Allison Bartlett, in “‘She Seems Nice’: Teaching Evaluations and Gender Trouble,” describes the struggles women encounter in academia. Bartlett explores anecdotal narratives and relates feminist pedagogy to the performances, structural limitations, and ways professional and personal lives of women in academia coalesce. bell hooks in chapter seven, “Holding My Sister’s Hand: Feminist Solidarity,” explores historic tensions between black and white feminists. hooks calls for the creation of a context where black and white women can engage in open critical dialogue with one another, where debate and discussion can happen without emotional collapse, and the establishment of a place where black and white women can know one another in the difference and complexities of experience. In chapter ten, “Building a Teaching Community: A Dialogue,” hooks critically examines the role of professors in academia through dialogue with Ron Scapp, a white male philosopher. Through their dialogue they explore engaged pedagogy and liberatory approaches toward education. They expand on the importance of sharing lived experiences, focusing on the individual voice, challenging tradition, and concludes with how “being a teacher is being with people.”

Reflecting on the three articles and deconstructing the concepts, I attempted to place myself inside each of the concepts discussed within these writings. Recognizing the “passing” spoken about in Bartlett’s article and then the importance of critical dialogue, the individual voice, the challenging of tradition, and importance of engaged pedagogy spoken about by hooks, reflected several of the ideals I believe in or have tried to focus on while working within LGBT populations especially in religion and spirituality discussions. Recalling the stereotypes and prejudice which exist in society, many LGBT individuals attempt to “pass” throughout their lives. They do not ever “come out,” nor do they feel safe to come out. While in high school, I attempted to pass as a straight male, mainly because it was not a safe place. As society dictates how women professors are seen and how they should “act,” it also dictates how LGBT individuals should act and even implies which jobs LGBT individuals are “unworthy.” Reflecting on the stereotype that gay males are pedophiles, gay men are told not to disclose their sexual orientation in educational settings because it could reflect badly on them and lead to adverse consequences. LGBT members are supposed to “pass” and follow a heterosexual norm, rather than live as their true “selves.” Recognizing demands placed on LGBT members and women in society, I realize neither gender nor sexual orientation should dictate how a person acts or what one pursues. Although “passing” may allow for one to gain access into areas of prestige, I do not believe it is worth the price of devaluing one’s true self.

Focusing on hooks and her dialogue with a white male philosopher, it was unique to reflect on their discussion and the critical concepts they explored. hooks emphasis on the importance of critical dialogue is vital. In order for members of society to understand LGBT issues, we must sit and explore questions, concerns, beliefs, and myths. Although it is not an easy process, it is a process that will allow us to engage and embrace others. Facilitating the discussion at Saint Luke’s in late November, provided the opportunity for me and the Diocese of Bethlehem to engage in a critical dialogue about LGBT issues. Through this experience, I not only learned about misconceptions the congregation held, but also was able to dispel myths within the group. Some of the best experiences of that discussion focused on highlighting the individual voice, telling the group my story and my affiliation with religious institutions. Although I tell them my story, I recognize the challenging of tradition which must occur for members to grow. Members need to see active engagement as a form of welcome. Rather than focusing on a passive from of welcome, individual congregants must come together and extend a welcome to LGBT individuals and provide the safe space for dialogue to occur.
Bartlett and hooks provide concepts which do not just apply to one setting, but rather can be extended to larger social constructions. Reflecting on these concepts and focusing on my own goals to work within a field of education, I observe these concepts as vital to initiate discussion and explore critical components within LGBT affairs.