PK-12 Sexual Minority Public School Employees’ Identity Management: Implications on Career Quality, Potential, and Advancement

Gordon Tod Larson

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PK-12 SEXUAL MINORITY PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES’ IDENTITY MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS ON CAREER QUALITY, POTENTIAL, AND ADVANCEMENT

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by
Gordon Tod Larson
December 2020
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Approved by:

Donna Schnorr, Committee Chair, Education

Jay Fiene, Committee Member

Enrique Murillo Jr., Committee Member
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ABSTRACT

LGBTQ public PK-12 educators make decisions on their sexual identity disclosure management. This study sought the phenomenological aspects of how these management decisions and actions affect career path, promotion, and fulfillment to retirement. The purpose of this study was to raise awareness of LGBTQ PK-12 educators’ experiences with sexual identity management disclosure strategies and how these strategies impact their career. The sample was four educators from across the northern tier of the United States; the Northeast, the Northwest, and the Upper Midwest. Narrative inquiry produced thick, rich and descriptive stories of interactions with their students which gave meaning to their careers. These were cases that enriched the semi-structured questionnaire. All interviews were held via Skype, in the midst of the COVID-19 epidemic. Findings included elements such as silence as a main method of maintaining a lengthy and successful career. By not vocalizing their sexual orientation, they managed their disclosure in such a way that maintained career path security. Staying in the same district and the same school was shared by all four as a characteristic of success. More strategies were incorporated, working beyond the classroom teaching duties, such as coaching sports, or sponsoring extracurricular activities made these teachers “indispensable” to their districts and community. Limitations include that there were only four, all were White, all were at the end of their career or already retired, three were gay, one was lesbian. No transexuals, bisexuals, young educators, educators of color, or genderqueer individuals participated. The study and the sample were
geographically limited. It is hoped for future research that these sectors of the LGBTQ community are brought into the workforce and are open or available to be in research. Finally, all four of these educators were ready for the new generation of LGBTQ educators to take the reins of LGBTQ rights and move forward in great promise.

Keywords: sexual minorities, public PK-12 education, LGBTQ educators, heteronormativity, homonormativity.
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All of the professors in the doctoral studies program helped to further enlighten me on the struggles of disenfranchised groups alongside LGBTQ souls. The literature they selected, peer reviewed articles and books, included LGBTQ culture consistently. It meant a great deal to me to feel this inclusion.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) people often find continual employment difficult, or career development stiffened, particularly in the field of education, if they do not mask their identity in different ways (Duke, 2007; Griffin, 1994; Woods, 1991). During this dissertation's writing, the federal law protecting sexual orientation and gender identity in employment passed in the United States Supreme Court in all states of the union and its territories on June 15, 2020 (Liptak, 2020). This federal law was after I wrote the literature review within this document. This occurrence took place shortly before the study, which was in July 2020. It had an impact still to be seen upon the lives of the participants and the culture of gay, bisexual, trans, lesbian, and queer people across our nation to know they now have legal protections in their places of employment.

Problem Statement

Data exists in the field for studies of LGBTQ educators who work in public schools. However, there was a deficiency of recent studies informed by queer theory (Capper, Green, 2013) about how sexual identity disclosure affects career path trajectory (Ozeren, 2017; Smith, Wright, Reilly, Esposito, 2008). In as many as 28 states, employment protections were limited for LGBTQ people (DeCiccio, 2018). Regardless of legal protection, local climates often dictate that LGBTQ people must carefully navigate the professional environment to protect their employment (Griffin, 1991). LGBTQ sexual minority educators maneuver their
disclosure decisions of their sexual orientation, primarily due to fear of loss of job
(Bishop, Caraway & Stader, 2010; Callaghan & Mizzi, 2015; Chrobot-Mason,
Button, DiClemente, 2001; Bizjak, 2018; Bliss & Harris, 1998; Coker & Cain,
2018; Connell, 2012; Connell, 2015; DeJean, 2007; Duke, 2007; Dykes &
Delport, 2018; Evans-Santiago, 2015; Gray, 2013; Haddad, 2019; Hooker, 2010;
Khan, 2013; Kootsikas, 2011; Lance, 2006; Lance, Anderson, & Croteau, 2010;
Neary, 2017; Ozeren, 2013; Ragins, 2008; Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito,
2008; Tatum, 2018; Wilkinson, 2004).

Even with policy protections, sexual minority employees in educational
settings still face homophobic discrimination (Coker & Cain, 2018; Connell, 2012;
Khan, 2013).

Purpose Statement

The study’s purpose was to raise awareness of LGBTQ PK-12 educators' experiences with sexual identity management disclosure strategies and how they impact their career, livelihood, and career satisfaction while primarily focusing on their career path. This project explored LGBTQ identity management’s role in career quality, career potential, and advancement in PK-12 public educational settings in the US. The project filled a lapse and added current discourse in the fields for literature on LGBTQ adults in PK-12 education in the United States and elsewhere. Auxiliary outcomes could potentially support LGBTQ educators in their career paths. Additionally, younger generations of educators may experience heteronormativity different from those older than them. This project sought to find those values and determine if the school or district climate and the
school culture today are more conducive to a more open and supportive LGBTQ educator's position.

Research Questions

Primary Questions

How do LGBTQ employees navigate the parameters of PK-12 public educational experiences related to career quality, career potential, and career advancement? What can schools/districts do to make it safer for LGBTQ educators to disclose? What can schools/districts do to support an LGBTQ educator's career path satisfaction?

Significance of the Study

The proposed study's intended outcomes were to be of service to new teachers in preservice, those in research pursuits, giving caution and strength to empower LGBTQ culture individuals in public school education, particularly PK-12 settings. We were given as much information as possible to benefit the field and instructors in the PK-12 area, universities, and colleges. Several research studies outlined in Chapter Two reveal that individuals who disclosed their sexual orientation feared losing their jobs, but careers or career trajectories were not the focus of these studies. There were varying degrees of openness, from entirely open and out of the closet to everyone entirely closeted and not open to anyone. The range in between was quite prevalent, with teachers not out to parents and students but open with administrators or select colleagues. Research shows (Gray, 2013) that educators did not have protection against LGBTQ
discrimination and, at any moment, could be fired. Such termination was standard for non-tenured teachers. Similarly, Hooker's (2010) study provided an example of Catholic teachers, where religious tenets aspired such that homosexuality is an unprotected faction of employment.

This study builds upon these studies of what was known. It explores the relationship between sexual orientation disclosure strategies and the workplace in K-12 educational settings (Griffin, 1991; Woods, 1994). It adds something new to the field of study. It contributes to *nouvelle* literature. It directly addresses the impact these strategies, actions, or decisions have on career paths, perceived or otherwise. Furthermore, this study looked at how new generations of educators experience sexual identity disclosure different from older educators, how schools, districts, counties, and states can create safe places for LGBTQ employees, and the current atmosphere of the contemporary school today.

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

**Social Justice Theory**

Social justice theory can empower LGBTQ readers to critically evaluate and engage in their workplace by allowing data-based strategic decisions for sexual identity management. It can advocate for inclusive and diverse professional development during preservice training with curriculums informed in various family structures, including historical figures that include gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Educators could decide to move elsewhere to find a more compatible LGBTQ-supportive environment in the PK-12 workplace.
(Tatum, 2018) and need an awareness of the global inequalities and prejudice brought into the community and the classroom (Callaghan & Mizzi, 2015) even while being overcome. Engaging in an educative manner to bring awareness and positive support for LGBTQ teachers, administrators, and staff is essential (Dykes & Delport, 2018). The authors suggested developing professional programs within school sites, administrative offices, and the curriculum for teacher training programs at universities.

**Heteronormativity Theory**

The institutionalized heteronormative models within the educational curriculum are reinforced by the obscurity of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender representation, thus becoming the only visible example regarding social relationships and sexual identity (Haddad, 2019). Heteronormativity institutions and political organizations work to make superior heterosexuality seem coherent and worthy of liberty (Haddad, 2019; Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008). Homosexuality is disenfranchised by legitimatizing only heterosexual marriage and lifestyles, subjugating everything else, and removing non-heteronormative privileges.

**Homonormativity Theory**

Homonormativity theory (Neary, 2017) maintains the replication of heterosexual marriage and social constructs; therefore, the support of heteronormativity and heteronormative relation subjugates much of the LGBTQ community. The model framed the approach that enforces "normal" "stable
relationships” in what Neary's article surmised as civil partnerships (CP), indicating how interruptions to heteronormativity may align along similar lines through a new kind of homonormativity. In doing such, visibility does not guarantee inclusion. The LGBTQ model becomes appropriated as a homonormative straightening device (Neary, 2017, p. 67), which maintains heterosexual convention and delegitimizes those who do not conform to the supported rules.

Homonormativity, a term Connell also called hetero-homosexuality (Connell, 2015, p. 177), reflects those biases that influence members of the gay rights movement to maintain the status quo by forcing them to mimic their heterosexual counterparts who are upper-middle-class, monogamous, married, and with children. Specific to teachers, the gay rights movement constrains a teacher's modality of self-presentation to look and act the same as their straight counterparts and even have the same desires.

"This 'white picket fence' vision of equality, dubbed the new homonormativity by Duggan (2002), has all but replaced the radical critiques of monogamy and procreation that flourished during gay liberation" (Connell, 2015. p. 134-5). Gender normativity assumes that the teacher's appearance should be very straight-gay. Transpeople, bisexuals, genderqueers, queers of color, non-binary sex workers, and other persons not conforming to the ascribed heterosexist traits become eyesores on the white-washed, upper-middle-class aesthetic of homonormativity. This oppression confines unshared sexual behavior as deviant or Other (Connell, 2015).
Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory was of interest due to people's religion, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, gender, disability, or other visible/invisible stigma-ensued characteristics in association with sexual identity (Evans-Santiago, 2018). Most studies were of White educators, while many other studies found it challenging to receive participants of color, except the Evans-Santiago (2018) review. The Black female participant was entirely out and felt comfortable doing so with almost 100% support of a predominantly Black community. The Evans-Santiago (2018) study also suggested what would happen if the Black participant worked in a school or district where she was a minority, asking if her decisions would be the same? There are other intersections of identity that influence sexual identity management strategies, such as religiosity or gender. Intersectionality theory offers a foundation for understanding the duality of two or more influences that identity may have upon an individual, their decision to disclose, as well as the outcome of that decision on their career path.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Lance (2006) and Lance, Anderson and Croteau, (2010) cited Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1996) as a means to quantifiably and psychometrically analyze Griffin's (1991) four sexual identity strategies: passing, covering, intrinsically out, and extrinsically out. Passing was lying and presenting oneself as heterosexual. Covering was to not implicate oneself in any way, such as not to correct someone if they spoke about
your wife, and so forth. Intrinsically out meant that anyone could read that one is LGBTQ, and nothing is said but perhaps to a few, promoting silencing to some. Extrinsically out meaning out to everyone in the workplace setting. Lance et al. also referenced Woods' (1994) three identity management strategies (IMS): counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating. Counterfeiting is the same as passing from Griffin. Avoiding is to choose not to involve oneself in any discussion or correct anyone in discourse about homosexuality. Integrating is a combination of Intrinsically out and extrinsically out.

In social cognitive theory, one wants others to see themselves as they see themselves (Lance, 2006). In Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), they think of this in the aspect of their career and how their sexual identity management selections, which may be fluid, affects their career (Lance, 2010). SCCT supports much of what Tatum (2018) and Tatum, Formica, and Brown (2017) placed as essential to positive workplace expectations and efficacy. Counterfeiting and passing were negatively correlated and were psychologically detrimental to positive workplace expectations and disclosure decisions. Intrinsically out and extrinsically out were positively correlated to efficacy and positive outcome expectations. Most of their participants were of the latter, intrinsically and extrinsically out, so they were placed into one category, integrating. Eventually, Lance et al. (2010) identified the theories of Woods (1994) and Griffin (1991) as two simplified strategies, concealing or revealing.
**Queer Theory**

The use of queer theory is a needed area of study still modulated for disenfranchised individuals. To understand current discourse on LGBTQ rhetoric and literature, Dykes and Delport (2018) concisely described a queer theoretical framework. Through queer theory, one could highlight and interrupt the silent assumptions that accompany heterosexuality and construct homosexuality as Other and explore the discursive practices that determine who or what is meaningful. "Queer Theory emerged from the 1990s from the field of post-structuralism feminism" (Dykes & Delport, 2018, p. 136). No longer is the word queer used in a derogatory homophobic sense but has been taken by the LGBTQ community to embrace and identify within the gay rights movement. Queer terminology is not a homophobic slur but as an identity that LGBTQ individuals take on themselves. Feminist theory and critical feminist theory gave rise to queer theory in the '70s to '80s (Kootsikas, 2011). By questioning male, White heterosexual dominance, feminism started critical thinking about the heterosexist dynamic at play that ostracizes LGBTQ individuals and marginalizes the LTBTQ community (Kootsikas, 2011). Queer theory began to turn heteronormativity and homophobia upside down by changing binary concepts such as hetero versus homosexuality, using queer to identify bisexuals, trans, or anyone who doesn't feel comfortable with the gay or straight didactic. (Bizjak, 2018). Individuals started rejecting male or female binary labeling. Gender fluid, or genderqueer, non-binary, etc., has been added and such adages to
race/ethnicities such as Latina/o to LatinX to make gender vaguer and less a labeled issue, speaking more to the individual than to their gender (Bizjak, 2018).

**Narrative Inquiry/Phenomenology**

Narrative inquiry allowed for exploration of educator’s lives and experiences, expecting to understand themes and commonalities within those stories (Creswell, 2014). The study was phenomenological in the process.

**Assumptions**

This study assumed that the LGBTQ community of educators have unique experiences worthy of investigating.

A second assumption was that identity management is a construct worthy of investigation supported by research.

**Delimitations**

For the most part, the participants in this study have maneuvered the public education social, political, and economic system and are still in their educational career or have retired after 30 years of teaching. Finding individuals who have left teaching prematurely and failed to progress through a successful career is outside this research scope. Snowball sampling could unearth young educators and educators who left the field prematurely due to homophobic oppression.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

Binary: opposing definitions and categorical placements: male/female, straight/gay, poor/rich, masculine/feminine, and so forth.
Cisgender: A term describing an individual whose self-perception of her or his gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth (Bizjak, 2018).

Closet: A state in which an individual does not disclose her or his sexual orientation publicly (Bizjak, 2018).

Gender conformity: The state in which an individual displays masculine or feminine traits accordingly congruent with their gender.

Gender non-conforming; A person whose gender expression is not consistent with and reproduced by the cultural norms expected for that gender (Bizjak, 2018). Gender non-conformity is when individuals appear androgynous, masculine when female, or more feminine when male, or a range between two binary constructs.

Homonormativity: Homonormativity, according to Neary (2017), refers to sexual politics that fails to critique but serves to reproduce and sustain heteronormative assumptions and institutions (p. 66). Connell (2015) expressed concerns of homonormativity and its proclivities to maintain the status quo in members of the gay rights movement by forcing them to mimic their heterosexual counterparts; monogamy, married, stable, and with children.

Heteronormativity: Heteronormativity defines as institutions and political
organizations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent but also privileged (Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008; Haddad, 2019).

Heteronormativity theory: simply implicates anyone outside the paradigm of heterosexual is Other, and unworthy of respectful recognition, casting them into a shameful, marginalized, and oppressed minority dominated by heterosexist norms (Evans-Santiago, 2015).

Homophobia: An irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or those who self-identify or who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (Bizjak, 2018).

LGBTQ: Lesbian. Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer

Out: A state in which an individual reveals their sexual orientation (Bizjak, 2018).

Intersectionality: The intercedence between two or more parts of one person's identity which affects their experience as they encounter the world, such as race/ethnicity and sexual orientation, being bisexual and disabled, being transgender and having a different sexual orientation, being religious, e.g., Mormon, and LGBTQ identified, and so on.

Queer: A term referring to any individual who self-identifies as non-heterosexual,
non-binary, non-lesbian, non-gay, or non-bisexual (Bizjak, 2018).

Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe a group of individuals whose gender identity/expression is different from the sex assigned at birth (Bizjak, 2018).

Summary

LGBTQ educators must carefully decide upon sexual identity management strategies to affect career implementation, promotion, contract continuation, and retirement. Several methodological and theoretical underpinnings beset this research: I explored phenomenological theory using narrative inquiry and semi-structured interviews, followed by a focus group. Social justice theory, social cognitive career theory, queer theory, heteronormativity theory, homonormativity theory, and intersectionality theory enriched the context and provisional discourse. The research questions had to do with how different elements affect the overlapping question of how sexual orientation disclosure is altered, perceived or real, a person's career trajectory in public K-12 education as an educator, and how the school atmosphere could create safe spaces for LGBTQ educators. Younger generations, location, and other factors make experiences different for LGBTQ educator's sexual identity strategies regarding openness and support for a decent career. Also, the culture and the climate of a school, district, and state can significantly affect this process and experience, even in places considered more hostile or more liberal.
The next chapter is a thorough examination of the literature to date, giving a scope of the nature of the educational setting’s problem and how educators and others are learning to overcome obstacles in becoming authentic, self-realized persons with high self-esteem. Chapter Two includes disclosure identity management, heteronormativity/heterosexist dominance and oppression, gender, gender (non) conformity, homonormativity, religiosity, legal protections, academic attitudes and experiences, and ally training programs and the importance of allies.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Prelude

Homophobia is one of the significant constituents of LGBTQ identity management, and its presence, or lack thereof, is directly connected to those decisions of sexual identity disclosure (Lazarevic, Orlic, & Knezevic, 2015). Lazarevic's et al. (2015) study was of interest because it highlights these issues of homophobia, particularly for educators, due to identity disclosure being such a dangerous proposal for so many of the LGBTQ community in the public-school setting (Connell, 2012).

This literature review was structured to explore these issues of disclosure based on the following themes as they pertain to identity management, stigma theory, heteronormativity/heterosexist dominance & oppression, homonormativity, gender, religiosity, academic attitudes and experiences, allies in support of LGBTQ persons and ally training, legal protections, geographic location. The literature review then connected identity management to career quality and career path advancement and effect upon a career path.

Disclosure: Identity Management

Out of queer theory and transformational theory, studies have examined the relevance of identity disclosure in the workplace. Lance, Anderson, and Croteau (2010) indicate that “identity management involves understanding the
development and use of various strategies for revealing or concealing sexual orientation at work” (p. 19). Their quantitative research used Griffin’s (1991) four identity management strategies: passing, to actively create the illusion of being heterosexual, covering, concealing information which could reveal a same sex relationship, implicitly out, being honest in indirect ways about one’s homosexuality, and explicitly out, to discuss their sexual orientation openly. These labels gave readers a value to assess the level to which a person discloses, or not, at their workplace and home. It is important to note that sometimes people fluctuate between the categories or strategies, that this is not a linear process. Management of disclosure is in a range and can be fluid, from complete concealment to entirely open with everyone the person is in contact with. Ragins (2008) expresses disclosure can differ in the person’s workplace and personal life.

Lance et al. (2010) cited three identity management strategies by Woods (1994): counterfeiting, creating a false appearance of heterosexuality, avoiding, to not reveal anything regarding sexual orientation, and integrating, refers to direct or indirect indications of sexual orientation. Lance et al. (2010) aligned with Woods’ management strategies, with the last two, implicit and explicitly out falling under integrating as one strategy in combination.

The purpose of Lance et al. (2010) study was to examine identity management and the various strategies involved with concealing or revealing sexual orientation at work. The quantitative research was conducted with lesbian, gay, and bisexual teachers, most of whom lived with a partner or were in a same
sex relationship but living apart. A few were dating or were in a romantic relationship (none were in an opposite sex relationship, even those identifying as bisexual.) The majority had been teaching over 11 years and were in secondary education, urban or suburban, in the Midwest and Northeast schools. Their ages ranged from 25 to 62 years.

The sample in Lance et al. (2010) was evaluated with a psychometric overview. The researchers were seeking correlations between their scores of a management measure and the correlations between the four scales for identity management; passing, covering, implicitly out, and explicitly out (Griffin, 1991), and three identity management strategies - counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating (Woods, 1994) as measured by means, standard deviations, and correlations. Three of the WSIMM-R (Workplace Sexual identity Management Measure-Revised) scales were statistically significant, with the most considerable differences in the explicitly out scale. The passing scale may be suggested not to be as strong as the other scales. The authors attributed this to the negative wording of the material in the instrument. The authors then suggested only two dimensions, concealing and revealing behaviors in terms of disclosure in the workplace. The results of Lance et al.’s (2010) study condensed the model to simplify it down to concealing, meaning the person does not entirely or evenly partially reveal their sexual orientation, or revealing, when the person most often or always reveals their sexual orientation.

In reference to possible disclosure decisions; Croteau, Anderson, and VanderWal (2008) again reference Griffin’s (1991) four sexual identity
management strategies: passing, covering, implicitly out, and explicitly out as well as Woods (1994) three sexual identity management strategies; counterfeiting, avoidance, and integration. This research was considered fragmented and non-theoretical until recently by Croteau et al. (2008). Before, there were no superior conceptual positions to structure the understanding and investigation of workplace sexual identity management. Croteau et al. cite Claire, Beatty, and MacLean (2005) and Ragins’ (2008) stigma theory as a principal foundation for understanding the workplace sexual identity management choices.

**Stigma Theory**

Next, the discussion turns to a more deleterious aspect of sexual identity disclosure, stigma theory. Stigma theory, according to Goffman (1963), proposed that the individual comes to face devaluation. Further, these potential costs in a stigmatized work environment are made to risk social isolation or rejection, status loss, prejudiced reactions, and discrimination. Ragins’ (2008) purpose was to define stigmatization and its antecedents and consequences. According to Ragins (2008), stigma theory involves how a worker, or an individual in any circumstance, anticipates consequences of disclosing workplace sexual identity management choices with weighing the costs and benefits of those decisions. Ragins (2008) defined stigma as individual attributes viewed as personal flaws in a social construct. Stigmas regularly result in disenfranchisement, prejudice, and discrimination against the stigmatized group (Ragins, 2008).

Ragins (2008) placed stigmas into two defined groups, visible and invisible. Visible would be such things as Down’s syndrome, physical disabilities,
and so forth. The author focused on the invisible, which includes LGBTQ persons, for the most part, persons with AIDS/HIV, mental disabilities, and mental health issues. These individuals can pass as “normal” if they desire to avoid the negative repercussions associated with the negativity concomitant once the stigma is known. Ragins (2008) does mention that in some cases, such as HIV, the person can transition from invisible to visible, and the stigma becomes apparent and known. Ragins’ (2008) article uses a qualitative approach citing articles to support the author’s discourse as scholarly evidence since the author is not explicitly looking at LGBTQ stigmatization but is inclusive of it.

Similarly, stigma theory suggested that sexual orientation was a stigmatizable characteristic that may lead to a person being discredited when that characteristic is revealed (Chrobot-Mason, Button, DiClementi, 2001). Stigmatized individuals often feel that others closely scrutinized them. Once their stigma was revealed, they became marked, such that the stigmatizing characteristic is given primacy over other traits (Bohan, 1996). Thus, stigma theory predicted that sexual minorities are likely to avoid disclosure of their sexual identity in the workplace when negative consequences were expected as a result of becoming marked.

According to Bohan (1996), institutional acceptance, such as employment opportunity when socializing with colleagues, increased the potential for opportunities in job advancement and placement. Further examples of heteronormative privilege were receiving promotions, on-the-job training, and “no risk of losing your job because of your sexual/affectional orientation” (p. 41).
Bohan (1996) stated the whatever path one comes to terms with their gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity must come to terms with the omnipresent stigma attached to homophilia. The term stigma referred to a physical demarcation identifying an individual or group as deviant or outcast, according to Bohan (1996). It can also identify invisible traits that include any attribute that causes others to be labeled as deviant. Bohan (1996) claimed that the LGB identity was this invisible stigma that is likely to elicit condemnation if it is revealed or detected.

Disclosure was seen as affirming one's authenticity (DeJean, 2007) and was psychologically optimal (Ragins, 2008) unless the potential risks of stigmatization are so significant in the workplace that self-protection through nondisclosure is necessary (Croteau et al., 2008). As mentioned, people use the stigma-based interpersonal diversity disclosure model to attribute many factors, but of interest here is that a person with invisible or non-apparent stigmatized social identities weighs the costs and benefits of passing or revealing their identity. People use prior experiences that have been positive or supported outcomes in order to be expected to disclose their identity, while those who conceal generally have negative experiences of stigmatization. There are also benefits to both passing and revealing. Passing may have adverse psychological effects but may be necessitated to keep one's employment in contrast to revealing, which may elicit feeling more authentic, having closer interpersonal relationships, and contributing to social change.
Out of the potential psychological effects of disclosure, positive and negative, central to identity management decisions is visibility in the workplace and out. Relative to this contextualization of stigmatization, first, Ragins (2008) cites Swann’s (1983, 1987) self-verification theory wherein persons are motivated to have others see them as they see themselves (North & Swann, 2009). Second, self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985) posits that people categorize themselves based on personal and social identities while this identity becomes centralized into their self-concept. LGBTQ individuals with a strong identification with their sexual orientation are more likely to disclose their stigmatized identity (Button, 2001; Ragins, & Cornwell, 2001). When doing so, Ragins (2008) indicates invisible stigmatized groups who are protected by legislation still face illegal heteronormativity and homophobic persecution, as well as adverse treatment leading to lack of promotion, lack of developing relationships, social isolation, and truncated career paths (Ragins, 2008 cites; Barreto, Ellemers, & Banal, 2006; Jones, 1997; McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004; Sanchez & Schlossberg, 2001; Schneider & Conrad, 1980; Stone & Colella, 1996).

Individuals need to be grounded and prepared to handle what comes at them once they disclose, should they decide to do so, as the investigation of this literature review showed a great deal of hostile heteronormativity still occurred in the public education workplace (Gray, 2013; Tompkins, Kearns, & Mitton-Kukner, 2019). As there were many places of positive affirmations of LGBTQ employment, there were also those who have found it difficult and trying, at best. Contributory to self-empowerment to disclose one’s sexual orientation, many
factors involve an affirmation of an open work environment, social support effects, including self-esteem (Gray, 2013). The improvement of acquired self-esteem is essential for manifesting positive or resilience against negativism of outcomes once one decides to disclose (Yunker, 1997).

The support of heterosexuels, family, and neighbors is positively related to disclosing their gay identity (Ragins, 2008). Essential to this support is the degree of trust, which is imperative in terms of disclosure. Relationships that are bound in high levels of trust are more likely to disclose; in other words, there is greater disclosure in relationships characterized by trust and psychological attachment (Anderson, 2014; Ragins, 2008). Trust is paramount to relationships in education, administrative, instructor, staff, and all persons involved as stakeholders to have productive ethical and moral values (Anderson, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Ragins (2008) stipulated persons who use concealing strategies are deciding not to use their minority status in the normalization of lesbian, gay or bisexuals, or of proving education through such disclosure. Ragins (2008) continued in the context of multiple minority statuses. People of color and biracial identifying people were also vulnerable to racism and the modality of sexual identity, and cultural constructions of non-White Eurocentric sexual identities. People of color and various races face multiple oppressions. It is also interesting to note that it was mostly White Eurocentric decisions of sexual management discussed by Ragins (2008), which are contextually defined in one paradigm. Some individuals who are not White and Eurocentric, such as persons
of color, or those with different religious beliefs, may find that sexual management decisions are influenced by family, ethnic, community, racial, and other forms of stigmatization. These multi-layered and diverse contexts effect their disclosure. While their sexual identity is invisible, other parts of them are visible and can still cause them to be stigmatized beyond their sexual identity. This is not to say that White persons do not also have familial and community decisions, which may force them to conceal outside of the stigmatization at work (Ragins, 2008). For example, a person from a highly religious orthodox context may not be able to come out in a family or community context due to extreme stigmatization, being ostracized, estrangement, and abandonment (Barringer, Gay, & Lynxwiler, 2013).

DeJean (2007) conducted an interpretive qualitative methodology to research ten gay and lesbian Californian public-school K-12 educators. Six were from Southern California, and four were from Northern California. Five were gay men, and five were lesbian. DeJean’s (2007) focus on being out in the classroom is an act of radical honesty. DeJean (2007) performed 9 of the 10 interviews in the teacher’s classroom after school. The participants were allowed to read the transcriptions for errors, and two focus groups, due to location, were indicated for validation by triangulation.

DeJean (2007) found five themes. First, being out meant a commitment to radical honesty. Teachers brought their partners to events that heterosexuals brought theirs to as well. The inclusion of same sex partnerships disrupted the heteronormative status in the school culture; thus, the author found it radical. Bell
Hooks (2000) added that one must tell the truth about themselves and to others. Creating a false self to mask fears and insecurities had become commonplace that many forget who they are. Unraveling this denial was the first step to discover our longing to be honest and transparent. Lies and secrets caused stress and were burdensome. Second, a commitment to radical honesty impacted the teacher, their students, and their classroom community as a whole.

Fighting such things as being accused of recruiting children into a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender person, queer, gender fluid/non-binary lifestyle by parents, and having the word “Dyke” painted in a photographic darkroom, teachers moved from hiding to honest transformation. Other participants have seen this to become a role model for non-majority culture students to hang out and confide in for support and advice, even so far as to say that being out transforms the classroom into a location of trust. Third, identity shapes literacy philosophies and practices. These teachers encouraged their students to explore intrapersonal literacy that fosters a greater understanding of their identities and beliefs as well as interpersonal literacies that provide respect for the uniqueness and values of others. Many lesbians and gays are often excluded from sports. For this reason, their core philosophy in their physical education classrooms centered on the importance of inclusion. Fourth, a school’s leadership and geographic location impact gay and lesbian K-12 educators’ quest to participate in radical honesty. All the teachers noted the importance of school leadership.

The school’s administration and location play powerful roles in being able to participate in radical honesty. It is often from the top down, a principal, a
school’s administration team, or the superintendent. School location is as crucial as leadership. The west side of LA was diverse and inclusive, and the Northern California Bay area made it easier to remain out. Discussions of location also highlight the significance of general LGBT anti-discrimination laws that have been put into place over the years in states and their cities. Every teacher noted the importance of these laws that have encouraged the establishment of educational policies in their districts. Finally, a teacher’s identity is an essential aspect of the creation of a quality teacher. Not just content knowledge and current instruction, but identity also forms a quality teacher. One participant says it is the ability to be real, honest, and caring.

DeJean (2007) recommended a larger cohort in the future and persons of color to participate in order to explore the intersection of different identities in one person and how they navigate it to become honest and truthful.

Heteronormativity/Heterosexist Dominance and Oppression

Although all of the research uncovered in this literature review depicts heteronormativity, heterosexist domination, and homophobia, some are worth placing it in its own category. Heteronormativity is defined as institutions and political organizations that make heterosexuality seem coherent and privileged (Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008; Haddad, 2019). Heteronormative society makes it difficult for LGBTQ educators to present themselves as out or disclose their sexual identity. Queer theory has begun to contraindicate heteronormativity. Duke (2007) follows:
In recent years, critical theory has interacted with poststructuralist, postmodern, cultural studies, queer studies, and feminist discourses. This interaction, or blending of discourses, has allowed the relationships between knowledge and power to be examined from the perspectives of historically marginalized groups, including women, people of color, indigenous peoples, the poor, [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender] GLBT individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons living with HIV/AIDS (Duke, 2007, 27-28).

Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) is operative in this parallel paradigm and the injustice, oppression, and violence of the oppressors [heteronormativity] while the oppressed yearn for freedom and justice. Ozeren (2014) presents US and UK businesses in a parallel paradigm for public education, with schools as businesses with student achievement as productivity. The author delineates, “Sexual orientation remains the – so called ‘last acceptable and remaining prejudice’ – in modern societies and organizations in comparisons with other dimensions of diversity” (p. 1203). The purpose of Ozeren’s article is to gather and project current research information on the state of the workforce in a supportive, homophobic or heteronormative environment in business contexts for GLTB persons, in terms of their sexual orientation, and the process of disclosure, or not, called coming out.

Like Duke (2007), Ozeren (2013) utilized an EBSCO peer-reviewed journal search for articles that were indexed only published in English. Each article’s focus would be substantively on sexual orientation discrimination in the
workplace. Initially, 1086 articles were selected with a selection of screening keywords and titles; ‘sexual orientation discrimination,’ ‘GLBT employee,’ ‘GLBT employ, ‘GLBT and workplace,’ ‘GLBT and employ, or ‘sexual orientation and discrimination.’ The sample was simplified, performed by two screenings, the initial screening the download of abstracts due to relevance. Out of those, 221 were deemed relevant based on information in their abstracts. Those 221 were thoroughly read and analyzed. The second screening involved a thorough review of research studies followed by a final selection of those relevant to the study. Eventually, 52 articles were vetted to be relevant to be included in the final sample.

Ozeren (2014) qualitatively found four themes in these articles; coming out, wage inequality, GLBT employee groups, and the effects of GLBT (non) discrimination on the workplace and business outcomes.

According to Ozturk (2014), by “coming out,” one considered each individual’s environment or situation. These considerations were complex, filled with risks and benefits. Although having a better comfortability in a supportive environment and less stress, continuously hiding one’s sexuality, one also has to note that gay men have a much higher chance of being fired than lesbians (Ozturk, 2011). Their findings included coming out with heterosexuals who have had previous contact with homosexuals was one of the most successful elements of reducing homophobia in the workplace. King, Reilly, and Hebl (2008) formulated two indexes for coming out, one involving the timing and delivery method, and the other involving the supportiveness, or non-supportiveness of the
climate/work environment. Ozeren (2014) found that timing, later disclosure was preferential to immediate disclosure in work environments, was most influential when reported by heterosexuals who had been disclosed to (King, et al. 2008).

The effects of LGBTQ (non)discrimination on workplace and business outcomes involves formal and non-formal LGBTQ discrimination policies. Formal, as one is fired due to being LGBTQ, or informal, being harassed, silenced, the brunt of jokes, and not allowed to access upwardly mobile career path opportunities. The author (Ozeren, 2014) cognates that employment discrimination against gay and lesbian employees, costs productivity losses in the billions, while formal protection and a supportive environment produced higher job satisfaction and lower job anxiety, even as an increase in stock performance.

Ozeren’s (2014) limitations included exclusive English language articles that were selected. The majority of the studies are Anglo-Saxon contexts. The author indicates future research needs to be in diverse contextual arenas. Working in the school environment, perhaps in other venues, such as administration, supply venues for schools and districts, classified staff, and so forth, would possibly be undertaken.

Since compulsory heterosexuality is sustained at the institutional level, and every day, informal conversations and practices, the author suggests adopting an ethnographic study to get an in depth understanding of the GLBT employee’s experience (Ozeren, 2014). Ethnographic studies are generally over a considerable period of time, following individual(s) along their career paths,
understanding the sexual identity management decisions they make, and how the two connected. Ozeren (2014) continued that while understanding that an individual’s sexual orientation does not occur in a vacuum, their sexual orientation was intertwined with racial/cultural presence, religious identity, and ethnicity.

Smith et al. (2008) mention the principal’s attitude about many school climate issues, including homosexuality, is a huge component for the comfort level of LGBTQ educators. Administrative support is of paramount importance for LGBTQ educators to feel supported and/or protected once they come out in the workplace (Smith et al. 2008). LGBTQ educators need to be supported equally as their heterosexual counterparts. The largest number of participants in their research considered their work environment homophobic, transphobic, sexist, or racist and was deemed unsafe and unsupportive for the LGBTQ educator. This perception skewed the data, with only a small percentage of the data at the supportive end. Intact laws and rules of heteronormativity demonstrate the most significant percentage of unsafe, rumor spreading, harassment, and lack of benefits, such as partner healthcare. Simultaneously, heteronormative oppression emerges through an invisible curriculum for LGBTQ persons even to the degree that they cannot repossess prominent information on their school computers relevant to the culture. The article uses the terminology “professionally responsible school climate” (p. 17) for schools with some protections or support and multiplicity for the ascribed diversity mentioned herein.
In other words, they support diversity for LGBTQ individuals in the workplace, which in this case, are schools and educational administrative centers.

The significant finding based on the data collection process of Smith et al. (2008) is that many LGBT educators in this study demonstrated a high degree of mistrust and fear. 100% who were African American or Black, Hispanic or Latino/Latina, Asian or Pacific Islander Middle Eastern, Native American, or multiracial reported hearing homophobic comments at school. 96% of those have heard students make homophobic remarks. 58% heard other professionals make homophobic comments at school. 20% have heard administrators make homophobic comments LGBT educators would consider racist, sexist, and transphobic: masculine feminine. 35 % felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation. 42% felt the attitude of the immediate community was unsafe for LGBT people. Smith et al. (2008) list included unsupportive school climates and survival skills to cope. Interactions between heterosexuals and gay/lesbian intergroup employees had indicated discrimination and prejudice. In Smith’s et al. (2008) findings, some individuals and workplace climates were found to be supportive and authentic instruction, and professions could be ascertained, thus reduced discrimination and prejudice were found.

When this support and open identity disclosure occurs, self-respect was reported as the most favorable consequence of being out. The second was feeling more comfortable at work (Smith et al., 2008). Additionally, Smith et al. (2008) mentioned some LGBT educators worked in schools who feel safe when they do not hear homophobic, racist, sexist, and transphobic slurs, and felt
supported when interventions were developed when such issues would arise. They also reported feeling safe and supported when working in schools with a policy for reporting harassment incidents, as well as professional development opportunities related to LGBTQ students. Finally, they reported the importance of being able to use school computers to access LGBTQ associated websites.

Though the majority of the respondents in Smith et al. (2008) perceived homophobia, racism, sexism, and transphobia in their schools to be present at varying degrees; some were found to be supportive and, as a result, authentic instruction, and professions could be ascertained.

LGBTQ educators’ perceptions of their work environment are influenced by heterosexual allies, as well as seeing LGBTQ issues and heroes visible in the curriculum (Bizjak, 2018; Smith et al., 2008; Worthen, 2011). Ultimately, Smith et al. (2008) did find that student achievement/potential suffers when teachers do not feel safe and supported in their environments. In reference to school climate issues, parental concerns were paramount to disclosure issues and support for LGBTQ educators (Smith et al., 2008).

Wells (2017) used case study qualitative research, which had four diverse Canadian participants. This rich, thick descriptive template allowed for correlations and differences in U.S. schools for PK-12. Wells (2017) indicates several secondary concerns can be of primary importance under the heteronormative imposition of authority and oppression. One is parental concerns. Parents have and perhaps always were among the main obstacles to LGBTQ liberation in the classroom (Wells, 2017). Societal and institutional
norms, such as long held heteronormative ones, in schools and communities, help reinforce the dynamic that many parents want to “shelter” their children from and do not accept any deviation from traditional heteronormative pedagogy. Wells (2017) points out how parents trump the oppression of gay students and teachers, such as by standing on high “moral” ground, parental outrage if a teacher comes out, removing their child from gay and lesbian teachers’ classrooms, and legal problems with parents and the district. In a private Catholic school, it was the parents, over everyone else, who were the problem of heteronormativity and heterosexist dominant oppression (Wells, 2017).

**Gender**

Gender, or gender conformity and gender non-conformity, plays a major role in homophobic heterosexist dogma. Lesbians, Bohan (1996) saw, have emotions which are subject to an extension of typical female expressions of gender appropriateness. Men, Bohan (1996) suggested, a single same sex experience was more than likely to make them question their sexuality based on their masculinity or gender non-conformity. “Men, in turn, had greater difficulty accepting a homophilic label than did women, revealing greater stigma attached to a gay male than to lesbian identity” (Bohan, 1996, p. 108).

Bliss & Harris (1998) quantitatively surveyed groups of teachers and parents who were gay men and lesbians affected deeply by homophobia. The authors explored reasons teachers and parents disclosed or did not disclose their sexual orientation in a school setting. A second objective was to compare gay
men and lesbians' experiences such as evidence that gay men are more likely to be targets of prejudice than lesbians.

A questionnaire was given to individuals at two Northeastern resort areas frequented primarily by gay men and lesbians, by a lesbian who identified as a graduate student at the University of New Mexico. The anonymous questionnaire dealt with their experiences as gay and lesbian students. As such, those who identified as parents or teachers were asked to respond to the additional sections reported in the article. Of the final participants, there were 34 teachers (10 male and 24 female), and 19 parents (2 were male, while 17 were female).

Results concluded that 9 of the 34 teachers disclosed to their principal, and males were more likely to do so than females. 5 responded about their principal's reaction. Most reported positive to neutral reactions. Those who did not disclose were primarily afraid of losing their jobs. The majority of teachers had come out to other teachers. In doing so, most had positive outcomes. Gender differences were noted. Males were more likely to disclose to both males and females, while females were more likely to disclose to females. Males were also more likely to advise others to disclose their sexual orientation to counselors and other teachers. 25 said that opening up about their sexual orientation had positive effects on their teaching by being honest. In doing so, there was an increased awareness of diversity among their students and the unique needs that diversity brings, such as becoming more tolerant of all diversity and sensitivity to oppressed groups.
Of the parents, 12 of the 17 female parents lived with a female partner, and both males were living with a male partner. 8 were living with their children, while only 3 made it known in school records. 18 of the 19 parents reported they had been married (heterosexually), 16 said their children were a product of that marriage, and 17 had joint custody.

This parental data altered the context of the literature dramatically. Very few of the gay parents came out to the school administration or teachers for fear of discrimination against their children and fear of losing custody. This lack of disclosure presented a particular problem because they wanted to be honest with their children while admission may have adverse effects upon their children.

On a continuing parallel of fear, though not for their children, gay men and women may receive lower wages and accept this fate due to fear of losing their job. As previously stated, Ozeren (2011) mentioned wage inequality, e.g., gay men fared worse, making less than their heterosexual counterparts, while lesbian couples fared better, making more. Ozeren (2011) implied that both women share the housework and have more time to spend on professional pursuits. The article also indicated that the stereotypical female persona (femininity) is countered by lesbians who may perform better in male associated jobs based on having more masculine qualities. Gender conformability came into scope as the aforementioned was heavily criticized by queer theory that static binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, husband/wife, and other heteronormative standards are taken for granted and assumed in the workplace. Ozeren’s (2011) findings included positive productivity and personal consequences resulted from
lesbians that come out that have a partner. The results on wages were mixed. In Canada, lesbians’ salaries were better than their heterosexual counterparts. In Australia, they were lower (Carpenter, 2008; Ozturk, 2011). Drydakis (2011) found that employment discrimination against lesbians, such as the hiring process and the offer of lower entry wages than offered to heterosexual counterparts continues to be at alarming levels in Greek society.

In the context of gender presentation and perception, transgender is a gender identity that differs from sexual orientation. Transgender persons may not be homosexual; rather, they may be heterosexual or bisexual. Thus transgender persons have been more vulnerable to homophobic attacks and violent discrimination than gays and lesbians (Ozeren, 2013). Ozeren indicates transgender persons’ and bisexuals’ work experiences are less documented than gays and lesbians in the field of identity disclosure and its antecedents and consequences.

Preliminary analyses of sex/gender differences in male homosexuality attitudes revealed that females have more positive attitudes than males toward LGBTQ individuals (Ozeren, 2013). These results are in line with some previous studies showing that females have less negative attitudes towards homosexuality in general (Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1999; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Lezarevic et al. (2015) found female respondents had a more positive implicit attitude towards homosexuals measured with Implicit Association Task, IAT, which is in accordance with a previous study by Steffens (2005) showing larger negative IAT effects in males than in females.
The Lazarevic et al. (2015) study found, beyond what is ascribed above, that males tend to be more homophobic towards gay individuals than females do or, to put it another way, females seem to have fewer negative attitudes and dispositions toward gay people than do males. This theme is echoed throughout several research articles (Barringer, Gay, & Lynxwiler, 2013; Takacs & Szalma, 2011; Wells, 2017). Lock and Kleis (1998) noted that “literature suggests greater problems with homophobia in males. In addition, males appear to be at greater psychosexual development risk for vulnerability in terms of gender, gender-role, and sexual-orientation anxieties” (p.1, 2).

Takacs and Szalma (2011) found that women, those with more education, and who were younger were more tolerant of gays and lesbians. Barringer et al. (2013) and Bliss and Harris (1998) confer that women are more magnanimous than heterosexual men and have more tolerant views of homosexuals. This leniency or tolerance of LGBTQ individuals is relevant because men see gays as a conflict of traditional masculinity, whereas the females do not differentiate (Barringer et al., 2013). Lastly, Barringer et al. (2013) note that heterosexual men favor lesbian marriage more than gay men’s marriage. Bliss and Harris (1998) cited research that gay men are more likely to receive homophobic backlash than lesbians.

According to Chrobot-Mason et al. (2001), research suggested that women are more likely to value social-emotional closeness and self-disclose than men (Chrobot-Mason et al. cite; Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). Lesbians and gay men may differ in their use of identity management strategies
or in ways these strategies are combined (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001). The gender differences indicated that, although lesbians and gay males seem to define identity management strategies in the same way, they may differ with regard to how and why a particular strategy (or combination of strategies) was used.

The results of Chrobot-Mason’s et al. (2001) study may have suggested that it was still detrimental for gay men to integrate and reveal their true identity to co-workers. Chrobot-Mason’s et al. (2001) study recommended that perhaps the stigma surrounding a gay male identity is more significant than for lesbians, particularly in an organizational context. Alternatively, these findings may have been because of the different nature of work relationships for men versus women. Since women are more likely to disclose personal information, the quality of work relationships for a lesbian may have been sterner when she is dishonest to her peers or avoids getting too close to anyone on a personal affect, as they are assumed to be to open and honest, or more intimate by co-workers (Chrobot-Mason’s et al., 2001). Lock and Kleis (1998) continued to confer with Takacs and Szalma (2011)

Acceptance of traditional gender roles predicted greater hostility toward homosexuals, high religiosity or membership in a conservative or fundamentalist denomination, political conservatism, lack of known personal contact with homosexuals or transsexuals, and a perception that their friends agree with their attitudes (Harek, 2002; Takacs & Szalma, 2011). In addition, in all studies using the ATLG, [Harek’s Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale],
heterosexual males scored consistently higher on negative attitudes than heterosexual females. Heterosexuals tended to score higher on negative attitudes targeting their own gender (Harek, 2002).

Homonormativity

Neary (2017) performed a small qualitative study in Ireland with teachers and administrators who had entered into civil partnerships (CP). In 2010 civil partnerships were introduced in Ireland, giving couples the same rights as civil marriages. In May 2015, Ireland was the first country “in the world” to publicly vote for same sex marriage. Denmark was the first country to legalize same sex marriage but did so after many other nations which by their legislature passed bills or laws legalizing same sex marriage. In the end, there were at least 18 other countries before Ireland, who allowed same sex marriage (Masci, Sciupac, & Lipka, 2019).

Neary’s (2017) study inquired how educators who entered into CP negotiated their relations with students and parents in Ireland while maintaining teacher legitimacy and congruently acting as agents of change. In this regard, they (re)produce heteronormativity but simultaneously enable moments of empowerment of queer transgressive potential.

Strategies used to gather participants were advertisements, informal and formal networks, and a snowball method to recruit teachers and administrators. Fifteen teachers took part in the study, including a principal. Neary’s (2017) study included seven women and eight men. Seven worked in primary schools, and four worked in community schools. Fourteen identified as gay or lesbian, one
identified as bisexual. There were no transgender or queer-identifying teachers. The study was for ten months in 2012. First, there was a semi-structured interview of about 90 minutes. Then those who had registered their CP (13 of them) completed a detailed written reflection recalling their life at the time of their CP. Additionally, participants were invited to six weekly written reflections guided by prompted emails.

The results of Neary’s (2017) study introduced the concept of homonormativity. Homonormativity, according to Neary (2017), referred to sexual politics that fails to critique but serves to reproduce and sustain heteronormative assumptions and institutions (p. 66). One participant’s discourse ensured that Neary followed the heteronormative lens of appropriateness, by not disclosing, or over-discussing, alternatives to heterosexuality. The approach was framed with a model that enforces “normal” “stable relationships” in what the article suppositions as civil partnerships (CP), thus are indicative of how interruptions to heteronormativity have the potential to re-orient along heteronormative lines through a new kind of homonormativity. In doing such, visibility does not guarantee inclusion, as the LGBTQ model becomes appropriated as a homonormative straightening device (p. 67), which works to maintain heteronormative heterosexuality and delegitimize those who do not conform to heterosexual rules. The research revealed a bias as LGBTQ’s who are struggling against heteronormative norms and stances with a quest for normal legitimacy. Those who interrupt heteronormativity and homophobia with changes of “non-alignment” (p.69) to heteronormative syntax risked vulnerability due to possibly
being redirected to homonormative and heteronormative lines (Neary, 2017).

Much of this was to combat anxieties due to perceptions of promoting homosexuality. The notion of promoting homosexuality threatens the heteronormativity entrenched in schools, underpinned by the idea that it is possible to change a person from heterosexual to LGBTQ (Neary, 2017). Further, the concept of being “born gay” (p. 68) are used to reinforce biological reduction narratives and teachings. They are silenced because of the risk of uncertainty the issues bring to the schools. The fear of an arbitrary concept of promotion acts as another “straightening device” (p. 68) to ensure LGBTQ teachers and communities do not construct a collective facing heterosexual norms.

The first finding was teachers who over performed to appear legitimate and compensate to protect their LGBTQ identities. However, this over performance’s implicit function indicated a continuation of heteronormative stands by diminishing the LGBTQ identities as subsidiary to their teaching continues the dichotomizing of private and personal lives. In other words, by overperforming and not addressing or being “out,” LGBTQ educators remain behind heteronormative norms by making their sexualities masked behind their significant competence in their field and with their students.

The second was the maintenance of distance between the student and the teacher physically and emotionally. This distance, in particular, was felt by a secondary principal and secondary teacher. Maintaining distance was suppositional as a reductive understanding of sexuality that places them in a
position of being vulnerable to accusations of sexual child abuse. Heterosexuality was not just surrounding the environment but also an orientation toward others. The private/public lives' underpinnings and personal/professional lives were invisibly reinforcing heteronormative logic. This logic allows cisgender and heterosexual educators to draw on power not available to LGBTQ educators. The disenfranchisement pushes teachers along heteronormative lines, maintaining silences, and ensuring “teacher/student relationships continue to be predicated on an invisible, unmarked heterosexual norm” (p. 65).

The third was being an agent of change. By opening up about their CP, LGBTQ educators devise strategies to interrupt homophobia, teach LGBTQ identification, and be a role model. In doing so, the educator can disrupt the pervasive assumption of heterosexuality.

In a connection to Neary (2017) connecting civil partnerships with acceptance of LGBTQ identity disclosure, Connell (2015), in the summer of 2008, attended a conference of the Gay and Lesbian Allied Administrators (GALAA) in downtown Los Angeles. There had also been a religious group who presented at the conference that shared the space with a banner on the podium made into a makeshift shrine stating, “Jesus is Our Lord and Savior” (p. 131). After Connell shared the author’s research at the conference, two [gay and lesbian] individuals started a conversation with Connell. As if sparked by the perceived possibility of controversy with the religious group [see religiosity section in this chapter], the conversation became involved with several gay and lesbian educators.
Connell (2015) illustrates a phenomenon that gay men who participate in female dominated professions, such as teaching, can be expected or accepted with more feminized gender non-conforming mannerisms, while gender-conforming lesbians become more invisible. This imbalance has negative ramifications: it contributes to the invisibility of lesbians while stigmatizing gay men. These constraints of LGBTQ presentation in the classroom perpetuates homonormativity and limits the challenges the gendered and sexualized inequalities gay and lesbian teachers could achieve. There is a high price to pay for teachers who cannot or do not want to fit the demands of homonormativity. It would be nice if every LGBTQ person could be their authentic self in the classroom, but homonormativity from within the gay culture can be a substantive inhibitor to sexual identity disclosure.

**Heterosexist Dominance**

Public school employees’ disclosures regarding their sexual identities conflict with the constrictive religious dominant narrative prevalent in our educational hierarchy. If they lay further to the right, it produces homophobic attitudes and heteronormative stances. These heteronormative attitudes and homophobic attitudes create a fear of disclosure and oppressive work environments. American religious institutions have generally served to maintain heteronormativity rather than progressive thinking and reform (Wilkinson 2004).

Every author of Duke’s (2007) study acknowledged “public schools as sites of institutional homophobia” (Duke, 2007, p. 8). These findings are relevant because people’s lives are at stake, and those LGBTQ educators are sometimes traumatized and sometimes rewarded when they are authentic (out of the closet) in their professional world.

There is a prevalence of educational institutions that do not provide adequate support for LGBTQ employees, counteractively, LGBTQ employee resource groups offer social support spaces where employees can advocate for workplace changes. As such, these groups offer support for sexually identified minorities and any other invisible minority, such as religious minorities, stigmatized individuals, or individuals with disabilities having authentic selves and boosting business productivity (Ozeren, 2014).

LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace can be in the form of firing or failing to hire solely because of one’s sexual orientation. Additionally, discrimination can lead to unequal wages, exclusion from benefits, not being promoted and being demoted. Informal oppression can take the form of jokes, homophobic verbal harassment, loss of credibility, lack of acceptance and respect from peers and managers, etc. According to Poe (1996), productivity is lowered by such an environment (as cited by Ozeren, 2014).

Schools are socio-political institutions and are often associated with right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) who consider themselves the moral elite and feel justified criticizing the immoral action of out groups. RWA is consistently associated with many forms of prejudice homophobia (Takacs & Szalma, 2011;
Wilkinson 2004). One mannerism is silencing LGBTQ persons by heteronormative, heterosexist agencies in education, and others do so in various forms. Many articles published in journals are read only by LGBTQ educators and not through mainstream media (Duke, 2013). Further school-based silencing is performed through a variety of methodologies from internalized homophobia, fear of institutional reputation loss, and several other factors that effectively work to subvert any operational element that could assist in disclosure and development of an inclusive LGBTQ workplace, faculty, and curriculum (Duke, 2007). Silencing is continued by the belief that the issue (LGBTQ issues) are best left for the parents, and not to the school to decide. This has effectively contributed to the oppression of LGBTQ people and those who are perceived as LGBTQ (Wells, 2017). Gray (2013) continues that “LGB teacher identities are silenced through heteronormative discursive, pedagogical, teleological, and professional practices that dominate schools” (p. 703). Gray (2013) illuminates that several participants, of which there were only four, worked where silence dominated their choice not to disclose due to conservatism and the complexities of their sexual identities. Self-respect was reported as the most favorable consequence of being out (Duke, 2007). The second was feeling more comfortable at work.

As previously mentioned, less scholarship has been given to transgender issues (particularly with LGBTQ [educators] of color), where there is a lapse in the field of literature (Renn, 2010). The 1990’s and early 2000’s were seen as an improvement in the scholarly work providing insight into LGBTQ academics and
administrators. More current, Haddad (2019) used a case study to show how schools can support gay men in the workplace and how disturbances in the lineation that heterosexuality was the presumptive “normal” (p. 1) foundation in all aspects of life. The study’s purpose was to delineate gay teacher identity disclosure. Phase one was a qualitative online survey that determined their location along a continuum of disclosure, going from birth to adulthood. Phase two found three themes: teacher preparation and professional development, perception/non-perception of administrative support, and activist teaching. Finally, the third phase of the conceptual framework was revisited and reformatted into a model of gay teacher identity. Then the researcher focuses solely on Peter, one of the four participants of the original study. The author focused on one of four participants, who had passed away in an automobile accident and was a dear friend. The conceptual framework was revisited and reformatted into a gay teacher identity, focusing on Peter.

Peter came out early in life. Peter excelled in his area of expertise and became popular. He worked in a charter school that offered academic solutions for children in poverty, similar to a non-profit organization, only to be lost to a sudden and unexpected car accident. In relation to the next context, his situation was his location. He was in San Jose, near to San Francisco, where acceptance of LGBTQ inclusion may shift perspective to a more supportive academic and social/professional climate that enabled Peter to come out. The finding Haddad implicated was being a popular and successful teacher would mitigate attention towards LGBTQ identity. Thus the more powerful and respected the teacher was
in school, the more likely the gay teacher identity could interrupt heteronormativity and be negotiated and enacted.

Bizjak (2018) performed a study of six LGBTQ public school educators who were currently teaching. The author conducted a phenomenological framework intertwined with queer theory/criticism and intersectionality with qualitative narrative interviews outlaying insight into the six co-researchers/participants. This phenomenological study eluded to five emergent themes of the essence of these six individuals’ experiences as LGBTQ public school educators: relationships with students, the passion to teach, the decision to self-disclose at work, fear, the need for district inclusiveness and safe spaces.

Bizjak (2018) cites McNaron (1997), whose results found that the intersections of fear and homophobia have causality for gay and lesbian faculty not to disclose (remain closeted) to protect their jobs and to foster the hope of career advancement. Bizjak (2018) also cites Sanlo (1999), whose qualitative study resulted in lesbian and gay teachers “in the public-school system must live with the added stress of identity management and fear of discovery just to remain employed” (p. xv). The fear of job loss was consistently at the forefront of every one of Sanlo’s (1999) participants’ concerns.

Bizjak (2018) had five out of six co-researchers [participants] remain closeted about their sexual orientation. One transgender male shared his identity with students openly. Blount (2005), as cited by Bizjak (2018), proclaim that when the community suggests it wants more male instructors, it means more heterosexual male instructors. Men who pursue traditionally associated female
professions “display gender nonconformity, remain unmarried, or openly identify as gay… typically are not hired…or, if hired endure heightened scrutiny. [In the same association], women who seek male associated educational positions tend to face internal resistance, if not over employment discrimination” (p. 182). Blount (2005) continues this discourse with “homosexual school workers, who at the beginning of the 20th century, faced ‘immense social resistance,…lack of job security, and hostile [work] climates’” (p. 178).

Religiosity

Religiosity is a major construct in the salient manifestation of cisgender and heterosexist dominance. Religiosity can be the predominant element in fear of disclosure. Wilkinson (2004) places religiosity into four distinct paradigms: quest, intrinsic, extrinsic, and orthodoxy Wilkinson’s (2004) rhetoric placed this paradigm of religiosity with these four quadrants from quest being loving and open minded to orthodoxy being the most homophobic and heteronormative, and the other two in the middle. Authoritarianism and religiosity create a multidimensional aspect of the measure of homophobia (Wilkinson, 2011; Takacs and Szalma, 2011). Wilkinson (2011) and Barringer et al. (2013) look at specific respondents’ social contact, apprehension, morality beliefs, civil rights, attitudes, and stereotypic beliefs toward gay men and lesbians, creating the same paradigm of religiosity and authoritarianist right wing political aspects. This finding is relevant to Takacs & Szalma (2011), who found that mid-left-wing political supporters were less homophobic and supportive of gay rights.
The context and quantitative methodology of Takacs and Szalma (2011), who, as previously mentioned, studied 51,000 individuals from a prior survey from 26 countries, selecting questions on a varying range, specifically looked at attitudes toward same sex marriage and same sex partnership. They used the significant data of the European Social Study Dataset (2002). 2002 was the first year the survey took place and has consequentially been taking place every other year since. Findings were relevant to the U.S. as well, for they paralleled this country in most data findings and data analysis (Takacs and Szalma, 2011), such as the Barringer et al. (2013) study and the Wilkinson (2004) study. Takacs and Szalma (2011) cover all of Europe, which mirrors or exceeds the conservatism of the U.S.

Takacs and Szalma (2011) concurred with Wilkinson that the more religiosity, the number of times one goes to church, the more one is staunchly embedded into their religion, the greater likelihood that this silences and negates the potential for LGBTQ teachers to disclose their sexual orientation to any of the school stakeholders. A parallel vein could be substantiated deductively that the more rural areas and US states with high religiosity such as the south can be corollary to the more Eastern European and Orthodox religions. Barringer et al. (2013) depict the more literal interpretations of the Bible, such as Leviticus 18:2 and Romans 1:18-32 tend to be the most homophobic, heteronormative, and discriminatory toward homosexuals (p. 246).

In contrast to the large number of European study participants, Worthen (2011) surveyed a set of undergraduate students of a mean age of 22 in the
Southern U.S. One of Worthen’s participants saw her background as a conservative Catholic as problematic for becoming an LGBTQ ally because of the church teachings. This graduate student could not fully become an ally for LGBTQ persons. Even though she sought “human qualities” in every individual, she could not fully support LGBTQ persons because of this religious background.

Related to policy efforts, Meyer, Taylor, & Peter (2015) contended it would be helpful for educators to learn how to balance the sometimes competing rights of religious freedoms when discussing LGBTQ-related issues in the classroom. This religious and educational balance was an important issue to explore further as claims of violations of religious freedom rights are often used as a tool to exclude and avoid talking about LGBTQ topics in schools. Although courts had found that religious freedoms do not trump the right to be educated in an environment free from discrimination in Canadian public schools (Ross v. New Brunswick, 1996), the research presented found that many educators still believe that teachers should not be asked to teach against their privately held religious values. Although Canadian law is progressive on issues of gay and lesbian rights, oppressive attitudes and behaviors concerning sexual orientation and gender expression persist in many parts of Canadian society, where schools are among the most problematic sites in this regard (Meyer, Taylor, & Peter, 2015). Canadian and European studies are included, as many of them reflect where the U.S. might be going regarding inclusion for diverse cultures.
Academic Attitudes and Experiences

Wells (2017) found LGBTQ teacher remembered their days as a student with suicide. Coupled with the resulting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as an adult in the classroom due to homophobia, suicidal ideation had to be conquered to be in the classroom. Thus, it was suggesting the need for further research of adult teacher suicide, psychiatric conditions, and PTSD. Much of this literature was blatantly excluded from current research and would help pollinate current discourse for future debate and dialogue. Conversely, few mentioned successes in the classroom of PK-12 gay men and lesbians coming out and having a safe and positive experience (Duke, 2007; Wells, 2017). Bliss & Harris (1998) found several positive interactions with teachers who came out to their classrooms.

This positive interface was found in Liddle (1997), who focused on a college professor disclosure of sexual orientation and teaching evaluations. Liddle’s (1997) own disclosure as a lesbian to two of four sections of the same upper level undergraduate course seemed to have no effect upon the evaluations, but the author does determine that this may be due to the fact that the author came out late in the semester, after eight weeks, so the students had become familiar with the author, and the author had already introduced the topic of sexual orientation (Liddle, 1997). Liddle (1997) recommends future studies look at when instructors come out early in the course to see if findings differ or if gay men or bisexuals experience different responses.

Contrary to these results, Russ, Simonds, and Hunt (2002), upon inquiry,
denote students finding a gay professor/teacher as significantly less credible than a straight teacher. College students of a gay teacher/professor perceive that they learn considerably less than students of a straight professor. Their findings concluded students rate a gay instructor lower in competence and character than a straight instructor. The study found no significant difference between the groups in terms of the two dimensions of credibility; competence, and character. As to the relationship between teacher credibility and perceived student learning, a significant positive relationship between perceived student learning and teacher credibility was found; students learned more from teachers whom they considered highly credible. Students perceive they learn more from a straight instructor versus a gay instructor. Nine out of ten students said they would not hire a gay instructor. This study exclusively looks at gay males in the educational workforce. It finds clear discrimination, prejudice, and negative consequences for revealing one’s sexuality if gay. It does recommend that college administrators take this into consideration for gay instructors and keep them on their faculty for reasons of inclusion, diversity, protection of LGBT students, and teacher authenticity. The faculty’s diversity is meant to enrich the curriculum and the lives of the young students they serve.

Ally Training Programs and the Importance of those Allies.

Worthen (2011) defines an ally “as a person ‘who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate with and for, an oppressed population’” (Washington & Evans, 1991, p. 195).
Positive environmental support for disclosure of stigmatized identities with the presence of others who have disclosed successfully indicates the presence of supportive relationships involving individuals who are not members of the stigmatized group, institutional support, and protection (Ragins, 2008). These deliver three types of support; social, instrumental, and symbolic.

Ragins (2008) continues that in the presence of supportive and ally relationships, supporters and allies are individuals who do not have the stigma but who consciously and deliberately support those who do. Supporters and allies may not view the characteristics as a stigma, even though they realize others do.

Supportive and ally relationships may facilitate disclosure relating to trust and psychological attachment. LGBTQ ally programs are offered at a large southern US university, an area known for hostility toward LGBTQ students (Worthen, 2011), which is composed of a four-hour session for students, faculty, and staff to promote equity for LGBTQ persons. Worthen’s (2011) study concluded that the LGBTQ ally program helped increase awareness of LGBTQ issues and people and decrease homophobic response rates among college age students in an otherwise hostile state towards LGBTQ people in the US.

Heterosexual allies who will speak out and support acceptance seeing LGBTQ issues and heroes visible in the curriculum and LGBTQ educators’ support groups greatly affect how LGBTQ educators perceived their environment (Smith et al., 2008). Ultimately student achievement/potential suffers when teachers do not feel safe and supported environments (Smith et al., 2008).
Croteau et al. (2008) elicit three types of support in the work environment which can assist in the reduction of stigmatization of the work environment if the worker feels supported and affirmative toward LGB workers, (1) seeing the success of other LGB educators/workers, (2) the presence of non-LGB workers (allies), and (3) the presence of LGB affirmative institutional policies and practices. Allies provide the support necessary for someone who does not share the stigma but does not stigmatize. Allies can be an essential intervention to challenge discriminative and aversive treatment. The presence of LGBTQ workers who have disclosed in the presence of allies and the presence of supportive policies and institutional practices directly influence disclosure decisions and indirectly influence such decisions.

Coker and Cain (2018), in their autobiographical narrative inquiry, recalls when an administrator, a man of color, a huge man in stature, church going, traditionally masculine, and sports following, put his foot down in support of Johnathan, who was facing fierce homophobia, was quint-essential to Johnathan’s employment as a middle school teacher. As an ally, the administrator called in parents, met with students, and provided an appropriate consequence on a situation that Johnathan thought would have resulted in termination. Johnathan and his administrator show how two marginalized people can work together to resist larger systems of prejudice.

Disclosure is more likely to occur in relationships established in trust. Trust is critical for disclosure and is worth mentioning once more (Ragins, 2008). LGBTQ identified teachers make up a very small fraction of the workforce;
therefore, it is unreasonable to expect them to do this work alone. Straight and cisgender-identified allies need to get involved in gender and sexual diversity (GSD) inclusive education efforts in order for such programs to have a broader impact beyond a few isolated classrooms or exemplary programs (Meyer, Taylor, & Peter, 2015).

One of Bizjak’s (2018) participants had a close relationship with the author’s former administrator, who identified as gay. Josh had to find strategies and instruct them on dealing with those who oppose homosexuality, including students, parents, and administration. Even though this participant was not out to his students and parents, he states, “I have some really good allies in my building, even at the administration level, I have good allies, and never in my career and in the school district” (p. 213) has anyone said to him how he had a plan to explain to parents or people that he is gay, even as he watched his administrator remain closeted.

Melillo (2003) wrote an article and study on four lesbian educators, one of which was a close friend. Melillo identified as heterosexual, but the author’s work in this article showed an excellent effort to understand the effects of heteronormativity on lesbian teachers in South Florida. Specifically, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand what impact “heteronormativity” has on lesbian teacher’s perception of instructional style, content, and context of the curriculum taught (Melillo, 2003, p. 2). After the pilot study of the four lesbian teachers, the author used snowballing to find a larger sample with a broader range of age, grade levels taught, experience, and ethnic
diversity. The author was unable to find any teachers of color. The participants taught in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties. Melillo (2003) found nine altogether. The author taped recorded two-hour interviews with each participant.

The results of this study showed that personal acceptance of being a lesbian, shared with the acknowledgment, rather than compliance or defiance, of cultural hegemony, can allow the lesbian educator to enhance the curriculum to characterize all people and create a classroom climate that will foster understanding and even generate social change among colleagues, parents, and students, one person at a time (Melillo, 2003, p.20).

For the majority of the participants, the most crucial part of their coming out process was that it enabled them to help their students. While having a fear of exposure, they could not live a life of lying about themselves. They had to have a “certain honesty” that was pervasive to their personal and professional experience. All women expressed that teachers are expected to be role models, and they have a captive audience. They used this power to help the students enrich their own lives and how this responsibility weighs heavily on the teachers. A few teachers were commended for high achieving teaching awards. One taught the importance of lesbian figures in history. Another taught the importance of not judging and being kind. Two others used the curriculum in first grade with alternative type families. As an ally, Melillo effectually supported through this research that closeted lesbian teachers can be good instructors. Still, the
students and colleagues cannot be given a chance to know a good teacher who was a lesbian.

Legal Protections

Bishop, Caraway, & Stader (2010) cited several cases where legal protection was invoked for sexual minority educators, not always with successful endings. Lawrence v. Texas (2003) went to the supreme court. Lawrence and his partner were having consensual sex in the privacy of their home when Houston police entered and arrested and convicted them of deviant sexual intercourse in violation of Texas statute for two persons of the same sex to engage in certain intimate sexual conduct. The state supreme court found their civil rights of due process under the fourteenth amendment were not violated according to Bowers v. Hardwick, 478 U.S. 186 (1986). Even the supreme court was split, but ultimately Bowers was overturned, and due process was found to have been in violation by the statute. What is of interest in this literature review is the date, 2003, which is relatively recent. In the 1970’s there were several cases, Acanfora v. Board of Education 1973; Burton v. Cascade School District 1975, and Gaylord v. Tacoma 1977, where teachers were fired for being rumored of homosexuality, regardless of tenure, quality of teaching, or length of time in the classroom.

Bizjak (2018) mentioned these several particularly relevant court cases where teachers lost their posts, making it relevant to this discussion and dialogue. In Acanfora v. Board of Education (Acanfora v. Board of Education of Montgomery County, 1973), Acanfora self-identified as a gay male teacher, filed
charges of discrimination against the Montgomery County School District because they transferred him from a full-time teaching post to a non-teaching position, without cause. The case did find that teacher's sexual orientation did not impact children’s sexual orientation, but Acanfora still lost his teaching job. In 1975, a rural high school teacher filed for attorney assistance and legal protection with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Her name was Peggy Burton. In *Burton v. Cascade School District* (Burton v. Cascade School District Union High School, 1975), Burton claimed her principal Federico confronted her that she was a lesbian under mere rumor from a parent. If found out to be accurate, she had seen other teachers face hard punishment: dismissal from her job, or worse, admittance into a state-controlled treatment program. She acknowledged she was a “practicing homosexual” (Peggy Burton v. Cascade School District Union High School No. 5 et al., p. 852). The ACLU case set a precedent that homosexuals have entitlements to civil rights, providing a shift in lesbian and gay rights. Burton only won some minor predominance. She was fired, paid the remainder of her salary for the rest of the year, a few hundred dollars for attorney fees, and the right to have her employment record expunged of the ongoing related to the incident.

In *Gaylord v. Tacoma School District No. 10* (Gaylord v. Tacoma School District No. 10, 1977, Gaylord, the defendant, never disclosed his sexual orientation. A student struggling with his sexuality sought advice from Mr. Gaylord. He had suspected Gaylord was homosexual, and the student had attempted suicide, not wanting his peers to suspect he was gay. The “authorities”
(Bizjak, p. 56) went to Gaylord’s home and accused him of recruiting children to homosexuality. Gaylord’s employment was terminated based on “occupying a public status that is incompatible the conduct required of teachers in this district. Specifically [for] …being publicly known homosexual” (Gaylord v. Tacoma School District, 1971) (Bizjak, 2018, p. 56).

Gaylord v. Justia, 1977 found:

After Gaylord’s homosexual status became publicly known, it would and did impair his teaching efficiency. A teacher’s efficiency is determined by his relationship with his students, their parents, the school administration, and fellow teachers. If Gaylord had not been discharged after he became known as a homosexual, the result would be fear, confusion, suspicion, parental concern, and pressure on the administration by students, parents, and other teachers (Bizjak, 2018, p. 56).

The Superior Court found that Gaylord was adequately discharged for immorality due to his homosexuality, and as a known homosexual, his ability and fitness to teach was impaired with resulting injury to the school (Gaylord v. Tacoma, 1977). Mr. Gaylord fought all the way to the supreme court, where the case was dismissed. Mr. Gaylord never went back into teaching (Shilts 1982, as referenced by Bizjak, 2018). Similarly, a gay New York public school teacher faced a threat to his position with the school board for behaving inappropriately in the classroom. (Gish v. Board of Education of Paramus, 1976) was found to be a member or affiliated with New York’ Gay Activist Alliance (GAA). Belonging to the GAA placed his reputation under scrutiny. His supervisor’s homophobia
constructed with a psychiatrist's opinion he was unfit to teach, would cost Mr. Gish his job. Both John Gish and James Gaylord never went back into teaching (Bizjak, 2018).

In Conway v. Hampshire County Board of Education (1983), a West Virginia kindergarten teacher was dismissed due to her clothing being non-conformist with her gender. This gender non-conformability led to the plaintiffs accusing her of threatening the well-being of the children she taught due to her sexual orientation, even though it was merely suggested. This gender non-conformability was deemed unacceptable, and Ms. Linda Conway was terminated which was upheld by the State Supreme Court.

Though these cases are outdated, they showed the struggles and strife gay men and lesbians have faced in the courts without success. In many places, this struggle continues.

As of the late 1990’s (Glover v. Williamsburg Local School District, 1998), a White male probationary teacher with an African American partner was fired in Ohio under the pretext of not having classroom control of student behavior, when a false rumor had been started that he and his partner were holding hands at a school event. Even though he proved the rumor was false, the school board, the superintendent, and the principal convened to fire the teacher. He filed charges that he was discriminated against on his sexual orientation, gender, and race of his partner. He was unable to prove discrimination based on gender or race, but he was triumphant in his sexual identity discrimination claim. He received a dismal amount of about $71K, plus attorney fees, and was unable to find work.
afterward, though the district was forced to give him a two-year contract. In *Weaver v. Nebo School District* (1998), a high school psychology and physical education teacher worked as a volleyball coach for girls’ volleyball. She had been a coach since 1979. A student asked her if she was gay, to which she truthfully answered yes. The district is in Utah, not too far from Salt Lake City, the Mormon capital of the world. The district then in kind sent her notice to silence herself on these matters, or she would be terminated. Her recently divorced husband, a school psychologist with the district, was written to silence himself about her sexual orientation, though he could speak about his heterosexuality. The grind is that heterosexuality was proponed in speech in the classroom as it was reinforced with the statue of no sex before marriage. The courts upheld Ms. Weaver’s allegations that the first amendment protected her speech. Her removal as a volleyball coach violated her fourteenth amendment clause based on impermissible reason, namely sexual orientation. She was awarded a mere $1500 and was able to coach again. Her attorney fees for her four attorneys were not granted. It is unclear if the cases were taken on a pro bono or contingency basis. Even in progressive states or those who think they are, in California, it took legal action to prevent parents from removing their children from a lesbian’s classroom claiming the teacher had created “a hostile learning environment” (Bishop et al., 2010, p.85).

The case was *Kavanaugh V. Hemet School District*, (2000), a suburb near Los Angeles. Ms. Kavanaugh was represented by Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the oldest and largest gay legal organization; Myron Quon was
her attorney. The ruling ordered officials not to remove students from
Kavanaugh’s classroom and to delete adverse records from Kavanaugh’s
personnel file. Under the law, removing students constituted the school’s catering
to anti-gay perspectives, utterly unrelated to the teacher’s performance, was
discriminatory and a violation of state law. With several other Lambda attorneys,
Mr. Quon represented the plaintiff Dawn Murray in *Murray v. Oceanside Unified
School District* (2000) in Oceanside, California. She alleged the district set up a
harassing environment that she had to endure, with a couple of other allegations
due to discrimination. Lambda did not win the harassment charge, much to do
with that she did not lose her post. She continued to teach. It was appealed by
two other law firms to represent Ms. Murray. The appeals court reversed the
lower court’s decision, and Ms. Murray’s complaints constituted severe and
pervasive harassing conduct. The conduct had to not continue, or the district
would be in further violation. Murray had been employed since 1983, and
Kavanaugh taught for 18 years, proving disparaging discrimination and
harassment does not just apply to probationary or newly tenured instructors.

Bishop et al. (2010), who sited these legal protection cases, make a stand
that unfortunately, many sexual minority educators worry about their employment
and become “rigid enforcers” (p. 87) of heteronormativity because of their fear of
making their sexual identity known or because they wish to protect students from
the harassment and bullying of LGBTQ students. Despite this rhetoric of dissent
on LGBTQ educators’ civil rights issues, there are assuredly many school
employees who have successfully disclosed their identities and found little to no
discrimination and went on to have healthy and robust careers (Coker, & Cain, 2018).

**Geographic Location**

Geographical location plays a significant factor in decisions of identity management (Coker & Cain, 2018; Connell, 2012; Khan, 2013; Ozturk, 2011; Takacs & Szalma, 2011). The location of the person’s employment has been found by the author in the following research to support this idea with substantive engagement. Legal protections are dependent in large part on geographic location, and if someone feels that they are in a highly homophobic workplace, they are less likely to disclose (Chrobot-Mason, et al. 2001; Claire et al., 2005; Croteau et al., 2008; Gray, 2013; Griffin, 1991; Lance, 2006; Ozeren, 2013; Smith et al., 2008). Smith et al. (2008) connect how much support they have in the workplace correlates to managing their identity in an authentic or privatized manner.

On the continuum of regionality, Dimito and Schneider (2008) asked how to make schools safe for students internationally, LGBT educators, and others who wanted to address these [LGBT] issues that address K-12 faculty? Their purpose was to ascertain experience with anti-LGBT harassment and discrimination in the school setting, to become aware of students being subject to such harassment, to learn more about their comfort level and sense of security in discussing these issues in the school setting, and to determine resources available to students on LGBT issues. The study was quantitative and used a questionnaire of a convenience sample of 132 teachers or school administrators.
at elementary, middle, and high schools in the province of Ontario, Canada. The first group was recruited from educators attending a conference concerning LGBT in the schools. These were returned in a dropbox. A second group was recruited at Pride Day in Toronto, available in a booth featuring LGBT-positive research at the University of Toronto. These were returned either by mail or in a box at the booth. The third group was recruited during a series of workshops on LGBT issues that teachers attended voluntarily throughout southern and central Ontario. These were returned by mail.

They were asked about LGBT issues: what are teachers’ experiences? (on a 3-point Likert scale) Why don’t educators respond to LGBT issues in the school? What is the amount of protection they felt when addressing LGBT issues? What are LGBT respondent’s level of being out in the school?

Dimito and Schneider’s (2008) findings included parents protesting being the primary reason educators do not want to bring up LGBTQ issues in schools, followed by the need for information on more effective strategies, with a close third of being harassed by students. In other words, parents and students presented a more significant barrier than did colleagues and other professionals, such as administrators. This suggests that interventions aimed at assisting students and parents in understanding LGBTQ issues should be a priority.

Out of Dimito and Schneider’s (2008) 11 point anti-LGBTQ harassment and discrimination, the worst offenders were students verbally harassing other students because they were LGBTQ or believed to be LGBTQ, followed by students bullied by students because they were LGBTQ or believed to be
LGBTQ. Anti-LGBTQ graffiti on school property, and students harasing teachers were the fourth highest ranked behaviors toward LGBTQ individuals in a purposefully discriminatory or prejudicial manner. Most felt Canada’s current legislation would protect them. Most felt their teachers’ federation would protect them as well. More than half said their school district had sexual orientation in their anti-harassment policy. A minority of the respondents felt that discussing issues with colleagues would jeopardize their jobs, but they felt their jobs would be most threatened if talked to with children as opposed to colleagues.

Dimito and Schnieder’s (2008) study was performed in Ontario, Canada, where legalized same sex marriage has been a national right for twenty years or more, plus other civil rights for LGBTQ persons in employment that only some states hold here for their protection. In Canada, employment protection is nationwide, called the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Your Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 2017). This protection gives LGBTQ educators a platform of stability for sexual identity management disclosure decisions. One of the largest reasons for discrimination based on sexual orientation is heteronormativity, which will be discussed next.

Wright (2009) performed a quantitative study, mostly using a Likert scale, to examine factors related to LGBTQ educators’ perceptions of school climate, as defined as perceptions of school safety through policies, principal support, and school homophobia and the impact these perceptions have on the educators’ level of sexual identity disclosure (outness), which has been linked to teacher efficacy. The online pilot study contained 165 items, detailing 30 respondents'
LGBT perceptions of safety in their schools. The pilot study was posted on the internet on April 1, 2006, using Survey Monkey. The link was made inactive on May 3, 2006. Two participants had missing data and were not used. The number of items was changed to 171 for a national survey. The final sample was 514 LGBT educators from all grade levels from the South, West, Midwest, Southwest, New England, and Mid-Atlantic regions of the US. The survey was posted between April 1, 2007, and June 30, 2007.

Findings or results included: by 1997, policies continued to push LGBT educators further into silence or out of the profession altogether. These LGBT individuals realized they could not reveal their sexual orientation as they could be harassed or lose their job in education. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in bullying policies based on respondents' demographic, personal, and professional characteristics. The hypothesis was supported as the participants [respondents] in the Midwest experience more support from bullying policies than did those in the South. Participants’ perception of job safety partially supported policies of human rights according to those policies. If respondents were protected under state law, ordinance, or union, and if there was principal support, they found their workplace safer, and were more likely to disclose.

Further supporting this was a significant hypothesis that the differences in perception of job safety could be based on the participants' schools' location. Those participants in New England schools reported a significantly higher level of job safety as opposed to the South or Midwest. Those educators in the Mid-
Atlantic had a significantly higher score for job safety than did schools in the South. The hypothesis was supported.

It was of interest in Wright’s study (2009) that teachers with experience of 21-30 years and new teachers with 0-5 years’ experience, felt significantly less safe than those with 11-15 years’ experience. Significant differences, as mentioned, were found from respondents’ age. Respondents aged 18-25 and 34-42 felt more supported by principals than those who were 43-50 and lived through rough times wherein LGBTQ people were discriminated against and never felt confident in administrative support. As well of interest, K-4 schools were found to the most unsafe due to fears of accusations of child pedophilia, being deviant, child molesters, and pushing a homosexual agenda compared to educators of older children. These factors of age and years of experience are also examined through a regional lens.

With respect to regions, Canada has continued to be a stronghold of research based support (Callaghan & Mizzi, 2015). Callaghan and Mizzi (2015) share that the Canadian inclusion policy was first designed for students to respect diversity, equity, and human rights and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual discrimination and gender identity to only later start to address discrimination against LGBTQ educators. Callaghan and Mizzi (2015) brought to light a list of countries that protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, there are still many nations that outlaw gender and sexual diversity and expression. Even worse are countries that impose the death penalty for same sex intimacy. The fact of homosexuals and transsexuals being
murdered by governments took the author to a more in-depth study (Byrnes, 2019), which lists 13 countries where being gay is punishable by death. Not all of these countries are poor; many of them are the wealthiest nations in the world. The list includes Yemen (death by stoning), Iran (hanging), Brunei, Mauritania (death by stoning), Nigeria (death by stoning), Qatar (Muslims may face death depending on the interpretation of the Sharia), Saudi Arabia (execution), Afghanistan (honor killings that restore the reputation of the family’s honor), Somalia, Sudan (a third conviction is punishable by death), United Arab Emirates (consensual homosexual relations can be punishable by hanging), and Pakistan. Callaghan and Mizzi (2015) reported that North American and international public school educational institutions and systems are essential: many people think they are far removed from these listed worldly affairs. Callaghan and Mizzi (2015 point out that Canadians [like all] classrooms are increasingly diverse and that the educators and students come from and travel to these countries where persecution exists.

Khan (2013) listed countries that violate UN human rights regulations and those that have them. See Tables 1-5.

Table 1.

*Lists Of Countries Where Same Sex Acts Are Illegal (76 Countries)*

| Africa: Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, |
Namibia, Nigeria, São Tomé, and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, some parts of Indonesia (South Sumatra and Aceh Provinces), Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (internationally unrecognised), Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen, as well as the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Latin America & Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

Oceania: Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, as well as the New Zealand associate of Cook Islands

Table 2.

_Prohibition Of Discrimination In Employment Based On Sexual Orientation (54 Countries)_

Africa: Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa (Namibia repealed such a law in 2004)

Asia: Israel, Taiwan, as well as a few cities in Japan
Europe: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 
Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, 
Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, 
Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, 
Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, 
Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom

Latin America & Caribbean: Rosario in Argentina, some parts of Brazil, 
Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela

North America: Canada, some parts of the United States

Oceania: Australia, Fiji, New Zealand

Table 3.

Prohibition Of Discrimination In Employment Based On Gender Identity (19 Countries)

Europe: Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Sweden. [Moreover discrimination of transgender people is covered by the gender discrimination prohibitions in among others]: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and United Kingdom.

Latin America & Caribbean: The Argentinean city of Rosario

North America Northwest: Territories in Canada, as well as some parts of the United States

Oceania: Australia
Table 4.

*Constitutional Prohibition Of Discrimination Based On Sexual Orientation (7 Countries)*

Africa: South Africa

Europe: Kosovo, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, as well as some parts of Germany

Latin America & Caribbean: Bolivia, Ecuador, as well as some parts of Argentina and Brazil, as well as the United Kingdom associate of British Virgin Islands

Oceania: None

Table 5.

*Prohibition Of Discrimination In Employment Based On Gender Identity (19 Countries)*

Europe: Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Sweden.

Latin America & Caribbean: The Argentinean city of Rosario

North America: Northwest Territories in Canada, as well as some parts of the United States

Oceania: Australia

Note: Source: Khan (2015). 7-9
By cross-referencing places like the Seychelles, one cannot have same sex intercourse legally but has the protection of employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Go figure. How does one come to terms with that logic?

Further heteronormative discrimination finds its way to places such as Tennessee and Missouri that have “Don’t say gay” bills (these bills prohibit discussion of sexual orientation in schools), which are growing in support and are advancing in the state legislature. In countries with high protection levels, there are still more alarming levels of harassment and homophobic intent. For example, there are still high levels of homophobic and transphobic bullying in the Netherlands, Canada, and France. Levels of LGBTQ bullying vary to include Australia from 61% to 88% reported verbal abuse. Educators can be fired due to nonconformity to heterosexual counterparts or gender conformity/expression (Khan, 2013).

In Houston, Texas, David Embry, a kindergarten teacher, asked if they minded if he was gay during an interview. Fellow colleagues referred to him openly as “lady” or “Ms. Embry.” Then an administrator sent a letter home to parents asking what gender they preferred their teacher to be. Later they removed him, interviewed all 23 of his students. He was reinstated but had post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to the harassment he endured. In the same school district, Houston Independent School District (HISD), Mr. Juan Alvarado did not have his contract renewed after he told one of his students he was gay.
This student was constantly using gay slurs. Despite being announced the teacher of the year, he was fired (Khan, 2013).

The most atrocious example that Kahn (2013) gave was on Professor Augustin Estrada Negrete, director/principal of a school providing services to special needs children near Mexico City in the State of Mexico, attended the \textit{International Day Against Homophobia celebration} on May 7, 2009, in a red dress. His image appeared in local newspapers, parents, community members, and teachers denounced him as a danger to the children and demanded his resignation. What happened afterward is nothing short of horrific and deplorable. The undersecretary of Elementary Education in the State of Mexico gave Prof. Negrete a one-year leave. Protests were made, resulting in a meeting with the deputy secretary general of the state. On that day, police captured his lawyer, beat him, then took Negrete to a basement in the Ministry of Justice building where is was raped, and later to a maximum-security prison where he was repeatedly assaulted and publicly gang raped. He sought asylum in the U.S. His experience in the US has been dramatic and traumatic at best. He sometimes had a small room with a mattress on the floor and a few clothes. Sometimes he was homeless. He did not have enough food at times. While he awaited asylum, he lived in secrecy of his location due to fear of reprisal from the Mexican authorities (“The worst case” 2012). Had Prof. Negrete been an accountant rather than a school director, his situation would almost certainly end differently. Because educators transcend the public world and private, they are particularly vulnerable to risks for human rights violations (Khan, 2013).
Khan (2013) explained the UN resolution pertaining to human rights for persons regarding sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity. The United Nations (UN), on June 17, 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) made a resolution that condemned violence and discrimination to set aside protections and boundaries for civilized behaviors towards individuals based on their sexual orientation. The resolution barely passed. UN countries continue atrocities based on sexual orientation, even the US, who, through systematic subjugation and marginalization, rob LGBTQ individuals of prosperity, lowering their quality of life dramatically (Khan, 2013). They often face violence, fundamental human rights, equal protection under the law, the right to a safe learning environment (bullying and worse), etc. In countries that are members of the UN, such as previously mentioned Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Mauritania, Sudan, large parts of Nigeria, parts of Somalia, individuals who engage in same sex acts are put to death. The Yogyakarta Principles document created in 2006 by human rights experts in 25 countries explained the (the UN) resolution on human rights/sexual orientation/gender identity connection thoroughly. The principals were expanded in 2017 in Geneva, termed: The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (YP+10). It accompanies the original 29 principals to expand into areas such as technology, the right to protection from poverty, the right of truth, and so forth. All 39 principals are based on sexual orientation/gender expression and the protections therein (“The Yogyakarta Principles,” 2017).

December 15, 2011,
The UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a landmark report detailing the human rights violations endured by LGBTQ people around the world. They emphasized that based on the Declaration of Human Rights, states have an obligation to:

• To protect the right to life, liberty, and security of persons irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity
• To prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity
• To protect the right to privacy and against arbitrary detention on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity
• To protect individuals from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity
• To protect the right to freedom of expression, association, and assembly in a non-discriminatory manner (pp. 5-8)

However, the report concluded that there is a continuous overlooking of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression by governments and intergovernmental agencies. Among some of the issues highlighted included:

• Men suspected of same sex conduct subjected to nonconsensual anal examinations to ‘prove’ their homosexuality
• Transgender persons unable to make legal changes to their gender and even when they are allowed, they are forced to undergo sterilization surgery
• Women who are suspected of being lesbians are raped to ‘change’ their sexual orientation or are forced into unwanted pregnancies and marriage.

• Children born with ambiguous genitalia are unnecessarily surgically altered to fit either male or female sexual organs.

• Transgender women placed in male prisons are often victims of rape (OHCHR, 2011) (pp. 6-7).

On a more domestic side, Connell (2012) compared two states, California and Texas, where there are high levels of employment protection policies for LGBTQ persons in California and few or none in Texas. Connell (2012) described that coming out “is a developmental milestone in the psychology of homosexuality… where it is considered a natural and necessary stage in the journey to healthy sexual identity development” (p. 169). Connell continued, “[T]hose working with children in the educational context are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and harassment and that as a result, they are more cautious about coming out on the job” (p. 170). Coming out of the closet has problems with binary implications of being gay or lesbian, in which neither may be the case for an individual. The author discovered many teachers have been unsuccessful if fighting school boards for wrongful termination in courts and that gender nonconformity is an issue for many LGBTQ individuals who do not want to be identified as LGBTQ. Policies do make a difference and provide support. Still, in urban versus rural locations there are not offer enough protections, rural locations offering the least protections and the most hostile. These school
microcultures exist despite policy protections to the contrary. Finally, as a note, Connell (2012) explained that the term “glass closet” refers to the “open secret” that persons are not openly LGBTQ, but they can be “read as such by various social markers” (p. 171). These teachers have a more challenging time and are especially vulnerable. It could be construed that some are not actually gay but still get read as such and have the same occurrences of discrimination.

Smith et al. (2008) found that there is a great deal of mistrust and fear in LGBTQ workplaces. The geographic placement was a part of getting responders. A great deal of effort was put into finding participants, but in North Dakota, Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia, South Carolina, and Vermont, no one responded. It was surprising in Louisiana because of the large gay community in New Orleans. Vermont was surprising because its legal civil unions for same sex partners was in effect. The lack of participants from the Southern states seemed to be straightforward cases of disclosure anxiety because of perceived consequences from conservative communities. Due to there being a culturally inherent social taboo, public policy in the South makes it difficult for participants of queer studies to come forward without risk to their careers or even their personal safety (Coker & Cain, 2018).

Coker and Cain (2018) use a qualitative autobiographical self-reflective inquiry. The authors then focus on Jonathan (one of the researchers), a brown man from the deep South or the Bible Belt. He came out when he was a teenager and landed in New York City, where social services provided housing, food, and education. He did not like living in “gay ghettos” (p. 2). He returned to
the South and returned to being in the closet. He had spent ten years throughout the Bible Belt as a middle school teacher. He changed positions, then started being out at various levels, from being totally closeted, to pretending to be straight, to selected being out to some individuals.

After continually changing jobs, he moved to the “liberal Northeast” (Coker & Cain, 2018, p. 4). His classroom was vandalized with homophobic slurs. He could not escape homophobia as an educator. He and his partner moved back South. He remained closeted, but a student outed him. He thought he would once more be fired, to his surprise, the administration, one of which was a Black man, supported him. Although he was scrutinized by fellow faculty who thought he should only be out to adults and not to students, he became accepted. He used classical mythology as a methodology for students to read about different sexualities and more fluid lifestyles than the rigid heterosexual/homosexual didactic.

As a precursor to geographic context, Lance’s (2006) dissertation on identity management strategies by LGB teachers noted Ellis and Riggle (1995), who discuss people who are less open in Indianapolis but were as equally satisfied as men in San Francisco who were open. It is presumed that the stigma is so much more significant than the negative consequences in Indianapolis are better left alone by not disclosing. Thus the geographic region is evidentially valid and vital. Regionality is seen again in Takács and Szalma (2011), where both religiosity and geographic location influence states of homophobia, intolerance, and marginalization. Ozturk (2011), as cited by Ozeren (2013), interviewed
many GLBT persons and found that gay men were the most likely to be fired once they disclosed their sexual orientation in Turkey.

Sexual Identity Management and Career Path Advancement/Affect

Tompkins, Kearns, and Milton-Kukner (2019) performed a study of 4 new teacher study in Canada. Their stories were from their first two years of teaching and inquired about the various levels of coming out for these individuals. The purpose was to find equity, inclusion, and social justice, including the LGBTQ discrimination of educators’ experiences. Work that needs to be done not just for youth but for educators who experience genderism, homophobia, and transphobia in schools and society. It was noted that in 2005, gay marriage became legal in Canada, yet there is still a pervasive homophobic culture of threat where physical, emotional, and psychological violence remain realities for many queer persons in everyday life, learning, and workspaces (Callagan & Mizzi, 2015; Tompkins et al. 2019).

Having an education degree does not protect LGBTQ teachers from experiencing homophobia and transphobia. Opposition from parents and religious groups, potential legal obligations, probationary status, and opposition from board members, administration, and colleagues constitute factors of not disclosing. Heteronormativity and cisgender privilege are normalized and embedded in power relationships. Beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable in these power relationships as they are probationary and have little cultural capital, which accompanies seniority and permanence in the profession
In their longitudinal qualitative study, Tompkins et al. (2019) utilized queer theory with four recent graduates in Canada who just entered teaching. The study was located in rural Atlantic Canada where colonialism and history had marginalized African Nova Scotian and Mi’Kmaw, Canadian indigenous Indians, who are the populous the teachers educate.

All of the teachers are White. Two taught in elementary schools in Alberta and Ontario's urban centers, the other two work in secondary in remote communities in Alberta. One teacher spent a year in a mostly consolidated high school in Nova Scotia.

Findings included moments where LGBTQ youth, educators, and stakeholders may feel a sense of belonging and as though their identities are valued; however, this dynamic is not sustainable over time, even in safe and positive school environments.

Dennis did not have a permanent contract, but he did try to tell a story about three fish (elementary) and challenge the rigid gender binary, and they did not have to have a boy's or girl's names and to have parents who are of the same sex. Dennis had the most challenges due to parents thinking LGBTQ inclusive education equated to sex education and that parents have concerns about educators promoting homosexuality on religious or moral grounds.

Craig was a high school math and social studies teacher and had a permanent contract in a rural area. He was overtly gay, and the overall teaching experience has been positive, stating that the geographic location is not overly
inclusive and accepting. Craig saw girls walking around holding hands, and less frequently boys doing so. He started a GSA with permission from the principal.

Rose identifies as queer, was an elementary teacher substitute in private and public schools in Ontario. She found two circumstances, one a boy who hung out with the girls and wanted to talk about playing hairdresser in first grade, and a teacher who was struggling to talk about a trans boy to kindergarten students, where she could be supportive. He (the boy) had immediate support from his principal and his colleagues.

Rose found some school board members who could be supportive of her.

Kelsey was gay and gender non-conforming. She was butch, wore her hair short, wears men's clothing, and does not wear makeup. Kelsey spent her first-year teaching English Language Arts. Her environment was "untenable," so she resigned, moved provinces, and accepted a term contract. However, she was highly discriminated against when the vice principal scowled at her when she met her in person the first time getting off the plane. She was hired over the phone. Both the principal and vice principal told her that her attire was inappropriate, that she had to dress differently, and suggested she might be happy if she lived in Edmonton, Alberta's capital. She had never been discriminated against by explicitly telling her that she did not belong and that she was different. The next year she returned to her small rural Alberta home. She put up the gay, trans, bear, flags, and a safe-space symbol. In doing so, she helped create a better GSA.

Four themes came up; first, feeling empowered and accepted to engage in
some level of LGBTQ education was experienced by all four, though the degree to which varied. Second feeling that they were able to come out in the context of their teaching contexts. Third, the participants felt a shared sense of responsibility for LGBTQ education, and it fell on their shoulders. Fourth, school leadership and climates where these LGBTQ educators were more likely to engage in LGBTQ inclusive education and feel supported when the school leadership environment was supportive and much less when they were hostile. Kelsey, Rose, and Dennis were stifled with problems surrounding how much of their LGBTQ identity they could bring into the school.

Harris and Gray (2014) stated: "working within the heteronormative spaces of school can be devastating on queer people working and studying, schools are spaces in which sexuality is generally viewed as private while simultaneously enabling heterosexual teachers to talk about their sexual identities unproblematically and leads to ontological [the nature of being] epistemological [the study of the nature/theory of knowledge, especially the limits, validity, methods, scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion] and spiritual isolation for queer teachers" (p. 4).

Dykes and Delport (2018) research purpose was to include LGBTQ issues in pre-service training programs, which is not just an issue in the U.S., but globally. They cited Australia, the U.K., and New Zealand, where repressive institutionalized heteronormative practices exist in teacher education programs and educator preparation programs. They, too, used a queer theoretical framework in which, through queer theory, one can highlight and interrupt the
silent assumptions that accompany heterosexuality and construct homosexuality as Other and can explore the discursive practices that determine who or what is meaningful. Continual, perpetual heteronormative practices in textbooks, society, and classroom culture were found, and LGBTQ voices were being silenced. Further, negative stereotypes were associated with homosexuality, such as pedophilia, promiscuity, mental illness, disease, and hypersexuality. Thus, pre-service teachers were entering without proper role models or sufficient information to provide an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum that normalizes and protects the rights and liberties of LGBTQ individuals. With this overwhelming homophobia, heteronormativity, and harassment, many LGBTQ teachers remain closeted, depriving students of exposure to sexual diversity in the schools.

Dykes and Delport’s (2018) research methodology was narrative inquiry. In the summer of 2014, Skype semi-structured interviews of 10 LGBTQ teachers, five males, three females and two not specified gender, six white, two Latino, and two non-identified races with most commonly a master's degree in education, in the U.S. Northeast, Northwest, South and Midwest. All had unions except the South, which prohibit unions where Right to Work laws are present.

A coding schema was formalized to include: bullying, harassment, discrimination, fear, acceptance, religion, training, sexual overtones, and employment. Three themes emerged: bullying, lack of pre-service training for teachers, and disregard for sexual diversity in school diversity training. If bullying training is provided, it usually goes toward protecting students and not teachers.

Molly had a student not in her class come and screamed out, "Are you
gay?", then the administration told her to keep it private, effectively silencing her. One student even went to the counselors to ask to be removed from her class because he didn't like the idea of having a gay teacher.

*Elise* had a colleague who cited a biblical perspective and told her it is against God's will.

*Melissa* had a parent use derogatory comments towards her, calling her a "carpet muncher" over the phone but was more amicable face to face.

*Marcus's* superintendent told him his Judeo-Christian values did not allow him to approve of his lifestyle. He was fired after his first year.

*Margie* was also terminated because she was employed in a non-union state.

*George* suggested that personal narrative be used in prep courses and that the LGBTQ movement's history is taught.

*Patrick* responded that they need for non-traditional families to be included for LGBTQ families not to be othered.

One reason most often cited was religion for not including gay issues in pre-service training, so they celebrate White, Christian, middle class, heterosexual, and conservative as normal, and construe homosexuality with immoral characteristics. The final theme emerged as a lack of diversity training. When there was training, it focused on race and linguistics, not on sexuality, fear of parental reprisal, and the religious connotations that prevail.

The researchers suggested that faculty members confront institutional heteronormativity in higher education; additionally, they advocate children's
books addressing gay and lesbian families. Second, they suggested an ongoing dialogue with an educational leadership program. The participants experienced bullying from administrators and other school faculty. Educational leadership programs should address the political and legal ramifications of harassing and denying LGBTQ teachers equal treatment that is already extended to heterosexual faculty. Lastly, schools need to provide training for in-service teachers. Additionally, schools should designate faculty who can offer safe zones for LGBTQ children.

On an international scope, Ozturk (2011) found a gay man who was seen holding hands with his partner in Turkey was fired the next day, not that this occurs in the U.S. (Bishop et al., 2010). The Turkish labor act and constitution refer to sex but did not specifically refer to sexual orientation. Inferring, the man had no protections. Ozturk (2011) interviewed many LGBTQ persons and found that gay men were the most likely to be fired once they disclosed their sexual orientation.

Several dissertations report job loss and [lack of] career promotion as predominant reasons for not disclosing, ranging from not at all, to just the principal, to only the faculty and not the students and parents, and open to everyone (Evans-Santiago, 2016; Hooker, 2010; Kootsikas, 2011).

Evans-Santiago (2016) cited Graves (2007) focused on the purge of gay and lesbian teachers in Florida from 1959-1964. These teachers were fired merely on accusations and rumor. They fire them, and they, in turn, revoked their teaching credentials (Graves, 2007). Evans-Santiago (2016) interviewed four
female teachers, three white and one Black, two high schools, one elementary, and one middle school teacher. The two high school teachers were out, which included the Black teacher, the elementary teacher was out to a selective few, and the middle school teacher was not out to anyone. Another interesting finding was contradictions of expectations in states like California, which might be considered liberal.

In contrast, the two Southern California teachers were not entirely out, only to a select few. The teacher in New York, considered liberal, the teacher interviewed there was not out at all. The participant interviewed in central Illinois, considered more conservative, was entirely out (Evans-Santiago, 2016). Finally, the Black participant taught in a wholly Black district in Michigan and thus, according to Evans-Santiago, did not have the dual minority stigma associated with many black educators, and was entirely out.

As this relates to career advancement and potential, one educator verbally advocated for LGBTQ issues at her school with staff and administration, but not with students (Evans-Santiago, 2016). The participant had witnessed a gay male teacher almost lose his job due to accusations connected to his sexuality. She worried about dealing with the school board and the community resulting in keeping her identity quiet (Evans-Santiago, 2016).

Kootsikas (2011) studied six elementary educators in the Southeast U.S., an area known for its intolerance for LGBTQ issues, conservatism, and homophobic heteronormative positionality. Kootsikas (2011) is a Black educator. This study examined the implications incurred with decisions of coming out to
administrators, school faculty, staff, parents, and students. Though the author was happy to know there were two other gay male teachers in the school, one was less open due to his fear of not being promoted within the school district. All three of them were not out to students and parents (Kootsikas, 2011). Kootsikas (2011) had narrative interviews with the six participants, of which none were out to parents and students (Kootsikas, 2011).

One participant stated that homophobic parents have been homophobic for a long time, and their children most of the time are homophobic because the parent is homophobic. Another participant states that if protected by law, she would come out at school. The job protection would make it ok for her to come out; she wouldn't have to worry that she would lose her job. She clearly delineates that she needed a paycheck. Under career protection, that fear would be gone. One other participant had a student have a crush on her. Eventually, she had to go to the principal due to her lack of comfort and fear of "this is kind of weird because I can get fired for being gay" (Kootsikas, 2011, p. 110). She went to her principal in protest because of her fear of losing her job and demanding something be done even though she is a great teacher (Kootsikas, 2011).

One of Kootsikas' participants had a delightful story of her mother helping her come out to her family when she went to summer camp when she was 15 (Kootsikas, 2011). Her mom, on the way to camp, asked her if she was gay? Then she told her it's ok if she was. She thought she would be homeless and was relieved, but she told her mother she did not know yet and was not ready to talk about it. Her mother had already found a gay youth group for her and told her
she would take her there, even though the participant said she would not go. She went "kicking and screaming the whole way, saying she didn’t need it" (Kootsikas, 2011, p. 146). Her mom told her she was going to read a book called, Now That You Know, to be supportive of her daughter. The group was a safe place and a social network to meet other children. It was an opportunity for parents to join or participate with Parents of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG) (Kootsikas, 2011). Despite familial support, this participant remained closeted with students and parents, presumably out of fear of loss of job (Kootsikas, 2011).

Hooker (2010) wrote a dissertation whose purpose was "to determine how gay and lesbian teachers negotiate their identities and how those affect their relationships in school, as well as what effect their sexual orientation plays on their professional practices, roles, and responsibilities" (p. 24). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender school educators are practically invisible within the nature of heterosexist and homophobic education (Blount, 2005). McCarthy (2003), as cited by Hooker (2010), says, "Openly gay and lesbian teachers were once thought of as immoral, and in some states coming out is still a risk to one’s job" (p. 182).

Hooker’s (2010) study was conducted to determine the effects of identity management on their relationships in their communities and how their professional roles and practices are effected by their sexual orientation. Hooker (2010) used qualitative interviews with four gay and lesbian teachers, two gay administrators and held focus groups with five gay and lesbian Catholic school
educators, inclusive of a soccer coach and a football coach from an all boy's Catholic school. Hooker (2010) had three research questions:

1. How do gay and lesbian educators negotiate their identities in their school settings?
2. How does being an "openly" gay or lesbian educator, or "closeted" educator, affect their relationships with members of the school community, including students, colleagues, and parents?
3. How does being an "openly" gay or lesbian educator or "closeted" educator affect their teaching practices and responsibilities? (p. 26).

Hooker (2010) cites Hernandez (2009) who interviewed a gay man named Andy, an openly gay teacher, and then became an administrator. Andy described fear before disclosure. The fear was over losing his job. Did anyone see him [at a gay venue]? His ultimate fear was if the parents would find out and how they would react. He struggled with what the children would say to one another. He was out to his colleagues during this time, but he never invited them to his house nor brought his partner to social events. Once in administration, he told his staff he was gay and developed a gay and lesbian staff support group. This open atmosphere lasted a few years but ended abruptly when "too many members feared for their jobs because of the conservative climate of the district and did not want to face the challenges if students of parents found out" (Hernandez, 2009, p. 213).

One administrator/participant in Hooker's (2010) "study had been fired as a result of his homosexuality" (p. 58). Hooker interviewed both public and
Catholic school teachers and administrators. The word fear was used much more prevalently in the Catholic school educators' interviews. One participant had been on a gay television show and was thus outed in the process. He became involved with an ex-student 20 years his junior. When the school community found out about the relationship, the superintendent called him in. He took his partner, who told the superintendent it was none of his business when the superintendent asked about their relationship. The problem then became the principal. The principal made his life miserable at every available moment. He lightly patted a kid on the back. Swiftly, the principal called him in and accused him of child molestation. He was directed to lie about his sexuality if anyone asked if he was gay, which he complied with.

Irwin (2002), as cited by Hooker (2010), states, "Sixty-eight percent of educators have experienced some form of discriminations and claimed that it has a negative effect on their work performance, 90% have increased anxiety, 80% have become depressed, and 63% have experienced a loss of confidence." A gay administrator was fired due to having a police report for having sex in a van with an undercover police officer. He left the education field entirely.

Griffin (1991) studied thirteen lesbian and gay educators and two researchers who were university professors conducting the study in an ethnographic qualitative proposal. In 1991, they overwhelmingly found that teachers did not disclose for fear of losing their job and perceptive loss of competence.
Griffin’s (1991) theoretical framework was contemporary labeling theory, wherein a dominant group labels and stigmatizes a group as deviant who is socially and politically less powerful by using the dominant cultural norms to perpetuate an unequal distribution of power. If the deviant group poses a threat, social conflict is inevitable as an upset in power occurs.

Within a Critical Feminist perspective, gender construction in a patriarchal society endorses that differences between men and women are biological. As such there is a constant relationship between biological sex, gender identity, gender roles, and sexual orientation, and heterosexuality is the only normal sexuality (Griffin, 1991, p. 190). Challenges of this paradigm assert that gender is a social construct, not just biological. Thus, there is no constant relationship between biological sex, gender identity, gender roles, and sexual orientation, with heterosexuality enforced by strict sanctions toward any other form of sexual expression.

Griffin (1991) explains that lesbians and gay men challenge traditional gender expression in that lesbians live independently of men, and gay men threaten patriarchal society by breaking ranks with heterosexuality and making avail male intimacy without superfluous dominant paradigms over females. The educators in the study (Griffin, 1991) had internal conflicts consisting of the fear of public accusation resulting in job loss and the wish for self-integrity and integration of identities they hoped being out would provide.

Griffin (1991) states that coming out is not a linear conquest but can be multifaceted. People can make multiple uses of varying workplace disclosure
strategies, with the exception that of explicitly out. Once that is done, it is permanent, and no regression can take place. It needs to have careful consideration (Griffin, 1991) but can provide the most satisfying psychological benefits (Tatum, 2018).

Internalized homophobia, or irrational fear of being seen as gay, can construe added weight to the perception that others will negatively respond to sexual identity disclosure, which is paramount to the fear that they would lose their job in a heterosexist society (Griffin, 1991).

Griffin (1991) suggests that openly gay and lesbian educators reveal possibilities of diversity and inclusionary choices for children they instruct, as well as others in the educational workforce and stakeholders. Patriarchal society must quell this diversity and stigmatize it to maintain control over the labeling of such (Griffin 1991). In those situations, everyone of all sexualities learns to fear diversity "in order to maintain a flawed illusion of normality (Griffin, 1991, p. 201).

Griffin's study gave us a qualitative empirical study, which had been lacking desperately to that point, on workplace sexual identity strategies and workplace happiness. The study was conducted in a time and place where uncertain, dangerous consequences were evoked from disclosing, mostly of complete job loss. Second to this is perceptual competence devaluation (Griffin, 1991), which was revealed in Russ et al. (2002). Russ et al. (2002) findings confirmed college students would not hire a professor if they knew they were gay, particularly gay men. Russ et al. (2002) study was 11 years later. It still was prevalent.
Bohan (1996) reports that self-disclosure at a place of employment is relatively rare due to factors that negative consequences ensue if their identity were known. Many report direct negative consequences when they have been open. In this sense, the movement toward near-complete disclosure may be supported by improved psychosocial well-being and improved interpersonal resources, but the psychological costs are too high for others. In other words, for some, life may be secure enough for openness about their sexual identity to enhance self-esteem, while for others, the potential dangers prohibit broad disclosure (Bohan, 1996).

Loss of one’s job is of paramount importance and consideration when deciding to disclose or not. Fearing losing their job, LGBTQ teachers and administrators often are forced to stay closeted. Heteronormative oppression forces LGBTQ public education employees out of their job if they disclose (Bliss & Harris 1998). Wilkinson (2004) focused on religiosity in terms of attitudes toward homosexuals in general, not specifically at teachers, and mentions job loss as well. This inclusion of LGBTQ persons and partial exclusion is relevant because the academic world may differ from the non-academic. Takacs and Szalma (2011) relate it as the more religious persons believe that gay men and lesbians should not be allowed to live their lives as they wish to.

Woods and Harbeck (1992) conducted a study of 12 LGBTQ public school teachers using a qualitative phenomenological approach with 90 minute interviews on 12 elementary and secondary public education teachers. 11 were White, and 1 was Black. The researchers’ salient problem focused on female
physical education teachers stereotyped as lesbian accompanied by the fear they would lose their jobs if their lesbianism were disclosed. Two themes prevailed in the resulting qualitative data; when identified as lesbian educators they feared they would lose their jobs, and female physical education teachers are often regarded as lesbian in identity orientation.

Of the 12 participants, 11 believed they would be fired if their sexual orientation was disclosed. The 12th teacher did engage in passing behaviors to conceal her sexual identity. When homophobic comments were made, all of the participants were "deeply upset" (p.154) in their failure to protect both students and teachers from anti-gay and lesbian situations. They either remained silent or removed themselves from the situation quickly due to the fear of losing their job. All of the participants felt positive about their private lesbian lifestyle outside the school. They uniformly declared that to bring that identity to work would be hazardous to their career. While heterosexuality was displayed and celebrated as the norm, homosexuality was discredited and silenced. All participants were subject to blatant and subtle homophobic harassment stigmatized as direct threats of dismissal to casual displays of heterosexual privilege. Woods and Harbeck’s (1992) research and available external research shows that both homosexual and heterosexual female physical education teachers are affected by heterosexism and homophobia.

As an example of fear of losing one’s job, Gray (2013) used a poststructuralist feminist/queer theoretical framework to underpin their small 4-person lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) teacher study in a longitudinal (6
months) qualitative study. Initially, 20 people were interviewed twice over 6 month intervals. The first was a semi-structured interview on their life history. The second was less structured on key issues from the first. Thematic analysis of the data was compiled. This framework allowed Gray to illustrate how people articulate their understandings of the social worlds they inhabit. Participants were approached through DIVA magazine and a newsletter of an English teaching union. Most of the union responses were male, which did not reflect the female dominated workforce of education, so DIVA was targeted for lesbian and bisexual women. Both primary and secondary instructors were chosen. The research met the British Sociological Association and the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines and undertaken with Lancaster University's ethics policy, and requisite approvals were secured.

Gray (2013) found in one case; Kitty was first at a Catholic primary school, where she could not come out for fear of loss of position. Then she moved into a "supply teacher" at a private school in Wiltshire (this study takes place in England), where once again, she kept her lesbianism private. A supply teacher is much the same as we call a long-term substitute teacher (Teaching and Education, 2018) here in America. They cover another teacher’s post, usually a long-term temporary assignment, until the credentialed permanent teacher returns. At either post, she could not come out for fear of loss of job and was or felt forced to assume the identity of a heterosexual person as a single mother (Gray, 2013).

Gray's (2013) research was pivotal revealing the same ramifications seen
in the U.S. Further findings included bisexuality is silenced because it exists outside of the realm of linguistic possibilities that the social institution of school permits as the bipolar sexual identity categorizes "straight' or "gay/lesbian." This issue was illustrated by the bisexual teacher, Dee, in the study. She was a music teacher. She did not present as bi, so she has chosen not to disclose. She felt silenced due to heteronormativity and homophobia. She did not feel understood due to her attraction to both men and women as they are outside the mono-polar aspects of sexuality and challenges the stable and essential binary categories.

For several participants, being out to staff and NOT to students was a conscious decision that was bound up with being "acceptably gay" or "not making too much" of their sexualities within their workplace (Gray, 2013).

John, 35, illustrated being open only to colleagues and not to students or parents. Bringing too much of his private life to school could be costly for him professionally. Having a partner made it easier to come out to colleagues. Those without partners felt less able to introduce the topic in conversation.

Kate, 30, worked at an inner-city London secondary school. She was the only member of the staff open to the students. She felt it was a positive experience and strengthened her relationship with the students. Kate challenged gender conformity, wearing short hair and a shirt and tie. Management directly told her they did not want her to come out to students who had a homophobia campaign against her. Coming out was risky for her. She was successful in having a pride assembly in the school. This victory opened up her relationship
with the students who changed their homophobic stances to become more questioning, compassionate beings.

Because mainstream politics within the U.K. and other Western contexts has historically placed sexuality into the private realm, coming out in opposition to the norm and speaking sexuality in public can be a political act. Gray’s (2013) study outlined three major strategies for approaching coming out: first, choosing not to come out at all, second, coming out to colleagues, and third, coming out to students.

Anderson (2014) conducted a study on 8 administrators in public schools/districts. "The problem was the threat of losing their job, career, or worse prohibits L.G. leaders from sexual identity disclosure. The purpose of this study was to explore and reveal the experiences and performances of L.G. educational leaders and how their sexuality has impacted their professional lives, paths to/in leadership, professional relationships, and how they viewed and practiced school leadership" (p. 6). She used qualitative interviews with four men and four women living in the Northwest and Southwest. All identified as either gay or lesbian; none were bisexual or transgender. The first interview focused on the life experiences of the participants. The second interview connected how being bisexual, lesbian, or gay, as well as gender, age, political climate, and career path, shaped their experiences as L.G. administrators.

Findings included that Diane retired after being discriminated against in the form of disciplinary actions. Her story was one of victimization from her supervisors as well as a case of sexual harassment that forced a life-long career
path change. Maria was born in Argentina, moved to England in her childhood, and then settled in the Midwest when her mother got a position as a university professor. She and her sister did not know English when they moved to the U.S. She moved to the Northwest because of a political climate that is more protective of LGBTQ rights. Even so, a student teacher at a nearby school was reprimanded, then released from his internship for telling a student he was gay. There were protests, and the board did draft a non-discrimination policy afterward.

Another female principal, April, was primarily funded by a nearby Baptist church, which placed her in fear of disclosure as it might jeopardize the funding the school badly needed. It was a Title 1 school with free and reduced fee lunches, resulting in her passing and lying about her sexuality.

April and another participant, Megan, felt isolated as a result of no support for L.G. people. They had to conform to heteronormative norms because of the assumptions that were made that they would lose something. Both were victims of a heteronormative school culture that coerced them into altering their professional choices, their relationships with students, deny their personal interests, and deny their personal lives and relationships. "Megan's choice was made to protect her employment and security" (p. 75).

In Anderson's (2014) study, the threat of losing one's job, career, or worse prevented every participant at some time over the length of their career from full disclosure. Byron, a superintendent, had positive relations with his board. The findings suggest that the higher the professional title and place in the
organizational hierarchy, the more likely the participant will have a strong, positive relationship with the key stakeholders. Byron did not enjoy the support he had when he was a principal. His relationships with parents and community members were tentative at best and would be a factor in losing his career. This was reiterated by April, Wayne, Brian, and Diane, who, as principals, reported good relationships with staff but tentative relationships with community members due to a lack of support for LGBTQ issues. Byron feared disclosure of his sexual identity would be a significant negative factor in his continued employment. Exceptionally, Maria held an opposing view. Her district had a non-discrimination clause and progressive support for LGBTQ issues.

Overall, the higher the organizational hierarchy position, the more secure the positive relationships with stakeholders occur. This means L.G. leaders need to examine their relationship in their hierarchy and how it affects relationships, feelings of efficacy, fear, and safety (Anderson, 2014).

Tatum (2018) and Tatum, Formica, Brown (2017) used social cognitive career theory (SCCT), or a slight variation therein, to assist in the explanation of the person's ability to disclose in the workplace contingent upon a positive interface with a supportive work environment as well as a supportive social system, which takes them through the stages outlined formerly by Anderson, Croteau, Chung, & DiStefano (2001) and Griffin (1991) of passing, covering, implicitly out, and explicitly out. Teacher efficacy stems from disclosure and is paramount to disclosure. Both studies were quantitative in nature and used theory to develop their ideas pertinent to revealing sexual minority identity with.
workplace satisfaction. Tatum (2018) found that concealing/passing, regardless if the workplace was progressive and positive or repressive and negative, still resulted in low workplace satisfaction and self-efficacy.

Tatum (2018) cited social-cognitive career theory (SCCT) stemming from social cognitive theory, “which holds that an individual's behavior is a co-determinant in the relationship between persons and their environment. SSCT incorporates social cognitive theory by including an individual’s self-efficacy and outcome expectations for performing a particular behavior as determinants of performing such behaviors” (p. 619). In other words, gay supportive, or affirmative, workplace climate predicted more extraordinary disclosure self-efficacy beliefs and more positive outcome expectations. This was central to Tatum’s two articles, both of which indicate the more support the workplace environment, including the co-workers and superiors, the more significant the sexual minority, which we term LGTBQ faculty, feels competent and authentic in their place of employment.

Tatum et al. (2017) explain:

Managing sexual identity in the workplace is characterized by the daily choices that lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual minorities are forced to make about revealing or concealing their sexual identity in the face of potential discrimination and hostility. The management of sexual identities in the workplace is an adaptive career behavior in that sexual minority persons must think about whether and how to disclose personal details about their sexual
orientation due to the work-related consequences of these disclosures (p. 108).

Tatum et al. (2017) reiterated what was previously mentioned that in the U.S., no federal law protects guarantees protection for employment protection based on sexual orientation [changed in June 2020]. They echo that both workplace environments and geographical regions influence the potential possibilities for disclosure at work to be hostile and threatening. When hostility occurs, they are likely or may adapt by concealing or suppressing their identities. This concealment motivation negatively correlated with a supportive work environment, sexual identity self-efficacy, positive outcome expectations, and disclosure. In contrast, workplace climate was positively correlated with these same elements. The study provides hope. Increasing disclosure self-efficacy and positive disclosure outcome expectations may lead to more comfort in disclosing their sexual identity at work.

Tatum et al. (2017) stated that sexual identity management would be a remarkable example of a career adaptation behavior that would benefit from being tested further. Tatum et al. (2017) indicate a theoretical framework that would involve antecedents and consequences in sexual identity disclosure in the workplace, stating there are large gaps in the literature, including few theoretical models and even fewer empirically tested models. This study hopes to fill some of this lapse in the research and literature.

SCCT intertwines socially learned behavior, personal characteristics, and contextual variables that influence interests, career goals, and occupational
choices (Tatum et al. (2017). The authors defined workplace climate as the organization's formal and informal aspects, which affect the employee's experience on their job. Legal aspects may include nondiscriminatory hiring, advancement, and retention policies. LGBTQ minority members might face discriminatory wages, termination, underutilization of abilities, harassment, social isolation, even violence. Informal aspects might be the presence of supportive workers and allies. This study transcribed stigma as an index to conceal one's identity but is associated with high levels of psychological distress and negative affect, even though one possible explanation is to wish to reduce the stress associated through the stigmatized identity disclosure with the motivation to conceal in order to avoid perceived, or real, negative consequences.

Tatum's et al., (2017) theories are straightforward. More positively reinforcing gay affirmative work environments will endorse more positive outcomes and purports of self-disclosure. Concealment motivation will be associated with negative self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations for disclosure.

Tatum (2018) illuminated six theories ranging from workplace environment as favorable inclusionary policies and staff, resulting in better work satisfaction, self-efficacy, and positive outcomes for sexual minority disclosure. All theories were supported or partially supported, revealing that if a sexual minority person feels accepted by their co-workers, and they have made an effort to disclose, their overall work satisfaction will increase. Tatum (2018) indicates that by not disclosing in a non-affirming work environment, the minority member
could avoid the negativity (feedback) from the work environment such as non-promotion opportunities, verbal or physical harassment.

Tatum (2018) indicated that low levels of identity disclosure lead to lower work satisfaction levels regardless of the work environment being supportive or not. Conversely, the positive relationship between disclosure and work satisfaction becomes more confident in the essence of affirming work environments.

Tatum’s et al. (2017) former article was still positively reinforcing to reveal one’s sexual minority identity. They acknowledged that concealing may be an adaptive method necessary for a sense of safety against possible negative consequences, denial of promotion, etc. Still, this concealment’s expense carries a significant psychological risk, sense of well-being, self-esteem, and so forth, further reinforcing stigma. These two studies did not suggest that concealment might be better for an employee based upon their location, as formerly mentioned in this review.

Tatum (2018) concluded that social support for LGBTQ minorities might come from either other LGBTQ workers or allies as well as from the person’s outside LGBTQ community. By having these supports, they can "offset" the feelings of loss of work fulfillment. The author suggested mental health professionals advocate for sexual minority members in counseling to help minimize stressors. This suggestion included having empathy for clients whose perceptions of their work environment were non-supportive. Further areas of suggested focus should be on self-efficacy for disclosing their sexual identity,
and outcome expectations to create further positivity in regard to levels of work satisfaction. The study's findings demonstrated the importance of researching and implementing inclusive workplace policies that promote sexual minority satisfaction and contentment, leading to more open disclosure methods that do not lend to possible mishaps of mistaken disclosure by "accident" by colleagues or others in the community. A more open position prevents the LGBTQ worker from cognitively monitoring processes at a constant interval, which requires a great deal of stress and energy, reducing work satisfaction and self-efficacy.

Tatum (2018) mentioned the need for workplace sexual identity management among minority persons of color as there has not been any study done as of yet.

No matter which strategy was chosen, or combinations therein, almost all participants wished they could be explicitly out in order to provide role models for students and co-workers and have better psychological balance in their personal life and professional life. Many of them felt they could never be able to do this, while some thought it might happen in the future. According to Tatum (2018) and Tatum et al. (2017), this has transpired, to some degree. It has also been shown to provide better work productivity, which this literature review has mentioned from Ozeren (2014), equating to improved student achievement. Ozeren (2014) puts it in oppositional terms. In our case school districts, the organization needs to have inclusion policies for LGBTQ employees as prerequisites for competitive advantages in the labor market. Even further, they implied that organizations need to realize that LGBTQ persons are consumers and employees.
Organizational management has to consider the effectiveness of a diversity element in their business practices, our schools herein. When facing heteronormative and homophobic stances, Tatum (2018) suggested the employee (educator) transferring to companies, or places, which have a more supportive, inclusionary policy and atmosphere to work in, rather than to try to change the one where they are.

Summary

Chrobot-Mason, Button, and DiClementi, (2001) researched identity disclosure mannerisms of gay men who are more prone to discrimination than lesbians, and with additional stigma in stigma theory [on visible versus invisible stigmas] (Croteau et al., 2008; Ragins, 2008). Gender differences were backed up by other studies (Bohan, 1996; Bliss and Harris, 1998; Ozeren, 2013).

Homonormativity was conceptualized and explained by Connell (2012, 2015) and Neary (2017). It explained that gay men and lesbians support heteronormativity and homophobic heterosexist oppression by modeling gay counterparts in the visible gay rights movement to exact fits of their heterosexual counterparts: upper middle class, married or in long term relationships, gender conforming, and often with children. Other lifestyles and alternative states of being are Othered and cast out, meant to be silenced.

Religiosity hampered sexual identity disclosure on many fronts: authoritarianism and orthodox religions are particularly hostile to the LGBTQ community (Takacs and Szalma, 2011; Wilkinson, 2011). Catholicism was often
equally disruptive to authentic and open instruction by LGBTQ educators (Gray, 2013; Worthen, 2011).

Ozeren (2013) like Duke, (2007), used secondary research articles for analysis. Business productivity seemed to be the objective goal and product of self-disclosure in Ozeren’s (2013) work. Ozeren’s (2013) data and findings could be aligned with the educational school district/system component. Ozeren’s (2013) assertion of the article designated that businesses are more productive when the inclusion of diverse cultures, including sexual orientation, is due to employees being authentic and more comfortable in their positions. A parallel paradigm can be made for educators and student achievement.

The Takacs and Szalma (2011) massive undertaking from a European dataset was crafted quantitatively to delineate precise and informative information regarding attitudes and opinions on the subject of gay marriage, and thus homophobia itself. This data seamlessly melded with Barringer et al. (1998) and Wilkinson (2004).

Aspects of lesbian and gay discrimination in higher education provided insight into the timing of disclosure, having an effect upon student/professor relations (Lliddle, 1997; Renn, 2010). Faculty evaluations characterized these issues by students. While Russ, Simmons, and Hunt (2002) found definite disdain, lack of respect, and lack of confidence in LGBTQ professors if students knew they were of such demeanor and character.

As to academic attitudes and experiences, Bliss and Harris (1998), Duke (2007), and Wells (2017) found successes in the classroom of PK-12 gay men
and lesbians coming out, having a safe and positive experience. Smith et al. (2008) reported a quantitative study of LGBTQ teachers in the U.S. The findings were relevant, as many of them reported negative consequences in terms of homophobia and heterosexist dominance, but also positively, where educators found self-respect and feeling more comfortable.

Geographic partitions in the course and context of acceptability of LGBTQ rights and freedoms are touched on by several researchers: Connell (2012), Smith, Wright, Reilly, and Esposito (2008), Takacs, and Szalma (2011). Connell (2012) delicately displays the differences between states with employment protection for LGBTQ persons and between rural and urban areas. Ozturk (2011) and Drydakis (2011, 2012) contribute to Turkey and Greece's literature perspectives.

Ragins (2008) and Worthen (2011) gave an example of how ally training programs can benefit the LGBTQ community and aid the heterosexist dominance in a more tolerant and compassionate understanding of this community. As gay rights move forward, it is imperative that not just LGBTQ persons are those who are manifesting equality. Croteau et al. (2008), Smith et al. (2008), and Coker and Cain (2018) discuss safe zones, not for students, but teachers and educators as well.

Several recent dissertations and articles still showed heteronormative oppression affects LGBTQ sexual orientation disclosure strategies (Anderson, 2014; Bizjak, 2018; Callaghan & Mizzi, 2015; Chrobot-Mason, Button, DiClementi, 2001; Coker & Cain, 2018; Dykes & Delport, 2018; Evans-Santiago,
2015; Haddad, 2019; Hooker, 2010; Kootsikas, 2011, Lance, 2006, Lance Anderson, & Croteau, 2010; Tatum, 2018; Tatum, Formica, & Brown, 2017; Tompkins, Kearns, Mitton-Kukner, 2019). Tatum (2018) gave educators, or employees in general, a mindset within companies, or school districts in our case, the ability to leave non-diverse supportive workplaces and found more supportive ones that enable LGBTQ openness, encourage partners and spouses to attend functions and have policies and attitudes in support LGBTQ employees. In other words, if they do not find their place of employment to be congenial to this, they are encouraged to leave, seek a career counselor, and find employment elsewhere where it is congenial.

Of the research in this literature review, there is hope in authentic instruction found by coming out to students, and a sense of responsibility to radical honesty by being open in the classroom (DeJean, 2007). Better workplace productivity can be found by having a more diverse workforce that includes supported (by policy and climate) open LGBTQ individuals (Chrobot-Mason, Button, DiClemente, 2015). The overall trend has been a trend toward negativity associated with coming out or disclosure identity management strategy in the aspect of PK-12 public school educational settings, even up to last year (Haddad, 2019).

Tragically, there are many others who cannot attain this level due to fear of loss of job primarily, geographic location, religious tenets set forth upon them, and a society that is not ready to give them fundamental human rights equal to
other members of that society, down to the point of humiliation and of death.
There is always hope, as we see in more recent studies by Tatum (2018) where
LGBTQ workers, in education and elsewhere, are empowered to seek alternative
placement of employment where they are embraced, are allowed to have their
partners/spouses attend functions, and are supported by the curriculum and
policies in their places of employment.

The field would benefit more from qualitative narrative inquiry studies. A
phenomenological approach such as this study can also benefit the field for
specific atténue, making the subject less arbitrary. At the least, there is still
heteronormativity and homophobia in this world. Careers, emotions, and feelings
are thus affected by sexual orientation disclosure decisions. Intended outcomes
would be of service to new teachers in pre-service, those in research quests,
giving caution and strength to empower individuals in an ethnographical context
of the LGBTQ culture in public school education, particularly PK-12 settings.

The next chapter gives the methodology, theoretical underpinnings, data
collection methods and analysis, and elements of validity and trustworthiness.
The chapter also provides the researcher's positionality and the sample of
participants. An explanation of bracketing's importance is incorporated in relation
to the data and its presentation or report.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose Statement

The study’s purpose was to raise awareness of LGBTQ PK-12 educators' experiences with sexual identity management disclosure strategies and their impact on their career, livelihood, and career satisfaction while primarily focusing on their career path. This project sought to explore LGBTQ identity management’s role in career quality, career potential, and advancement in PK-12 public educational settings in the US. The researcher sought to fill a lapse and add to current discourse in the fields for literature on LGBTQ adults in PK-12 education in the United States and elsewhere. Other outcomes from the study could support LGBTQ educators in their career paths. Additionally, younger generations of educators may experience heteronormativity different from those older than them. This project sought to find those values and determine if the school or district climate and the school culture today are more conducive to a more open and supportive LGBTQ educator’s position. I, the researcher, did not find any young educators. [Thus, getting data from young generation instructors was impossible. Instead, data was interpreted by asking interview questions of older educators who indicated the new generation and the atmosphere today relative to a few years ago, is more open and much more positive in terms of acceptance of gay rights in the classroom and schools.]
Interview Protocol

The researcher welcomed participants as a part of the research study titled: PK-12 Sexual Minority Public School Sexual Minority Employee's Identity Management: Implications on Career Quality, Potential, and Advancement. The dissertation focused on self-identifying LGBTQ public school teachers’ lived experiences and how their sexual identity disclosure strategies influenced their careers. The purpose of the interview was to understand personal and professional experiences as self-identifying LGBTQ public school teachers. I was not here to judge proficiency; instead, I was interested in how stories, histories, and perceptions have informed and grounded individual experience.

The researcher designed the following questions so that each acted as a guide such that they would build upon each other to navigate toward gaining a fully realized understanding of lived experience. To keep the conversation flexible and casual, I asked that the conversation simply "flow." I told participants they did not have to answer every question; they could stop the interview at any time. If a participant felt traumatized after sharing personal information, whether emotional or psychological, they could call the county mental health urgent care. The contact information was in the debriefing statement sent out after the study. I planned this interview to last no more than 60 minutes. I asked if they had any questions? I asked if we could proceed?
Research Questions

Primary Questions

1. How do LGBTQ employees navigate the parameters of PK-12 public educational experiences related to career quality, career potential, and career advancement?

2. What can schools/districts do to make it safer for LGBTQ educators to disclose?

3. What can schools/districts do to support an LGBTQ educator's career path satisfaction?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your life and how you became a teacher or administrator.

2. What expectations did you have, and what ones do you have now, relative to your sexual identity disclosure and career path?

3. Tell me what has transpired over your educator experience regarding your decisions related to disclosing your sexual identity.

4. Describe your process regarding your decision to disclose or not disclose.

5. Tell me about the culture and community of the school related to those decisions.

6. Tell me about your plans in the future pertaining to your decisions to disclose your sexual identity.

7. What can school districts do to support an LGBTQ educator's career path satisfaction?
8. How do you feel about the contemporary state of the field in public PK-12 education today concerning LGBTQ inclusion for educators?

9. How do you perceive the school culture and environment today vs. the past regarding acceptance of LGBTQ inclusion/diversity?

10. What do you perceive schools, districts, counties, and states can do to create safe environments for disclosure?

11. What can schools/districts do to make it safer for LGBTQ educators to disclose and fulfill a career?

12. How would you describe your career quality, potential, and advancement as an LGBTQ educator?

13. What would make you consider it to be safe to be out to your students, their parents?

14. What are your thoughts about your disclosure and the role that plays for LGBTQ youth?

15. What can you do as an agent of change?

16. Please, describe how you would compare younger and older LGBTQ teachers’ experiences regarding inclusion?

After responses from the first interview, focus group questions were used to develop questions for a second [focus group] interview.

**Potential Focus Group Questions:**

How would you describe the school culture today regarding career paths for LGBTQ individuals? Please discuss why.
What can schools/districts do to make it safer and more accessible for LGBTQ educators to disclose and fulfill a career?

What can the system do?

How would the school, the district, or you make changes to a way of new hope for LGBTQ teachers?

What can the system do to make the environment safer for disclosure? Does the school have a safe space?

How was this created or stabilized? What would an ideal school look like in terms of creating safe environments for disclosure?

Has the curriculum changed in your school's history materials? Health? etc.

Please explain in what ways it has, if so, or how if not.

Where we have gotten through the work of advocacy- LGBTQ organizations, etc. to show more significant signs of hope or suggestions of how to move forward to create safe schools for all students, staff, and teachers?

How has your career changed as a result of your sexual identity management strategies?

How do you see the world of public education changing for LGBTQ teachers? Do you have evidence to support your thoughts? What is that evidence?

Please, comment on the artifact(s) that you sent to me, on their meaning to you, how they express your experiences as an LGBTQ educator? Have a round table discussion on educators' experiences and have a dialogue about similarities or differences, particularly on the safety and support for LGBTQ educators.
Actual questions were variants of these dependent upon the focus group discussion.

What can schools/districts do to make it safer and more accessible for LGBTQ educators to disclose and fulfill a career?

What can the system do to make the environment safer for disclosure?

Does the school have a safe space?

How has the curriculum changed in your school?

Where we have gotten through the work of advocacy- LGBTQ organizations, etc. to show more significant signs of hope or suggestions of how to move forward to create safe schools for all students, staff, and teachers?

   George mentioned that he worked with GLESN; he was asked if he worked with any other advocacy sources?

How do you see this going forward?

How do you see the world of public education changing for LGBTQ educators?

What evidence do you have to support your thought?

Do any of you have people you know in teaching or counseling or administration that are trans right now?

Please, comment on the artifact(s) that you sent to me, on their meaning to you, how they express your experiences as an LGBTQ educator? Have a round table discussion on educators’ experiences and dialogue about similarities or differences, particularly on the safety and support for LGBTQ educators.
Research Design

In narrative interviews, qualitative research offers the opportunity for rich and densely formed stories (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), phenomenological analysis comes from a place where the researcher describes the lived experiences of a phenomenon described by participants. In this case, the sexual identity management strategy or strategies participants had or are employing and how it affects their career path. Some may call it "coming out." Phenomenological research culminates in the essence of several participants experiencing the phenomenon and theoretical underpinnings of psychological (Creswell, 2014) and professional occurrence. Honing in on these essences and essentials for such a phenomenon helped find meaning and code for themes (Saldana, 2016).

Phenomenological and narrative inquiry was used to involve a marginalized group of individuals, social justice, discrimination, and oppression. Phenomenology uses the analysis of themes or generated meaning units and develops the essence of the themes and codes (Creswell, 2014). Second, to the phenomenological approach, a narrative inquiry was implemented to explore the educator's lives and experiences, expected to understand themes and commonalities within those stories (Creswell, 2014).

Glesne (2016) discussed this type of phenomenology as hermeneutic or introspective phenomenology. The approach seeks the lived experiences, familiar and different, and perceptions of the participant's lived experiences (Glesne, 2016). Saldana (2016) suggested one of the purposes is for future
research or outcomes to be policy implementation that surmounts oppressive forces.

The phenomenon of the relationship of self-disclosure and strategies of sexual management in the workplace and its effect on the participant's career paths, perceived or otherwise, contributed to the current literature and possibly articulated something new to the field.

Research Setting

The researcher conducted the Zoom online interviews, recorded at the designated participant and the researcher's time. The researcher's office space and using his office computer provided ample comfort for him. The participant decided upon their setting for the interview. Zoom meetings were necessary for COVID-19 to assure respect for safety, health, and attenuation to current health protocols in the pandemic. The second interview was conducted as a focus group and was also on Zoom. The focus group interview took place a week after the first interviews have transpired.

Research Sample

The researcher initially sought out a sample of five LGBTQ educators familiar to the researcher. Snowball sampling allowed for one participant unfamiliar to the researcher. When that sample did not pan out enough participants, I resent the initial text (see below) to the five acquaintances; one responded and participated. Then a close relative of the researcher who teaches and close friends of the researcher was called and texted to see if they knew of
an LGBTQ educator, which two did. Both of those participated. One of the
original sample participants participated, and one initial potential participant sent
out the invitation (snowball) to which one person responded. Per the IRB, the text
was sent on July 11 at approximately 10 am:

The participant was invited to the study: PK through 12 sexual minority
public school employees’ identity management: implications on career
quality and advancement. Please click on the following Qualtrics survey link
for the informed consent and further information about the study. See link
above. Kindly invite others that you know who qualify by forwarding the
Qualtrics link in the invitation to them. The link was the informed consent
decrees and electronic signature for I consent, or I do not consent.

If they consented, they were taken to a page to sign up for an one hour time
slot to interview on July 16, 2020, between 10 am to 5 pm PST. The Qualtrics
software then took them to a confirmation page with two interviews shown, the
first individual interview and the second group interview for July 23, 2020, at 10
am PST. This snowball sampling produced four participants. All four were White.
Three identified as gay men, one identified as a female lesbian. Three of them,
two men and the female participant, were married to same sex partners; one is in
a 32+ year ongoing relationship. They all were in the latter part of their career,
ready to retire soon (two), or already are retired (two). One of those is retired but
still works at the school he had for many decades. The researcher did not find
any young educators for the study. No trans or bisexual participants participated
in the study. Nor were any non-binary participants found. The snowball sampling
did not lead to any Brown, Black, or any educators of color, despite the richness it would have brought to the discussion and conversation. Two were high school level educators; one teaches AVID, the other taught business education. One advocated all grades, meaning K-12, in a small district who was a drug and alcohol counselor for the district. The other was a junior high science teacher. There were no elementary educators, but one who worked in K-12 public schools as a counselor did work in an elementary school two days a week and three days in secondary.

It was a juggling act. Original potential participants, ones I knew, perceptively did not want to be live video and audiotaped, as none of them initially responded. Getting mobile phone numbers from my relatives and close friends of known LGBTQ educators, contacting them with the invitation mentioned above, and setting up the interviews took more maneuvering in the form of snowball sampling. None of it went smoothly, but it did cement in the end.

Gender and geographic location accounted for this research's response in part, but not entirely as the researcher only initially knew gay male educators in Southern California and the Midwest. No educators from the South were found, including Southern California.

Research Data

The data was digital Zoom video and audio recorded interviews, transcribed by Scribie, and reviewed for themes, assisted by NVivo. The researcher asked each individual about demographic data, such as age, years teaching, level or age taught, sexual identity, gender identity, type of school
district, and school type. Participants had their identity and locations changed, as the study assured confidentiality and protection of privacy. Research themes were sought out from the data on the second recursion, or reading, of the transcripts.

Data Collection

Once the participant clicked on the Qualtrics survey link, the software directed them to the informed consent (see Appendix B).

The data was two digitally video- and audio-recorded Zoom narrative/semi-structured interviews about an hour each. The first interviews were private, one on one Zoom interviews. The first interview was an individual one through Zoom audio and video held on July 16, from 10 am to 5 pm Pacific Standard Time but in one-hour increments. Due to technical difficulties, one Zoom link was lost to the university server and was scheduled the next morning on July 17 at 10 am PST.

The second interview was a focus group Zoom interview with all of the participants held on July 23, 2020, at 10–11:15 am Pacific Standard Time. The second interview, the focus group, was a Zoom video and audio recorded meeting as well.

After transcription, the researcher modulated data for themes or codes. All files with the data were password protected in a Dropbox cloud folder. In the second interview, validity by triangulation occurred by authentication of the focus group discourse and context. The participants' repetitiveness from the first interview showed the truth as the participants wanted the other participants to
know what they have gone through. The researcher placed the focus group data in a password-protected cloud account. Member checking incurred at two points, after transcription and after data production.

Data Analysis

Digital audio recordings were transcribed using Scribie, then coded for themes using NVivo. The researcher considered additional information from both the video and audio recordings/transcripts, such as body language, tone of voice, pauses, syntax, or eye contact with the camera, which enriched the data. The video and audio data together brought the focus group data into context. Agreements, chuckling, terms of understanding such as ah ha's, etc. were all indicators that the educator corresponded and related to the speaker's thoughts. Strict verbatim transcription also allowed for the deciphering of these more subtle venues of communication. Member Checking was used to find agreement in this data analysis with each participant.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Triangulation of the focus group's second interview with the first interviews data provided trustworthiness and validity to the study. The documents provided trustworthiness and validity not only from the author but on the data incurred as well. After transcription, the data was password protected. The researcher sent transcripts of their interviews to each participant by email. There was a chance for the participants to go over the data, change or correct anything that they felt misrepresented, and provide further information should they desire to do so. The researcher gave a second member checking to the participants after writing
Chapter Four in a rough draft. The participants signed for both the transcript of their interviews and the analysis (See Appendix D). This member checking also gave validity and trustworthiness to the study by assuring that the participants communicated what they intended or agreed with and that the researcher did not misconstrue the data.

The researcher assured confidentiality. The researcher attested to keeping the data on one server only, a private password-protected Dropbox account, not discussing it with another source. Participants had pseudonyms and locations altered even though the participants wanted transparency. Trustworthiness can also be verified by transferability data to a broader audience, in this case, the LGBTQ culture. In other words, the data and results here can be suggestive of data of a larger audience if one could acquire a larger cohort. The study had a thick descriptive notation of examining the phenomenon. In this case, constructive consequences of sexual orientation disclosure in public educational settings for educators provided authenticity to the data. The participants needed to know they did not have to answer any question(s) in the study, that they could safely withdraw at any time without requiring a reason from the researcher, and that participation was entirely voluntary. Freedom to choose what to answer or when to stop helped assure informants they could be as candid and honest as possible during the interviews.

Bracketing the researcher’s position on the participant’s responses ensured relief of bias and continues in the research transcription, analyzation, and reproduction. Bracketing helped to keep personal preferences and positionality
separate from the analysis of the data. To be objective in interpreting the data and reporting it from a purely accurate manner, it was essential to "bracket" personal inferences and connotations wherever possible. Bracketing also validated and gave trustworthiness to the study.

Positionality of the Researcher

I am, or was, a child of the sixties and seventies. Great new conquests into space, love, peace, flower power, anti-war demonstrations, the sexual revolution, and, one would hope, the grounds for positive progression in human rights marked this era of history. It was also a dark time, assassinations, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and John F. Kennedy. Men with great promise and vision. An unfortunate time for the gay rights movement as heterosexist norms continued to oppress in the US (Renn, 2010), Canada (Dimito, Schneider, 2008), Europe (Takács, J., Szalma, I. 2011), Australia (Carpenter, 2008), and in Turkey Ozturk (2014). I certainly felt homophobia and was victim to it growing up in a non-diverse, White, mid-western town a few hours from Chicago. I never had White privilege; I was tagged as gay immediately upon entering public schools at age 5-6.

I relate more poignantly to those oppressed by homophobia as it has persisted throughout my life, including up through today. High school consisted of not being bullied any longer. I was closeted and secretly being victimized/a survivor by/of a child predator, my rhetoric and Latin teacher, for one year, who now is a married Russian Orthodox priest. Once through secondary schooling, upon entering university life, I expanded my mental schema to incorporate
international and racial/ethnic diversity, particularly in the LGBTQ culture itself. I broadened my sexual adventures into bisexuality briefly while still identifying as gay. One could relate to Cass's (1984) six-step model of homosexual identity formation, identity confusion. Although I didn't seem confused, I simply found it easier to cope socially and romantically in a bisexual relationship than in a gay one. So perhaps I was in Cass's stage two; identity comparison, where I was in a comparison between the two. Afterward, I found myself with pride and fierce loyalty to gay men as a group as well as only socialized exclusively in the gay subculture for the next several decades. I felt I could live without the intrusion of heterosexism in my life for the duration of it. Homophobia was the most intense of ma vie when I entered into work in public education. It was a nightmare, and after nearly six years, I resigned to focus on self-care in the form of athletics, sports, and scenic motorcycle riding. I have returned to work in three school districts, mostly with elementary-age children, as a guest teacher, a polite term for being a substitute. I did not disclose to students for the majority of time, if not all of the time. Parents who have figured it out have lied to principals, and I used legal force to neutralize these fraudulent threats. Staff and administration were aware, but I do not, for the most part, have lunch in the faculty lounge or take breaks there. Of the literature I had found, I have unearthed no one who has left public education, by choice or not. Instead, the study participants focused on those who have stayed and the methodologies they have implored to articulate management in those spaces pertinent to their sexual orientation identity. I choose to do this for positive reinforcement issues, to help render those who are
thinking or are in the trade to equip themselves better if they decide to go into or are in the business of public PK-12 education.

Homonormative experience: Fundraiser for the Human Rights Campaign in Palm Springs, California. As I pulled up to a fundraiser for the Human Rights Campaign, I was Othered. Marginalized by our community. I walked around, and no one would speak to me, though many knew me. I was met with snobbery and what seemed to be disdain. The friends who had put me on the list for entry to the HRC event were White, upper-middle-class, and in a male gender-conforming long-term relationship who did eventually marry once it became legal in California and nationally. They had also bid on an art piece. Perhaps I should not have been on the invitation list at all, as a fine artist, we thought it would be a valuable experience. It was undoubtedly regrettable.

Second homonormative experience: The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Gay Pride weekend 2019 Palm Springs, California. The occurrence was at a gay pride festival after the parade in Palm Springs. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) had a booth set up for anyone to stop and inquire about educators' protections, etc. I told them I was not a regular education teacher, that I had retired, and that I substituted. I was immediately dismissed by the gay man and the lesbian because I was not currently working full time in the field. "Oh, you're not a full-time teacher?" they said. They turned their backs to me. As they did so, I felt somewhat shocked, then I walked away and moved on. I was quite hurt. Being a substitute is challenging due to student disrespect and colleague dismissal and disrespect as
well. To have a national organization treat an educator in this manner was spiteful and damaging.

It was reminiscent of an uncoordinated, small, skinny gay boy in physical education classes in late elementary school and junior high. I would be the last one to be picked. For instance, when I was for baseball, The PE (Physical Education) teacher and the other boys placed me way out in the left-field, where they hoped no one would hit the ball, or at least it had less propensity to being so. Then when my big moment would come, and I would run after a ball, only to pick it up and throw it nowhere near where any other player was. As I said, uncoordinated and Othered. There is a relation to the lack of efficacy and being Other. I hated PE. I still do not do well in teams. I quite selectively do independent sports.

Bracketing of this positionality creates the researcher as a “credible witness.” Being able to distance myself from these experiences and stay objective allows for an ethical reporting of the data and the findings.

I hope was to transform lives of LGBTQ lives, and perhaps my own, into a phenomenological space upon which is transitory for better authenticity and empowerment to thine own self be true. Something I could not help but be. It is the only way I could/can live. Abraham Maslow's self-actualization theory (Maslow, 1954) resonates with me, especially the need for beauty; discrimination is ugly. To be concise: in Goble's (1970) account of Maslow's "The Aesthetic Needs, Maslow found that, at least for some individuals, the need for beauty was profound, and ugliness was sickening to them" (p. 42). I am an artist. My degrees
were in art, focusing on fine art, painting, and drawing, with a hybrid art
history/visual art dissertation for my masters. I say this with humility and without
ego. I have learned that I am a humble servant of education, and through servant
leadership, can make changes. I am not trying to control the outcomes of this
study. I wish to report it, without bias, as much as is humanly possible.

Bracketing of this positionality creates the researcher as a “credible
witness.” Being able to distance myself from these experiences and stay
objective allows for an ethical reporting of the data and the findings.

Summary

This chapter has denoted the methodology as a phenomenological,
narrative inquiry and semi-structured interviews with a small sample of 4
participants in Zoom videos, transcribed, triangulated with a second focus group
Zoom meeting, and translated for codes and themes with NVivo. The two
interviews were not relatively far apart. Theoretical underpinnings include queer
theory, social cognitive career theory, heteronormativity theory, homonormativity
theory, intersectionality theory, and social justice theory.

The next chapter will discuss the data and the initiation of analysis, in this
case, qualitative data of rich, thick descriptive interviews telling stories of people's
lives in the context of their career choices relative to PK-12 educator's sexual
orientation disclosure.
CHAPTER FOUR
PARTICIPANTS, DATA, AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introductions to Participants

Upon reflection, all four of these participants had things in common. All of them were White and in the latter years of their career or retirement. They had all worked in the same school district for the entirety of their career. The continuity of the same job at the same school and district was most interesting because it suggests that consistency with the same hierarchy and structure, community, student body, parents, and so forth can lead to eventual career satisfaction with being openly gay. Both of the two retired individuals did note that they never vocally came out as gay men, which moderated their degree of openness. Although their actions and other methods of communication displayed or conveyed such. They were clear on this. It was somewhat la connaissance of silence, but as the inquisitor, I cannot say that it was the case, as it was their choice in the success of a fruitful career in public school education. Their silence was a part thereof.

I was genuinely humbled by all four of the participants. They displayed courage, transparency, and loyalty. None of them wanted to change their names or their location. I had not anticipated this, especially in the Midwest and rural or suburban contexts like Louis and Paula; both pseudonyms. We had expected so much need for protection of identity and place to reduce the risk of harm. The entire Institutional Review Board process (see Appendix G and H) and the Informed Consent Letter (see Appendix B) were to protect their identities under
any circumstance. They had their honor in their experience and their stories. No one could rob them of it. We had to change them due to informed consent contractual IRB stipulations in the end.

All were same sex married, with one having a significant other of 32 years. Their dedication to their students equaled their devotion to their work and their spouses/significant others. Therein lies another element that came across in the interviews. It was a constant reminder that we discussed the educators and not the students in the sexual identity management strategies and the consequent implications on their careers. Analysis of the word student, students, student’s, etc. was one of the most utilized words in the survey. NVivo showed it [student and its stems] occurred 136 times during the survey. When added in kid, kids, there is an additional 20 times. Only school [101] came out close to the word student, and kids, the children, or the focus on the children becomes the most common wordage in the context of the dissertation used during the interview. The reader can graphically view the data in Chart 1. It might then suggest that for an LGBTQ educator, their focus ought or is on the students, their diversity, their potential. The educator’s best job was to give as much as possible to those students, which enriched their career as they progressed over the years and came out in these specific instances in nonverbal ways. The focus on the student is the main point of district missions and visions. It makes sense it comes down to LGBTQ educators in evolving sexual identity management affecting career growth. The focus on the students did graphically imply, such as the gay-straight
alliances they started or were in, made way for safety in the ranks of the LGBTQ faculty, staff, and administration.

Chart 1

Word Frequency Cloud

Note. [NVivo 1.3 Mac]

Another temporal element that made it safer for them to come out was the Supreme Court Decision in 2015 to allow marriage between same sex unions. Illinois had made it legal in 2013. Incredibly, Paula was empowered by this to bring her wife into the fold of her professional life. Their love of their students
came across brightly, especially in Louis’s story, which I will get to later. They all mentioned they want their students to be the best people they possibly could be, in my words, to fulfill their potential. That was their job. I tried to get them to think about the other professionals they work with and the society, community, educators, administrators, parents, all that affects their fellows’ career path.

A final note before I describe the questions and demographics, none of them started out being openly gay, especially outspoken regarding this was Frank, also a pseudonym. When they started in education, the time seemed to demand their silence and need to conceal, though Louis and George, pseudonyms, never concealed, they kept quiet. Their reticence reveals a similar technique by both educators; to remain silent about their sexual identity at all times while on the job in public school employment. The exciting thing is that they were ready to hand the torch over to the new generation of educators, teachers, and administrators. According to them, the “new” or “young” generation is so much more open to LGBTQ issues and can take us forward to places beyond where they have been able to do so. They were all optimistic about the new generation of teachers coming on board to fill the ranks. It is a beautiful enclave of discourse, thought, perception, ideal, and passion that seemingly contrasts the literature review performed for this dissertation from the past, which often seemed dismal (Duke, 2007; Graves, 2007; Khan, 2013; Russ et al. 2002). Refreshing, to say the least, hopeful to say the best. The very recent, June 15, 2020, Supreme Court decision to protect LGBTQ workplace rights federally also brings into much negation of the literature review that there are still about 28
states with no protection as an LGBTQ teacher (DeCiccio, 2018). The feeling of elation felt from this may have had to do with the transparency and the trust these educators delivered.

There are still educators oppressed and marginalized by heteronormative homophobia, to the point of disgrace (The worst case of homophobia in Mexico, 2012), even suicide. There are still places where these new laws may become in place, but people’s minds may find means and manners around them, which still pushes gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender persons out of the education profession's door. Not one of the four knew a transgender educator in their school in the PK-12 setting…, not one, despite their triumphant rhetoric about the youth transgender in the schools and their support. In the study results, the staff was not yet reflecting the same supportive diversity of inclusion. Based on the study results, plausibly, transgender educators in their school districts or near them are closeted and not ready to divulge what many may propose as private versus professional worlds. Having transgender faculty or administrators will change, it has at the university level. I expect it will do so soon in the PK-12 schema or has in places I did not find in this small sample

None of the educators were full time elementary or primary school teachers. Data of this nature is of interest because the literature review revealed elementary teachers are presumed more suspect to be victims of homophobic suspicions (Wright, 2009). None of the Southern California educators queried participated. The study did show a marked delineation between North and South in terms of being willing to participate in Zoom interviews.
I recommended George look at Woods’s (1994) identity management strategies: *counterfeiting*, creating a false appearance of heterosexuality, *avoiding*, to not reveal anything regarding sexual orientation, and *integrating* refers to direct or indirect indications of sexual orientation. Relating to research question 1, How do LGBTQ employees navigate the parameters of PK-12 public educational experiences related to career quality, career potential, and career advancement? George and Louis are closer to Griffin’s (1991) four sexual identity management strategies: passing, covering, implicitly out, and explicitly out [*passing*, to actively create the illusion of being heterosexual, *covering*, concealing information which could reveal a same sex relationship, *implicitly out*, being honest in indirect ways about one’s homosexuality, and *explicitly out*, to openly discuss their sexual orientation.] Louis and George seem to be between covering and implicitly out, as they say, never vocally talking about it/being silent. In this case, the participants call it not verbalizing. It is the same thing, heteronormative forces silencing them. They believe their actions speak for themselves, which they do. None of the four participants were explicitly out from the start. Most were like Frank, who was deeply in the closet when he started his career. Frank admits that he had to be in the closet when he first started teaching. George did as well when first starting teaching in Catholic Schools and when he counseled in public schools.

As the researcher, I relaxed the protocol in a semi-structured questionnaire. Narrative inquiry was nearly as critical as the phenomenological pursuit of how LGBTQ sexual identity strategies affect PK-12 public school
educators’ careers. As the researcher, I was able to get brilliant stories from the participants that went beyond the relationship of the purely anecdotal premise of sexual orientation management disclosure effects on the career path. Stories were revealed close to the educators’ hearts that made being an LGBTQ educator and semi-open more meaningful ones to keep them in their careers and continue on the path to retirement.

Interview Questions

Question 1: Tell Me about Your Life and how You Became a Teacher.

Frank came out to both parents when he was 21. His father was more accepting than his mother. Frank seems to attribute this due to his father being European. It took his mother much longer to accept him. Today both of his parents accept him. He shared his mother took some time, but they enjoy time together now. It is a lot like George, who says his mother comes in now and acts as if everything had been fantastic from day one, which had not been the case, but they let it be and enjoyed the mended feelings. Frank has a close relationship with his parents, and they live close to where he lives and teaches in the Portland area of Oregon state. He, like George, came to be an educator by default. He majored in something else but found the job prospectus low in his area of study and was able to find a job in education. His particular district required “a very small select group of teachers” to have a master’s degree in teaching, to which they paid. He has been with the same high school 28 years since, currently “teaching” AVID, Advancement Via Independent Determination, an in-school academic support program for grades seven through twelve. The purpose of the
program is to prepare students for college eligibility and success. AVID places academically average students in advanced classes; it levels the playing field for minority, rural, low-income, and other students without a college-going tradition in their families. AVID targets students in the academic middle--B, C, and even D students--who desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard (cde.ca.gov/re/pr/avid.asp). AVID’s mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society (avid.org).

Frank became part of the ACT UP movement of the eighties [founded 1987], which “is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis” (actupny.org). Act up was founded by Larry Kramer in New York City.

Paula came out later in life, after college, and starting teaching. She held firm boundaries between personal life and professional life at that time. These boundaries did not change until the Supreme Court made legalized marriage a right in 2015. Then Paula felt the agency and efficacy at work and in her career to start to come out. Much like George and Louis, she did not vocalize it.

When Paula was young, she went to summer camp. She found she liked helping other kids. Paula then had a high school teacher who inspired her; thus, before she went to college, Paula had already decided she wanted to be a teacher. In Illinois, Western Illinois University, she refers to as a teacher college, was close by, so she went there.
Like all the other participants, once she landed a job [out of college], she stayed with the district and position for her tenure until the present day when this dissertation takes place, 2020. Paula started teaching in 1994. She teaches junior high science in a small, rural district in western, central Illinois. She has a very pragmatic view of being an LGBTQ educator.

Louis also went to Western in Illinois and was the other participant in the Midwest for his bachelor’s and master’s. Louis is somewhat an anomaly; he knew he wanted to be a teacher since he was in second grade. He currently teaches in a south western suburban Chicago. His career has been over 46 years and ongoing at the time of his participation in this survey. He retired when he had been teaching for 36 years, and he has been substituting by request religiously for the last ten. He intends to continue doing so, though many teachers do not know what this will entail in the age of the COVID-19 epidemic. We did all of these interviews over Zoom. COVID-19 and the protections mandated necessitate it. Initially, I had hoped to interview participants in person, to sit down in a casual discussion and conversation. Time made this as it is and was. Perhaps all for the best.

Louis considered himself a moderate, middle conservative politically. He was an only child; his parents were in the same location near where Paula lives and works. He explains his parents were conservative and controlling. Being gay was not a part of the discussion, according to Louis. This non-vocalization was a large part of Louis’s sexual identity management with his parents and at work. There were no conversations about it with his family. When he finally did “come
out” to his mother, after his father had passed away, he did so non-verbally, in a written letter held off until her health was deteriorating.

Louis taught high school business education. He quite fondly and proudly has spoken to me several times, and in this interview, about his teaching English in France during summers. He explained more about it to me during this interview. In St. Paul, Minnesota, an agency in 1995 took volunteers to teach conversational English in the summers. Louis gladly enlisted. He did not know French, but it was not necessary. Students in France and other European countries have to attain a certain English proficiency level before graduating. He said they were so grateful to have him there and give his time teaching, that he felt honored. He has been doing so about six summers until this one with the COVID virus halting it.

His district has changed over the last several decades. It serves minority populations more, with lower socioeconomic levels of poverty, higher levels of cohabitants living in the same dwelling, many generations living together, and the district gives out quite a lot of Title 1 or free lunch programs. Louis did not distinguish the differing cultures, races, ethnicities, or other demographic changes, except what is shared here. Frank said much of the same thing about his district as well, except he said it was incredibly diverse, that there were 77 different languages spoken in his high school.

George lives in New York. He lives in a gay resort seaside community/city. If not ironic, George described where he lives now as a one square mile town, and the township where he was a counselor was also a one square mile town.
All of the participants are in long term relationships. Three are married: Frank, Paula, and George. Louis is in a long-term relationship with committed and devoted parameters of its own. Due to Louis’s partner’s extraneous circumstances, they do not live together and are not married currently. George seemed to have been with his husband since he was in college. George went to two private Catholic universities for his degrees. He went to an exclusive one in central Connecticut, for his bachelor’s majoring in history. George then went to another one in Upstate New York, majoring in United States history. He does mention he comes from an upper-middle-class upbringing. When George finished his degrees, he could not teach or get a job in his field of study at a public school, so he taught history at a private Catholic school from 1978 – 1982. He left teaching to get a certificate as an alcohol and substance abuse counselor. New York public schools would be offering a new position through the State Department of Education called Substance Awareness. He found it too repetitive for his taste, having to do the same “lecture” every 48 hours. He recalled feeling like he was in a time warp…, “the same lecture, the same discussion.” He transferred to the adolescent unit, where he “worked in Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment for about two years, which gave him the experience and time to go back into school to be the Substance Awareness Coordinator. So that’s how he got into public school and stayed for 30 some years.”

George attributes his family, particularly his sister, to contributing to his need or to his knowledge of drug and alcohol abuse and the salient element for
counseling. He stated he could not help his sister, but he knew he could help others.

As for coming out at work, it was more of a fluke. Like Paula, when marriage became legal, his partner, now husband, went to the city hall to get married. Unknown to them, they were being photographed by the local paper as they signed their documents. He went to work as usual, since it was a Saturday when he went to marry his husband, on Monday the parents were not honking their horns and waving their hands to him as he was the greeter for the morning drop off at the school. He thought it was odd. He went into the office, where the secretary showed him the newspaper, and opened the second page with a full color picture of him and his husband signing their marriage license. He was more or less outed by this. To his benefit and his fortune, within a week or so, the parents went back to honking and waving their hands as if nothing had happened. He still never vocalized it. He just left it alone.

He is particularly proud of starting a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) through the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLESN). His school, like Paula’s was very small, only about 68-80 kids, and 20-25 of them came to the GSA meeting. Starting GSA’s is a thematic element of the success of these participants’ career path that is shared. All of the participants agreed that the establishment of GSA’s for students affected the feeling of safety for LGBTQ educators, which boosted their career.

George, like the others, did not vocalize he was gay, just letting his actions do as they may. He did reference what many others do, or all actually, that was
their job performance, their reputation as a teacher, ca counselor, coach, sponsor, and so forth, that came first which made people take him seriously and not give him a “hard time” about his sexual identity. The thematic element exhibited here was especially important to the two retired educators, Louis and George. They all had stayed strict to this silence throughout part of their careers. Louis said he felt no pressure, no probing questions, or any LGBTQ discrimination in his district and school job interview, which might have referenced his sexual orientation. Once he started teaching, he did find a book, upon opening it, it had “Name deleted is gay every day” inscribed in it. Louis did not get upset. He just thought, well, it’s true, and left it be. The student(s) were trying to test him; he did not fall for it.

**Question 2: What Expectations Did You Have, And What Ones Do You Have Now, Relative To Your Sexual Identity Disclosure And Your Career Path?**

Frank disclosed he is at the end of his career path. He wanted to retire around the next three-year mark. Paula was also toward the end of her career, going to retire in the next five or fewer years. Therein lies a significant limitation to this study, we were unable to get any new or young teachers for this study. I was grateful to get the four I did, hear their stories, and share their personal and professional lives transparently. Frank shares about professional growth around LGBTQ diversity, but focuses on transgender ones, due to trans students’ visibility in his school that was “pushing me [him] to understand.” He suggests that his generation has the most prominent hill to climb, including transgender issues in the schools and trans lives.
He also shared he gave up the idea of going into administration twenty years ago. He explained later.

Paula again shared she did not come out until she got married, about “ten years” before this interview. It had to be about 7-5 years due to the state and federal legalization of gay marriage in Illinois and the nation. She said it was in 2010 that she married her spouse. Perhaps there was a local ordinance as same sex marriage became legal in Illinois in 2014. Like all of the other participants, she thought people always knew, but no one asked her about it or talked about it [to her]. Once more, the element of silence is thematic to their careers. Then two years ago, a student asked her about her wife, which took her off guard. She had never been asked so forwardly nor discussed it with the children. She is very pragmatic.

I try to walk that line of, you know, are people okay with it? Are people not okay with it? You know, and you don’t ever wanna be accused of trying to, you know, teach kids to be gay if that makes sense. You know, there’s that misinformation out there that gay people try to turn everybody else gay, and it drives me nuts. But anyway, and I just kinda looked at him, and it just kinda brought, you know, some tears to my eyes, and... And I thanked him for... For normalizing my relationship, because, you know, usually in a small rural district, you know, you don’t have very many people who are out and proud, so to speak.

Paula also coached girls’ basketball. I have mentioned, all of the other participants went beyond their duties as teachers and counselors. They coached
team sports, sponsored student activities, or worked on National Standards published for teachers across the nation (Frank). None of them left the classroom at the end of the day and just came to work the next morning. One would suspect this is an essential career-building element for LGBTQ educators, or at least it was for these four.

Paula cited two instances of distinct homophobic, heteronormative oppression. She heard of a lesbian coach whose administrators directly told her she could not go into the locker room and asked her to resign. She had the opposite experience after marrying her wife. They had become married in October the previous year, and between basketball games, some of the current and former players announced to congratulate the coach and his wife and to coach and her wife. The other coach had a wedding anniversary at about the same time as she had with her wife. She did explain that she felt a bit shocked because it was junior high-level children.

I just kinda looked around like at the crowd thinking, "Oh, my God, this was just in front of two schools’ worth of fans, and this other stuff," you know, and I was just... I was flabbergasted. And when we went into the locker room to talk before the game, you know, I started... I started crying and I talked to them, you know, and I said, "As a human, I need you do know and understand what you just did because what you just did isn’t something that normally happens in places like this, you know, um, and you guys are the ones who are going to change opinions about relationships like mine. You know, that I'm just here to do a job. I'm here to teach you, I'm
here to coach you, I'm here to make you the best possible player and the best possible human that I can." You know, and I, of course, I'm in tears, so the kids are in tears and I'm like, "Alright, we're... Let's move on," you know, and...

Paula had a home economics teacher, now called FCCLA [Family, Career and Community Leaders of America], who was her ally. When the FCCLA teacher taught parenting, she talked about Paula and the challenges that her wife and her son had in terms of her adopting her son, and being a proud parent and wife, not wanting to hide, and making sure her son knows it is ok.

Due to suggestions of proper writing formats, I fear quoting Paula too much, but her words speak volumes, and my paraphrasing just does not give them the justice they deserve. The state of Illinois was starting a mandate that schools include LGBTQ individuals who have contributed to history. Louis, also in Illinois, made a supportive comment for LGBTQ inclusion about this new law. Paula was willing to help with the district implementing the curriculum.

She revealed a charming, humorous, and heartfelt story about a young boy who comes to her one day.

I remember one interaction with a kid, he's one of my favorite kids. You know you get used to... You get used to answering questions like umm being very, very vague when, when you can't be out and proud, so to speak. And like I said, I finally... I was just done with it and... But this kid goes... He saw my wedding ring and he goes, "Well I didn't know you were
married." Well yeah, yeah, I'm married. He goes, "Huh. Well, what's your husband's name?"

Yeah, and I was like, "Well, I don't have a husband." But you said you were married. Yeah. Well then, what's your husband's name? I said, "I don't have a husband." And he goes, "Well, you said you're married." I said, "I am." And he just sat there and I just saw the light flicker in eyes, he goes, "Oh, you're like Ellen."

I said, "Yes, I am like Ellen." He goes, "Oh, okay." And then he moved on. Like once he had reconciled it in his brain, he was just like, Whatever. And you know he was fine with it, he didn't care, and I find that a lot of times, most kids are okay with it, it's, it's the older people who are not. But again, you know, I try... I try to lead by example as an educator, as a coach and as a human and as a woman, you know, just like, if they respect me for that, then it makes it a lot harder to be upset about other things. You know what I mean?

The media made it easier for the boy to make a positive connection to Paula's homosexuality and be married to a woman. Paula shared that it was so funny.

Louis went to a high school in a city of 40,000 people, but the high school served a much larger community. The graduating classes were about 700 seniors at that time (1974 or so). He taught at a small rural district at a high school in going to Western for his student teaching. When he graduated, he applied for a permanent job to the farthest southwestern suburb of Chicago,
which Louis said was similar to where he grew up. He said they had a desperate need for what he taught, business education.

Louis had a situation rarely shared. A few of the other participants were experiencing it, but unlikely to the extent that Louis is. He was teaching grandchildren of former students. Former students were on the school board, so Louis was working for them. He had had administrators who were former students. He also had been teaching alongside former students and their parents. Even the district superintendent was a former student. In answer to the question that has been gay affected his relationship with the community or school community, he says it was negligible and has not impacted him.

George started in the workforce in 1978, Louis had since about 1974. George shared that his husband and he would go into the city around 1980-82, where they could walk around [the village] holding hands and how wonderful that felt. They met in 1983, they had been together for nearly 37 years, a monumental achievement, especially in the AIDS crisis, at the time of this writing. Our mutual friends who referred George to me have been together for about 34 years at the time of this writing. George also stated he enjoyed going to Provincetown, a rather exclusive gay resort across Boston’s bay. Provincetown and The Pines next to Cherry Grove on Fire Island are the Northeast’s two biggest gay resorts for gay men, lesbians, or LGBTQ persons. He loved being in a gay environment. Now they enjoy living in a gay beach community. He went on to say he never wanted to live in the town where he worked. He wanted to feel as if he had his
private life. For many years, up until the newspaper article, he kept his personal life apart from his professional life.

**Question 3:** Tell Me What Has Transpired Over Your Educator Experiences Regarding Your Decisions Related To Disclosing Your Sexual Identity.

Paula again explained very patiently with me that the Supreme Court decision that legalized same sex marriage was the largest factor for her in relationship to her disclosing her sexual identity in her career. She went on to say that her seven-year-old son also plays a significant role. In adopting her wife’s child, and he feels free to say, "Well, I have two moms and two dads." The importance of this is not to show shame. She doesn't want him or them to live in fear of being afraid of admitting that. She sees how other people have treated her merely as an example of not treating people. She leads by example of how to get through and how they can get through… life.

Paula brought up the favorite boy I quoted earlier who asked her about her marriage. She said it “floored” her, but the more he talks about it to his friends and other people, they will hopefully be more accepting. Paula has an optimistic perspective coupled with a practical knowledge that has served her well.

In response to the Supreme Court decision, she said shortly after, her district changed paperwork to include same sex couples. Additionally, Paula’s athletic pass, for games and so forth, had her wife’s name on it for access as well. Quite progressive for a small, rural area. She attributed this to the school board and the people who work in the administration of being “forward-thinking.”
George backtracks a bit here, he explained that he never really disclosed his sexual identity, to say he never made a public statement that he is gay or homosexual, not even today. He “just felt people knew.” Taking into account the newspaper article, one gathered he was [openly] gay. He did admonish never coming out, except at a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) meeting two years before retiring, where he introduced himself as gay. The essential element here was that it was after school. The participants might have respected confidentiality. George has been retired for three years at the time of this interview. He explains it has been an evolution of events to his disclosure over the last 40 years, since 1978, when he took his first job teaching at a private Catholic high school. This evolution has not only been societal evolution but personal strength and growth. I suspect this is true, or thematic, for all of the participants.

**Question 4: Describe Your Progress Regarding Your Decision To Disclose Or Not To Disclose.**

Frank explained that he has students who are inquisitive, intuitive, and some insensible. To the latter, he said, “some days the kids kind of force it out, but, and you know, 25, 30 years ago, to be forced out of the closet meant your career was ended.” To that end, his high school and district were making a concerted effort to diversify staff and future instructors to match the diverse student body. It is not just a GSA, there is also a gay club, a transgender club, and he then explains 77 languages are spoken, mentioned earlier. We, according to him, “are really keen on equity, diversity, proactive behavioral implementation systems, Black Lives Matters, we’re doing everything that we can to create a
cadre of teachers in the college program, so that when they become trained as teachers, they already have a job with us in our school district, so we're looking to increase the diversity of our staff that reflects our student body population." His school even had programs such as a teaching academy for students to take vocational classes to see if they want to pursue a career in education. I asked him what did he do 25 years ago since he has been teaching for 28 years? Point blank, the answer was "stayed in the closet." Staying in disguise, having a façade, takes work and energy. Griffin's (1991) Passing strategy and Woods's (1994) counterfeiting strategy is to intently produce pretense that one is heterosexual while living the opposing lifestyle as an LGBTQ individual. It is not sure that any of these four participants did so because they stayed silent. They did not vocalize their sexuality, which is more middle ground, like Woods (1994) avoiding strategy, or Griffin’s (1991) covering and implicitly out strategies. Frank went on to explain in 2007-9 he started opening up about his sexual orientation. During this time, Portland had a gay mayor, and now they have a lesbian mayor, giving a sense of normalcy to the LGBTQ culture. Even his direct boss, his headmaster/principal was a lesbian, but he wanted her to evaluate his competence as a teacher, irrespective of being gay. Being respected for their competence was common for the four participants.

Paula brought up her wedding to this question. Her social life was mostly at school because she was so involved in coaching and teaching. Paula not only coached two basketball teams but two scholastic teams as well. Her life was predominantly at school, which dominated her social life and the friends she had
through the school. Colleagues told her they already knew {she was gay} and that they would come when she announced her wedding at lunch one day. Co-faculty and staff went to the wedding, it was fine.

When Louis started teaching in 1974, the next summer of 1975, he began his masters work for three summers. In his third year of teaching and holding tenure, he ran into a colleague in a gay bar in St. Louis. Louis deems running into a colleague at a gay bar coming out. This consideration is localized, as it was about 1975, and both men knew not to speak about it at work. It was also at the beginning of his third year, so he had tenure. He explains gay radar, a marvelous concept to denote, he details an intuitive method of nonverbally figuring out if another individual is lesbian or gay. Gay radar uses visually and acutely deciphering such things as gender conformity, gait, fashion attire, body language, and other close personal property character traits shown nonverbally. Oddly enough, it is quite often acutely accurate. He said “it” was just never an issue regarding his sexual identity, which he never vocalized. Louis wanted to share an experience with a student curious about the student’s sexual orientation. Louis’s need to communicate leads to Louis’s powerful story, one close to his heart, and I will quote later. I wanted to assure Louis his contribution was respected and validated. The story about the boy was one of a youth needing a gay role model to help in a dire time of need, in which Louis still did not come out, but did provide care, love, and substantial empathy to aid the child in that time of need.

George’s dynamic was parallel to Louis’s on many fronts. Their mental schema and thoughtful paradigm of action with silence worked for them. They
both wanted, or all four of them, to have their work to speak for itself, often described as LGBTQ educators want to overachieve to gain respect before coming out (Coker, Cain, 2018; Connell, 2015). George states that discussing LGBTQ issues were not part of his job.

When national issues, such as the transgender bathrooms, come up, he stood up for transgender issues as a modality for expressing his sexual identity discretely. He said he would shepherd information and not “ram it down their throats.” Like all of the other participants, his reputation for quality work was essential. His sexuality was not in the forefront, but a piece of himself [which he kept silent about].

Question 5: Tell Me About The Culture And Community At The School Related To Those Decisions.

Frank gave additional information that they wanted to build the diversity of faculty to reflect student diversity. He explained that beyond his district, there are even a couple of AVID transgender teachers. Here Frank was talking outside his school district; in the focus group, none of the participants knew transgender educators in their districts. He explained that his personal, professional growth comes through approaching transgender people who may not be gender-conforming (or his idea of what that is) initially to begin a conversation and a discussion to better interface with this kin’s students. He brought up geographic area attitudes toward LGBTQ inclusion again, in that where he teaches in the Portland metro area, it is a safe space for LGBTQ teachers. Still, just 30 miles outside, it’s conservative, and none of this “stuff” would be happening. The
Cascade mountain range seemed to be a divide, according to Frank, of safe and not safe, or blue versus red. Consequently, people “flock” to the Portland metro area, which has four counties in what Frank called climate or political refugees, coming from red states to blue states, from red cities to blue cities. He extracted sentiment that we are in an ever-increasingly polarized region and nation, and people want to go to where they feel safe and that safety can be in numbers.

Paula reiterated she is in a small, rural district, emphasizing its importance. She said she has never been told to hide anything, that the administrators had been welcoming, understanding, and accepting. She grew up in a small community and did relent to that in the '80s, being gay was just “something you didn’t talk about.” Thus, she kept silent and performed her work. She, of late, has had some open verbalization to colleagues, conceding silence.

She offered herself to the counselors to be the role model for the go-to girl for LGBTQ kids who need help in any manner. She let them know they can send the students her way, and she will give them sound, professional guidance, or just be a role model so that they do not have to feel alone. Paula admitted she hopes she sets the right example, questioning was she setting the right model?

On her Facebook page, she started putting pictures of her wife on FB, after not doing so for a long time. She also hid them from the community, keeping them private, not an easy task, explaining she had known these parents for a very long time five to ten years. She did not take student requests as friends on FB, then later decided to. She chose not to hide who she was and if they didn’t like it to “go along your way.”
Paula has had administrative support from her principal. Support from upper management is congruent with the other participants. She mentioned it here.

Louis reminded me that it was the mid 70’s. His interactions with parents produced no uncomfortable feelings at conferences. He said he hoped the parents understood he was there for the student’s behalf and to help the student. He thought some may have had suspicions of his orientation or know, but it never became an important conversation, no conflict or disrespect from any of them. When he worked as an “administrator” as a department chair for a couple of departments, he was the supervisor or lead teacher, and he never felt disrespected personally or professionally. He continues this to today by stating they kept asking him to come back to sub these many years. He denoted the importance of a teacher skill set to achieve support.

George conceded his town is not just a small, but it used to be “prejudiced.” When he started in 1986, there was one African American family in the whole school district. No one was out, educators or students. He said it was hard for the kids, not mentioning it might have been harder for teachers because it was a town where everyone knew everyone else. Every kid knew each other, and every family knew each other.

George brought up an element of discussion found in part in the literature review. He said it was easier for the girls to come out than the boys. Then a humorous, but a sad observation: he found it interesting the boys who were questioning their sexuality, if they had attractive female friends, the other boys
left them alone. But if the boy was a loner, he got harassed more and was a heteronormative assault target.

Question 6: Tell Me About Your Plans In The Future That Pertains To Your Decisions For Disclosing Your Sexual Identity.

Frank explained he will retire after 31-33 years of service, maybe a couple more. Frank’s disposition is one of resignation. He said, “I’m done” in reference to the current political and economic climate in the US. He and his partner have already bought a property in Latin America. They have a high-rise condo together there, and currently, they were building a house for when he retires. He spoke about the polarization in the age of Trump. He believed as many do, that it will take years to undo the racism, the animosity, the vitriol that exists here in the US. He does not want to have it in “his bucket list” to help those causes change for the better. He was ready for the new generation of teachers, educators, and professionals to come on board to take up that task(s) of the challenge for gay rights and inclusion/diversity. This quote Frank used was originally from Dr. Martin Luther King.

As Obama says, the Arc of Justice always tends to sway towards being correct. You know? But I also need to just live out the rest of my life someplace quietly, and you know to be able to live where I can actually afford to live someplace, you know? And my dollar goes further is something that I’m looking forward to, so.

Frank’s share was the first comment on how the new generation is ready to challenge gay rights and diversity in society.
Paula identified the most remarkable paradigm. She simply stated that her straight friends who are married do not go around telling people they are straight, so she didn’t talk about her sexual orientation all the time. If asked today, Paula tells them about her wife. She used to be very vague, telling the asking party that she had a roommate. Paula did feel she can help an LGBTQ student by being a role model for them and support for the student. She later in the questionnaire says she was the only LGBTQ educator in her district. Being a support educator for other educators was not mentioned by any of the four participants. The four focused on what the schools, their education, and their professional developments have taught them to focus on, which was the student. Paula said she feels for students whose parents turn them out from their homes, who did not have support. She also sat in her ally’s classroom, previously mentioned, to answer questions forthrightly about adopting a child and how her in-laws treat her.

Paula said she had enough support from the faculty, the staff, the administration, the school board, and the student body that no one asked her to keep her “mouth shut.” She did have healthy boundaries within her coaching positions. Paula was aware if she lost a job, she was not going into the locker room, she was going to follow the same rules as a male coach..., she did not go in while they are changing. When she did go in to talk to them, it was before they change. She indicated this is unlike any other coach or teacher. It was important because it directly involved her actions, possibly affecting her career and her
knowledge of what and when to do something which kept her job as a teacher safe.

Louis had a hard time conceptualizing this question because he is at the end of his career and is not planning on changing his sexual identity disclosure with the school district or students, parents, and staff. He felt he was and is discrete. He had never been a “flag-waver” and “brandish banners.” He simply thought he did not need everybody to know. Louis did live very close to the school community he teaches. He was always running into former students. He also did not fear anyone seeing him with another male person, his partner, in a 32-33 year relationship. His partner has discomfort levels with being called Louis’s partner, so Louis respectfully called him his friend instead of his partner. The discretion they observed falls in line with his nonverbal disclosure paradigm methodology he attends. He felt it is a personal thing within the relationship. Going into the city, having a celebration, having a fine dining experience with his partner was not problematic for Louis or his partner.

Louis did not feel he needed to go to gay pride events, such as the Chicago Pride parade, though he has in the (long ago) past and has even ridden in with GLSEN. He used to like going into the city since GLSEN did not have a chapter in the suburbs. He went to one in Chicago periodically.

George currently did have a gay rainbow flag in front of his house. It was safe to do so because it is a gay “resort” beach community. George’s husband works in politics. His husband served on the city council for about 14 years. Thus, George and his husband had political involvement with their town. At one
time, he said that three of the five city council member seats were gay. Palm Springs has also had this type of governance, and at times, West Hollywood.

**Question 7: What Can School Districts Do To Support LGBTQ Educators, Not Students, Career Path Satisfaction?**

Frank continued the district’s theme, being progressive, trying to encourage and bring young students into the teaching profession through their “Teaching Academy.” They singled out students, asked them if they would like to be an educator, encouraged them to take an education course as a vocational education credit counting toward graduation. If it was a fit for the child, the State had a fund that those children who go through college and teach in the same district they are from; the State paid 100% of their college. He mentioned they are the first in line for teaching jobs if they choose this route. The prioritizing is how the district and state were attempting to get the educators to resemble the student body as time progresses, and people like Frank fade into retirement. Frank does still not steer toward supporting current-day teachers who may need it.

Paula has an anti-homophobic ideal that no one should ever tell a person to keep their sexuality to themselves. Her next step was to put up a wedding picture or a picture of her family to see what happens. She was exceptionally fortunate, which she shared, to have a district that changed its insurance documents to be LGBTQ inclusive. “That’s the biggest thing,” she went on to say. The language, being accommodated with paperwork within the district, and understanding she encompasses into this umbrella of most indispensable
elements that districts can do to make it safe for LGBTQ educators to have a successful career.

Paula mentioned the pain of having to cross out the father and put mother where it said mother and father’s name on documents such as the hospital or the city they live in to indicate two mothers. She was grateful her district has already done the paperwork changes to make it inclusive for same sex couples, such as the athletic card that came through with both of their names on it without request. This inclusion was massive to Paula and many other educators and the field of education at large, if not all, professions and society.

Louis said they have established a GSA. Inaugurating a GSA for the students transferred to safety for LGBTQ faculty by allowing them to wear, distribute, provide a program, and a meeting facility to whoever supports LGBTQ and other human rights. Once more, creating safe spaces in a GSA made Louis and his LGBTQ colleagues feel safe, accepted, and supported. He made an unusual itemization. He denoted that the sponsors or coordinators do get a stipend once they get school board approval. He doubts that educators would do it otherwise for “free gratis.”

Louis’s high school practiced a Day of Silence, GLSEN’s annual day of action to spread awareness of the effects of the bullying and harassment of LGBTQ students. All students take a day-long vow of silence. This day of observance was held on the second Friday of April each year. He said they have new, over the last five years, software inclusive for trans students. They had an area for them to put their preferred name. This name was in parentheses, but at
least it was on the roster. Officially their birth name was what is still on the district roster. The place for their preferred name was the district’s administration’s least intrusive way of accommodating these students. According to Louis, continuing the paradigm of inclusion, faculty could use any restroom, so it was not an issue.

George felt fortunate, if not just “lucky” to be in a place with job protections in place for LGBTQ persons before the recent federal judicial decision. He dreaded to think of any new laws that would make the New York Board of Ed or administrators ground to fire an individual and use their sexuality for it. George’s story was a corollary to Louis’s share on the district embracing the student GSA’s. I had to redirect him by asking, “Do you see a relationship between that and helping the educators also to become stronger and more open with their sexuality?” He answered:

I do feel that. And I do feel that it’s important for local districts, not just for the administrators but I do feel that local teachers’ unions and things during our union meetings that they should be bringing people in and doing in services and things for the staff. For example, we had GLSEN come in a number of times, you know, at our faculty meetings just to make our, our overall general faculty more sensitive to the needs of the kids and the staff really too.

Precisely like Louis, George said he never would say he was gay at the high school during his career, but that the students knew, but that he never stood up and publicly stated it.
Question 8: How Do You Feel About The Contemporary State Of The Field In Public PK-12 Education Regarding LGBTQ Inclusion Or Educators?

Frank brilliantly brought up the recent Supreme Court issue where a gay principal or assistant principal was fired at a Catholic school when on social media, there were pictures of he and his partner getting married. The Court sided with the school, and thus Frank simply said, “private versus public.” Therefore, private schools had the right to refuse employment to individuals based on their perceived or their sexual orientation. In public schools, there were protections, wherein in private schools, those protections were foregone.

Paula mentioned a skit that was put on by the teachers and the students. Two heterosexual couples came in and sat down, but when they passed popcorn around, the two males put their arms around one another to give the popcorn, leaving it there. The skit was in front of the entire student body. To Paula, she needed people to understand how big of a thing this is. The act or scenario related to gender portions of the literature review herein relevant to female vs. male acceptance. She said her eyes grew huge to see how the students would react and how her co-workers would. These moments desensitized and normalized LGBTQ persons to her. The mention of if a male coach slapped a male athlete on the butt, people could have questioned motives, but she would just never do that because it was an awkward thing to do. Appropriate behavior would have been giving them a high five or a quick pat on the back. These types of conversations with her co-workers were endearing to Paula.
Louis was nervous but glad and happy about the recent Supreme Court Decision to provide legal employment protection, adding sexual identity to the civil rights act of 1964 as sex was inclusive of sexual orientation and transgenderism.

The court considered two sets of cases. The first concerned a pair of lawsuits from gay men who were allegedly fired because of their sexual orientation: Bostock v. Clayton County, Ga., No. 17-1618, and Altitude Express Inc. v. Zarda, No. 17-1623.

Gerald Bostock filed the first case, allegedly fired from a government program that helped neglected and abused children in Clayton County, GA., just south of Atlanta after he joined a gay softball league.

A skydiving instructor brought the second, Donald Zarda, also allegedly fired because he was gay. His dismissal followed a complaint from a female customer who had expressed concerns about being strapped to Mr. Zarda during a tandem dive. Hoping to reassure the customer, Mr. Zarda told her that he was “100 percent gay.”

The case on gender identity, R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, No. 18-107, was brought by a transgender woman, Aimee Stephens. After she announced in 2013 that she was a transgender woman and would start working in women’s clothing, a Michigan funeral home fired her.

Mr. Zarda died in an accident in 2014, and Ms. Stephens died on May 12. Their estates continued to pursue their cases after their deaths.
Question 9: How Do You Perceive The School Culture And Environment Today Versus The Past Regarding The Acceptance Of LGBTQ, Inclusion, And Diversity?

Paula found it much more open today, conceding that students, faculty, and staff still face things they shouldn’t have to. She sees in them seeing her or just LGBTQ people, such as in the media or their personal lives, it is getting better. Paula admitted there are still outliers who are conservative homophobes who make life difficult for people. She shared a brilliant story needed to be shared. It showed the level of education she and her wife brought to a difficult situation:

You know? My wife and I went out for dinner one night, and we heard these... I overheard these two gentlemen having a conversation and they were both self-proclaimed homophobes, and, umm, I was just kinda like... I was trying to enjoy my dinner with my wife, and then I just had to hear this, and it just was very, very frustrating and angering for me, and umm, before we left, I went over to the, the bartender guy who was serving everybody at the bar, and I asked him, you know, if he had their ticket, and he said, “Yeah.” And I said, “Well, how much is it?” And he told me, and so I handed him 40 bucks and I said, “Well, you just tell those guys that the lesbians bought dinner for ‘em.” And, you know, and, umm, we left, and then we went back a couple of weeks later and the same bartender was there, and I
asked him how it went, he goes, “Not very good.” I said, “Well, oh well.”

“Yeah, no, I said, “If they won’t accept it, then you got a $40 tip, if they accept it, know you still got a, you know, a $15 tip. It’s all good.”

Louis spoke about going to professional meetings and CPDU [Continued Professional Development Unit] sessions for additional certification. He did not find problems or constraints, so he had a hard time answering the question. Louis did admit it less “uptight” than it was in the past because there are other issues to worry over. He mentioned a couple of female PE teachers, a couple of lesbians he knew for a fact, but he stated that goes with the territory. His school had eight counselors, a school psychologist, social workers who may, in his words;

come across as being more sensitive I believe to students that may be having some of those issues, one of them is the sponsor of the Gay Student Alliance... she has a very close, umm, colleague in the counseling department that is the lead girls’ basketball coach, there was no question about her. You know, she came in, there was no question whatsoever. The males, that’s a little bit harder challenge.

Readers may take this statement that he sees females as more “sensitive” to LGBTQ issues. He saw males as having a more challenging time finding compassion or empathy from this statement’s sounds. The literature backs up this gender paradigm (Bohan, 1996; Harek, 2002; Ozeren, 2013; Takacs & Zsalma, 2011).
Since Louis has been subbing, two gay teachers in the English department have covered their classes. He has sensed no problems. Louis was funny. He went on to say that in music, the visual and performing arts division, and so forth, there are a couple [who were gay] that it “kinda goes along with the territory.”

George seemed to say he thought LGBTQ inclusive education needs to start in elementary and middle school, as *Two Mommies* or *Two Daddies* are elementary level books. He admitted there may be pushback, and there are some people that speak, “We need to start throwing these into the fire.” Then so it’s like "No, no, no, no, no!" There is a lot of resistance from really conservative groups, admittingly.

**Question 10: What Do You Perceive Schools, Districts, Counties, And The States Can Do To Create Safe Environments For Disclosure?**

Frank simply stated creating transparency is what schools, districts, counties, and states use. Transparency for Black Lives Matter and other human rights initiatives and protests. Frank continued to focus on students.

Paula also brought transparency into the fold of discussion. She understood everybody will not accept her relationship, but she still wanted to be respected as a human. The state mandating LGBTQ representation in history was an example of the government doing something to include LGBTQ lives. Paula shied away from hostile forums trying to undermine these progressive efforts due to her inability to “handle ugliness from people.” Her taking her wife to
the annual Christmas party showed inclusion and a show of being open and understanding by the school and district.

Louis brought geography into the conversation, mentioning that the country's southern region may not have protection in its constitution. Still, larger cities and metropolitan areas had added it as part of the state's constitutional amendments. He went on to include recent additions for transgender persons. Administrative support was his answer here, as the administration knows they are legally married and even attend their weddings. He admitted it's not *laissez-faire*, and everything is not “*perfecto*,” but it much more comfortable for LGBTQ married individuals. Louis felt safe in his school and district, mainly due to his extensive career, 47 years, and they still wanted him back to continue to substitute teach. He contemplated if he were to go to another state, such as just over the state line to Indiana, he would have to start the process all over again. He knew they could not point-blank ask him what his sexual preference is or his sexual orientation, especially this late in the game, he was not going there. He mused about fellow teachers still in the classroom going, "Didn't we attend a retirement party for you at one point?" I [he] said, "Yes." "You did?" It’s not like I have to, but that’s because I still have something to contribute. I still have a passion for doing that." Respect from his colleagues was why he continues to substitute teach.

George explained that the schools, districts, counties, and states advocate when discrimination against people occurs. I presumed he meant students as the conversation herein has been dominated in this paradigm. Still, he may also have
suggested for faculty, counselors, their families to come to them. They know it was a safe place. He said just passing regulations was always the key. But it was getting the proper administration who are sensitive to diversity issues and are supportive, as well as having elected officials in local and state government who advocate for those students. Once more, the discussion turned back on the students. He finished with that is the only way anything will change if we put people in the office to support our agenda.

**Question 11: What Can School Districts Do To Make It Safer For LGBTQ Educators To Disclose And Fulfill A Career?**

Paula said that school districts can make sure that any type of discrimination is dealt with swiftly. She also had student and parental support, which she brings up.

Once more, she focused on students. When a student bullies another student, being called a faggot or other derogative name, it is dealt with quickly. The student hears that, but the children also hear and see that the reaction is not appropriate.

George mentioned the stability he has had in just one school over his 30-year tenure. He said the district needs to tell them they are in a safe environment. He went on to say the district ought to provide in-service training to inform them of this. The district ought to go further, getting stickers to put on their doors from GLSEN with such things as a gay flag and a pink heart underneath, stating, “This is a safe place.” Small steps can speak volumes, according to George. He wished to see them in the counselor’s offices, the principal’s,
administrator’s offices. He further mentioned he did not see them in fellow educators in different buildings where he works. He never put a gay sticker or a gay flag on his door. He never verbally came out and said he was gay. He did tell me he had a gay flag inside his office and a picture of his husband on his desk. “Pretty close to coming out.” The sexual identity orientation management choice related to Woods (1994) and Griffin (1991) between avoiding (verbally) and intrinsically out, display of the flag, and the visible picture of his husband. He falls between these two.

**Question 12: How Would You Describe Your Career Quality Potential And Advancement As An LGBTQ Educator?**

Frank considered advancement in a career in education in who you know, not your performance. Occasionally, personnel does promote regardless of their skin color, regardless of their sexuality. As Martin Luther King would say, "Judge me not on the color of my skin, but by the content of my character." And they do get those jobs. He mentions nepotism was exceptionally prevalent. Frank made a conscious decision 15 to 20 years ago that Portland was a safe place for him. He did not want to get an administrator job outside the area to gain experience and then return and apply for promotion within his district and province. Frank also told me that it was 15 or 20 years ago before he came out of the closet. He then tells me that the Portland schools and districts hired teachers within the district to become administrators.

Frank informed me that there are 296 school districts in the state, thus 296 school boards, consequently 296 different political viewpoints in how they
approach the recognition of LGBTQ educators. He said a recognized national entity like GLSEN can make a difference. Frank again informed me that there are red states and blue states, blue districts, and red districts. Whether it is corporations or public and private entities, he decided in the greater Portland schools area. He made a choice that he did not want to step outside his “comfort zone” to a less progressive school district for the potential to move up the career ladder. His career as a teacher had afforded him the luxuries to do other things in his life. He saw administrators putting in 12 -14-hour days, year-round duties. He said you can see the stress in their face, their regret. He atoned to having a happy career and ready to let his career close, reiterating that he was prepared for the next generation of teachers to continue to move the arc forward regarding justice for the gay, lesbian and transgender population.

Paula said she has not seen any difference in her advancement in career opportunities than anyone else. She had coached girl’s basketball for 23 years. Like Louis, Paula was a mentor teacher. She did not consider it an administrative position. She had been helping new teachers in coming to her district for years.

Louis considered his career very satisfactory and very successful. His sexual orientation or sexual preference had never been a problem. Like Paula and Frank, he had sponsored many sport and co-curricular activities: girl’s tennis, being the ski coach, and the ski sponsor of the ski club. He had taken multiple trips, including weekend trips, for many years, overnight, with the students. He admitted that he had to be cautious in the back of his mind, but he was not fearful. Louis did say: “let's face it, especially these days, a student, a parent, uh, for
whatever reason, however disgruntled or upset they are with who knows what issues can make extremely damaging accusations.”

George said the only trouble he ever had was around 1979 when working at a drug and alcohol treatment center. He blurred the lines between professional and personal, getting involved with the executive director who was gay. When George ended the relationship, and because he ended the relationship, the director fired him. Worse, when George was trying to get new jobs in the field, the director made calls to blackmail him. Quite vindictive. Fortunately, he had a new interview at another sobriety/mental healthcare agency. The director there was gay and knew the other director, hiring George despite the vengeance sought by his former boss.

Question 13: What Would Make You Consider It To Be Safe To Be Out To Your Students, Their Parents?

Paula reminded me that it is not something she readily discussed unless she was asked. It was the disclosure of her sexual identity, due to some situations that could get you into a dangerous position. She choose who her friends were, and her parents who she disclosed to who she trusted. With the students, she said she did her own thing, which was to teach science. It strongly implied and reinforced she focused on her teaching, not her sexuality.

Louis discussed different levels of being out, much like the former discussion with George. Overt actions such as kissing and hugging were actions of affection, but he still did not vocalize it. Then Louis admitted there was another level where one did verbalize it to someone. He says that had a significant
impact. He shared about his personal life. Louis was a 67-year-old man, considered himself single, but had been in a 32-year gay relationship. They were not domestic partners. Louis did offer the other man to move in together “way back,” but due “to other reasons [he] didn’t.”

Louis then went back to his life at work, where he has had current and former colleagues who do not have “big discussions” about it but are straight couples, and they come to his dinners. He loved to cook and cater. “They willingly sponsored all the things [he] has done.” He went back to the conversation about levels of coming out, and his decision is or was not to verbalize it. He did run into colleagues at the gym or big theatre productions or concerts, and there was never any friction or uncomfortableness. He says conversations may have been a little different, but it didn’t affect his professional relationships either. He explained there are lesbians and that the entire group was professional with the common denominator in education. They were educated individuals. He discussed his being more a moderate to the left politically. En fin, he said they, meaning parents, needed to be more supportive of what they (LGBTQ educators) needed to be in the classroom in “dealing with other minorities.”

George said he made a choice not to verbally come out to students and parents, reminding me that 30 years ago, when he walked in the door, he could have never verbalized anything related to his sexual orientation. [Now] he thought the climate and culture were alright with open LGBTQ counselors, so he would not have had a problem being verbally out at the end of his career. When
George started counseling, the administration would have fired him, or parents would have come in and told the office they forbid their children from seeing him if he were openly (vocally) gay. He was astutely aware that he was in fear of this initially, so George focused on being an efficient worker. If anyone accused him of not being able to handle his caseload, then why is the district keeping him? George was always fearful of that at the beginning of his career. Even today, parents and others find ways of going around protections by making indirect homophobic fraudulent accusations, he mentions.

Question 14: What Are Your Thoughts About Your Disclosure And The Role That Plays For LGBTQ Youth?

Frank saw being a role model goes beyond just being a gay man. He pushed them in their academics. His school and district had a “distinction,” actually protection, for illegal immigrant students. They had fortifications in place for them, thus the need to document them. They started them down the “DACA road” (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) as undocumented students, and they had a “firewall” against the administration in Washington DC for their protection. AVID is engineered to engage and enhance children in their learning/education to get them to college. He addressed his transgender, gay, or lesbian students who behaved negatively to understand why they acted out and assisted in improving their lives. Some of these DACA children also were LGBTQ; the state had funds called [Undisclosed] to help them. He said that over the last nine years, a program called the College-Bound Scholars was in place, which if they got a C or better and had no criminal infractions that tie to DACA.
They worked with colleges to get the students accepted and created an alternative college number in place of the usual social security number, which they did not have. He acknowledged that they also recognized African American, Black, and Brown students and LGBTQ students. He related this to his career when he came out in the mid-2000s when the district took up these roles.

Paula said she is more open to student’s questions now than she had been in the past. She did this to give them a person to talk to and understand they have a safe place and person.

Louis believed his conduct and professionalism speak for itself. His moderate, independent (political) perspective would be “acceptable,” and he could express himself in a supportive manner; to anyone. He reminded me that he did have time to go beyond standard procedures with a student to support them and be more open. This story will come later.

George had students who came to him for support as a counselor outside the GSA who were questioning or gay.

I remember I had one student that I guess he was a junior at the time, on weekends, the girls would... 'Cause he wanted to transition, and the girls wanted to dress him up in drag and take him to the local mall. So on the weekends, so he would be able to walk around the mall and feel like he would mingle in, you know, because it just wasn’t our kids who went to the mall, kids from all of the other districts would go to the mall....

When I heard that he started going into the city and that he was trying to buy the necessary you know drugs so that he could take to
transition himself and doing it on the black market, I was very concerned and asked if out of his two parents, which would be the easiest one to have a conversation with, and for him to do it with me, and we did call his mom in, and we did... You know he...

As his coach, I kinda like explained what was going on and that if he wanted to transition, and this was probably like in the, the middle 90s, probably like maybe around 1992, '93, that his mother and I thought that was very smart of her. Got him involved in counseling to be able to have someone professionally talk to, to be able to you know, do necessary steps in order to transition, and from what I understood, they followed through, and then he graduated, and then I didn't hear what happened to him afterward.

This story meant a lot to George and the child because they were in a “tiny little town.” The student tried to keep it under wraps, but hormones into your body that are not coming from a doctor could be dangerous whenever you put medications and hormones into your body. He was glad the student had the maturity to listen and say, “Listen, if I'm gonna do this, I need to do it the right way.”

Question 15: What Can You Do As An Agent Of Change?

Frank:

I'm a White American person, okay. But there need to be people of color in my school district. There need to be more people of color in my high school. You're trying to find the... God, there is a joke that came out many, many
years ago, you're trying to find the, the umm... Oh, God, what was it?
Paraplegic, African-American, Jewish, lesbian, wheelchair. Whatever that...
It's almost like a litmus test is what it is. And so you almost as if you're
looking at the high school population as a percentage, you will never get
there until you have a percentage of the population that is reflective in your
faculty. Meaning a person of color who is an LGBTQ. Okay, which we have
had. They come and go, okay.

Frank was saying he was ready to pass the torch to the next, more
diversified generation, a theme of all four respondents. Frank elaborated more
succinctly on the changes of demographics, much like those that Louis
described. He explained that affluent people are returning to the cities to condos
and high rises. Frank taught in the suburbs, seeing more of an influx of free and
reduced lunch (Title 1) families and children. He said there are elementary
schools with 100% free and reduced lunches, and his high school has 62%.

Paula said representation was the biggest thing to do to be a role model: a
woman, a coach, a teacher, and a parent. She said that heterosexual people
may have the irrational fear that LGBTQ people are hitting on them when they
just need to calm down because they are not. Paula wanted to be proud of who
she is and inspire somebody to say they want to be like her. This need to
authentic was becoming more important as she gets older and closer to
retirement. She simply couldn’t keep hiding.
Louis now wanted to share his story where he could go above and beyond the standard care of a student to protect them, support them, and perhaps save their life at that moment.

Well, I wanna say it was the 80s... Can't remember the exact year. Um, so you know, I started in '74, so let's say within uh, about 10 years after... No, yeah. Uh, with... Within the first 10 years or so, there was a phone call that I received. It was summer, school was out umm, and a student identified himself and seemed very, very upset uh, was calling from a phone booth within the community that the school is located, and like I said, was very, very upset. I knew of him because I had him in class, and he was also, uh, in the Ski club at one point.

I had my suspicions uh, and so forth in school, but this is the first that he actually made any kind of uh, overtures and was so upset umm, he has left home they were umm, the parents were not too accepting of what he had just revealed or his discussion with them about being gay. He turned to me out of the blue umm, and so in talking to him, I had to kinda, you know this is... This is totally out of left field. I had to keep my composure, and I... I kept going back to uh, "Why... Why are you calling me? What... What makes you... You know uh, you know you've got... You've got some siblings umm... " 'Cause I've had the brother in school as well.

"You've got some friends. I know you've got friends, 'cause I... I, you know, I have experienced those with you, uh, and so forth." And he was so upset because his parents weren't accepting, he had a backpack with
him with clothes and so forth, so his intention was, of course, leaving. And I said, "I don't know what you want me to do." "I just need to talk to somebody and... And I felt you were the person I feel comfortable... " I'm paraphrasing, but uh, I said, "Well... " I... I mentioned a couple of people, even uh, one of the counselors... His counselor and... And his advisor, I wasn't his academic advisor, but I... I mentioned that person, and I said, you've got some people, you're working somewhere, you know couldn't you talk with them and then don't you feel comfortable with them, no. So anyway, it's... It's only 12 miles away. So I really stuck my neck out, I realized that, and I said, "Well, you stay there." 'Cause he didn't... He didn't have transportation. I said, "You stay there, and I will try, and I will come and pick you up." Safety, safety. Safety was what was in my mind the whole time and not for me, it was his safety, about what he was going to do, I had no idea where this could lead, you know, and trying to keep my cool. I picked him up, I had no other place... Right, Really, I had no other place to go with him, uh, but came back to my place, and So we had a long conversation, uh, for a long, long time, and before it went any further I said, "You need to call your parents and tell them." You know, 'cause this is several hours down the road, I said, "You need to call and let them know that you're safe." And I said, "You don't need to tell them where you're at, just tell them that you're safe." Now, whether they could have traced the call, I don't know, they never did, or never surfaced.
So anyway, we had a long, long talk and so forth, and I talked him into going to a friend's house because he wanted to stay here. Now, whether he had other ulterior... Ulterior motives, I don't know, it's history, nothing happened. You know I thought... I laid awake that night thinking about all the possibilities, but that was, uh, a prime time for me to assess how open I was going to be. I never... I never said the word, but I said, "I fully understand and can sympathize and empathize with you on, on this issue." That's as far as I went.

The student did drop out of school. He went to Milwaukee for a bit, then to Chicago. He was artistically talented. He co-owned a shop in "Boystown," a gay section of the north side of Chicago. Louis ran into him at gay pride celebrations and bars. Louis and his partner went to his store and were supportive of him, at which time he told Louis that he was HIV positive. Louis forgot the year, but the year is essential. If it were before late 1994, people with HIV were still rapidly passing away because the medication treatments had not become sophisticated enough to support their lives. The uncertainty of his former student's status bothered Louis, as Louis said, "You know it's hard to find the words and so forth. I haven't seen or heard of him for some time now. I'm knocking on wood that he's still safe and with us."

Louis never came out to the boy that night, but he feared his safety and gave him a safe place to stay and get through the night. The memory was a very poignant story.
George explained that the most important thing he could do as a role model was for faculty in-services and students. He found a guy a couple of years older than the students who was a crossdresser and came in full drag, meaning when a guy entirely dresses in women’s attire, makeup, hair, etc., and did an in-service. Having a crossdresser living a life without drugs and alcohol as a role model was a big deal because he elaborates a bit more detail that the town is middle to lower middle class and has more bars per square miles than anywhere in the world. We also talked about the higher suicide rates and suicide attempts for a male to a female transgender individual. LGBTQ higher suicide rates bring us to a discussion about traumatic loss. There was a Traumatic Loss Coalition for Suffolk County that George got involved in New York, which helped intercede students or family members incur a traumatic loss, such as sudden death, murder, and suicide. Counselors would step in to assist as needed. George took on various activities: coaching a varsity sport, being involved in the Gay Straight Alliance, in the Traumatic Loss Coalition, being the substance abuse coordinator, that he was the front-line person, and was indispensable as an employee. As needed, he also referred for outside psychiatric issues, or the school psychologist got involved in the child study team or brought parents in to have meetings with teachers on a topic. George made himself a great asset to ensure his ongoing career would be stable and progress with a potential.

George coached boy’s and girl’s cross-country track for 12 years, the girls’ varsity tennis for six years, and he was the advisor for peer leadership, where they would take a one-week field trip to the Delaware Water Gap, an exquisitely
beautiful place. This camp took about 300 students throughout the state to establish a healthy lifestyle without using drugs or alcohol. He mentioned so many children were out, or you could tell they would be [like Louis’s radar]. It was a very safe place, and the students were very accepting. "You know, this is a wonderful place where it can build your self-confidence and self-esteem.” It funneled many students to the GSA or other service projects once they are back at school. He said, with glee, that he spent six months of his life over his years in a wooden bunk bed out in the woods to bring a representation of his high school every year. Dedication.

Question 16: Describe How You Would Compare Younger And Older LGBT Teacher’s Experiences Regarding Inclusion.

Frank was friends with a gay younger, new teacher who offered Frank new insights, perspectives, and exciting attitudes in his fifth year of teaching. They were professional colleagues and friends. His friend didn’t understand anything other than being an out gay teacher. This paradigm continuum goes as he further stated that when Frank started teaching, you had to stay “hush-hush.” In contrast, today, his fellow teacher cannot understand that concept, due to social media such as Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok, make it impossible to keep secrets. This generation refuses to have heteronormative standards shove them into the closet, according to Frank. He indicated red corporations and blue corporations, believing we are in such a divisive society right now.

Paula saw a lot changing today, such as bringing the mandate of LGBTQ inclusion into the history curriculum. She also saw more LGBTQ people out in
public, holding hands and not being afraid. Although, Paula admitted she gets troubled for them because she knew there are still areas where it was not safe. Since the pride movement started in the ’60s, she went on, that with each generation, it gets better. She said there are always going to those angry and mean people, which she saw counteracting by being kind and being the best person you can be.

Louis said with all seriousness that the difference was like “night and day” between older generations and today’s generation of LGBTQ educators. As an example, and parallel to what Paula mentioned, he said that public displays of affection, PDA’s, were not allowed when he was young, whereas today, it is more relaxed. Louis sites two other teachers of which he was aware. One had been teaching five years, and the additional 40 or almost 50 years old, a lesbian who didn’t hide things but “isn’t in your face” with it either. He said they have it so much easier to be openly gay or lesbian. He cited teaching AP, Advanced Placement classes, the yearbook publication, and creative writing, which lends itself to avenues of free and creative thoughts and expressions. The other is a female who was a health teacher. Louis was somewhat shocked about the subjects they breach. He said, “you can’t be uptight.” He noted the visual and performing arts are typical with LGBTQ teachers, as he chuckled.

George had hope, great hope for the future. He saw the current generation have great enthusiasm like a “fabulous breath of fresh air.” Like the other candidates, all four, he stated he was more than willing to move over to the side and let our younger people come into the ranks of teaching, educating, and
administration to take over. He felt they are in an excellent position with the young LGBTQ staff today. He said their attitudes are much more well-formed; I presumed this means around sexual identity management, that they stand and fight, push for what they are, he mentioned, much like Act Up did in the '80s. George reminisced about being an Act Up member, which he wasn’t, but said he did it his way.

Chart 2 displays the codes and themes from the interviews.

Chart 2

Hierarchy Chart

Note. codes and themes individual interviews

The central theme was not vocalizing, then geography, their competence that their work speaks for itself, including further educating themselves. As one reads from left to right, the next tier was the closeted past vs. openly gay today, coming
out at work, GLESN, and coming out to the family. Coaching was a large part of
the next tier, with the theme of staying in the same school since they started
teaching and ready for the new generation of teachers to take over the quest for
gay rights. Though transparency of names and locations were allowed, even
sought after, by the participants, our contractual agreement in the IRB informed
consent meant we had to change names to pseudonyms and alter locations.

Focus Group Survey

Focus Group Interview Questions

I expected I might only have one or two participate in the focus group.
Each participant appeared, with sometime between, in the zoom meeting. Each
participant's arrival exhilarated me as each one came in and I was ecstatic when
all four of them were there. I just reminded them that they had asked for
transparency for their name, locations, schools, etc. and asked them if they
wanted to continue to do this in the focus group. They did. Transparency was
much the same as the one on one interviews. I wanted a casual, informal,
relaxed “atmosphere” for the group. It worked. There was laughter back and forth
as they related to each other’s experiences, nods, oh yeah’s, for sure, etc. as
communications of agreement. The participants wanted to stay in contact. There
was no discord, and I was thrilled to be a conduit. In the final construct, we had to
use pseudonyms and altered locations here per the IRB (Institutional Review
Board) approval, which was a contractual document.

I need to preamble this discussion so there will be quite a few repetitions,
as the participants wanted to share with the group parts of our conversations in
the study we had in our one on one zoom interviews with each other in the focus group one.

George was the first to join. We discussed the artifacts briefly. Then Paula came on board, after which Louis, and finally Frank. Louis wanted clarification about the artifacts, but I do not think I clarified it enough for him as he did not send any. George did, and Frank did, which I will get to in that discussion. My artifact description to Louis was:

Any type of poetry or visuals or artwork, or we have... I won't comment on the other things that other practitioners here have done but those he... You know, that could be things like if you... I think for one person that they had enriched a curriculum with certain things. Maybe in your case, it needs to be some of your curricular activities that you did that might have helped just descriptions of that or things within your [life] You have an extensive career. Just something over that period of time that has enriched your career and made it more possible for you to be authentic and be yourself.

I was somewhat surprised, actually astounded all four showed up. It can be like herding cats, for a familiar colloquial saying. Gratitude filled me, and I shared it with them.


Frank initiated the conversation by sharing his location, the Portland metropolitan area, then Louis, the southwestern suburbs of Chicago, then
George, suburban New York, and Paula in west-central Illinois. Louis, Paula, and I acknowledged we are all from the same area of Illinois, some the same town. Paula and Louis shared they went to the same university for their teaching degrees.

Frank jumped in to answer the question. He shared more on his location: a suburban Portland school district at a high school which, over the last 15 years, has been very conducive to be a part of the LGBTQ population. Frank mentioned several faculty members who are gay or lesbian, and one of the neighboring districts has the area’s first transgender teacher. He shared that he has had gay and lesbian evaluators, and his current principal was lesbian. Having a lesbian boss lent itself to a very different experience with a non-factor to be considered in employment.

Louis shared his ideology that he let his actions speak for himself from the first day he interviewed with the district. He said the early years were challenging, but that it was a “good fit.” He went on to get another degree, a master's, had no problems with administration. Louis considered his being the department chair for a couple of departments a managerial or administrative position over a couple of departments that were not his academic discipline. He never received any hostility, animosity, or non-acceptance. The lack of discrimination included his sponsoring student activities and coaching and today as a substitute teacher.

Paula shared that she teaches in a small, rural district. She said her pressure to remain hidden or not disclose her sexual identity was self-driven and that she never felt pressure from administration, parents, or students. Her
feelings of no direct discrimination delineated what most of the others shared in that when they started decades before, they “self-decided” to not disclose in those early years. This self-driven strategy was most likely due to fear of discrimination or avoidance thereof.

Paula felt that now (current day), it was much more open. She brought up an itinerary in the one on one interviews, which they all do, to help inform the group discussion. Included in the conversation was the fact that Illinois just passed a law requiring LGBTQ contributions in history. She also shared that she was invited into her friend’s (ally) class to speak about second-parent adoption. Her administration had been very supportive, and one of her administrators had a lesbian daughter and was thus more empathetic. She shared she had one co-worker who was lesbian but had moved on to teach in another district. Paula said she is in a good district, and the other teacher had found support. She later shared that she was the only LGBTQ person in her district. Her friend here was of the hope that Paula would have fellow camaraderie. She mentioned her coaching the girls, how open and welcoming they and their parents have been over the last few years.

George came on board asking if anyone else was retired, stating he had a gratifying career and that he had spent the last 30 years at the same school in New York, a little one-mile square town. It’s graduating class was 68-75 “kids.” He mentioned many bars in his small town. Perhaps that was why they hired him to be the first substance abuse awareness coordinator for the district because he came from adolescent drug and alcohol facilities for New York. He gave another
interesting statistic in the headlines of the paper that [unnamed] is the PCP capital of New York. The next week the article headlined that said: "Psuedonym, drug and alcohol counselor for [unnamed] schools, continuing with the regional drug issues relating to his role."

Like Louis, George, “let the work speak for itself.” He wanted to get tenure and let them know he was a valuable and safe person and then make inroads from there. He also became very actively involved coaching girls and boys cross-country track for 12 years, six years girls’ varsity tennis, extracurricular clubs, and the wellness prevention camp for young students. He explained they went to the Delaware Water Gap with 300 other kids. Then he brought up he and one of his lesbian co-workers started the Gay Straight Alliance-GSA. At the end of his tenure, they allowed middle school grades to participate. His secondary school was grades 7-12. He related to Louis’s story further is saying, “I never stood at a microphone or a podium and just said, you know, "I, I'm gay." He shared how his picture was in the largest or most significant paper in suburban New York when he and his husband got their marriage license at city hall. He shared his story of how everyone “sort of gave him the sly, so to speak” In a week parents went back to greeting him, waving hello, and honking their horns in welcoming. He said he had no percussions afterward.

Louis mentioned he did 36 years “straight” before retiring. George had said a few gay couples had married before he left. Louis also had this occur. Louis had continued for the last ten years, usually subbed two to four days a week. George acknowledged. Louis said he does so, continue to sub because
many of the administrators and board members are previous students. Akin to George, the founding, which he did not do, of the Gay Straight Alliance, GSA, in the last 6-7 years helped by being practiced and celebrated.

As the researcher, I tried to redirect what they have seen in other educators and direct them to relate to the career path. I acknowledged they all have had long and fruitful careers, asking them to think of the people who have brought us here, and the people coming in. I directly said: The dissertation’s point is how the LGBTQ disclosure management strategies affect the career path.

Louis, who has known me for 41 years, when asked to describe what they have seen in other educators’ experiences, mentioned a teacher in southern Illinois where he and Paula went to college. Louis’s acquaintance taught in a small rural community; his education was at Western Illinois University. He majored in business education. His first job was in a small rural district by I-80 in the middle of the state. He had a tough time and didn’t last in teaching after the first semester before he resigned. He not only felt pressure, but he was unhappy with the backlash he received and the “ill feelings” he received from the community. Louis mentioned he was more effeminate, creating the idea gender conformity may have had its play in this experience. Louis also suggested that he was “a lot more sensitive” gay man and not ready for the classroom. Louis said he communicated stories of certain regards of abuse, a lack of respect, and so forth. Louis was not having these experiences but tried to be supportive. Today may be more liberal in context, but his quality of teaching may have been to blame, according to Louis, as he observed him in his doctoral program.
George came on board and relaxed the tone by telling them he felt like he had seen all of their faces before, but he did not know where. They laughed. Louis, in particular, felt a camaraderie when George said he felt he has seen them before.

Paula continued the lesbian teacher’s discussion she mentioned who had been her co-worker, who moved north to a larger district in the Carbondale area and was also a coach. She was told not to bring her significant other to the competitions. Paula was unsure if the administration had threatened her with firing, but she did know that she specifically was told not to bring her significant other along with her. Such direct discrimination may have influenced the teacher moving around a “decent amount.” Paula knew of explicit heteronormative bias by a smaller district as well, where a female lesbian volleyball coach was told she could not go into the locker rooms with students without another adult present. Paula thought she resigned from the district. Both incidents were relatively recent, in the last five years, six years.” Frank acknowledged this is recent.

Paula felt fortunate to have her basketball team recognize herself and her wife, along with her assistant coach and his wife, for their anniversaries in front of the entire gym. Paula was “temporarily mortified” that there would be pushback. She spoke to a parent who shared that they had not heard one person say or read anything derogatory, nor did they say anything positive, but it was all good for Paula.

Frank stated we are in a state of transition which started before the Supreme Court ruling in favor of gay marriage (2015) and the Supreme Court
recently (2020) affording legal employment protections for LGBTQ people. He admitted you cannot change some people’s perspectives toward the LGBTQ community…, no law will change that mindset. Frank shared an accurate tale of how the rule applied in the San Francisco Unified School District will be different than Valdosta Lake Park School District in Southern Georgia. He related that transitions of LGBTQ acceptance will take time, generations. Frank also described that the youth of today want inclusion and openness of LGBTQ rights. Further, he brought up the importance of straight allies to bring change, more than a generation, two, or five, or ten years ago.

Louis came back in with the state mandate for LGBTQ contributions to history for the social sciences curriculum. He thought it is up to each district to decide how to implement it and when. Louis believed that by junior or senior year, it is too late. He also questioned how much time each teacher might spend on it, implying it may not get more than an honorable mention. Louis saw teachers who may have animosity towards the inclusive curriculum. He found it thought-provoking to see where, when, and how the individual schools will fit this mandate into the curriculum. He saw this as moving forward, that it will not or cannot be reversed. “It’s here to stay.” Paula and Frank agreed.

George indicated he lives in a one square mile gay town on long the Long Island shore in New York with his husband, which ironically is the same size he was a counselor for 30 years. He said where he now lives is a gay mecca. Every year for Halloween, George dressed in drag, entered a contest, and had won first place for years. He said there was always a group of 5 – 6 of his ex-students,
some of which are gay, that had “come out,” and others were their allies, friends of theirs. He feared he would end up on Facebook and tell their close friends, but George was not ashamed, he was not humiliated, the students and the community members respected and accepted him. He felt affirmed by the students, especially since he won a $500 cash prize each time (see appendix E). To him, it was a good experience that could have turned very ugly. Louis responded, chuckling that the trophy had something to do with his pride as well.

Paula mentioned that other faculty members are supportive and accepting, which makes her feel less alone and safer, even though there are no other LGBTQ educators in her district. Louis lead up to being authentic, be conscious of the way you carry yourself. He felt most comfortable in being himself. The consistency of his personality and demeanor was of importance. He did not waiver from one disposition in one setting and another in an altering environment. This consistency of personality-wise was important to Louis. He had five classes a day. Then character carried over into coaching and his sponsored activities in which they saw the same, Louis. Louis articulated he held consistency and uniformity. He said, “I wasn’t waving a flag and carrying a banner and throwing it in people’s faces. I was just me.” His mention of a lack of actions and demeanor reflected a continuum of being non-verbal in his sexual orientation, but just being himself, quietly.

Paula asked if it was George who mentioned tenure? George said yes that for the first three years, the school district decided whether they want you. George said that he had tunnel vision, that his goal first was to get tenure. Then
after which, opening up about his sexual orientation was an “evolution.” Paula responded they, the school district, accepted you as an educator in the job, as a coach, that they respected you and respected the person you are. She said that the importance of first being respected for the job one does, and as a person, they were more likely to respect you. I fear being too repetitious. A person cannot describe the importance of notation enough.

George agreed. Paula continued that it is also who you are and your relationship outside of work. George replied that early in his career, he felt he had to take lesbian companions to chaperone prom, until several years later, when he decided he did not have to until one day he thought it was unnecessary. Louis came in to say that for 30 plus years, he sponsored and coordinated homecoming and prom. He said that gay men are more creative in the colors they select for centerpieces, etc. “You know what? No straight guy is doing this well.” George agreed, then Louis boasted that his level of creativity was above the average straight guy and that he proved himself. Frank responded to Louis, saying that Louis’s word was to be authentic in how he was with his students. Louis said, “what you see is what there is.” Frank agrees. Louis said there is no make-believe, no mask, that authentic is it.

Louis shared his story from our one on one interview about the student who wrote “Name deleted is gay every day” in a textbook. Louis did not get upset; he just saw it as accurate without taking offense. Frank stated that some students, through “osmosis,” figure out he is gay, while others are more shocked. Frank’s biggest challenge was to separate his identity as a teacher from his
identity as a gay man. He then refocused on students and having them fulfill their potential. He did work with LGBTQ students, but all students who needed help achieving their potential.

Louis shared his experience in teaching in France, teaching conversational English. Louis volunteered to teach English in France, no backlash. He said they were so grateful to have a teacher as they have a requirement to get to a particular academic level with English to graduate.

I asked them to talk about safe spaces, not necessarily for students, but safe spaces in general, having a safe space emblem in their door or allies on their door. But safe spaces for anyone to come to, including faculty. I asked them to share on this.

Frank questions for students and teachers? I respond with having a safe space for students, does it make for a safer space for teachers? Frank and Louis agreed that safe space stickers make LGBTQ educators feel safer in their employment place. Frank reflected on the staff. He wanted to focus on his job. Rather than creating a safe space, he focused on what he is doing to prepare his students for the future. He asked the group if they agree. Paula did not have an emblem on her door. She had spoken with the guidance counselor and the social worker telling them if they have talked to a student in the LGBTQ community to send them to her if they need to speak with someone. Once again, back to the students. Paula mentioned a male student who was worried about being thrown out of his home. She had a long, tearful conversation with him, helping him in a time of need.
George came in to say he was the vice-president of the teacher’s union for about seven years. He had the opportunity to speak with faculty [about their sexual identity], and his office was a safe space. George did display emblems and a pride flag inside his office. He said the guidance counselors on the other side of the building had a flag on their door or a safe space sticker. Administrators and progressive educators invited faculty members to display them. Over his years, he did have faculty members come to his office to privately discuss issues with a loved one, whether it be a child or substance abuse, or a mental health issue. George referred some to the EAP, Employee Assistance Program, they had through the union to get help with their personal and family matters.

Question [2] Has the Curriculum Changed in Your School?

Question [3] Where Have We Gotten Through the Work of Advocacy, LGBTQ Organizations To Show Greater Signs of Hope or Suggestions to Move Forward and Create Safe Schools for Students, Staff, and Teachers?

Question [4] George Just Mentioned That He Worked With GLSEN. Have Any Of You Also Worked With Any Other Advocacy Sources?

Louis mentioned he went to GLSEN meetings in the city, Chicago, and he was a member. He recalled it was on Tuesday nights on the Northside. He enjoyed it saying, he “found it was fun.” He said they have a sizeable diversified counseling staff at his high school, social service, student services, case managers, school psychologists, and eight dedicated counselors for students. If Louis had an issue about a delicate situation or someone’s sexual orientation, he
overheard, he could comfortably go there to talk or share with them. Two of those counselors sponsored the GSA.

Louis went on to say there are no safe space stickers on their doors, just a rainbow border, “not in your face but there it is, and uh, you know, you can go by that…” He retold to the group about the Day of Silence the students observed in April to commemorate LGBTQ rights. Over the last eight years, there was a GSA presence in the pride parade with a section of students all wearing themed t-shirts.

George said that if two boys or two girls wanted to go to prom together, it was never an issue in his district.

**Question [5] How Do You See this Going Forward?**

**Question [6] How Do You See the World of Public Education Changing for LGBTQ Educators? What Evidence do you Have to Support Your Thought?**

George had high hopes for the future in education concerning LGBTQ issues. He said the culture is normalizing it, and sexuality is more accepted overall. He admitted that it will take more time in some geographic areas, but society could expect normalization in the not too distant future. Frank spoke of the “arc of justice bends towards forwardness.” He thought one of our presidents [Obama] said, “The arc of justice is always moving forward.” It was a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” (Huffington Post, 2018)

Paula echoed the same sentiment as George, with the larger districts moving faster than the smaller ones, but the required LGBTQ curriculum in
Illinois is changing mindsets. She admitted that you will always have negative thinking and acting individuals, which will have an impact. The need for allies who will step up and speaking for the LGBTQ community was making it better. Frank said the transition is moving at different speeds depending upon one’s geography.

Louis came in to say it is going to be interesting to see how to implement the issue of transgenderism. George and Frank agreed. Louis stated he has students in various stages of transition, and their class rosters had a place if they were trans to put their preferred name. Paula told them that she has had conversations with her co-workers when trans students have come in that they don’t understand. Paula tried to be the ambassador between the faculty and the students so that the faculty gets a better understanding of the student’s side of “it.” It refers to transitioning, being respectful to the students, and being respectful to those who are in the LGBTQ community and understanding how to come to that respect. She simply added that if you are not part of that community, it can be challenging to understand.

Question [7]: Do Any of You Have People You Know That are in Teaching or Counseling or Administration That are Trans Right Now?

All four said no.

Frank added that in several students, yes, on the administration side, not yet, indicating it may come soon.

We ended our focus group. Thereafter the group exchanged ideas about sharing contact information.
Artifacts

I described the artifact in the focus group. Artifacts were poetry, art, celebrations, memorability, awards, letters, and anything that enriched their career as an LGBTQ educator to enhance their career.

The first was Frank. He sent the cover page for a teacher education standards book published for education on teachers’ national board standards (see Appendix F for more concise descriptions). He co-authored [on the standards committee] a book with several other authors, teachers, professors, directors, an instructional coordinator, and a curriculum specialist for the career and technical educational standards. It was quite an honor for Frank and one he had deserving pride. Frank authored several books, one of which was due soon. Frank ingrained writing into his teaching career.

George sent in the rest of the artifacts. Both sent them to me via email, and I put them in the password-protected Dropbox account. Only the four of them had access. George’s first photograph was holding a pink staff, his trophy, a large pink wig, a somewhat revealing feathered woman’s bathing suit, full drag makeup, and high heels. George meant the photograph to be humorous, and it also shared a side of George we did not see in the Zoom interviews. Next, he sent what appears to be a book cover on managing sudden traumatic loss in schools for adolescent suicide prevention. It had George’s contact card for the TLC coordinator of the Traumatic Loss Coalition.

George shared how valuable this experience was for him as a counselor and its importance on his career. He then shared a certificate of recognition from
the State Department of Education for the teacher recognition/educational services professionals program. The acting commissioner of education signed it. Then he had a letter from the governor. The governor presented George with the Governor's Award for Outstanding Teaching. Lastly, in two parts, was an article on gay marriage in a local newspaper when gay marriage became legal. Inside the paper there was a large color picture of George and his now husband signing their marriage license. George shared such a rich array of items. His contributions contained letters, certificates, photographs, and newspaper photographic articles recognizing George in many facets of his life as an individual and as an educator.

In relation to research question one, how do LGBTQ employees navigate the parameters of PK-12 public educational experiences related to career quality, career potential, and career advancement? Artifacts reinforced the finding that educators performed work outside of their classroom duties to excel in their profession. They also gave levity to the seriousness of the interviews and its sensitivities. The participants insisted upon some sense of humor throughout the interviews, especially in the focus group and the artifacts.

The artifacts gave the participants a means to express awards or author listings, some humorous and personal, that gave them profound accolades for their work. I did know what to expect from this, so anything was surprising, but a theme of rewarding accomplishments, if any, was the prevalent one of essence from the artifacts.
No drawings, no artwork, no poetry, except what one may make of awards and recognition. No acceptance as a *fait accompli*. Yet unexpected results, unexpected rejoices, incredible accomplishments, hard work, and hard-earned. Time as time allows nothing before, and only then as a temporal protagonist.

See Appendix F: Artifacts:

Analysis

The data was analyzed by tracing the transcripts through NVivo and mechanically making codes in the software from the entire transcription as one file. I had to do this on my own. The program did not produce the codes on its own. I then went through the interviews, then the themes became apparent. Repetitions of disclosure strategies, such as nonverbal use of LGBTQ status, staying at the same school, being married or in a long-term relationship, etc. simply required me to meditate on the data and reflect. NVivo helped tremendously with a word search and word counts to show what I suspected was the case; the number of times certain factors of importance were spoken about, in this case, students and schools. In a phenomenological approach, these participants revealed methods of how they have successfully maneuvered brilliant career paths, retirement, post-retirement, and potential moves out of this country, while staying authentic LGBTQ public K-12 school educators. It was by analyzing the transcripts to put them in my own words and the stories I quoted on here that cemented these. Rewriting the transcripts to send back to the participants to be sure I interpreted the stories, information, and answers to the questions in the manner they intended for the member check was essential for
coding and subjugating themes. I cannot say enough about the wonders of transcendental meditation and the wonders of technology spent together

Findings

Research Question 1: How Do LGBTQ Employees Navigate The Parameters Of PK-12 Public Educational Experiences Related To Career Quality, Career Potential, And Career Advancement?

Participants described themes such as silence of their sexual orientation to students, parents, administration, co-faculty, community, and faculty. Staying in the same district and school from their first interview out of college was an essential element shared by this cohort's participants for a successful career. Working in activities outside of their assigned teaching or counseling duties, such as coaching and extracurricular activities, was shared by all four participants as a means of making themselves “indispensable.” Being in a same sex marriage or long-term relationship was also relative to a successful career. Location or geographic location was another theme as we did not find any educators from the south, not even Southern California. Three of them were in suburban contexts, which Takacs and Szalma (2011) found to be mostly liberal, and one was rural who was lesbian. Paula’s acceptance may have had to do with her gender.

The theme of silence, of non-verboseness, of not vocalizing their homosexuality, was inherent to all four, especially in the early years of their career. Still, to this day, Louis stays quiet. Frank did not talk about it when he was at work. He speaks about it today. George was retired now for three years.
Paula talked sparingly, who only verbally addresses if when asked about the subject or her wife and family. This “discretion” may be a vital part of producing a successful career, as all of them felt they have never had a problem with being gay at work. Frank shared that his new friend at work, who has only been teaching for five years, can’t imagine having to be closeted at work, indicating his friend has comfortably disclosed his sexual orientation.

Louis’s ability to this day remains silent about his sexual identity was of interest. It is a time of increasing awareness of diversity, racism, inter-religiosity, gender, gender-conformity, LGBTQ inclusiveness, and disability inclusion, to name a few. His story about the boy who had left home shows that he was a role model for gay youth, or at best, a support person.

George and Louis were of the same generation. They both had long and successful careers in public PK-12 education. Their approach had been very similar, with only a few differences, such as George had been married. George had a non-verbal sign, a gay flag in his office. He took his sexual identity strategy to another level than Louis. George’s story about the crossdresser who came to speak about getting sober in a mile-square town who was only a couple years older than the students showed George’s willingness to bring in professional development and student support activities that enriched the life and understanding of the LGBTQ community. George’s story about having helped the transgender “boy” talk with his family, get professional psychiatric, and medical hormonal therapy was monumental to assisting the child in not ending up as a statistic of drug use, prostitution on the streets, and consequent death by suicide.
or overdose. All of this was George’s *forte*. To take his drug and alcohol prevention training and apply it directly to intervene in a young transgender life showed great compassion and empathy. Still, he said he never went around saying he was gay, ever.

Paula’s silently paying the two men’s dinner bill at the bar who were making homophobic comments at the restaurant showed a great deal of educated constraint. She did not confront the men. She remained silent and left a message with the bartender to tell them that two lesbians bought them dinner. Interestingly, Paula did not verbally say anything to the men, the bartender did.

All four of them were silent about their sexual orientation practically all of their careers. This “non-vocalization” was seemingly essential to the construct of the assurance of a successful career in PK-12 public school when they started their careers in the seventies, eighties, and nineties. The two retired educators did not and still do not speak about their sexuality at work [still referring to Louis since he continues to work in his district and school]. George lived in an exclusive small gay resort town on New York’s Long Island Shore that was a haven for affluent LGBTQ patronage, as real estate prices climb and soar.

This code of silence may be going away, but we did not get any new, young teachers in this study. We also did not get far gender non-conforming individuals. Frank commented that he was not the most masculine or “butch” fellow. Yet, he pulled off staying closeted in his early career, just as Paula did. Frank was the most open and vocal about his sexual identity, but he had the support of a lesbian principal, his boss. It was not unlike the “don’t ask, don’t tell”
policy of the military. They all did agree it was important to be authentic. The theme of silence directly atoned to how they navigated their disclosure of their sexual identity to have a successful and rewarding career.

Another emergent theme was that all four of the participants excelled in their subjects and worked outside of their classroom duties, such as being a coach, writing up national standards, sponsoring academic activities [after school], and so forth. George put it simply that he had made himself indispensable. All of them did in one way or another.

Frank and Louis went back to school shortly after starting teaching to get a master’s degree in their field. Frank’s degree was paid for by his district, which may lend itself to the second primary question: what can districts do to support and enable LGBTQ educators. The purpose of sending Frank to get a master’s degree in education had nothing to do with making it safer for LGBTQ teachers to disclose. Moreover, it had to do with promoting professionalism and competence in their staff and faculty. It could be said to be in both Louis’s and Frank’s instances that the district did send them for their master’s degrees to support LGBTQ career path satisfaction, but it was unspoken.

The participants agreed that they self-censored when they started teaching by being closeted and did not feel pressure from the administration. This theme of excelling came up in both interviews. The instructors and the counselor wanted “their work speaks for itself,” meaning their professionalism needed to be impeccable to have a deflection of possible homophobia. Being competent may be so, for many teachers overachieve to gain respect for making
their disclosure more supportive from the community, administrators, and colleagues (Haddad, 2019). Anderson (2014) discussed this in a conversation that the higher up the hierarchy, the less likely the individual will encounter homophobia. These three teachers were mentor teachers and George, a state-certified counselor in drug and alcohol prevention for adolescents. To be a mentor teacher, one needs to be competent and fluid in classroom management for PK-12 public education.

That lead to another theme; they all started and stayed with the same district and the same schools they interviewed with when they began teaching. This devotion, dedication, discipline, and abiding determination to hard work lead them to successful careers in public PK-12 education in the US. Districts and school boards rewarded loyalty in kind. Maintaining the same job and position brought us to unfold more than just one of the primary research questions. Allegiance was something the participants did to maneuver their careers as LGBTQ individuals as educators who move around might suspect less competence, as mentioned in the previous theme. It also became something the school districts did to support them. Paula’s small, rural district’s decision to make paperwork inclusive of insurance forms and other legal documents for same sex couples affected this question of what districts can do to support an educator’s career path satisfaction. The district had an inclusive policy. In its support, the school and district went further when they issued the athletic event pass with her wife’s name on it could be said for socio-emotional support. These two events brought support from the district for a safer place and supported their
careers both. Thus, that Paula attained the last two research questions. She felt supported and safe by the district.

Gender does play a role in the acceptance of homosexuality or being LGBTQ. Bohan (1996) found a more significant stigma associated with gay men than with lesbians. Bliss and Harris (1998) found that gay men are more likely to be targets of prejudice than lesbians. An interesting finding might be pragmatic in Paula’s situation. Barringer, Gay, and Lynxwiler (2013), Bliss and Harris (1998) conferred that women are more tolerant than heterosexual men and have more tolerant views of gay men and lesbians. Takacs and Szalma (2011) found that women, those with more education, and younger were more tolerant of gays and lesbians. Since women dominate faculty in our educational settings, perhaps here, a parallel can be ascertained that finds it fortunate for Paula. None of the other male participants brought their husbands or partners to school events; two were entirely non-vocal about their sexual orientation, being silent. Paula was quiet to a degree, to be discrete was a theme throughout this interview.

Participants often brought the geographic location to the spotlight for the fair and equitable treatment of PK-12 LGBTQ educators. Most of them regarded the South as more uptight or less safe for LGBTQ employees. Takacs and Szalma (2011) found relevance to Frank’s description of The Portland Metro Area, meaning the close suburbs, are safe havens for LGBTQ educators compared to the more rural areas “East of the Cascades.” Takacs and Szalma found that most homophobic persons were in the inner city, and the most tolerant was in the suburbs. Rural areas were in the middle. It has to be understood
Takacs and Szalma (2011) were in Eastern Europe, in Budapest, Hungary, not far from Moscow, Russia. There is no protection from homophobic religious zealots or young crusaders that prey upon LGBTQ men, women, and non-binary persons to their death in those cities. This hostility and violence in the US is rarely seen in the inner city but does occur. I will digress into a few examples most are familiar. Julio Rivera went outside his Jackson Heights apartment in Queens, New York City. Two young men attacked him. They used a hammer, a beer bottle, and a knife to kill Julio. Julio was 29. Jackson Heights is the second largest gay neighborhood in NYC (Fried, 1991).

Since Frank, George, and Louis all taught in suburban neighborhoods; perhaps the findings are parallel. Paula seemed to have a jewel in the hayfield, literally. Her rural district was progressive and open-minded. She felt supported and safe where she works, just as all of them were—comparing what happened to Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, a small college town of 30,000. Matthew had been gang-raped on a trip to Morocco before being lured away from campus and brutally assaulted/murdered (Sheerin, 2018). Beaten and coldly murdered in a rural setting, Mathew made a place in our history books, one that is unfortunate and dark. Much like another rural setting with an American trans man Brandon Teena who was brutally raped and murdered in Humboldt, Nebraska (Biography.com Editors, 2019). Brandon was 21.

Compare and contrast these violent incidents, the negativity subjugated throughout the literature review to these four educators’ experiences. It was quite remarkable as if they lived in a bubble. Yet, the locations of the participants were
across the US, both coasts and the Midwest. The only geographic element they have in common was that they were all in the US’s northern parts. Regionality might be of importance because none of my Southern California (the South) educators responded to my survey invitations. Three of them were suburban, while one was rural. A correlation to Takacs and Szalma (2011) may be more relevant than was suspected in terms of geographic location or region pertinent to proximity to large cities.

Research Question 2. What Can Schools/Districts Do To Make It Safer For LGBTQ Educators To Disclose?

Themes of inclusion; such as inclusive paperwork, athletic passes, encouraging diverse future new teachers, state mandates of LGBTQ historical figures contributions in social sciences courses, policies that are allowing for professional developments, and after school student in services that initialize broader understandings of not just LGBTQ culture, but diverse multiculturalism, and intersectionality bring equality and fairness to the expanse of humanity present in our schools

Frank described the district steadily brought new teachers in that reflected the student body, including the LGBTQ community since LGBTQ students were in the high school where he works. He said the state of Oregon has a program that works with the district to single out high school students who may want to go into teaching and groom them toward a teaching career and education. Paula shared it is important to have paperwork for the district that is inclusive of same sex partnership or marriage. She appreciated that here district went above and
beyond that in giving her an athletic pass with her wife’s name on it as well so the two of them could go together to sporting events she coached.

Louis said the district is following acceptable practices in supporting student LGBTQ rights by allowing GSA’s in schools. He went beyond that; it makes him, and his colleagues, felt safe and supported. He also thought that by allowing for the Day of Silence, the district was supporting the LGBTQ platform. George mentioned GSA in school districts, which, in turn, provided faculty a safer place to work. He discussed the school union, which he was a representative of for several years, was an important safety net for LGBTQ instructors and administrators. He mentioned bringing GLSEN into the schools for professional developments for faculty. Louis stated GLSEN in that it was a fun and safe space for him to go to in the city during the week to connect to the LGBTQ community.

Frank discussed transparency when asked how state and public entities can create safer spaces for LGBTQ employees to disclose. Paula also brought up transparency, that it was crucial to her to be able to be authentic. Paula and Louis were incredibly excited about the State of Illinois mandating adding LGBTQ persons' contributions in history to the social sciences curriculum. State mandates were quite remarkable and a step in the right direction, they note. Louis shared some skepticism, in that there may be no control over how long a teacher spends on the topic or introduces it. For example, it may be a two-day lesson in their junior year. It seemed the state had not entirely wired out those parameters as of yet. Louis also shared that administrative support was
essential for a same sex married couple to feel encouragement. Having had administrators come to their weddings shows this unwavering support.

George wanted entities; state, district, etc., to be safe havens when LGBTQ employees come to them. He did see passing regulations as key for improving relationships within the community and the educators. George also saw the need for the “right administration” to be sensitive to diversity issues. Finally, he thought we have to put people into office that support our conception for equal treatment. Paula said when there is discrimination or bullying, it needs to be dealt with swiftly. George contended that districts ought to provide in-service training geared toward letting LGBTQ employees know they were in a safe place. Like the small emblems on doors for LGBTQ safe spaces, little things were huge in the effect they have for everyone on the school campus. He said this while never putting one on his door, but he put a gay flag inside his office.

Question 3. What Can Schools/Districts Do To Support An LGBTQ Educator’s Career Path Satisfaction?

The theme of schools and districts having local and state ordinances protecting LGBTQ employees before the federal mandate was substantial for supporting career path satisfaction. When the federal law passed, just a few months ago, at the time at the writing of this dissertation, many states prior still could fire a teacher or educator simply because they were LGBTQ. Those places were likely still homophobic, but at least the law protected LGBTQ employees under equal protection in employment. The school and district that gave an athletic pass with two same sex married couple’s names on it showed respect
and a policy of inclusion to help with career path satisfaction. Giving professional developments for increased awareness of LGBTQ individuals and culture also enhanced the dignity of LGBTQ employees. Districts and schools allowed after school in services, such as the young crossdresser who came in to talk to the students about how to do so without using drugs and alcohol, gave support for LGBTQ students and employees in the schools. District hiring LGBTQ administrators who “protect” LGBTQ educators, or made them feel safe and secure, gave these educators a sense of security in their career path. Finally, osmosis could ascribe a few themes. By schools and districts allowing GSAs for LGBTQ students and allies, faculty and counselors benefit with security about their positions. Just as safe zone stickers on doors and windows meant for students lent itself to make educators feel more secure in their posts as professionals. Schools and districts allowed observances of gay rights celebrations or protests, meant for all student participants. Faculty felt included as a part of the LGBTQ community.

Many states and local districts/counties have had employment protections for sexual orientations in their employment policies. The recent federal law in 2020 made it a federal mandate for the protection of LGBTQ protection under sex to protect sexual orientation in employment. A Supreme Court decision like this was no minor event. Districts could employ these policies to protect their LGBTQ educators. One cannot say enough about Paula’s athletic pass was authorized by the district and school, which made her feel included, at the least. George’s after school in-service for the students with the young cross-dresser on
living as so without drug and alcohol use also showed support of the district and school to support him and the LGBTQ community in his career path. Districts employing LGBTQ administrators, such as Frank’s lesbian principal (boss), definitely supported Frank in having a successful career. Louis’s district supporting the Day of Silence to support LGBTQ diversity and gay rights helped gay students but alternatively assists LGBTQ educators. In the same sense, districts and schools allowing GSAs to take place after school is excellent for LGBTQ students and allies but was shown in the data to help the educators tremendously in the stability of their career path. Safe space stickers on doors and windows was another aspect that mirrors these two former paradigms meant to help LGBTQ students that also helped LGBTQ educators feel safe and feel more comfortable in their career path.

Policy, or law, was further salient in the Supreme Court decisions to allow same sex marriages (2015) and employment protections on a federal level for LGBTQ individuals (2020) was mentioned by most of the participants as making a significant influence upon their decision to be more open about their sexual orientation. Their sexual orientation strategies did shift due to these monumental accomplishments by the Supreme Court for human rights. In particular, once married to her now-wife, Paula decided to be more open at work once she was legally married. Her workplace dynamic shifted dramatically, even though she did not move to her sexual orientation’s vocalization. In Takacs and Szalma’s (2011) research, their work had 50,082 participants and surveyed 26 European countries about attitudes towards same sex partnership [marriage]. They
correlated that the more positive the attitude toward same sex partnership, the less homophobic the participants were. Their quantitative study was exceptional in it gave not just geographic locational differences, age, urban, suburban, rural, religiosity, and many other factors found that exemplified whether the persons were homophobic or not. This research will echo throughout the results.

Having student assemblies such as George’s crossdresser were great for students, especially his male to female transgender students, but bringing in organizations such as GLSEN to perform “in service” or professional development with the staff was an excellent recommendation by George. Louis’s school district provided a row or section for transsexual students to have their preferred name on their attendance rosters showed inclusion for the LGBTQ community. It was a start for the LGBTQ faculty, administration, as well as staff. All of the educators had administrative support. Particularly Frank, who had a lesbian principal, his direct boss. The other participants all had supportive administrators who supervise, support, and perhaps, protect their sense of safety for their career. The “Safe Space” emblem in the district, administrative, faculty, other windows, doors on campuses, and district offices assured that there are those who support LGBTQ inclusion.

Louis and Paula mentioned in the group chat that they knew other educators who were either directly discriminated against, or heteronormative forces pushed them out of the teaching profession. Paula knew of another lesbian, and Louis knew of a gay man, whose struggles were against homophobic and heterosexist constraints or resistance. It was essential to note
this because not everyone has the experiences this sample has. Their experience was most remarkable and shows definite strategies to manage sexual identity disclosure to ensure a long and “fruitful” career. Not being overly vocal, taking on extracurricular activities, focusing on the student, married, and so forth.

Summary

The first 16 questions of the individual interviews and the focus group discussion lent itself to answer themes of the primary research questions, which were:

How do LGBTQ employees navigate the parameters of PK-12 public educational experiences related to career quality, career potential, and career advancement?
What can schools/districts do to make it safer for LGBTQ educators to disclose?
What can schools/districts do to support an LGBTQ educator's career path satisfaction?

The majority of the questions focused on the first primary question of how the participants navigated the parameters of their sexual identity disclosure parameters related to career quality, potential, and advancement. Silence, being of service for extracurricular activities, coaching sports, staying with the same school since first being out of college. All four educators did this in some form or another, Frank working on the National Board Standards, Louis coaching and sponsoring extracurricular activities, Paula coaching sports, and George coaching sports and extracurricular activities like the summer camp to the Delaware Water Gap. Furthering their education to get master's degrees and
being competent in their subject field made them indispensable. Both Frank and Louis received master’s degrees shortly after starting teaching. Three were married; Frank, George, and Paula. Louis was in a long-term relationship. In the end, focusing on the student(s) was the primary objective of all four of the participants. It was amusingly difficult to pry their focus away from their students onto their own or other LGBTQ educators' career path(s). The educators intrinsically intertwined their lives with their students and their schools.

The next chapter will bring these themes in view and look at the narrative interview aspects of their stories. Their stories produced case studies of rich, thick, meaningful discourse that justly kept these educators in their schools, their field, and their positions for decades, leading to retirement or near to retirement.

We make recommendations for further research as we disclosed the study’s limitations and hopes to seek a more rounded and diverse group of participants.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The participant's stories, the narrative inquiry, made this more than just a phenomenological study. Beyond the context of fellow LGBTQ colleagues' lives, their focus was on their students and specific events that were close to their hearts and made joy, or some sorrow, which gave meaning to their careers.

As for coming into education, two educators knew before they went to college, they wanted to teach Paula and Louis. Louis knew as young as second grade. Paula knew by high school. The other two decided upon finishing their bachelor's degrees and finding better employment opportunities in public education. George started in private Catholic schools before transitioning into drug and alcohol counseling for the state of New York, then the school district he worked for thirty years. George had gone to private Catholic universities for his bachelor's and master's degrees before entering the education field.

Connections

Most of the participants were between Griffin's (1991) covering and intrinsically out and Woods's (1994) avoiding and started integrating. Specifically, intrinsically out (Griffin, 1991) meant that anyone could read that one is LGBTQ, and nothing was said but perhaps to a few, promoting silencing to some. Avoiding, (Woods, 1994) was to choose not to involve oneself in any discussion or correct anyone in discourse about homosexuality, lays closest to remaining silent over the years of their employment. Frank was integrating, meaning he was
open to some or most, and Paula was open to a select few and remained silent unless asked, which is more avoiding. None of these strategies are spot on. The participants come between these, but the overwhelming theme of silence is material to this data's capital.

Dykes and Delport (2018) studied pre-service teacher programs in colleges. They found not just in the US, but also in the UK, New Zealand, and Australia repressive institutionalized heteronormative practices exist in teacher education programs and educator preparation programs. These pre-service courses, in turn, silenced LGBTQ educators through heteronormative oppression. Dykes and Delport's (2018) study plausibly relates to the silencing by the participants.

Being oppressed cognitively or not, to remain silent about one's sexual orientation was touched on by Ozeren (2014) when he found that sexual orientation remains the last acceptable and remaining prejudice in modern society and organizations compared to other dimensions of diversity. Smith, Wright, Reilly, and Esposito (2008) had the largest number of participants in their study considered their work environment homophobic, transphobic, sexist, or racist and was considered unsafe and unsupportive for the LGBTQ educator. Smith et al. (2008) did find educators who are open, feel safe, and are comfortable in their workplace environment. Alignment to these positive recorders of a supportive environment participants paralleled these educators.

Smith et al. (2008) found that the principal's support was one of the most important influences upon an LGBTQ educator's career. Frank's principal, who
was lesbian, and Paula's principal and vice-principal support when the school community congratulated on their wedding anniversaries displays what the literature showed; that administrative support was, or is, essential to longevity as an LGBTQ educator.

Implications

Homonormative theory is defined within these results as they all mimicked heterosexuals by being married or in a long term relationship, having a child, and being relatively gender conforming.

It was important for at least two of them to have administrative support. Frank had a lesbian principal who supported him as an openly gay man, and Paula had a supportive administration, a principal and vice-principal who supported her and her wife and relationship on campus. Being supported and included relates to Social Cognitive Career Theory in that it normalizes Paula’s relationship with her wife and her child. Paula, on numerous times, told me how important and momentous this was to her.

Paula told me that it was essential to her as a human, a woman, and a mother, to be accepted by her community as a lesbian. Intersectionality theory intertwines these aspects of Paula’s facets and makes her whole, makes her a more rounded person.

The immediate result in hand was the focus of the responses to these questions was on the students. This paradigm’s salience throughout the narrative inquiry and semi-structured questionnaire was enigmatic, principally since, as the researcher, enigmatic, principally since, as the researcher, I kept trying to get
them to focus on the teachers or other educators, to little avail. The words of the stem student were the most often words in the study, according to an NVivo analysis (see Chart 1).

Based on narrative inquiry and appreciating stories from participants as case studies, I took this time to share those stories again that meant so much to the participants in their service to their students.

Narrative Inquiry as Cases

As a case: Paula’s story about the young boy who inquired about her marriage was touching and moving. It meant so much to her to have this young [junior high school] boy asked her about her marriage and then come to terms with it in a positive and accepting manner. She shared this after she opened up about adopting her wife’s 7-year-old son, becoming a parent, and making themselves two mommies for their child, who also has two daddies, she explained. The junior high school boy came to terms with Paula’s marriage entirely because of the television talk show Ellen, who has been open about her sexuality for several decades in the media. The boy related Ellen to Paula’s marriage and then moved on without condemnation. The paradigm of television and movie media representation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender, or queer characters as natural, for whatever that may mean, does relate to gender (Bohan, 1996; Harek, 2002; Harek & Capitanio, 199; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Lezeveric et al., 2015; Ozeren, 2011; Takacs & Szalma, 2011). It is hard to find two gay men who are married who have a popular daily show on local television
like Ellen. Times are changing, and the hopeful prospect for the future may not be far off.

Louis's case, later on, shared a compelling story about a young boy [high school age] who left home and was in "dire straits." Louis was able to be there for him and shelter him, a safe place, and a compassionate friend for the night. Louis kept clear boundaries in place and never disclosed his sexual orientation as Paula did. Still, the story was equally as monumental to him as an educator in knowing he went above and beyond his duties as a teacher into being a supportive member of the LGBTQ community for children in need of guidance for LGBTQ normalization. These ethnographic accounts were much of was sought in narrative inquiry for this dissertation. It brings to the forefront of the lived stories of LGBTQ educators in the field of PK-12 education. Stories of importance that gave them meaning to keep teaching, stay in their career, continue pursuing their goal, teach. Each participant had stories like this.

As a case, Frank had a "wonderful" high school girl who was somewhat oblivious to the recognition of his sexual orientation. Professionally, he had to make it more explicit to let her know where he was on the scope of being LGBTQ. Frank said, remembering fondly, that they kept in contact with her through high school, that she was a fine student and girl, and that she held promise to go to college. Frank said he continued to see her and her family at Costco and other shopping venues in their community. As an AVID instructor, reaching out to this student, inspiring her to do better, being authentic, and staying with her through her high school career meant a great deal to Frank.
The video and audio recording on zoom was prodigious. The audio transcription was "strict verbatim" and was able to catch um’s, ah’s, etc. that gave one the idea that the person was thinking of putting together their thoughts in a caring manner before saying them. When questioned, most people are not conscious of this.

As a case study, George had a fantastic story about a young transsexual, non-binary, or other gender boy, male to female. He had girlfriends who liked to dress him up and take him to the mall, where other young adults from across the area could see him. Forgive me if I am using the wrong gender. I am using the accounts to which George and I spoke. The "boy" started going to the city, New York, to transition. In doing so, the youth sought drugs, anti-androgens, progesterone, etc., related to transitioning to become a woman. George was his coach and stepped in. George got involved in the child's family and intervened. He spoke to the child's mother about getting professional help. Getting real doctors and actual prescriptions prescribed to the child/young adult would lead to a safer experience and professional therapy. George was a part of this. Doing what George calls "the right way." George lost contact with the student once he graduated. I am sure he would like to know how his former student is doing now. Their stories were caring and warm.

Limitations

This group was all white, all older educators in their 40 and above. They had all been teaching coming up to or past 30 years. One was a junior high educator, the other was high school, but George was a counselor for all grades.
He was at the elementary school two days a week and the junior/high school three days a week. His training was primarily for adolescents; thus, the entire group virtually was in secondary education.

They all were northern tier United States educators. In other words, I did not find any educators from the South or Southeast, not even Southern California. All of the actual cities or places were above the latitude of 40. There was only one female lesbian in the study. There were no gender fluid, non-binary, or individuals with multiple minority facets, such as being gay and Hispanic, or Iberian descent. Most of these individuals fit into relatively gender conforming "standards," although Frank mentions he is not the most butch guy on the block. My positionality also limited us. As much as I would like to bracket my position in this study, it is impossible to do so entirely. I had the help of my three committee members, which aided tremendously.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders/Practice

To address question one: how do LGBTQ employees navigate the parameters of PK-12 public educational experiences related to career quality, career potential, and career advancement? Educational leaders might break the silence as a role model and be vocal, showing they can do so without losing their job, being demoted, or shamed. Being an example may be the best anecdote for those living in fear. There is no guarantee that this will not backfire, unfortunately. One must be cautious and have an administrative backup. Being married or in a long-term relationship is admirable, but some men or women, non-binary persons, are not married, and shame should not befall them for being so. In the
social justice theory, one tries to eradicate homonormativity as much as heteronormativity to be fair and equal. Those in alternative relationships should not have to live in fear of disclosure, even though they can disclose they are LGBTQ. Group forums may be of help; perhaps other means can transpire, the creativity of this sort might be endless. Gender equality is another theme worth noting. Men have a more challenging time in homophobic communities than women (Bohan, 1996; Harek, 2002; Harek & Capitanio, 199; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Lezeveric et al., 2015; Ozeren, 2011; Takacs & Szalma, 2011). Changing this may prove nearly impossible, but over generations, it does change, and from this group’s attitude, it is changing for the better, toward acceptance. Frank was a friend with a new teacher who cannot imagine being in the closet as a teacher with five years and tenure. It was unfathomable to him.

To address questions two and three, what can a school, state, and district do to make an LGBTQ educator feel safe to disclose and supported to fulfill their career? As the theme of silence was the most prevailing overarching theme of our interview data schemata, having professional developments and pre-service training in the form of diversity courses in teacher credential university courses would help bring this to light. More importantly, the district, the schools, and the community may need to be taught inclusion for LGBTQ individuals as a culture. Diversity is inclusive of all minority cultures and considerations of those intersectionality cultures when hybrids appear in which misunderstandings often arise. These recommendations for practice will help all stakeholders in PK-12 public schools.
Paula held an excellent standard when asked about what a school and district could do to make LGBTQ educators feel safe. She mentions that when bullying occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and that administration implements ethical consequences. Looking at this in terms of training; if staff to staff bullying, student to staff, parent to staff, administration to staff, or parent or community member to staff bullying occurs. It might be suggested to be addressed immediately as a wrongful act with direct consequences so that legitimate infractions are happening upon the disenfranchised group. Putting it into practice is no different than yearly Keenan school "Sexual Harassment: Staff-to-Staff" and "Sexual Misconduct Staff to Student" training. Putting it on the platform as requisite training equalizes the playing field.

Recommendations for Future Research

These educationalists have high hopes for the future regarding inclusion for LGBTQ rights: students and educators. They all see a new focus developing on transsexual students. We wait to see how inclusion develops for transsexual instructors, administrators, and staff so that trans individuals feel safe and supported to be open about their gender identification and transition. Finding younger and more diverse educators would be astute in preference. A more varied group would give the researcher a better view of the field today. Educators of color from varying religious backgrounds, international educators, transsexuals, gender fluid or non-binary, bisexual, and disabled educators would be most welcome in the study's literature. Finding individuals who have left the field of education to find their reasons, if it had to do with heteronormativity and
homophobia, or if it had some other causation, could tremendously enrich the data. All of the participants were ready to "hand over the torch" to the younger generation of educators to progress LGBTQ rights in public PK-12 education, not just for students but for educators as well. The honest yearning for young educators to take over will profoundly affect LGBTQ careers in education and other businesses or corporations. Saldana (2016) mentions the purpose of future phenomenological research is for policy implementation, such as with the Illinois change in same sex marriage inclusion on insurance paperwork and same sex inclusion in the social science curriculum, that surmounts oppressive forces. Hopefully, new researchers will include more diverse samples; persons of color, a more multicultural element in all, religious, socio-economic, etc..

Conclusion

Bizjak (2018) performed a phenomenological survey of six participants using queer theory/criticism, intersectionality with narrative interviews. His findings somewhat parallel the findings in this study: relationships with students, the passion to teach, the decision to self-disclose at work, fear, the need for district inclusiveness, and safe spaces. Five out of six participants remained closeted in Bizjak's (2018) study. My four participants had not all come to the point where they needed to self-disclose at work. They seemed to be handling fear well, as they had upper management support. Yet silence was still a running theme. This study was phenomenological, using a theoretical framework of queer theory, intersectional theory, social justice theory, and narrative inquiry. We could expect that the findings would be close together, but the differences, such as
those not closeted in mine, were surprisingly apparent. This closet, though, meant a silent one. This cohort of four participants seemed to counter much of this previous literature as the educators felt supported and safe in their positions and careers.

The last three to four years have been a journey. From a foreboding but exciting literature review, full of warnings and caution for new upcoming LGBTQ educators regarding their career in PK-12 public school education to a transparent survey of four openly gay and lesbian educators who are not in your face, and not too vocal, if at all. All four of the participants have had a successful and rewarding career in PK-12 public school education, according to them. The honesty, transparency, courage, and dedication they placed into this dissertation indicate that one can have open sexual identity strategies in the PK-12 educational settings. Their careers end in positive and keenly resounding retirement or close to awaiting it. Today's LGBTQ educators are entering a new world, one they can expect to find support. Geography still holds a determination in that realm of decision making, as anywhere one must consider the political and religious climate. Being silent mostly seemed to be a valued attribute. Oppressive silencing by heteronormativity may not be acceptable to many LGBTQ persons, perhaps most. These participants did not feel it was an oppressive force but as their own choice. Quelle Difference.

I hope that educators will find promise and hope herein, that this contributes to the field of literary work for LGBTQ education. New researchers, it
is trusted, will find young teachers to accentuate studies like this. I am humbled by this process and honored to have participated.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Participants were welcomed as a part of my research study: PK-12 Sexual minority Public School sexual minority employees’ identity management: Implications on Career Quality, Potential, and Advancement. The focus of the dissertation is on the lived experiences of self-identifying LGBTQ public school teachers, how their sexual identity disclosure strategies influenced their career. As such, the purpose of the interview is to understand your personal and professional experiences as a self-identifying LGBTQ public school teacher. I am not here to judge experience; rather, I am interested in how stories, histories, and perceptions have informed and grounded individual experience. I explained they had Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protection of data should they desire. To keep the conversation flexible and casual, I asked that the conversation to simply “flow.” Participants were told they did not have to answer every question, that they could stop the interview at any time.

I have planned this interview to last about an hour.

[I welcomed each participant with variations herein of this protocol. I did not read it like a script. It, like the intention of the interviews, was intended to make the survey more informal since the IRB application and subsequent Informed consent letter was extremely formal, to the point I feared it might have scared off some of my local respondents. We wanted security, but also humanity: human courtesy, human kindness, and human congeniality.]
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE
PK-12 Sexual minority public school sexual minority employees’ identity management: Implications on career quality, potential, and advancement.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Donna Schnorr  
Research Institution: California State University San Bernardino  
Co-investigator: Gordon Tod Larson  
The informed consent was sent directly by text message to the participants using a Qualtrics survey invitation.  

Informed Consent  
(see below)
Welcome to the research study!
Informed Consent

PK-12 sexual minority public school employees’ identity management:
Implications on career quality, potential, and advancement.
Principal Investigator: Dr. Donna Schnorr
Research Institution: California State University San Bernardino
Co-principal investigator: Gordon Tod Larson
We are interested in understanding PK-12 sexual minority public school employees’ identity management: Implications on career quality, potential, and advancement. For this study, you will be asked to answer some questions relevant to your experience as a PK-12 sexual minority public school employee about your identity management as that pertains to your career quality, potential, and advancement.

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the lived experiences of self-identifying lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) public school teachers or educators. Specifically, we are exploring sexual identity management strategies at work with its impact upon career path, trajectory, promotion, and quality. No one will be paid to be in the study. There will be two interviews, the first interview will be an individual one through Zoom that will be held on July, 16, at 10 am to 5 pm but in one hour increments. The second will be a focus group Zoom interview with all of the participants that will be held on July 23, 2020 at 10-11:15 am. To be in the study,
you must have held or hold a teaching credential or administrative credential and taught or have been an administrator at a public school. You must also self-identify as LGBTQ. During each interview, the participant will be asked to recall, describe, and reconstruct her or his lived experiences so that the researcher can arrive at the essence of what it is like to serve as a self-identifying LGBTQ public school educator relative to their career. Interviews will be video recorded via Zoom and the audio subsequently transcribed verbatim by a program called Scribie to be analyzed and coded. To enhance the study, participants will be asked to provide research journals, art, poems, changes to their curricular matters, etc. to capture reflections and musings of their professional and personal experiences.

The overall commitment to the study should take fewer than three hours of your time.

Risks:
There are minimal risks should you decide to participate in this study. Emotional distress and discomfort could occur due to the sensitivity of the formal interview questions. To minimize emotional distress and discomfort and to promote confidentiality, all personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. If you experience distress or discomfort during or after the interview(s), we can take a "time out," the co-principal investigator can recommend psychological services at the end of the interview in the area you live, either in person therapy or psychiatric services including crisis intervention centers, or via teleportal. Please contact him immediately when this situation occurs.
When the researcher looks at the data, none of the data will contain your name or identifying information. Whatever is shared or whomever in this focus group interview is not to be discussed outside of this session.

Benefits:
Information you provide will add to the already-existing literature on the lived experiences of self-identifying LGBTQ teachers, as well as shed new light on contemporary issues. It is possible that the information you share will self-
empower LGBTQ educators for social justice, equality, and confronting heteronormative norms present in daily activities. It also could build constructive methods of positive self-esteem requisite for building positive professional relationships that enhance, improve, and enrich their careers accompanied by identity management strategies for sexual orientation.

Confidentiality:
All personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. When the researcher looks at the data, none of the data will contain your name or identifying information. You will also be asked to not use your name or anyone else throughout the interview. The researcher will not identify you in any publication or report. You will be given pseudonyms and locations will be altered. Whatever is shared or whomever in the focus group Zoom interview is not to be discussed outside the group.

To accommodate COVID 19 protocol, interviews will be conducted via Zoom while also using the recording feature. We will do interviews via Zoom. All interviews will be audio and video recorded. The researcher will conduct the zoom interviews in his home office with the door shut. This will allow for a non-contact environment and a safe way to interchange dialogue. The Zoom audio recordings will be transcribed using a personal, password protected google docs "voice-typing" by the researcher in his home office computer. This will be done by playing the audio recording from Zoom while using google docs voice typing. All data, including the artifacts that participants will be asked to submit along with the transcribed audio recordings, will be kept in a password protected Dropbox account accessible only by the researcher. The transcriptions will be incorporated into NVivo and saved on a password protected file in the researcher's home office. All personal information will be coded so it cannot be linked to the participant. When the researcher looks at the data, none of the data will contain names or identifying information. Participants will also be asked to not use their name or anyone else throughout the interview. The researcher will not identify the participant in any publication or report. They will be given pseudonyms and locations will be altered. The information will be kept private at all times, and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after the study concludes. The only exception to this is if the participant discloses abuse or
neglect that makes the researcher seriously concerned for their immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study.

Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions, you can talk to or write the co-principal investigator, Gordon T. Larson, at his email: larsong1@coyote.csusb.edu or the principal investigator, Dr. Donna Schnorr at her email dschnorr@csusb.edu.

Your Statement of Consent:
Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are 18 years of age or older. You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason. You are aware that the Zoom interviews will be video and audio recorded.

If you click on the "I Consent" button and you click on the bottom right arrow you will be taken to the zoom link information for the first and second interview as well as a reminder as to the dates and times of these interviews. You will also be prompted to select a one-hour time frame for the first interview.

If you do not wish to participate in the study, please click the "I do not consent" button and the bottom right arrow.

- I consent
- I do not consent
Participants who agreed were directed to the link for the Zoom interviews on the date and time identified. Participants who did not consent were thanked for their time.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Interview Questions:

1. Tell Me About Your Life And How You Became A Teacher Or Administrator.
2. What Expectations Did You Have And What Ones Do You Have Now, Relative To Your Sexual Identity Disclosure And Career Path?
3. Tell Me What Has Transpired Over Your Educator Experience In Terms Of Your Decisions Related To Disclosing Your Sexual Identify.
4. Describe Your Process Regarding Your Decision To Disclose Or Not Disclose.
5. Tell Me About The Culture And Community Of The School Related To Those Decisions.
6. Tell Me About Your Plans In The Future As That Pertains To Your Decisions To Disclose Your Sexual Identity.
7. What Can School Districts Do To Support An LGBTQ Educator's Career Path Satisfaction?
8. How Do You Feel About The Contemporary State Of The Field In Public PK-12 Education Today In Regard To LGBTQ Inclusion For Educators?
9. How Do You Perceive The School Culture And Environment Today Vs. The Past In Regard To Acceptance Of LGBTQ Inclusion/Diversity.
10. What Do You Perceive Schools, Districts, Counties, And States Can Do To Create Safe Environments For Disclosure?
11. What Can Schools/Districts Do To Make It Safer For LGBTQ Educators To Disclose And Fulfill A Career?
12. How Would You Describe Your Career Quality, Potential, And Advancement As An LGBTQ Educator?

13. What Would Make You Consider It To Be Safe To Be Out To Your Students, Their Parents?

14. What Are Your Thoughts About Your Disclosure And The Role That Plays For LGBTQ Youth?

15. What Can You Do As An Agent Of Change?

16. Please, Describe How You Would Compare Younger And Older LGBTQ Teachers' Experiences Regarding Inclusion?

Participants will be asked to submit artifacts that capture reflections and musings of their professional and personal experiences into a secure Dropbox shared account which will be discussed in the second interview.

The second Interview, the focus group, was a Zoom video and audio recorded meeting held on July 23, 2020 at 10-11:15 am PST. Focus Group Questions: responses from the first interview to develop questions for a second [focused group] interview. Possible Questions Included:

How would you describe the school culture today regarding career paths for LGBTQ individuals? Please discuss why.
What can schools/districts do to make it safer and more accessible for LGBTQ educators to disclose and fulfill a career? What can the system do to make the environment safer for disclosure? Does the school have a safe space?

How has the curriculum changed in your school?

Where we have gotten through the work of advocacy- LGBTQ organizations, etc. to show more significant signs of hope or suggestions of how to move forward to create safe schools for all students, staff, and teachers?

How do you see this going forward? And this is... That'll be our last thing.

How do you see the world of public education changing for LGBTQ educators?

What evidence do you have to support your thought, and what is that evidence?

Do any of you have people you know that are in teaching or counseling or administration that are trans right now?

Please, comment on the artifact(s) that you sent to me, on their meaning to you, how they express your experiences as an LGBTQ educator? Have a round table discussion on educators’ experiences and have a dialogue about similarities or differences, particularly on the safety and support for LGBTQ educators.
APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
This study was approved by the IRB board of California State University San Bernardino. This study you completed was designed to help minority educators decide on their sexual identity management strategies which may affect their career path. It also intersects the school climate or culture to assess the support different generations of LGBTQ minority educators have in their sexual identity management strategies. These two frames are explicit throughout the study. We are interested in the exchange of ideologies of identity management and career path trajectory. If a participant feels traumatized after sharing personal information, whether it be emotional or psychological, it is suggested they call Riverside County 24/7 mental health urgent care at (442) 268-7000.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the dissertation questions or observations with other individuals. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Gordon Larson or Professor Dr. D. Schnorr at (909) 537-7313. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact Professor Dr. D. Schnorr at (909) 537-7313 at the end of Fall Quarter of 2020.
APPENDIX E

EMAIL PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER CHECK:

TRANSCRIPT REVIEW AND CHAPTER FOUR; DATA SIGNATURES
[Participant],

See attached. This is a draft, not a final document. It reflects the data from the interview of the 16 questions, the focus group and the artifacts. Kindly just reflect to me on your part. If I need to change a context or if I have taken something the “wrong way” please, let me know. You are more than welcome to make editorial remarks, but the final document will be sent to a professional editor before submitting.

I will attach an important document for you to sign and send back to me, please. It conveys that you read the transcripts, that they were alright, and that the data was also conveyed in a reasonable manner.

This is the final member check. I am in total indebtedness to you and the others for your participation. Much thanks.

Kind regards,

Gordon Tod Larson

Mr. Gordon Tod Larson MA

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT: The information in this e-mail inclusive of any attachment(s) is covered by the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 USC SS 2510-2521 and is legally privileged. It is intended only for the attention and use of the named recipient. If you are not the intended recipient, you are not authorized to retain, disclose, copy or distribute the message and/or any of its attachments. If you received this e-mail in error, please notify me by return email and delete this message.
Transcript Review

Title of Study: PK-12 Sexual minority Public School sexual minority employees’ identity management: Implications on career quality, potential, and advancement.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Donna Schnorr, co-investigator Gordon Tod Larson, doctoral candidate at California State University San Bernardino

____________________
(Initial)

I was provided a copy of my transcribed interview and was encouraged to review the interview transcripts for accuracy.

____________________
(Initial)

I was given the opportunity to clarify and/or redact any of the statements that I made during the data collection (interview) phase of this research study. I was able to see my part of the data and clarify when needed.

Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_______________________________ ___________________
Participant Name Date

_______________________________ ___________________
Participant Signature Date

_Gordon Tod Larson________________________09/01/2020_
Investigator Name Date

_______________________________ ___________________
Investigator Signature Date
APPENDIX F

ARTIFACTS
The participants submitted photographs, thus I am listing them as figures here in this appendix. One was from Frank, the others were from George. None came from Paula or Louis.

Figure 1: George: Drag Contest He Won Each Year

This artifact was a photograph of Louis in drag which included a skin tone body suit, a feathered white and pink bikini, white opera gloves, a large pink wig, a “diamond” necklace, rings, and bracelets. He is holding a large staff with a huge plum of pink what looks like cotton candy on the top. George had shared he was over 6 foot and had an athletic build. He had high heeled pumps on to make him towering even more.

Figure 2: George’s involvement with the State of New York Adolescent Suicide Prevention in Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss

This artifact was a book and cover with the business card taped to it for the local contact for its implementation.

Figure 3: George Governor’s Teacher Recognition Award

This artifact was a certificate of recognition, much like a graduation certificate, from State Department of Education Governor’s Teacher’s Recognition/Educational Services Professionals Program.

Figure 4: Letter From [Removed] Governor To George Congratulating Him On The Governor’s Award: Redacted Address

This artifact was a signed personal typewritten letter to George from State Office of the Governor congratulating him on the Governor's award.
Figure 5a: *The Front Page Of A Newspaper Article Commemorating Legalizing Same Sex Marriage/Unions.*

Lastly, in two parts, was an article on gay marriage in a local newspaper when gay marriage became legal. The article's first page was sent.

Figure 5b: *An Interior Page Of The Article Continued From The Front Page.*

Inside the paper there was a large color picture of George and his now husband signing their marriage license.

Figure 6: *Frank’s Contribution To Help Co-Author The National Board For Professional Teaching Standards.*

This is the inside of a book for career and educational standards, showing the standards committees, of which Frank is one of the co-authors.
June 30, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2020-355
Status: Approved

Prof. Donna Schnorr and Mr. Gordon Larson
COE - Doctoral Studies, COE - Educ Leadership&Tech ELT
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof. Schnorr and Mr. Larson:

Your application to use human participants, titled “PK-12 SEXUAL MINORITY PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES’ IDENTITY MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS ON CAREER QUALITY, POTENTIAL, AND ADVANCEMENT” has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

The study is approved from June 30, 2020 through June 29, 2021.

Your IRB application must be renewed annually and you will receive notification from the Cayuse IRB automated notification system when your study is due for renewal. If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse IRB system.
You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implementing in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risks and benefits to the human participants in your IRB application. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2020-355 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive regarding your research from participants or others should be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG
APPENDIX H

IRB APPROVAL: MODIFICATIONS
July 16, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Protocol Change/Modification
IRB-FY2020-355
Status: Approved

Prof. Donna Schnorr and Mr. Gordon Larson
COE - Doctoral Studies, COE - Educ Leadership&Tech ELT
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof. Schnorr and Mr. Larson:

The protocol change/modification to your application to use human subjects, titled "PK-12 SEXUAL MINORITY PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES' IDENTITY MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS ON CAREER QUALITY, POTENTIAL, AND ADVANCEMENT " has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). A change in your informed consent requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online Cayuse IRB Submission System.

1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.
2. If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research study or project.
3. If your study has not been completed submit a renewal to the IRB.
4. If you are no longer conducting the study or project submit a study closure.

You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data
for at least three years.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2020-355 in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dabbs

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D, IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

ND/MG

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