Terri had to call CNN and tell them that they could not do the interview. In the same vein, the students decided not to let MTV do a reality show in the school. Rick, one of the students I interviewed, reiterated his sentiments about MTV coming, which really spoke to Unity's mission:

R: [Terri] told me that MTV wanted to do a reality show here.

M: A whole reality show? Wow. I knew that MTV wanted to come, but not a whole reality show.

R: Yeah, [Terri] said no. And I'm - thank God. Oh my God, thank God.

M: There would have been cameras everywhere.

R: No it would have been fake and not what this school is.

M: So why do you think it would have been fake? Because it's MTV, so they would have made it like

R: Have you seen MTV?

M: Yes.

R: Like Real World?

M: Not recently, but yes Real World.

R: Real World, you know Jersey Shore all that crap… It's - it's like I don't know man. [They have] all this drama crap.

M: It's almost like they try to start it. They try to get people riled up.

R: Mmm hmmm. And that's what high school is. *And that's not what we're about*. So go to any other high school, and you'll get a good reality show. Because they start up all the drama - we don't.

The solidarity was also echoed by the use of the pronoun "we" throughout numerous interviews. Rick's last line regarding the MTV invitation was that "that's not what we're about," and I began to notice throughout my interviews with the teachers as well that participants expressed a sense of community and that school was more about "we" than "I." This small pronoun really speaks to how the participants view one another and their community in this space.

Bodies in queer spaces

The definition of queer(ed) spaces goes beyond the physical and emotional manifestations of a shared community like a school, and infiltrates the body as well. When a school or any space has queer(ed) subjects moving through it, especially if they are predominantly queer(ed) subjects, it is necessary to define and

grapple with the queer(ed) body, and its re-construction in these safe(r) spaces. The queered bodies at Unity, mostly students but even teachers, are a reflection of how the hybrid queer identity in/outside of schooled spaces could reside. The queered body is a walking contraction; a student may feel safe to wear a wig or present as a different gender than when they go home for a family barbeque, for example. Marginalized bodies have always, already been re-constructed in these dynamic ways throughout time. How do queered bodies currently get constructed in these worlds? Queered bodies are both how the individual subject identifies nonheterosexual, but also the ascriptions of these identities by others. Many times students' bodies are (mis)read as different from the gendered norm, and that is the justification for bullying. This has nothing to do with their actual queer identifications or dis-identifications. How does queer corporeality complicate Judith Butler's notion of perfomativity, specifically for sexual minorities? According to Butler, performativity is not a one-time, single act, but rather the "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names." [33] Further, Butler goes on to argue that "heterosexuality shapes a bodily contour that vacillates between materiality and the imaginary." [34] This imagined, figured world then could reside and be in material spaces and places. Performing in a space "matters" to the body in that there are many of the same representational codes, and embodied manifestations that take place. The representation of emotions and identities, for instance, that are displayed in these queer, separate spaces have just as many real behavioral and social consequences as their similar counterparts in the mainstream and master narrative worlds.

---

[33] Butler, 1993, p. 2.
[34] Butler, 1993, p. 17.

Students who were harassed and bullied in their previous schools were not necessarily discriminated against because of explicit sexuality identifications. In fact, Elizabeth Meyer reminds us that many times the reasons students bully has to do with clothing, behavior, and mannerisms outside of the gendered norms. Queer bodies are regulated and violated not because of the subject's identifications, but because of their perceived defiance of what it means to be traditionally male or female. Meyer argues that the "social constructs of ideal masculinity and femininity are at the core of much bullying behavior."[35] Karen Corteen agrees that sexual dissidents are only allowed to be gay in specific spaces and places just like one of the particpant's, Exotic Barbie's, decision to "dress like a boy" depending on where she was, and that lesbians need to display the "signs of being lesbian" or possess "signifiers of lesbian-ness" in order for bullying and violence to happen.[36]

Other students have echoed this by telling stories of how their bodies were interpreted to be anything from outside the norm of what it means to be a traditional male or female, and often had little or no correlation with their sexuality identifications. Elizabeth Grosz discusses how the body's surfaces already have "inscriptions…in three-dimensional space," and that materiality should "include and explain the operations of language, desire, and significance."[37] Grosz's definition of virtuality, then, could be used as a framework to ask questions about what it means to be virtually embodied, as a framework for how queer students have both a spatial present and their "link" (figuratively) to a larger world space.[38] Grosz defines virtuality as "the spark of the

---

[35] Meyer, 2008, p. 39.
[36] Corteen, 2002, p. 271.
[37] Grosz, 2001, p. 210.
[38] Grosz, 2001, p. 128.

new that the virtual has over the possible…the capacity of the actual to be more than itself, to become other than the way it has always functioned." [39] This new embodied virtuality may be a new embodied utopia, which could be argued is paradoxical and an oxymoron. When cultural inscriptions are made on the body, these cultural inscriptions must be transformed because of their environment, including their school. Although we can agree that virtuality is permeable, these identities are not protected by the reality of the spatial worlds – these spaces could be initially safe(r) places (spaces?) than their rural communities, farms, families, schools, homes. These spaces where (queer) students, as well as their teachers, "try on" different gender expressions, for instance, may be utopic at first glance, because this very re-location, for queer youth, as Grosz would argue, can in fact change their memories of experiences, [40] or how those memories (both "good" and "bad" ones) are constructed, told, and re-told in these environments and communities.

One of the teachers discussed his wardrobe choices at Unity, and how his clothing may change if he worked at a different school. Augustine is a middle school Math teacher at Unity and presents as fairly traditional-looking, White, heterosexual male. He shared a few stories about his clothing choices throughout the last year he has been a teacher there.

> M: What would you miss if you had to leave?
> C: Everything. My haircut. My outfit. I mean - this - this is me. I'm not joking. This is me - this is me before I started student teaching in college. This was me in high school. This is me in the summer time. It's just - it's me. Anywhere else - I'm not calling it a lack of respect or respect for any type of dress code or culture, but I would - I would respect another school's culture if that's what it was. And

---

[39] Grosz, 2001, p. 130.
[40] Grosz, 2001, p. 119.

> I would maintain a different type of professionalism. But like, I'm comfortable. And I don't lose any respect with my students because of the way I look.

Augustine's assertion that "this is me" and "I don't lose any respect with my students because of the way I look" re-emphasizes how performativity of the body and clothing choices go beyond the student community. The way in which the teachers choose to express themselves in the material world also plays a role in how Unity is a safe(r) and perhaps more comfortable space than other schools or settings. During my first day as a researcher at Unity, I dressed more professionally with "business casual" attire, and my response from the students was not unkind, but it was not friendly either. I was unintentionally creating a separation and looked more like an observer than one of the teachers, staff, or students. After about a week there, I changed my attire to more casual, to a T-shirt sporting queer-of colour idol Margaret Cho one day, and quickly realized that not only were the students more comfortable with me, but perhaps I was more comfortable in the space as well.

Partly because of this, my interactions changed, and so did my research. I also became more accustomed to the space, the people within it, and their comfort with me in that space as well. What will their memories of Unity be, and how are these memories, these stories, going to change how they quite literally walk through these spaces? Many of the student participants told me that they realized that their definitions of a school and a community began to shift. They were able to literally dress and express their gender in ways they had been intensely scrutinized for in their previous schools and homes. This new embodiment has shifted not only how they view and accept their own queer and nonqueer identities, but also how they view their relationships with their teachers. Because their spatial world

changed, their expression through their bodies, which is vital to any youth's development, began to change as well. Even the students who were not transgender have expressed how surprised they were at their ability to "dress the way they wanted" at Unity. It could be something as simple as dying their hair blue, or wearing makeup, or having long hair. Butler argues that if these bodies are visually represented in these safe spaces, then perhaps the norms of heterosexuality will be repeatedly "subverted, parodied, or challenged, [and then] dominant 'scripts' might change…geographers argue that *place* is the stage on which such performances are played out."[41]

The students are not the only ones subverting the gendered norms and boundaries at Unity. Augustine, shared one of his favorite Unity stories with me. He challenged the students in his class to improve their Math test scores with an incentive: he would dress in drag with two of his biological brothers and play a game of basketball with them. Trusting that Augustine would actually do it, many of the students test scores improved drastically in the next few weeks. In true Unity form, Augustine and his brothers all dressed in drag and played a game of basketball with the students. Augustine's team won, and he still has the dresses they wore hanging up in his classroom.

Many artifacts such as these from this newly constructed queer spatial world are evident at Unity. Augustine pointed to the dresses hung up on his wall with pride. Walking through the halls, it is evident that this place is truly the "island of the misfits," as one of the art teachers so eloquently named it. Many of the students are defiant of the gendered norms simply by how they walk, talk, dress, breathe, and present themselves in this school. The school psychologist is currently starting up a

---

[41] Butler, qtd in Valentine, 1993, p. 650-651.

transgender student support group, and many of the students whom I interviewed talked about some of the transgender students having a "clique" and their own set of drama at this school. The transgender students are perhaps the new terrain and frontier of what it means to have a body that is well outside of the gendered scripts in schools. Still, there are grades of difference within Unity, specifically for the transgendered students, but they may not be as distinctive. Many of the non-transgendered students noted the transgender student clique, but instead of speaking about them as a marginalized group or a group that was not as popular as their own, they simply noted that the transgendered students felt they could "be themselves," which was their example of how Unity was different from other schools. These are just some examples of what it means to be materially represented at Unity, and how those queer manifestations shape how the community defines the school.

Beyond violence and safety: Problems and implications

Earlier, I have argued with Foucault, Morris and Rushbrook that queer bodies can be part of queering a space, and gone on to expand this view with Hubbard's assertion that a queer person might choose to disengage from this process to protect themselves. When queer subjects occupy a space, one could argue that they are also making new meaning for that place, but this visibility, this being or living in a space, has its limitations. According to Larry Knopp, this very visibility that placement brings can "make us vulnerable to violence as well as facilitate our marginalization and exclusion from the security and pleasures that placement usually brings members of dominant groups. Many queers find a certain amount of solace, safety, and

pleasure being in motion or nowhere at all."[42] This transitory "feeling" is echoed with many of the students' literal homelessness, or sitting in between two different homes or families. This vacillation between these spaces and places provides a location to interrupt – specifically as it relates to not only social relations in and of these spaces, but also identity construction within them and through them. Kristie Fleckenstein emphasizes the reciprocity of space and relations, and explains that "places are created by actions and the interpretations of individuals as they wrestle with the problems posed by the place they create."[43] Further, places emerge as a result of social interactions, relationships, and these places are nonlinear, always shifting constellations of identity formations and re-formations. "Space is often understood as interrelational, open, and multiplicitous"[44] and "not entirely synonymous with physical place."[45] What does it mean, then, to not just think of space as a "backdrop,"[46] but rather multiple constructions of community, safety, and even visibility?

One example of "Unity transference" was shared during my conversation with Jennifer, a teacher at Unity and the leader of the restorative justice program there. She and some of the other teachers planned a workshop for some teachers at another school to learn restorative justice circles. The outside teachers were interested in learning "how" to facilitate the circles so they could "bring them back" to their school. As Jennifer and the other Unity students moved through the circle process, Jennifer could tell that some of the teachers just were not "getting it" because they were not fully participating in the process. They still had the

[42] Knopp, 2007, p. 23.
[43] Fleckenstein, 2005, p. 165.
[44] Massey, 1999, quoted in Chavez, 2010, p. 4.
[45] Chavez, 2010, p. 4.
[46] Shome, 2003, p. 39.

mindset that they wanted to "fix" the students problems, instead of facilitate a discussion and conversation between the students, and ultimately set up a community of trust. Jennifer said she was disappointed, but pointed out that Unity's practices cannot necessarily always be simply transplanted into another school simply by taking a day-long workshop or retreat. Unity lives and breathes its foundations, and the teachers in particular are committed, above all else, to "listen to the students' stories."

Yet, as Laura, the social worker, has pointed out, Unity is not a totally frictionless, un-problematic space. The intersections between race and queerness specifically should be addressed, and the fact that all the teachers are White, which was pointed out by the school social worker, is still an issue. How can many (queer) students of color, for instance, feel truly safe when all of their teachers are White? Zeus Leonardo tackles the idea of safe spaces in relation to race dialogue. His argument is that no space can really be safe when there are subjects present who are already in positions of power. In this case, one could make the case that since all of the teachers are White and many (but not all) are heterosexual-identified, how safe is Unity? Further, Leonardo suggests that the violence that Whites embody toward people of color is often "violence of the heart rather than the fist."[47] One of Leonardo's solutions to this is to create risk as the antidote to safety,[48] and perhaps a comfortable dialogue about race "belies the actual structures of race, which is full of tension. It is literally out of sync with its own topic." [49] I agree that safety is not always possible even within spaces where community is strong, and even in places that people define as home, as is the case with Unity.

---

[47] Leonardo and Porter, 2010, p. 151.
[48] Leonardo and Porter, 2010, p. 153.
[49] Leonardo and Porter, 2010, p. 153.

There are the realities of race and power relations embedded and seeping through all seemingly "safe" spaces. Unity is not immune.

Queered spaces and Unity in particular provide a new space of occupation for marginalized groups, a new area of exploration for underrepresented populations, however limited, constrained, and reflective of the "real world" (former school, home, community) they may be. These situated identities within these imagined spatial worlds and spaces provide different avenues for expression, identification, and identity work to take place. What does it mean to queer a space, and to "make it safe"? Catherine Fox calls for a re-definition of safe spaces by changing the "safe" to "safer". She contends that by adding an "r" to safe:

> … calls attention to the tensions inherent in any discussion and action aimed to counteract multiple forms of terror and violence…it calls to 'unfix' our definition of safety, and, instead engage safety as a process through which we establish dialogues that create and re-create spaces where queer people are more free from physical and psychic violence…it calls us to consider the ways that safety has been too often equated with comfort around normative gender and race identities that reproduce a White male guy at the center of these spaces[50]

Through practices that range from the more formal restorative justice circles to conversations with picketers to a basketball game in drag, Unity has set a standard for a more transformative learning process for its students, regardless of their identifications. By committing to simply listen to students' stories, teachers have re-created and been integral players in this community as much as the students. Through taking risks that resist some of the norms of formal education, Unity is in a way creating different avenues of learning and being.

---

[50] Fox, 2010, p. 643.

References

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity.* London: Verso, 1995.

Bell, David, and Gill Valentine, eds. *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities.* London: Routledge, 1995.

Binnie, Jon. "Coming out of geography: Towards a queer epistemology?" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15 (2) (1997): 223-237.

Brown, Kath, Jason Lim and Gavin Brown. *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices, and Politics.* Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2007.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Chavez, Karma. "Spatializing gender performativity: Ecstasy and possibilities for livable life in the tragic case of Victoria Arellano." *Women's Studies in Communication* 33.1(2010): 1-15.

Clandinin, D. Jean, and F. Michael Connelly. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research.* San Franciso, CA: Josey-Bass, 2000.

Corteen, Karen. "Lesbian safety talk: Problematizing definitions and experiences of violence, sexuality, and space." *Sexualities* 5.3 (2002): 259-280.

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003.

Fleckenstein, Kristie S. "Faceless students, virtual places: Emergence and communal accountability in online classrooms." *Computers and Composition*, 22(2005): 149-176.

Foucault, Michel. "Space, knowledge, and power". *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. London, Penguin, 1984.

Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowiee. "Of other spaces." *Diacratics* 16.1 (1986): 22-27.

Fox, Catherine. "(Un)covering normalized gender and race subjectivities in LGBT 'safe spaces.'" *Feminist Studies* 36.3 (2010): 629-649.

Great Lake City School District website. *School Demographics*, 2012. Pseudonym.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays On Virtual and Real Space.* Boston, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2001.

Hetrick-Martin Institute: Empowerment, Education and Advocacy for LGBTQ Youth. (2012). Retrieved from www.hmi.org

Hubbard, Phil. "Here, there, everywhere: The ubiquitous geographies of heteronormativity." *Geography Compass* 2 (2008): 640-658.

Johnson, Carol. "Heteronormative citizenship and the politics of passing." *Sexualities* 5(2002): 317-331.

Johnston, Lynda and Robyn Longhurst. *Space, Place, and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities.* Landham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

Kentlyn, Sue. "The radically subversive space of the queer home: 'Safety house' and 'neighbourhood watch.'" *Australian Geographer* 39 (2008): 327-337.

Knopp, Larry. "From Lesbian and Gay to Queer Geographies: Pasts, Prospects, and Possibilities." *Geographies of Sexualities.* Eds. Kath Browne, Jason Lim and Gavin Brown. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. 21-28.

Kosciw, Joseph, Emily Greytak and Elizabeth Diaz. "Who, what, where, when, and why: Demographic and ecological factors contributing to hostile school climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth." *Journal of Youth Adolescence* 38 (7) (2009): 976-988.

Lefèbvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991.

Leonardo, Zeus, and Ronald Porter. "Pedagogy of Fear: Toward a Fanonain theory of 'safety' in race dialogue." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 13. 2 (2010): 139-157.

Macintosh, Lori. "Does anyone have a band-aid? Anti-homophobia discourses and pedagogical impossibilities." *Educational Studies: A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association* 41.1 (2007): 33-43.

Mayo, Chris. "Queering school communities: Ethical curiosity and gay–straight alliances." *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* 1.3 (2004): 23–35.

Meyer, Elizabeth. "A feminist reframing of bullying and harassment: Transforming schools through critical pedagogy." *McGill Journal of Education* 43.1 (2008): 33-47.

Morris, Marla. "Unresting the Curriculum: Queer Projects, Queer Imaginings." *Queer Theory in Education*. Pinar (ed). Mahwah, NJ: Earlbaum, 1988. 275-286.

Oswin, Natalie. "Critical geographies and the uses of sexuality: Deconstructing queer space." *Progress in Human Geography* 32.1 (2008): 89-103.

Pratt, Minnie Bruce. "Identity: Skin Blood Heart". *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism*. Eds. Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbar Smith. New York: Long Haul Press, 1984, p. 49.

Rasmussen, Mary Louise. *Becoming Subjects: Sexualities and Secondary Schooling*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Rushbrook, Dereka. "Cities, queer space, and the cosmospolitan tourist." *GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8.1-2 (2002): 183-206.

Schroeder, Christopher. "Making a space for queer youth: Adolescent and adult interactions." *Gender, Place, & Culture* 19.5 (2012): 635-651.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990.

Shome, Raka. "Space matters: The power and practice of space." *Communication Theory* 13.1 (2003): 39-56.

Valentine, Gill. "Hetero-sexing space: Lesbian perceptions and experiences of everyday spaces." *Environment and Planning D-Society and Space* 11.4 (1993): 395-413.

Warner, Michael. *Fear Of A Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Weems, Lisa. "From 'home' to 'camp': Theorizing the space of safety." *Studies in Philosophy Education* 29.6 (2010): 557-568.

Wiesel, Elie. "Forward". *The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code*. Eds. George Annas and Michael Grodin. London: Oxford University Press, 1995. ix.

Willis, Paul. "From exclusion to inclusion: Young queer workers' negotiations of sexually exclusive and inclusive spaces in Australian workplaces." *Journal of Youth Studies* 12.6 (2009): 629-651.

Appendix A: Poster on every classroom door

Respect

Use appropriate language
Help to keep noise levels down in hallways and common areas
Reserve elevator use for those who need it
Knock softly before entering classrooms, if not your own
Be mindful of your surroundings and the work of others
Congratulate others on their successes

Responsibility

Work together to keep our school tidy both inside and out
Leave it better than you found it
Be impeccable with your words
Stay positive and motivated
Represent yourself and others using positive language
Use your time wisely
Do your BEST at all times

Safety

Let the staff know if there is a problem
Use cell phones responsibly
Remind guests to sign in at the office
Be a role model by being in class on time
Use the BUDDY system at the bus stop
Be aware of your surroundings
Enter and exit the building using the front doors

Dr. Mel Freitag is currently the Director of Diversity Initiatives in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Nursing. She recently finished her PhD from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and her dissertation is titled "Safety in Spaces: A School's Story of Identity and Community." Using the insight she gained from her research, she plans to continue to serve historically underrepresented students in her new role through mentoring, student programs, curriculum initiatives and faculty/staff professional development. She hopes the students' and teachers' voices and stories will shape how and what it means to be a welcoming, supportive, and safe(r) school. She lives on the bustling east side of Madison, Wisconsin with her partner, two cats, and one adventurous dog.