

The unsung gay heroes of American education:  
The lived experiences of the gay and lesbian educator

by

Roger Andre Syng

B.S.E., University of Kansas, 1985  
M.S., University of Minnesota, 2001

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2018

## **Abstract**

Much of the research on gays and lesbians in education has focused on their experiences as a marginalized group. There has been much progress in the understanding of gays and lesbians as a whole and the research shows that indeed this group has shown great contributions to the field. However, a close examination of the history of gays and lesbians also presents considerable evidence that the civil rights of gays and lesbians can indeed influence their professional lives regardless of occupation.

This qualitative multiple case study examined the life experiences of the gay or lesbian educator in light of civil rights legislation that continues to influence our lives. Tenured educators were interviewed regarding their lived experiences early in life, during their education and growth in the profession, and currently as educators. The research used reputational snow ball sampling to discover these educators.

The concepts behind Queer Theory and Queer Legal Theory were used in examining data in the context of civil rights involving gay and lesbian teachers. This study adds to the body of literature regarding sensitivity and tolerance for gays and lesbians as well as materials designed to enlighten teacher training in sensitivity, and awareness of gay, and lesbian teachers and administrators.

The unsung gay heroes of American education:  
The lived experiences of the gay and lesbian educator

by

Roger Andre Syng

B.S.E., University of Kansas, 1985  
M.S., University of Minnesota, 2001

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2018

Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw

# **Copyright**

© Roger Andre Syng 2018.

## **Abstract**

Much of the research on gays and lesbians in education, has focused on their experiences as a marginalized group. There has been much progress in the understanding of gays and lesbians as a whole and the research shows that indeed this group has shown great contributions to the field. However, a close examination of the history of gays and lesbians also presents considerable evidence that the civil rights of gays and lesbians can indeed influence their professional lives regardless of occupation.

This qualitative multiple case study examined the life experiences of the gay or lesbian educator in light of civil rights legislation that continues to influence our lives. Tenured educators were interviewed regarding their lived experiences early in life, during their education and growth in the profession, and currently as educators. The research used reputational snow ball sampling to discover these educators.

The concepts behind Queer Theory and Queer Legal Theory were used in examining data in the context of civil rights involving gay and lesbian teachers. This study adds to the body of literature regarding sensitivity and tolerance for gays and lesbians as well as materials designed to enlighten teacher training in sensitivity, and awareness of gay, and lesbian teachers and administrators.

# Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	xi
List of Tables .....	xii
Acknowledgements.....	xiv
Dedication.....	xv
Prologue .....	xvii
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Theoretical Overview and Conceptual Framework .....	3
Research Problem .....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Question(s) .....	9
Professional Significance.....	12
Overview of the Methods .....	13
Limitations of the Study .....	14
Summary.....	14
Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature .....	15
Introduction.....	15
The Historical Importance of Gender in Education.....	16
Changes in Perspectives and Civil Rights .....	20
Supporting Theories.....	33
Related Research and Literature.....	36
Summary.....	38
Chapter 3 - Methodology.....	40
Introduction.....	40
Suitability of Qualitative Research Design.....	40
Purpose of the Research.....	42
Research Questions.....	42
Data Collection .....	44
Trustworthiness of the Study .....	46

Data Analysis .....	47
Background and Role of the Researcher.....	48
Summary.....	49
Chapter 4 - Profiles .....	50
Introduction.....	50
Participant 1 Profile .....	51
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	51
Work and Career Experiences.....	52
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	52
Successes.....	53
Motivation and Inspiration.....	53
Needed Initiatives .....	54
Researcher’s Perspective: Confident .....	54
Participant 2 Profile .....	55
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	55
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	56
Successes.....	58
Motivation and Inspiration.....	59
Needed Initiatives .....	59
Researcher’s Perspective: Courageous .....	61
Participant 3 Profile .....	62
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	62
Work and Career Experiences.....	63
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	63
Successes.....	64
Motivation and Inspiration.....	65
Needed Initiatives .....	65
Researcher’s Perspective: Devoted.....	66
Participant 4 Profile .....	67
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	67
Work and Career Experiences.....	67

Experiences as a Gay Person .....	68
Successes.....	69
Motivations and Inspirations.....	69
Needed Initiatives .....	70
Researcher’s Perspective: Committed .....	70
Participant 5 Profile .....	71
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	71
Work and Career Experiences.....	71
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	72
Successes.....	73
Motivation and Inspiration.....	74
Needed Initiatives .....	75
Researcher’s Perspective: Enthusiastic.....	75
Participant 6 Profile .....	76
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	76
Work and Career Experiences.....	77
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	78
Successes.....	81
Motivations and Inspirations.....	82
Needed Initiatives .....	82
Researcher’s Perspective: Role Model .....	83
Participant 7 Profile .....	83
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	83
Work and Career Experiences.....	84
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	86
Successes.....	86
Motivation and Inspiration.....	87
Needed Initiatives .....	87
Researcher’s Perspective: Appreciative.....	88
Participant 8 Profile .....	89
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	89

Work and Career Experiences.....	89
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	90
Successes.....	91
Motivation and Inspiration.....	91
Needed Initiatives .....	92
Researcher’s Perspective: Compassionate .....	93
Participant 9 Profile .....	93
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	93
Work and Career Experiences.....	94
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	95
Successes.....	96
Motivation and Inspiration.....	96
Needed Initiatives .....	97
Researcher’s Perspective: Inspired .....	98
Participant 10 Profile .....	98
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	98
Work and Career Experiences.....	99
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	100
Successes.....	101
Motivation and Inspiration.....	102
Needed Initiatives .....	103
Researcher’s Perspective: Provider.....	104
Participant 11 Profile .....	104
Early Life Experiences and Education.....	104
Work and Career Experiences.....	106
Experiences as a Gay Person .....	107
Successes.....	109
Motivation and Inspiration.....	110
Needed Initiatives .....	110
Researcher’s Perspective: Soldier.....	111
Summary.....	111

Chapter 5 - Data Analysis .....	112
Chapter 6 - Conclusions .....	152
Discussion of Research Question One .....	152
Discussion of Research Question Two .....	155
Discussion of Research Question Three .....	158
Discussion of Research Question Four .....	160
Discussion of Research Question Five .....	161
Significance of the Study .....	163
Implications for Professional Practice .....	165
Implications for Personal Practice .....	166
Recommendations for Future Studies .....	168
Recommendation One: Exploring the influence of multiple minority groups.....	168
Recommendation Two: Explore and research hatred versus acceptance .....	169
Recommendation Three: Explore and research the influence of region on the educator or various professions.....	169
Recommendation Four: Be aware of the current climate and the loss of civil rights .....	170
Summary .....	171
References .....	172
Appendix A - Debriefing Statement .....	181
Appendix B - Preliminary Questions .....	182
Appendix C - Interview Protocol .....	183
Appendix D - Informed Consent.....	186

## **List of Figures**

Figure 5.1 Intersection of the Main Themes .....	118
--------------------------------------------------	-----

## List of Tables

Table 1.1 Important Legislation, Court Cases, and Milestones Related to Gay and Lesbian Educators’ Civil Rights and Civil Rights of LGBT People.....	6
Table 4.1 Participant Demographics.....	50
Table 5.1 Main Coding Categories and Narrative Headings (Chapter 4).....	118
Table 5.2 Sub-codes for Struggles with Definitions and Examples from Text .....	119
Table 5.3 Sub-codes for Supports with Definitions and Examples from Text .....	120
Table 5.4 Sub-codes for Issues of Identity with Definitions and Examples from Text.....	120
Table 5.5 Sub-codes for Similarities and Differences with Definitions and Examples.....	121
Table 5.6 Sub-codes for Life Experiences with Definitions and Examples .....	122
Table 5.7 Sub-codes for Needed Initiatives with Definitions and Examples .....	123
Table 5.8 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Struggles Early in Life St-1 .....	125
Table 5.9 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Struggles at Work or Professionally (St-2).....	126
Table 5.10 Patterns for the Sub-code of Struggles with Family and Relationships (St-3).....	127
Table 5.11 Patterns for the sub-code of Supports from Family or Early in Life (S-1).....	128
Table 5.12 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Supports from Past Educational Experiences (S-2) ...	128
Table 5.13 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Supports from Current Educational Experiences (S-3) .....	129
Table 5.14 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity Early in Life or Schooling. (I-1)...	130
Table 5.15 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity as a Young Gay Person (I-2) .....	130
Table 5.16 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity as a Gay Adult in Personal Life (I-3) .....	131
Table 5.17 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity as an Adult Professional (I-4).....	132
Table 5.18 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Similarities to the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life (DS-1) .....	133
Table 5.19 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Differences from the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life (DS-2) .....	134
Table 5.20 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Similarities in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator (DS-3) .....	135

Table 5.21 Patterns for the Sub-Codes of Differences in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator (DS-4) .....	136
Table 5.22 Patterns for the Sub-Codes of Positive Life Experiences or Successes (LE) .....	138
Table 5.23 Patterns for the Sub Codes of Initiatives Needed (IN) .....	139
Table 5.24 Summary of Patterns or Incidents across Six Main Emergent Codes and the Subsequent Sub-Codes.....	140
Table 5.25 Themes Emerging from Six Main Codes and Sub-Codes .....	143
Table 5.26 Patterns Contributing to Theme One .....	144
Table 5.27 Patterns Contributing to Theme Two.....	144
Table 5.28 Patterns Contributing to Theme Three.....	145
Table 5.29 Patterns Contributing to Theme Four .....	146
Table 5.30 Patterns Contributing to Theme Five.....	147
Table 5.31 Patterns Contributing to Theme Six.....	147
Table 5.32 Patterns Contributing to Theme Seven .....	149
Table 5.33 Patterns Contributing to Theme Eight .....	150
Table 5.34 Patterns Contributing to Theme Nine .....	151
Table 5.35 Patterns Contributing to Theme Ten.....	151

## **Acknowledgements**

This project and doctoral research would not have possible without the people that felt impassioned and supportive of my beliefs and capabilities. I would like to acknowledge my appreciation and gratitude to the following people who contributed their time and ideas to my work:

To Betsy Edwards, who was supportive and available throughout the past two years, with editing skills and superb knowledge of Word, I thank you for generously giving of your time.

Carol Sevin, whose patience and ability to let me ‘find’ it, taught me well about pausing and letting the student discover the pattern. I am very grateful to her for her knowledge of referencing, citing, and editing.

To the staff of Garden City High School who I had the pleasure to lead and support, I thank you for your tolerance, patience, kindness and appreciation.

Finally, to John Patti, thank you for helping to develop the title theme of “unsung gay heroes.”

## **Dedication**

First, I would like to thank my family, in particular my sister Angela for giving me the idea of moving to Garden City, Kansas. It has been difficult, but it was a great place to have grown my career as an educator. Thank you, dear sister, for always making me do what was right and appreciating how I have grown and done the best I could. Thanks also for making sure I got through a few difficult times financially and medically, as I would not be where I am now without your help.

Subsequently I have met some great people who have helped me grow both personally and professionally. My close friend Richard Kilgore has saved me by being there with advice of ‘what to do next’, both in life and in career. I still recollect those disgusting desperate times 20 years ago when we were waiting tables and bartending together since it was the best we could do at the time. Devin Claussen, my buddy and confidante, kept it real, and was always there to help me keep my sense of humor, to help around the house, and give me tough love in the form of reminding me to stay the course, stay strong physically and mentally, and finish this project.

As for finishing, thank you Dr. Steve Karlin, and Dr. Darren Dennis for the kind and realistic words of ‘keep going’ even though it might be a longer journey than originally expected. Dr. Karen Dulling also acted as a great role model in her focus and outstanding dissertation which was an excellent guide. Dr. Trudy Salsberry who inspired the exploration of self which resulted in an amazing discovery of what is truly important and relevant with regard to identity and how it influences me and those I educate and inspire.

My district has been amazing, and I am very grateful to Joyce Adams and Janet Smith who I give partial blame to for this by starting me on my studies in Educational Leadership when I was a classroom teacher for them. Jennifer Wieberg, the best teacher I have ever worked with

and probably one of the best I have ever met, is to be thanked for making me work even harder after I thought that I had it all figured out and that I could survive on a 15-hour field trip with 12-year-olds. I thank the following people who were a great inspiration in my first years as an administrator and are overall just talented people and fun to have worked with: James Mireles, Martin Segovia, Renee Scott, Charles Kipp, Drew Thon, and Ryan Meng, and special thanks to Steve Nordby for his excellent leadership and mentoring and an almost disturbingly accurate knowledge of the best of black culture and music.

Finally, I thank Skip Mancini, my amazing world class teacher, and theatrical director who made me realize the importance of being grateful for what I learned being in front of an audience. She made me aware of what I must give as a performer. That was how it all began many moons ago as a dancer and a singer. My stage talents were used every day as an educator. I keep in mind that the laughter I gave those students is reflected in the smiles, love, and kind treatment I have gotten and get from the people in this small town of Garden City, Kansas. Thank you, to all the parents, and the students, that have touched my life.

## Prologue

I am a 59-year-old African American man that has been educated as a young person in Minnesota, Virginia, and Kansas. I was provided with a strict family structure by a step-father and my mother. In my early years, expectations of academic achievement were high and had great importance to my parents. My two younger sisters and I were raised as Catholic until I was 12 and then another sibling was born at which time we became Jehovah's Witnesses. At this point in our lives as children, things changed for the worse. Due to my mother's new-found faith, we were required to give up all birthdays, holidays, and celebrations of any kind. My mother at this time, in my recollection, experienced what might be termed a depression, combined with severe financial pressures. This resulted in severe physical abuse to the youngest sibling as we watched helplessly, and psychological abuse for the rest of us, as we pretended that all was fine for the sake of the other members of the Jehovah Witness congregation, and to avoid physical beatings. The members of the congregation that were near my age of 14 proceeded to enlighten me with several illicit activities including smoking cigarettes and marijuana as well as a variety of sexual explorations.

At this time, I became aware that I was not a normal teenage boy. I began to fantasize about exploring my sexuality with other males even though with other boys in the "church" and at school, I spoke and pretended to act "normal" as best I could. It was an exciting time as these explorations continued, since it was seemingly innocent, and I pretended to be interested in girls and the female form. High school found me in Kansas after a family move and things seemed to get better with my mother for a time, although she never attended any of my concerts, plays, or gymnastics meets. I worked hard to gain my parents' approval by focusing and succeeding in academics, music, and athletics. My focus toward my education changed since I chose not to

head into the “fulltime ministry” deemed appropriate to young men of the congregation at the age of 18. Despite being “disfellowshipped” or what some religious groups would call excommunicated from the congregation and the resulting estrangement from my mother, I chose to pursue my education and enrolled at the University of Kansas to study music education.

I believe that pursuing my education in music and dance was my real awakening and beginning of self-acceptance as a gay man. I write this narrative with the understanding that my socialization as a performer is indeed an influence on what I bring to my teaching and my continued learning. It took much painstaking self-exploration to come to terms with being gay and what it is being out as a gay person. It took and still takes continued reflection to decide who needs to know, and who needs to know how much.

It is with this awareness that I now discuss being an educator. My journey continued by gaining my Bachelor of Science Education degree in dance and music. I then spent nine years in New York City continuing to explore my identity as well as the life of a would-be performer and eventually attended the University of Minnesota to obtain my teaching license and master’s degree on what was known as a Teacher of Color Scholarship. My subsequent career as a teacher consisted of the usual struggles as well as some considerable successes including several honors as Teacher of the Year. I continued after seven years to study leadership and I am now, after 20 years of educational experience, a high school associate principal, writing this text toward my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership.

I am considering with this prologue, my audience. As I sought materials of gay educators’ experiences, I found very few, so I am hoping to reach the gay teachers and anyone who is different or diverse in any way and those considering education or leadership of any sort. I hope also to inspire anyone who is different or diverse with the expectation that other educators

and or administrators (regardless of their ethnicity, race, origin, sexuality, or identity) will find the courage to be comfortable in their skin, and to know that they are indeed valid and worthy to be leaders and teachers. All teachers and educators take on the task of needing to model positivity and fairness for their students and staff but as I have experienced and discovered, this can be complicated for a gay person. I will say that indeed this is written for the unsung gay and lesbian heroes out there that go to work every day and give all that they are, and all that they know, to make the world a great place to teach, learn, and live.

# **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

## **Background**

Although the United States of America guarantees all its citizen's equal rights, both history and current events show that this is not necessarily the case if one does not have a heterosexual orientation. Inequity and hostility have been found in a number of occupations including the military, sports leadership (coaching), police and fire departments, intelligence agencies, and elementary schools (Gluckman & Reed, 1997). For the purposes of this study, the field of education was chosen to be examined.

There has been some revealing research conducted investigating the history of gays and lesbians involved in education. These studies show that throughout the history of education in this country there have been numerous struggles related to gender and sexual orientation (Blount, 2005; Graves, 2009; Jennings, 1994; Khayatt, 1992; Tyack, 1974). Along with the issues of gender, are the overall issues involving civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Historically, LGBT people have had to contend with discrimination and persecution. Movements such as that of Anita Bryant have sparked persecution and denial of civil liberties for the LGBT educator throughout the nation, with particular focus in cities like Eugene, Oregon, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Wichita, Kansas (Harbeck, 1992).

“In the United States, people who have followed a heterosexual orientation have received numerous social, legal, and fiscal rewards, whereas those who have admitted a homosexual or bisexual orientation have been at risk for jailing, electroshock, beating, mutilation, state-imposed drugging, and or death” (Lugg, 2003, pp. 100-101). Legislation such as “Don't Ask Don't Tell” seems slightly more enlightened by not asking one to hide, but just not to talk about their sexual orientation (Lugg, 2003). Many gays and lesbians attempt to hide and or disguise sexual

orientation and this can be especially true for gay and lesbian teachers. A considerable amount of energy is devoted to staying in the closet. This limits their ability to serve as role models for LGBT students as well (Lewis & Taylor, 2001). The author of this study seeks to understand a certain perspective that he has experienced as an educator including confronting the issues of 'being out' especially as that relates to issues of discrimination and civil rights issues. The criteria used in choosing the participants are that they are tenured, self-admitted gay or lesbian educators. The assumption is made that there will be a variety of levels of what is considered being out and that this could be different for each individual case.

The presence and acceptance of LGBT educators by others is a primary component in acceptance of LGBT students. In 1973, a teacher in Maryland was fired after presenting administratively approved curriculum on sexual orientation. This curriculum was presented in response to a concern for two harassed and reportedly suicidal LGBT students (Harbeck, 1997). In 1989, the U. S Department of Health and Human Services, reported 30 percent of youth suicides were committed by LGBT young people (Perotti & Westheimer, 2001). Perotti and Westheimer (2001) have noted the efforts of states like Wisconsin and Massachusetts in leading the protection of gay youth by adding discriminatory clauses that include 'sexual orientation'. More recently, *Time Magazine* highlights alarming cases in 2011 that all were related to the bullying and abuse of gay boys that led to suicide.

Although progress has been made in advancing acceptance of LGBT people in education, more research needs to be done. The need for this research was influenced by the fact that the civil rights for gays and lesbians are still being contested and are still controversial. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute in an analysis of 21 different local surveys between 1980 and 1991 found widespread discrimination against gays and lesbians in employment,

renting a housing unit, public restaurants, health services, obtaining insurance, and in education (The Leadership Conference, 2013). In recent years, the controversy over gay marriage varied from state-to-state and still resulted in discrimination involving educators. In St. Louis, Missouri, a music teacher named Al Fisher was fired from his job after school officials learned of his plans to marry a same-sex partner of 20 years. The case became complicated since it involved a Catholic school and the decision to use these religious foundations as the reason for termination (Hyun, 2012). One only needed to enter an internet search on gay teachers and several current discriminatory cases appeared. The *Huffington Post* presented not only the Al Fischer case mentioned above but several cases including Lisa Howe who in 2010 was fired from her soccer coaching job at Belmont University in Tennessee allegedly after disclosing plans to have a child with her same sex partner (Huffington Post, 2010). As the author, I made the assumption that gay and lesbian teachers are persistent despite these infringements on their civil rights and that the life experiences both lived and current have an influence on them and performing their jobs. The researcher sought to understand more about these life experiences from the gay or lesbian educator.

### **Theoretical Overview and Conceptual Framework**

This research sought to explore the possibilities of initiating actions and thought that will encourage changes in the experiences and endeavors of the gay or lesbian educator. The author has an advocacy/participatory worldview and believes that the research should contain an action agenda for changes or reform that could change the lives of the participants, the researcher, or the institutions in which they work (Creswell, 2007). The researcher sought to provide an understanding of how the participants dealt with the institutional inequities that have existed in

the field of education and what actions or considerations could or have, changed these conditions.

Another aspect of being a gay or lesbian educator is how they are perceived within society. The concepts of cultural hegemony originating with the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) emphasize the domination of society by uniform rules set forth by social institutions. This “hegemony” as he explains would be the reason for legal and societal advantages of fitting in with the majority (Cole, 2018). Teachers have historically been expected to support popular and approved societal agendas and norms. Many times, teachers are considered to be the promoters of the society at large and are the ones responsible for producing citizens that join a work force and add to the status quo. The devices in this hegemonic system would be, among other things, churches, the media, and for this discussion, schools (Cole, 2018). Heterosexuality as the appropriate way to ‘be’ brings acknowledgement of being legitimate and “normal” and anything other than that is, of course, abnormal. The gay person must work within this system, which is subtle, yet present. It is a system where one’s conduct is expected to match those around them, with men being masculine, and women, feminine (Khayatt, 1992). This study, therefore, would challenge a breaking free of hegemonic thought toward working against a nation where one is being denied civil rights or equality.

The concepts of Queer Theory (QT) and Queer Legal Theory (QLT) were considered as a foundation for the study. In brief, according to Brizee and Thompkins (2010), QT explores issues of sexuality, power, and marginalized populations in literature and culture. The research can be understood more clearly if the stories and experiences of gay and lesbian educators are compared and analyzed. QT influenced this study since it focuses in part, on gay and lesbian people, who as a marginalized group, have experienced discrimination and legal battles. Thus, the theoretical

framework was also influenced by QLT (Lugg, 2003). QLT also is an intersection of several aspects of legal theory including feminism, race, and gay and lesbian theories. QLT seeks to be “all inclusive” and is important since it embraces diversity (Lugg, 2003). Finally, as an African American gay educator, having my teaching and higher education experiences in the Midwestern United States, I brought to the research my own values and lived experiences that influence the study.

### **Research Problem**

Despite lacking a true fit in society, there are many gay and lesbian educators who continue to succeed and model excellence in teaching. History shows us that the gay educator has had a legacy of contributing to the welfare of students and to the nation’s schools (Blount, 2005). There are also narratives about gay and lesbian educators who, despite the odds, persevere in the profession (Kissen, 1996). This study sought to illuminate how they did that and what has influenced them to be devoted to a profession that historically has discriminated against them. It is not clearly understood how these individuals succeeded in this field despite the circumstances involving discrimination, and despite the ongoing civil rights struggles. Many courageous people have sought equality in civil rights for gay and lesbian people. To show what this discrimination looks like; a summary of important legal actions is presented. Table 1.1 shows important events that give clarity to the legislation that contribute to a historical understanding of the problems experienced by the gay or lesbian educator. This table is compiled from Harbeck’s (1997) work and represents some key cases on both state and national levels. Harbeck (1997) organized her study by first focusing on a search of all litigation that occurred using key words such as “homosexual,” “lesbian,” or “gay” in connection to such words as “university,” “college,” or “school” (p. 26). She then narrowed the list down to significant litigation that has influenced the

civil rights of LGBT educators from the early 1950s to 1985. For information after that time, several events were used to verify that the struggle for equal rights was and is ongoing. The rationale that Harbeck (1997) used is embedded deeply with the debate involving the employment of the gay and lesbian educator and the civil rights of gay people in general. In addition to Harbeck’s (1997) list are important civil rights legislation that relate to LGBT people as well as issues receiving considerable attention in the media, such as transgender cases involving discrimination.

**Table 1.1 Important Legislation, Court Cases, and Milestones Related to Gay and Lesbian Educators’ Civil Rights and Civil Rights of LGBT People.**

<p><b>1956 / The Florida Investigative Legislation Committee</b></p>	<p>This legislation also known as the Johns Committee, which originated with the influence of McCarthyism and the search for communists in government, also sought to hunt down and eliminate homosexuals in education.</p>
<p><b>1967 / <i>Sarac v. California State Board of Education</i> (1967)</b></p>	<p>In the case of Sarac, his excellent teaching and testimony of colleagues did nothing to discourage the court from revoking his teaching credential. His arrest for soliciting sex with an undercover officer seen as “immoral” deemed him “unfit” to teach.</p>
<p><b>1967 / <i>Jarvella v. Willoughby Eastlake City School District</i> (1967)</b></p>	<p>This case showed a decision that enhanced the rights of teachers in general. The court ruled that there was “unwarranted intrusion” into the litigant’s personal freedoms.</p>
<p><b>1964 to 1969 / <i>Morrison v. California Supreme Court</i> (1969)</b></p>	<p>Even though Morrison was initially fired and had his teaching credentials revoked due to immoral conduct, the case went to the Supreme Court where it was determined that his homosexuality alone was not grounds for dismissal. This case inspired others to challenge the legal system’s views on personal conduct and individual rights.</p>
<p><b>1972 / <i>Acanfora v. Board of Education of Montgomery, Maryland, et al.</i> (1974)</b></p>	<p>The outcome of this case was that certain rights of gays and lesbians were deemed constitutional rights to privacy. This was the first time that a community lobbied for the reinstatement of an openly gay teacher and received such great publicity. The case also was supported by the National Education Association.</p>
<p><b>1977 / Florida / <u>Save Our Children</u></b></p>	<p>Anita Bryant began her extensive campaign against LGBT people named Save Our Children. Among those targeted were also gay and lesbian teachers.</p>

**Table 1.1 Important Legislation, Court Cases, and Milestones Related to Gay and Lesbian Educators’ Civil Rights and Civil Rights of LGBT People.**

<b>1977 / California / <u>Proposition 6</u></b>	California’s Proposition 6, led by John Briggs, sought the termination of or refusal to employ anyone who “engaged in homosexual activity or conduct”.
<b>1978 / Oklahoma / <u>House Bill 1629</u></b>	After much statewide, anti-gay campaigning, including rallying high school students in support of the Ku Klux Klan, a replica of the Briggs Initiative, House Bill 1629 was passed into law with the support of Republican senator Mary Helms.
<b>1985 / Supreme Court Split Decision</b>	The Oklahoma case went to the Supreme Court only to meet with a split decision. Both sides claimed victory.
<b>1993 / Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell</b>	This legislation for military personnel demanded all employed by the forces that were gay or lesbian to remain in the closet and not express or speak about their sexual orientation. This reinforced the same for most GLBT people, especially educators.
<b>1996 / Colorado Amendment 2</b>	The case of <i>Romer v. Evans</i> (1996) sparks the end of Colorado’s Amendment 2 which denied gay and lesbian people protection against discrimination by calling them “special rights”. Justice Anthony Kennedy stated, “these protections . . .constitute ordinary civil life in a free society.”
<b>2000 to 2006 / Recognition of Civil Unions</b>	Vermont becomes the first state to recognize civil unions. The law grants the same benefits and privileges as spouse but still defines marriage as heterosexual. In 2004 same sex marriage is legalized in Massachusetts. In 2005, civil unions became legal in Connecticut and in 2006 the same happened in New Jersey.
<b>2007 / Employment Non-Discrimination Act</b>	The House of Representatives approves a bill ensuring equal rights in the workplace entitled gay employees’ equal rights in the workplace.
<b>2015 / Boys Scouts of America</b>	The Boy Scouts of America changes its policy and puts an end to the ban on gay adult leaders. The new rule still allows for church supported activities to ban gay adults for religious concerns.
<b>2015 / <i>Obergefell vs Hodges</i> (2015)</b>	This case was a collaboration of same sex couples from four states and ended with the decision from the Supreme Court of the United States that banning same sex marriage was unconstitutional.
<b>2015 / Equal Rights in Marriage Progress</b>	At this point South Carolina becomes the 35 <sup>th</sup> state to legalize same sex marriage.

**Table 1.1 Important Legislation, Court Cases, and Milestones Related to Gay and Lesbian Educators’ Civil Rights and Civil Rights of LGBT People.**

<b>2008-2016 / Equal Rights in Marriage Success</b>	After a nationwide debate and back and forth legislation, the rights for marriage is won for LGBT people. The Supreme court declares that states cannot mandate that marriage is reserved for heterosexual couples.
<b>2016 / Restrooms for Transgender students</b>	Due to <i>Gavin Grimm vs Gloucester (2016)</i> a controversy ignites in some states regarding which restrooms transgender people have a right to use. Within the discussion is the idea that students may use bathrooms according to their self- identified gender.
<b>2017 / Trump Chooses Policies Against Gay Rights</b>	Trump supports legislation that hinders LGBT rights, including a ban on transgender people in the military, and choosing anti-gay marriage supporter Sam Brownback as an ambassador of religious freedom (Savage & Shear, 2017).
<b>2018 / Gay Candidates Are at Record Numbers</b>	More than 400 gay candidates ran for office in 2018 and over half were for state office. In 2017, over 120 anti-LGBT Bills were introduced in 30 states. Twelve of these became laws (Edmondson & Stack, 2018).

From time to time, gay and lesbian people remain in the current events’ spotlight due to several controversial issues. This seems to draw attention to them and creates a type of scrutiny not experienced by other marginalized groups. The issues of marriage, and whether a person chooses to announce or share their sexuality with those they do not know, are highly personal and relate to private choices on several levels. Within the reality of our current times, the researcher sought to explore how experiences of the participants and civil rights issues affected their professional lives. The researcher explored the importance of the educator’s feelings about civil rights and the highly personal aspects of exposing his or her personal life.

**Purpose of the Study**

Research has been done revealing the life experiences of gay and lesbian educators and how they influence their successes (Jennings, 1994; Khayatt, 1992; Rofes, 1985).

The purpose of the study was to expand and explore this body of literature regarding the life experiences of gay and lesbian educators and their perceived influence on their careers. These life experiences included: childhood experiences, educational background, successes or accomplishments, and personal pursuits involving family or partnerships. Life experiences are defined as any events, past or present that have influenced or come to be realized as having impact on, or influence on gays and lesbians as they have performed their work as educators. The researcher in this study sought to understand how they achieved success in an employment context that could involve discrimination and perhaps what civil rights issues affected their lives at work. The study sought to reveal what certain policies or practices might impair or enhance the success or achievement of gay and lesbian educators or leaders, and thus, another purpose was to discover possible changes that might be needed to best serve gay or lesbian educators.

### **Research Question(s)**

The researcher in this study investigated the key concepts involved with the lived experiences of gays and lesbians in educational careers and how those experiences are perceived to have influenced their success. The research questions were guided by the concepts associated with QT and QLT, as well as an advocacy perspective and the concepts of hegemony.

Since the focus was on sexuality, and specifically gays and lesbians, as well as legal issues surrounding these people, QT and QLT were a focus for certain questions. QT impacted the study because of its emphasis on sexuality being discursive or changing and being experienced and being understood in historically specific ways. These changes coincide with changes in human perspectives and traditional values. QT focuses on the idea that there are many discourses surrounding and informing sexuality and they provide clues as to why certain knowledge and practices emerge when and where they do (Sullivan, 2003). Since the focus was

on sexuality that is other than the normative sexuality found in mainstream society, the focus for accompanying questions is QT. QLT encompasses the legislative framework and the civil rights involving gay and lesbian educators and reaches beyond the discussion of just sexuality but includes law and discrimination. Valdes (1995) explains QLT “as a cross-disciplinary and self-conscious exploration of the ways in which legal doctrines, customs, and practices impact on sexual minorities as sexual minorities” (p. 2). Thus, the research questions reflected this theory and frame of thought.

Cultural hegemony and the influences of a patriarchal society influenced the formation of the theoretical framework as well. Antonio Gramsci is closely associated with the concept of hegemony which he defines as a form of control by the dominant class (Duncombe, 2012).

To add clarity to the questions and sub-questions the following key terms are defined:

**Career Choices:** This is about making the decision to choose to be an educator or educational leader.

**Gay or Lesbian:** These terms are used to indicate a self-identified gay or lesbian person.

**Issues:** The term issues is about but not limited to civil rights aspects of the lived experiences of the participants.

**Life Experiences:** Life experiences are defined as any events, past or present that have influenced or come to be realized as having impact on, or influence on gays and lesbians as they have performed their work as educators.

**Success:** As it pertains to this study, success is having achieved tenure in a position as an educator.

**Work Experiences:** This pertains to any events, past or present, that have influenced or come to be realized as having impact on, or influence on gays and lesbians as they have performed their work as educators.

**Actions and Initiatives:** This refers to any perceived action that needs to happen or be initiated to enhance teaching and learning for gay or lesbian educators or students.

The overarching research question influenced by the theoretical and conceptual framework was:

How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to have impacted their work life?

The sub-questions that help to clarify the responses are:

1. What does the examination of life experiences, reveal about struggles for the gay or lesbian person who is an educator, or educational leader? (QT)
2. What does the examination of life experiences, and teaching experiences of the gay or lesbian educator, reveal about issues such as, discrimination, gay marriage, civil rights, bullying and the welfare of the LGBT student? (QLT and research literature)
3. How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to differ and compare to those in their profession that are not gay or lesbian? (QT and hegemony)
4. What does the examination of life experiences, reveal about gay identity in relation to becoming an educator and choosing to teach? (QLT)
5. What do gay and lesbian educators perceive as needed action or initiatives in schools to enhance their success and to best support LGBT students? (QLT and research literature)

## Professional Significance

As a black gay educator, the author brings his own life experience with him in perceiving the responses to the research questions. The data shows that teacher diversity is an issue in this country. It is reported that while nearly half of the children in schools are children of color only 17 percent of teachers are teachers of color. Among other influences teachers of color are can act as ambassadors for students of color as well as role models for achieving educational goals (Partelow, L. Spong Catherine Brown, and Stephenie Johnson Center for American Progress, 2017). Race is in general observation. Keeping with the Kinsey report that there are 10 to 15 percent of the population, that are gay or lesbian, that would be a considerable number of those teachers that are different in a not so obvious way.

Every August there is that moment where many educators stand up and start in with the “who are you?” speech. The internal blush is inevitable as one chooses to say or not say; “married, single, partnered, kids, no kids,” etc. The benefit of focusing on the life experience of the gay and lesbian educator is quite simply answering the question “*what does it feel like to us to be different, an invisible unspoken difference?*”

There is a considerable amount of literature that discusses racial, cultural, and language differences regarding preparing for classroom instruction (Huegel, 2003; Johnson, & Watson, 2013; Mazel, 1998; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997; Rofes, 2005). The research in this study will add to the body of literature for teacher and administrator preparation, especially regarding gays and lesbians.

The author sought to add to the body of literature for teacher and administrator preparation that increases understanding of what it is to be a gay or lesbian educator. Ideally, the

significance was to add to an understanding of a characteristic that doesn't immediately present itself like language or race.

### **Overview of the Methods**

The researcher chose to approach this project as a qualitative multiple case study to show an understanding of the lived experiences of the gay or lesbian educator. These experiences are based on early life experiences, experiences in deciding to become a professional educator, and current experiences as they pertain to the context of discrimination and civil rights legislation.

The participants were teachers or formal leaders that have succeeded in gaining tenure in the profession of education. The range of age, race, and gender were random. The researcher used reputational snowball sampling to discover participants. Reputational snowball sampling relies upon personal contacts of the people interviewed to gather information about other prospective respondents (Patton, 2002). The number of participants analyzed was determined based on how the range of age, race, and gender played out and whether they presented a credible and representative sample.

All participants were interviewed in two stages to acquire rich data regarding their experiences. The study consisted of people from vastly different backgrounds and regions. The interviews focused on background, education, and current feelings and attitudes about their careers.

The methodology is presented in depth in Chapter 3 and a definition of terms that have a significant meaning in the study will be given as they appear. The primary theories that influenced the study were QT and QLT.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are conditions that affected the outcome of the study and that cannot be controlled by the researcher. First, the study was focused on successful gay and lesbian educators and thus the definition of success was determined by participants to some degree since they submitted names of future respondents. The selection process had purpose but was not likely to be a full representation of the range of perspectives of the identified group. Reported life experiences were viewed to have had impact on their careers. The focus was on perspective and not on actual behaviors during the impactful events. Finally, as very personal information was explored in following chapters, results could have been influenced by the participants' comfort with revealing critical information of a sensitive nature.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, a short historical background was given regarding the treatment of and discrimination against LGBT people. Despite the issues of discrimination and prejudice, gay people have taught with success and continue to be present in the educational system in our current time. The research explored the life experiences of these people and analyzed and compared the results to understand the challenges and possible rewards of pursuing education. This chapter also presented the research problem, questions, methodology, and theoretical framework. In the next chapter, the literature was explored with a close look at the history of the gay and lesbian civil rights and involvement in education as well as QT, QLT, and the research presented.

## Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

### Introduction

The literature review for this study is organized into three main areas of discussion: (1) the importance of the early history of education and civil rights, (2) supporting theories, and (3) related research. The first section explores the importance of gender throughout the history of education and how that pertains to the gay or lesbian educator or formal leader. The second section examines the dilemma involving the pursuit of civil rights for both gays and lesbians in general and as educators. It presents some of the primary landmark cases involving discrimination against gays and lesbians in education and, therefore, warrants a historical overview of the LGBT civil rights movement and important current events. The third section discusses the importance of theories that question conventional and traditional frames of thought regarding sexuality and identity, namely QT, and to some degree, QLT. Here questions are raised regarding cultural hegemony and patriarchal foundations that present themselves upon examining our educational traditions. Finally, a summary explores the research done so far involving the experiences of the gay or lesbian educator and details the need for further research.

The chapter concludes with a summary that synthesizes the ideas as they relate to the main research questions:

1. What does the examination of life experiences reveal about struggles for the gay or lesbian educator, or a formal leader? (QT)
2. What does the examination of life experiences, and teaching experiences of the gay or lesbian educator reveal about the connection of issues related to civil rights and their career success? (QLT)

3. How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to differ and vary from those in their profession that are not gay or lesbian? (QT and cultural hegemony)
4. What does the examination of life experiences, reveal about gay identity in relation to becoming an educator or choosing education as a career? (QT)
5. What do gay and lesbian educators perceive as need action or initiatives in schools to enhance their success? (QLT and research literature)

### **The Historical Importance of Gender in Education**

It was found that an in-depth exploration of gender as it relates to educators was important to fully understand how the gay or lesbian educator or administrator might be expected to act, appear, lead, or otherwise perform his/her job.

Gender is important historically, and in the context of men and women in education, in North America. Consequently, a discussion concerning the history of gays and lesbians in education needs to include an overview of the scrutiny given to teachers dating back to colonial times. At this time, the main educators of children were connected to religious doctrine. In 1701 in Massachusetts, an adopted law stated that the town minister could not be used as a teacher but would oversee religious matters (Harbeck, 1997). In this position, the minister insisted that the person teaching follow the same religious and behavioral codes that the township followed. Since the pay for teaching was so low, it was difficult to find people to fit the strict code. Both community members and the ministers participated in regulating teacher conduct intensely through a detailed set of rules they were to follow in their personal lives. During this time in education, there was a distinct focus on Biblical scripture as well as teachings (Gulliford, 1984; Harbeck, 1997). Although all children were encouraged to have a respect for religion and faith,

girls were limited to learning the basic subjects, encouraged to help with domestic pursuits at home, and not allowed to pursue higher education. Particularly in wealthy families, boys were given more instructional time in reading and writing and were encouraged to continue toward apprenticeships or professions involving college or further education (Gulliford, 1984).

Because of being given extra time to focus on education, men during the early 1800s, dominated teaching and tutoring. In the early years and during a time of Manifest Destiny, a man was expected to have practical knowledge and be able to work with his hands. The schoolmaster's struggle for respect was compounded by this expectation. The work involved close contact with children, which was seen as effete and associated as women's work. Hardened frontier boys sometimes as old as 17 or 18 were known to physically challenge male teachers if they attempted to inflict corporal punishment, subsequently, driving them off and out of their town. Being the male teacher was having to earn his manly worth carefully in the community through clever teaching and tenacity (Freedman 1983; Gulliford, 1984).

However, this job was usually done in lieu of going on to professions such as law, commerce, and medicine. The occupation of schoolmaster was seen as a way to earn money following college and a step toward advancement of college subject matter related to a person's field of interest. Men in education saw this as employment that provided the opportunity to recruit students, create curricula, and build associations with other men in the community (Blount, 2005). Men eventually earned prominence in administrative roles, which was the highly accepted place for men in the educational framework.

Over the next 100 years, the gender identity of the school teacher changed from primarily a male occupation to one dominated by women. At this point in time, the work

of teaching was viewed clearly as women's work and the work of leadership and administration for men. Thus, the structure of the school served as a place for gender appropriate modeling, with the men leading the "household" whose role fit them and the women doing the teaching, seen as service-oriented (Blount, 2005). It is interesting to note that because of gender, women received limited education and opportunities for moving onto college and performed the same work at a fraction of the pay as men. The opportunity for men to study liberal arts provided significant, career and wage advancement (Gulliford, 1984).

Teaching was one of the most important forms of employment for women during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Vicinus, 1985). This occupation was one of the small numbers of significant and respectable jobs for women and they were willing to work for the wage offered. Leading educators had concerns about the "benefits of feminization of the profession" and presented higher pay to men to encourage them to take on the profession and move into educational leadership positions (Tvack, 1974, p. 62). Administration became a popular niche for men in education. Men also sought to be the superintendent in many cases and this fit the expectation at the time for men to be in the highest positions in schools. This structure of the school highly resembled the structure of the traditional and religious patriarchal family, as well as sending an unstated message to students of what were appropriate roles for men and for women.

As far as teaching and gender appropriate modeling were concerned, married men were preferred to be teachers over single men. Single men were viewed suspiciously as womanizers, lacking manliness, or having poor or irresponsible character. Despite the higher pay they received, men usually moved out of the classrooms into leadership in

schools or into other professions considered appropriate for the traditional leader of the heterosexual household (Blount, 2005).

Women, on the other hand, were expected to remain single in order to be a teacher. These single women who were becoming a majority of the workforce were seen as reinforcing the ideology of women being chaste and morally sound exemplars for children (Blount, 2005). As single women with meager pay, they formed their own same gender communities and companionships. This occupation allowed women to support themselves with their own money. These women, living on their own, working independently outside the home, challenged the patriarchal tradition of dependence on men.

During the mid-1800s, newly established academies and seminaries for women provided opportunities for formal education beyond the basic instruction for the first time for young women. This trend continued and following the Civil War, a number of states founded normal schools which focused on college-level teacher preparation needed to meet the growing demand for teachers. Many women continued to dominate the field of teaching (Vicinus, 1985). This gender shift in teaching heading into the late 1800s was in part caused by men actively rejecting teaching as an occupation. Men who were schoolmasters found themselves increasingly surrounded by women and children and left the profession in large numbers. To add to this, the profession was becoming increasingly supervised by male administrators hired, to some degree, to oversee the growing number of women in the teaching workforce (Tyack, 1974). This reduced the amount of autonomy and control teachers had and was also viewed as an erosion of the male teacher's masculinity (Blount, 2005).

The trend of increasing numbers of women becoming comfortable as teachers and men moving into other professions made schools aware of the diminishing number of male teachers. Thus, there became an increasing concern for the gender identity of male students. Districts were desperate to hire male teachers, so men were hired that did not always represent the typical heterosexual and traditional male that pursued a career and family (Blount, 2005). There were fears that the effeminate male teachers were harmful or brought abnormality to the school and that male students being around women so much would make them feminine. Male educators coped with these situations by creating niches that were for men only, including athletics, manual trades, specific subjects including math and science, and, of course, administration (Blount,2005).

### **Changes in Perspectives and Civil Rights**

A discussion of the history of gender and gay educators should include the institution of same sex academies and schools. In the mid-1800s, most educators, male or female, had attended a same sex college or institution where, to some degree, the controversy began regarding behaviors that occurred between those of the same sex (Vicinus, 1985). Many of these schools had a religious foundation and built their strong traditions on gender identity. In society, men and women developed separate-spheres ideologies, with men associating with men and women with women as they socialized and pursued interests. This was supported by same sex boarding schools with students eating, sleeping, and learning all on the same campus. Boarding schools were considered a benefit to students and reinforced gender appropriate behaviors (Blount, 2005). There were many accounts of students, especially women, who loved an older successful woman at the school. With that in mind, it was not a concern that both males and females developed attachments for older role models of the same gender. Some of these relationships

were close and intense and might even be described as passionate. Some of the relationships did become sexual and some of them long term, especially for women (Blount, 2005). Eventually, criticism developed for these women, especially when in tandem with the progress in the suffragette movement. A sex researcher named Havelock Ellis (1927) published the pioneering work, *Sexual Inversion in Women* as well as *Sexual Inversion in Men* in which he extensively examined cases of same-sex relationships amongst women and men. Mr. Ellis' term of 'inversion' eventually became the modern lexicon of homosexuality. He noted that women were expected to maintain some distance from men, but they were allowed considerably more closeness and intimacy when with each other. He also noted that men were actively discouraged by schoolmasters in several ways, after the existence of same sex relations amongst men were discovered despite many of them being more friendship and companionship-based with older and younger students. At this time, homosexuality became an issue for the public, as the reality of its existence was exposed, especially among young people at same sex schools or academies (Ellis, 1927).

The beginning of the women's suffrage movement presented the opportunity for women to attend college and pursue higher education. In the early twentieth century, societal changes became evident and included changes for women and their place in American culture. Although still scrutinized, women over the next few decades gained the right to vote and were now educated, politically capable, and economically independent. A change of perspective occurred from viewing the single unmarried teacher as desirable and chaste, to viewing the educated married teacher as a valuable new resource. With this new-found independence, women that did not fit the acceptable married mold were scrutinized closely and seen as pitiable or as 'old maids' and American society began to speculate that those who were unmarried might be deviant or

perhaps, women who desired the same sex. Once again in history, perception came to play as an emergence of a post-World War II awareness of gender identity and sexuality emerged (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988).

This time period saw a distinct increase in the awareness of homosexuality previously considered inappropriate and rarely discussed (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988). World War II provided a climate where same sex interests flourished. The war took men and women out of their small towns by the millions, to ethnically diverse urban areas. Because of this growing diversity, communities of LGBT people began forming. These communities consisted of entrepreneurs, restaurant owners, and like-minded business people surrounded by supportive groups (Rupp, 1999). Sexual boundaries were expanding in some ways, but the Cold War against Communism created a rash of investigations into government jobs in the 1950s and 60s. Homophile organizations such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis started in the 1950s and created advancement in political awareness and social contact among homosexuals and lesbians (Meeker, 2004). In some cases, citizens previously involved with the Communist Party became part of these organizations. The Party had considered homosexuals to be an oppressed minority and these associations hurt the ability of the group to attract members and added to the negative image of gays held by most Americans (Meeker, 2004). Scrutiny was given to anyone, however, who had a reputation or known affiliations with LGBT people and they were seen as a national threat. This started a nationwide fury of persecution against any affiliation with or reputation of being homosexual. Many times, the harassment was unpredictable and brutal and could be carried out by police themselves (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988).

During this time, the real battle began as anti-gay legislation appeared in a variety of instances. The 1955 Model Penal Code called for the legalization of all acts between consenting adults. Despite the advice of legal experts to end prosecutions for consensual acts, all state legislatures rejected this recommendation (Harbeck, 1997). The result was local statutes that prohibited gross lewd conduct, extramarital sex, and loitering that were now being used against gays and lesbians. This mobilization against gay people became an obsession in certain cities. In Boise, Idaho, gay men fled after over 150 local news stories appeared there and in nearby states that gave intense coverage of the witch hunt. The police called in fourteen hundred residents and pressured them to answer questions. Gay people were coerced into turning in friends (Gerassi, 1966). America was already experiencing a shock to the foundation of the family due to the Depression and post-World War II eras. The emergence of this subculture seemed threatening to the fragile heterosexual patriarchal family norms (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988).

It is possible that the group that was the most harmed by this anti-gay fervor were educators. They dealt with the legal and social stigma of their arrest as well as facing immediate job termination that ignored the components of the case. In Florida, beginning in 1960, the Johns Committee was responsible for a considerable degree of harassment and intimidation of educators (D'Emilio, 1983). This mandate was designed to deal with the population of suspected homosexual teachers who were suspected of coercing young people particularly at the high school level. The Committee was organized with an unusual arrangement with the State Superintendent of Schools. They were allowed to conduct investigations at schools and demand the immediate dismissal of teachers. The Johns Committee carried out an elaborate, intimidating, and dishonest set of procedures all designed to rid the profession permanently of any suspected

gay people by revoking their lifetime teaching credential after thorough humiliation (Graves, 2009).

The state that stood out regarding this legislation was California. First of all, California Penal Code, Section 291, stated that a law officer was required to report any arrest of a teacher involved in a sex-related crime. Even if the crime was unsubstantiated, it was used successfully to terminate the employee (Harbeck, 1997). Similar legislation was seen in the California Education Code, Section 12756, which allowed for the immediate termination of a teacher's credentials if convicted of a variety of sex-related statutes. These legal mandates were similar to Florida's in that unsubstantiated evidence, or the use of simply being arrested, was reason for termination (D'Emilio 1983). These states encouraged a rash and widespread targeting of the educational system and in particular gay people. There were a few gay people that fought the system, however the injustice against LGBT people was pervasive and usually these brave people lost legal battles. Homosexual schoolteacher cases were particularly hard on the accused. The public humiliation, loss of job, and sometimes fear of harm were cause for few legal battles to be pursued (Graves, 2009). A few noteworthy cases occurred that were important in the eventual gain of civil rights for LGBT people.

Traditional heterosexual values affected the judicial decisions of the 1950s and 60s. A typical case consisted of a male teacher usually arrested in a public restroom for lewd conduct. The court decision usually ignored any focus on individual rights or any type of equal protection under the law (Harbeck, 1997). In the case, *Sarac vs California State Board of Education*, (1967) there was no connection between the defendant's conduct in the restroom and his ability to teach, nonetheless, his teaching credential was revoked. Sarac made the mistake of admitting to one homosexual encounter in court. This is a landmark case because despite the presence of his wife

and children and excellent legal representation, the court proceeded to revoke the teaching license reflecting bias against homosexuals (*Sarac vs California State Board of Education*, 1967).

In Ohio, the case *Jarvella v Willoughby-Eastlake City School District Board of Education*, is significant in its examination of trends in cases involving educators. In 1967, Mr. Jarvella was fired from a high school teaching position for writing letters to a male student that were considered “gross, vulgar and offensive” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 202). The decision of the court in this case enhanced gay rights because it did not automatically side with the school district and the community. The court decided that instead there had been an unnecessary intrusion into Mr. Jarvella’s rights of protected speech because the letters were private communication. At his reinstatement hearing, testimony of his teaching excellence was presented to the court and it was also decided that his personal freedoms had been intruded upon (*Jarvella v Willoughby-Eastlake City School District Board of Education*, 1967).

In California, in 1964, the case *Marc Morrison and the Lowell Joint School District*, is noteworthy because it too demonstrates the social change that happened after World War II. The rights of the individual were considered and light was shed on the idea of personal conduct having little to do with being fit to teach. Mr. Morrison was reported by a married friend he had consensual sex with several times and he first resigned and then had his teaching credentials revoked. This case revealed that Education Code Section 13202 was void because of the mixed and imprecise interpretation of the language of “immoral, moral turpitude, and unprofessional” (Harbeck, 1997 p. 215). Prior to this case, anything that was upsetting to the school system was deemed as immoral, and for the first time, an emphasis on the rights of the individual. Morrison never regained his credentials but the case follows a trend in the late 60s of deciding in favor of the person in view of their civil rights (Harbeck, 1997).

As the 1970s arrived, we see much more focus on fitness to teach as opposed to trying to prosecute based on unsupported prejudices. Other states started to apply the Morrison standard. This is seen in Minnesota in 1971 with the case of *McConnell v. Anderson* (1970) the district court ruled in favor of a gay man who had a contract revoked as a university librarian simply because of reported public behaviors as a homosexual. They decided the university had violated his due process rights and that his private conduct and public life were not relevant to his job (*McConnell v. Anderson*. 1970).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the beginnings of a major social movement of gay liberation and activism is evident. In New York City's Greenwich Village, a gay bar named the Stonewall Inn became the source of a historical clash between police and LGBT people. The police were proceeding with what they thought was a usual weekend routine in closing a gay establishment. The clientele of the bar did not respond as usual to getting arrested and being put in a police van. Instead, a riot ensued that lasted for five days (Faderman, 2015; D'Emilio, 1983; Harbeck, 1997). The Stonewall riot represented a milestone in the collective entitlement for fair treatment and justice for gay people.

Because of the Stonewall riot, the gay community had "come out of the closet" and began to function as a political, social, legal, and educational lobbying group. By the early 70s, the issues involving LGBT educators went directly before the American public. In 1973, several states adopted the Model Penal Code, which decriminalized sex between consenting adults. This legislation changed the entire controversy over the rights of LGBT educators (Harbeck, 1997). The scenario for LGBT schoolteachers changed from a criminal issue to a social controversy over something no longer illegal. In the same year, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses (D'Emilio, 1983; Harbeck, 1997).

Lobbying was used by LGBT people but it is important to mention the considerable amount of public protest that happened after the Stonewall riot. LGBT educators first protested against discrimination in 1971 in New York City. It consisted of a sit-in where five protesters were arrested. This was the first example of LGBT teachers risking their jobs collectively to demand their rights (Harbeck, 1997). The next important set of events happened in the District of Columbia, St. Paul, Minnesota, Eugene, Oregon, and Wichita, Kansas. These cities enacted anti-discrimination laws. These laws stated that discrimination could not occur due to sexual preference and the response to these changes had relatively quiet success (D'Emilio, 1983; Harbeck, 1997).

In 1974, the National Education Association (NEA) made a unique stride in LGBT rights by making the anti-discrimination laws a national policy statement. The NEA provided protection for teachers in the form of financial and legal support in the case of litigation. They provided litigation experts once the case reached state or federal courts. It is interesting to note that since anti-discrimination laws were being litigated for LGBT people, this heightened awareness for African Americans, women, Jews, or any minority group (Harbeck, 1997).

The case law for LGBT educators of the 70s was much different than that of the 1950s and 60s. There was a prominence of mostly male litigants to a combination of male and female people whose sexual orientation came to the attention of school boards via rumor or publicity rather than accusation of criminal conduct. The politically sharp LGBT community also made a point to spread the financial and emotional burden amongst a number of special interest groups (Harbeck, 1997).

At this point in history, several cases emerged where gay teachers acknowledged their sexuality and their civil rights. Peggy Burton was a lesbian from Oregon, who fought for her

civil rights as a gay person. In her case, the argument was made that, like African Americans, LGBT people deserved protection under recent civil rights legislation. Burton was given financial compensation but was not reinstated in her position, which was a decision she also fought (*Burton vs Cascade School District*, 1973).

In *Acanfora v. Board of Education of Montgomery County*, Joseph Acanfora was a gay activist at Pennsylvania State University. The public acknowledgement of his sexuality led to suspension from his student teaching assignment and upon reinstatement, received a reassignment outside of the classroom that prohibited his contact with students. When he was refused reassignment, he pursued the same civil rights arguments that were used in the Burton case. There are two things to note about this case. First, this case was one where the court saw testimony from experts about the effect of a gay teacher upon children. Second, was the courage of Acanfora to make a national televised appearance on 60 Minutes where he was quoted,

Many of my friends have asked me why I'm doing this, why I don't just go someplace and be a teacher and not let the gayness enter into it at all. But the fact is that I'm gay, just like the fact is that other teachers are straight or heterosexual. But I'm sure a heterosexual teacher isn't going to live his life a complete lie and hide what he is and I have no intentions of doing that either. I have every right to be a teacher and I plan on doing both. (Harbeck, 1997, p. 240)

The civil rights activism of the time implied an acknowledgement of the prejudice that was pervasive in mainstream, white, heterosexual society (Harbeck, 1997). This focus on civil rights is still an issue in our current society and is reflected in the struggle for LGBT people to gain in most states, the right for a legal marriage.

As history has noted, there are many people that have had the courage to come out of the closet and fight the social mores that are still present in our world. Although LGBT people have

gained civil rights, many do not feel the same courage and are still facing situations in our society where there is a fear of harassment and harm. Beginning in the late 1970s, a similar discussion about current events for LGBT people is possible to compare to discussions held today. Even though we continue to talk about historical events, these are issues that still influence the ongoing struggle for social equality as well as equal rights.

In 1977, a former Miss America named Anita Bryant declared as part of her love for God that she would fight against a militant homosexuality invading our schools. In Dade County, Florida, Bryant led an anti-gay movement under a title directly related to the gay educator called “Save Our Children” (Graves, 2009). Bryant and her campaign depicted gay people as sexually deviant and prone to extreme behaviors that were based on questionable data. Due to all the false and vicious comments about homosexuals, a considerable amount of violence erupted at this time. In Florida, bumper stickers showed the slogan “Kill a queer for Christ” and the violence included nationwide incidents including beatings, shootings, and bombings of activists or known gay people (Graves, 2009). Although Bryant’s campaign seemed to have successful outcomes, including the political victory of her winning the vote on her antigay ordinance, gay rights were now in the national spotlight. This issue is comparable to current day topics because to mobilize against the open hatred, many known gay people chose to no longer sit quietly. This is still an issue for many gay people today. Gay people were participating in record numbers in the post Stonewall gay pride celebrations that were taking place across the country. Gay people were still battling the religious right, but none-the-less, were exposing themselves as part of the mainstream of American society.

It is possible that the idea of coming out or not about ones sexuality is an important aspect of the life of a gay person, that, is making the decision to come out openly about their

sexuality. This term is commonly known as “coming out of the closet.” Concealing the facts behind one’s identity is a considerable burden. Many times it leads to dishonesty and internal discord as a result of having to make excuses and lie to cover certain aspects of their lives. Most obvious is the self-loathing behaviors of depression, and even suicide. In the book, *Outing Yourself*, Michaelangelo Signorile (1996) explains that this feeling is given unintentionally by the most important people in our lives: our families, our schools, and even our places of worship. He comments that this is very difficult to accept from those that love us most and leaves a feeling of utter disgust within the individual. The gay person eventually feels there is something wrong with them. The homophobia in our society can be contagious and can lead to this “disease” being passed on in families, in schools, and by clergy, to children and people they influence (Signorile, 1996).

The legislation of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” is important to discuss because it, by the nature of the law, asks gay people to keep their sexuality out of the picture in the occupation of military service (Eaklor, 2008). The law basically bans openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual people from serving in the military. It is also highly discriminatory against acknowledged gay people. In a subliminal way, it was a way of encouraging the self-hatred that can accompany remaining in the closet. This 1993 law was finally repealed in 2010, a reflection of how LGBT people are still struggling with the most basic of civil rights, the freedom to choose (Eaklor, 2008).

Within a discussion about freedom of choice, is the controversy over gay marriage. It would seem reasonable to assume that this would be an issue directly affecting a gay educator. Gay marriage is a statement about identity and truly an equal opportunity to choose to live and be in equity with those around us. The Defense of Marriage Act was a federal law that refused to recognize same sex marriages (Solomon, 2014). Although the issue remained controversial,

several states have legislated in response to the law that it was unconstitutional (Solomon, 2014). As an educator and/or leader, it is almost imperative to role model the courageous actions it takes to live as one believes despite the perceptions of others. The gay marriage issue in this way reminds one of the struggles for racial equality. The population at large is struggling to accept a new and unfamiliar level of what is truly freedom of choice and justice for all.

The earlier depiction of the actions of Anita Bryant spouted anti-gay violence and subsequent societal response to gay marriage and the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” legislation kept LGBT issues in the spotlight (Eaklor, 2008, Graves, 2009). It is hard to determine whether this attention is the cause of ongoing violence against gay people or not but nonetheless, the harassment of gay people continues into current times and signs of continued struggle with threats of violence and anti-gay protest are evident in the news. Numerous incidents are notable. The 1984 Charlie Howard murder in Bangor, Maine is worthy of mention because of its questionable provocation and extremely violent brutality. In this case, the victim supposedly made a “sexual comment” and thus was brutalized and thrown over a bridge into a river, despite his pleas he could not swim. The perpetrators of the crime were minors and thus, released to the custody of their parents (Dunbar, 1995).

The Matthew Shepard murder occurred in 1998 and was considered a clear case of a hate crime against a man because of his sexual orientation. Matthew was tortured, beaten, and then tied to a fence to die. This case received much public attention and eventually after substantial litigation led to laws against hate crimes. This case received considerable media attention and later depicted the recounting of the incident in the form of a play, a movie, and extensive notice by musicians and performers (Shepard, 2009).

Another incident occurred in Denver, Colorado where three gay men were assaulted and beaten with one of them having his jaw broken. The attack occurred as recently as October 2010. The victims reported that anti-gay slurs were being yelled at them before the attack. It is difficult to draw conclusions as to the reasons why the men suffered this attack, however, it can be deduced that the attackers perceived them as gay men. The victims stated that it was “because they were gay” that the incident occurred (Denver Post, 2010).

At this point, the researcher uses his own epistemological views to add to the literature found around suicide and self-image. The attack in Denver reminds one that the perception of gay people often incites violent reactions. Men viewed as effeminate in their actions, body language, and the way they speak, can end up being victims of violence from those outside the LGBT community. The violence perpetrated against them suggests that gay people many times are perceived as unacceptably different even if they are not flamboyant. It is important for the author to mention this happens not just to gay men, but lesbian and transgender people as well.

Perception and self-image are key factors in LGBT people dealing with the hostility of our society. First, individual perception and acceptance of the self over time is important. Feelings related to lack of self-confidence or not being accepted for LGBT people are compounded when negative feedback or bullying occurs. Eric Rofes (1983) is a gay educator who wrote *“I Thought People Like That Killed Themselves: Lesbians, Gay Men, and Suicide.”* The author is clear that as the environment of our society has changed so has the ability of LGBT people to more fully accept themselves and increase their self-awareness. For example, data on gay suicide in the 70s and 80s is inconsistent with data before the Stonewall event and the onset of the resulting gay liberation (Rofes, 1983). Rofes also stated that more research needs to be done about the relationship between gays and lesbians and suicide. His extensive studies include

the importance of the negative influence of religion in society throughout history related to the subject of suicide and homosexuality. The research cited by Rofes (1983), concluded after interviewing a significant sample of gay men and lesbians that “53% of the men and 33% of the women who had considered or attempted suicide said that their homosexuality was a factor” (Rofes, 1983 p. 20). He notes:

There is no doubt that suicide and attempted suicide are frequent responses of gay people to the difficulties of the gay experience in hostile society. It has been suggested that the psychiatrists, clergy, and others who insist on characterizing gays as sick and sinful are responsible for driving many gay people to suicide. It is a form of violent oppression resulting from isolation, discrimination, and the problems of survival. (Rofes, 1983, p. 21)

*Time Magazine* (2010) reported that four young people, ages 13 to 18, who were either out of the closet or assumed to be gay, were bullied and or cyber-bullied and subsequently, committed suicide. These events received significant attention from educators in regard to bullying and what needs to be done with anti-bullying curriculum especially with the advances in technology leading to cyber bullying. These issues are especially difficult to face as educators are involved in the lives of the children they teach every day.

### **Supporting Theories**

Queer Theory and Queer Legal Theory served as a foundation for the research framework. QT is a post-structuralist product of feminist theories and gay and lesbian studies. The term “queer” as discussed in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, Dynes (1990), is for twentieth century America, “probably the most popular vernacular term of abuse for homosexuals” (p. 1091). The author goes on to mention that the term has experienced declining popularity and “may therefore reflect today’s greater visibility and acceptance of gay men and lesbians” (Dynes, 1990, p 1091). Despite the derogative slang usage, the word ‘queer’ has come to be used as an umbrella term to encompass those people that do not fit into a ‘heterosexual

behavior as normal' class of society. The use of the term in relation to theory, therefore, suggests an acknowledgement that it is out of the ordinary heterosexual perspectives of identity, gender, sexuality, and behavior.

Queer theorists tend to resist defining but do challenge the opinion that there is a normal sexual behavior. The social theorist, Michel Foucault stated, "That there is no single, all-encompassing strategy, valid for all society and uniformly bearing on all the manifestations of sex" (Foucault, 1978, p.103). It has been suggested by QT that sexuality is indeed not natural or correct but constructed. Sexuality is understood and experienced in historically and culturally specific ways (Sullivan, 2003). The construction or formation of views on certain non-heterosexual lifestyles and behavior is determined by history and the experiences and politics of previous generations. A simple example of this is the increased acceptance of gays and lesbians as a marginal group addressing their civil rights.

Jagose (1996) stated that "queer describes those analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire" (p. 3). Queer is also seen as a way of acting and by nature the queer theorist is resistant to the notion of a fixed identity. Rather, queer is seen as an action resisting what is considered normal, as well as ongoing and changing depending on the environment one is in (Sullivan, 2003).

Foucault points out that industrial society is responsible for repressing various sexualities but is indeed the source of the conditions that led to people exploring outside of traditional structures. He described it as an "explosion of unorthodox sexualities" (Foucault, 1978, p.49). For Foucault and others that have influenced the formation of QT, sexuality is not simply based

on heterosexual as a normal way of performing. QT questions the traditional, hegemonic understandings of sex and gender (Finneman, 2009).

Literature takes note of the historical significance of gender and how education has been influenced by it. Using the understandings created by Foucault and others, Judith Butler (1990) has established a foundational text that supports QT in her book, *Gender Trouble*. In the preface, she stated “the text asks, how do non-normative sexual practices call into question the stability of gender as a category of analysis? How do certain sexual practices compel the question: what is a woman, what is a man?” (Butler, 1990 p. xi). Butler (1990) questions the ideas of a normal set of gendered behaviors, which she sometimes refers to as performativity. Butler proposes that the term “gender” is a construct of our culture and society. She questions the feminist view of women as a group with common characteristics and proposes that such thinking reinforces a ‘binary’ view of the genders as distinctly men and women. This excludes any variations to a gender that has been changed (transgendered people) or any person that does not meet with traditional views of male or female (the practice of drag, gender bending dress, or demeanor etc.).

QLT, much like the aforementioned theory, acknowledges the idea of multidimensionality. The idea of QLT is that to be queer can hold multiple meanings and is quite different from person to person. This is similar to the inherent differences and varied life experience of anyone queer or non-queer (Lugg, 2003).

The literature related to this study also revealed information about how gay or lesbian people are perceived by society as a whole. The concept of hegemony and especially cultural hegemony in correlation to education were explored. These concepts of cultural hegemony originated primarily with the writings of the Italian philosopher and political leader, Antonio

Gramsci. As interpreted by Frey (1993), hegemony was described by Gramsci (1891-1937) as a form of control exercised by a dominant class. Frey (1993) noted that public education programs are constructed in a way that excludes certain cultural perspectives and fails to consider linguistic and socioeconomic differences. The misunderstandings that result from cultural hegemony in the curriculum and lack of educator sensitivity to differences results in general underachievement for many in minority groups (Frey, 1993). For a gay or lesbian teacher, these concepts provide a useful tool for understanding the issues and struggles that define normative sexuality at the expense of other sexual expressions (Khayatt, 1992). The concepts of the various forms of hegemony are interesting since educators that are gay or lesbian many times feel the need to be repressed or silenced regarding their identity and sexuality (Khayatt, 1992).

The researcher maintains an advocacy worldview and seeks to provide a foundation for continuing to gain understanding of the experiences of gay and lesbian educators. The basic principles of this worldview are that inquiry should contain an agenda for reform that may initiate changes for those in marginalized groups. As issues such as discrimination are studied and exposed, this research seeks to provide a voice for the participants in raising consciousness and improving lives (Creswell, 2007).

### **Related Research and Literature**

All aspects of gay history and life experiences were, and continue to be, explored in the literature. Within the study of people in any marginalized group, is the awareness one needs to have regarding the intensely personal and private nature of any individual's life experiences, and particularly, one's sexuality. Sensitivity in research, therefore, was taken into consideration. A sensitive topic is defined as "research which poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it" (Lee, 1993, p. 4). One of the issues for the gay educator is coming out of the

closet and quite honestly, how far out. Although we have made great strides with civil rights as mentioned previously, it can still be daunting coming to terms with how sensitive the issue can become, or that information when given, could have professional risks. The risks of interviewing are present for any researcher as well. Whenever issues that are sensitive are discussed and researched, the researcher can develop a friendly relationship with the participant. In addition, carefully following basic safety issues regarding conducting interviews needs to be considered when doing research around any sensitive issue (McCosker, Barnard & Gerber, 2001).

As the researcher continued to develop the proposal and the study continued, gaps in the literature emerged that explored insight into issues related to being a gay educator or leader. Eric Rofes (1985) wrote an autobiographical account which revealed the extensive struggle and confidence it took to come out as an openly gay teacher in Massachusetts. In *Socrates, Plato, and guys like me; Confessions of a gay schoolteacher*, Rofes' account is not only brilliant in its candor but is an excellent memoir of the trials of the beginning educator as well. Rofes (1985) continued to become a very successful educator, writer, and activist and as mentioned previously, also wrote and researched extensively on gay and lesbian suicide.

Kissen (1996) shared the experiences of gay and lesbian teachers in her book, *The Last Closet; The real lives of lesbian and gay teachers*. Her exploration was vast and included the factors of race, culture, identity, and the empowerment of coming out as a gay or lesbian educator. Jennings (1994) explored similar experiences in an anthology of gay and lesbian educator experiences entitled *One Teacher in 10*. This collection of poignant narratives includes an appendix of important legal cases and gay and lesbian educator organizations across the country.

Finally, Harbeck (1992) has led an important exploration of the legal history of gay and lesbian educators. She compiled a collection of studies that focused on various aspects involving gay and lesbian educators entitled, *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet, Gay and Lesbian Students Teachers and Curricula*. These research studies are in depth, and focus on issues such as educating gay and lesbian youth, perceptions of gay and lesbian educators, as well as history and empowerment. The literature supporting these research studies revealed many sources focused directly on the experiences of gays and lesbians and the related struggles and challenges of working in educational settings.

These narratives and research studies maintain a theme of struggle for belonging and identity. It is the researcher's intention to explore any connections between the lived experiences and current legislation that may not be directly discriminatory but still affects the mindset of the gay or lesbian educator. The research is expected to delve deep into the experience of the gay or lesbian educator and continue to analyze what is discovered in order to present the possibility for needed changes.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, an extensive history of gay and lesbian educators and the important role that gender has played in society, past and present, was shared. There has been substantial literature exploring the area of gay and lesbian educators' experiences and the struggle in both civil rights and acceptance. Although progress has been made regarding tolerance of gays and lesbians, civil rights issues are still at the forefront of many state and national political agendas. Civil rights and, particularly, equality regarding civil unions continues to reemerge as hot button issues for many that do not accept either the lifestyle or desire for equality. Finally, the theories and related research were explored that support the study of gays and lesbians and the

understanding of various ideologies and how they can affect the gay or lesbian educator. Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth description of the study's methodology.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This multiple case study examined the lived experiences of gay and lesbian educators and how these experiences affected their careers. Specifically, the experiences were limited to those that influenced their educational careers and perceptions regarding their success. The data was collected using interviews, field-notes, and questionnaires to develop a rapport with the participants.

### **Suitability of Qualitative Research Design**

Creswell stated that qualitative research is suited for “the study of research problems exploring the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 240). His considerations also included: (a) data collection with sensitivity to the problem, (b) analyzing data to establish patterns or themes, (c) a final report that provides for the voice of the participant with reflexivity of the researchers, (d) a complex description and interpretation of the problem, (e) and finally, a study that adds to the literature (Creswell, 2007).

The study considered that the life experiences of an individual connected to their sexuality is indeed a sensitive topic. Lee (1993) pointed out that research on sensitive topics frequently “addresses some of society’s most pressing social issues and policy questions” (p. 2). As mentioned in the literature review in the previous chapter, LGBT people have been the victims of bullying and suicide and concerns for basic civil rights still exist today. Pressing social issues add to the content of this study. The researcher intended to examine the data for patterns and themes across the participants of the study. The results of the analysis included the voices of gay and lesbian educators as they shared their experiences. Lugg (2003) mentioned that the

“queer experience” can hold multiple meanings and can be experienced quite differently from person to person (p.104).

This study is a multiple case study of gay and lesbian educators. Merriam (1988) described a case study as an “examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (p. 9). Merriam also points out that unknown relationships and variables can be expected to emerge from case studies which can lead to a rethinking of the subject or issue being studied. Insights from case study methodology help others understand the way things change and become what they are (Merriam 1988). The case study can also show the influence of the passage of time, for example, the changes experienced in legislation involving gay and lesbian civil rights. Case studies can also explain the reason for a problem, the background of a situation, or offer a deep understanding of the case (Creswell, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the cases were individuals who are self-identified gays or lesbians. Part of the inquiry involved the examination of the reasons why these individuals chose education as a career and various reasons for their success. It was expected that both similarities and differences would be discovered. The research intended to expand the understanding of the success and experiences of the gay and lesbian educator and add to the literature addressing diversity and tolerance in educational careers. The individuals’ experiences portrayed their uniqueness as reported through common patterns and themes. The results added to the limited published history of the gay educator’s experience and the relevance to success despite significant issues.

## **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the study was to explore the life experiences of gay and lesbian educators and their perceived influence on careers in education. The researcher focused on lived experiences that were perceived as influencing the careers of these individuals as educators or formal leaders.

## **Research Questions**

Prior to the interview, a debriefing statement (Appendix A) was sent to each participant and demographic information was gathered in the form of a brief questionnaire (Appendix B) from each participant. The following overarching research questions provided a guide for data collection and analysis:

How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to have impacted their work life?

The sub-questions that helped to clarify the responses were:

1. What does the examination of life experiences reveal about struggles for the gay or lesbian educator person who is an educator? (QT)
2. What does the examination of work experiences, of the gay or lesbian educator reveal about issues such as discrimination, gay marriage, civil rights; bullying and welfare of the LGBT student? (QLT)
3. How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to differ and vary from those in their profession that are not gay or lesbian? (QT and cultural hegemony)
4. What does the examination of life experiences reveal about gay identity in relation to becoming an educator or choosing education as a career? (QT)

5. What do gay and lesbian educators perceive as needed action or initiatives in schools to enhance their success and to best support LGBT students? (QLT and research literature)

### **Participants**

The study focused on successful gay and lesbian educators and formal leaders. For this study, an educator was described as a tenured, full-time teacher in the profession. A formal leader was described as someone who held a title that indicated some form of educational leadership as principal, assistant principal, superintendent, etc. The selection of the participants of this study began with professional contacts made at national conferences and through friends. Criterion based sampling was used to select participants with the following criteria: (a) hold a license to teach or an administrator license for a P-12 setting; (b) gained tenure or renewal of a contract for at least three years; (c) self-identified as gay or lesbian; and (d) be willing to participate.

During the fall of 2010, the researcher attended a national conference for educators in Denver, Colorado and met several educators that were part of a gay and lesbian leadership group. In a preliminary discussion about the proposed research, these professionals expressed interest in participation in the study. One of these professionals consented to participate in the study and other individuals provided additional contact information on potential research participants. The researcher then contacted these individuals and secured ten additional people willing to participate in the study. As a result, the participants represented national influence from four different states. Along with this expressed interest and geographic representation, additional purposefully-defined characteristics of participants included: (a) a balanced number of males and females; (b) a total number of 10-15 participants; (c) age variation between 20 and 60; (d) a

balance of teachers and formal leaders, and (e) a variety of teaching or leading levels (P-12). If initial contact with these participants did not yield enough numbers representing the range of perspectives, these individuals would be asked to recommend participants.

Demographic information was collected and used to verify selection criteria and determined the final selections of participants. The researcher estimated 20-30 interviews with 10-15 participants to achieve a sufficient representation of the data. A study conducted by Baker and Edwards (2012) mention this range could adequately provide data from a limited number of participants with in-depth review. Jennings (1994) used 36 participants in a study of gay and lesbian teachers and their experiences and Khayatt (1992) used 19 interviews for gathering information on the lives of lesbian educators. A summary of the participants selected is provided in table format along with a brief narrative accounting for the range of perspective (Table 4.1).

### **Data Collection**

Prior to beginning data collection, all guidelines for the Institutional Review Board were observed including letters of consent. To guarantee confidentiality, the researcher recorded interviews and allowed participants to review transcripts for accuracy. Due to the sensitivity of the question topics, the researcher carefully protected the identities of the participants by utilizing codes to analyze and present data in publication of the dissertation.

The sources of the data for this study included participant responses to: a) answers from a preliminary questionnaire, (b) inquiries about basic information and information related to career, education, and accomplishments, (c) two in-depth structured individual interviews conducted with each participant (Appendix C), and (d) anecdotal field notes done in conjunction with or after the interviews. As mentioned above, the IRB consent form was also used to obtain consent from each participant (Appendix D).

The preliminary questionnaire determined how well the various aspects of the population were represented and gathered information related to career and job success. Information such as gender, age, highest educational level attained, title or position, place of employment, length of time employed, and geographic location were included. The researcher made initial contact with participants via telephone with confirmation via e-mail. Participants had a choice to interview by telephone, virtual technology platform, or face-to-face, if location made that possible.

Patton (2002) stated, “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton 2002, p. 341). The researcher considered the integrity of a three-interview process but condensed the interview process into two in-depth interviews of approximately 45 minutes. The structures for the interviews are based on the content postulated by Seidman (2006) as in-depth phenomenological interviews. The interviews included questions about; (a) a focused life history and early experiences about the topic, (b) the concrete details of present lived experiences, and (c) reflection on making meaning of and understanding participant experiences (Seidman, 2006). The researcher framed these components into questions to conduct two interviews, providing in-depth interviews that gathered rich and thick descriptions of the experiences of the participants. This structure intended to save both the participant and the interviewer valuable time and resources yet provide ample opportunity for the researcher to sensitively respond to very private and personal information. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The second interview was modified to include probing questions based on analysis of the initial interview and attempt to address the research questions involving the issues of gay and lesbian civil rights. The researcher took notes by hand to confirm and supplement the data and used any information

that emerged. Finally, the researcher obtained permission to conduct a follow-up phone call with participants to clarify responses if necessary and to ensure consistency in data collection from each participant.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

Creswell (2007) provided an overview of validation strategies for qualitative studies and recommended that at least two of his eight strategies be utilized to ensure trustworthiness. To validate the study fully, the researcher used the following strategies; (a) multiple sources or triangulation to compare cases, (b) member checking to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions and analysis of the data, (c) rich and thick description to use participant quotations or narratives that provide case descriptions, (d) peer review to authenticate the data analysis process, and (e) clarify researcher bias by providing a description of background and belief systems.

By using information from a series of interviews and a questionnaire, the researcher gained information from multiple sources. The questionnaire and information from the first interview were shared with the participants for their review. The researcher provided a rich and thick description of each case and included this information for the participant to reflect on prior to the second interview. Upon completion of the initial analysis, the researcher encouraged participants to provide feedback, clarify any information from the first interview, and add confirmation about the results. After analyzing the results, the researcher reflected on existing literature presented in Chapter 2 and considered alignment with the study's purpose. The peer review process resulted in an 85-90 percent similarity between the author's data analysis and a fellow researcher's analysis.

Finally, it is vital to this research to clarify the biases of the investigator. This is important to the reader so that they understand the researcher's position and any biases or

assumptions that impact the study (Merriam, 1988). In this study, clarification of the researcher's bias, background, and past experiences deemed important consideration. These are discussed later in this chapter on the background and role of the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

The sources of the analyzed data included field notes, interview transcriptions, and demographic information from the questionnaire. The information from the interviews, notes, and questionnaire provided the in-depth descriptions of the participants. This same information investigated any similarities in viewpoints or background and used to discover patterns if any existed.

Creswell (2007) presented a data analysis spiral as a framework for proceeding with data analysis. The process included; (a) organizing and managing data, (b) reflecting, reading, and note taking, (c) comparing classifying and interpreting, and (d) visualizing and representing. This process moves in analytic circles rather than in a fixed linear approach. The researcher utilized this circular process in examination of several facets of data analysis (Creswell, 2007).

Ideas for making sense of the data emerge while still in the field, constituting the beginning of analysis as field notes are recorded (Patton, 2002). With the idea that data collection and analysis can proceed simultaneously, the researcher began to immediately organize and manage information by recording interviews with a digital voice recorder and then transcribing interviews with the aid of a professional transcriber. Transcriptions were then reviewed and compared to the recording to assure accuracy and to clarify exact statements made by participants. Field notes were then compared to what was transcribed for confirmation and further clarity. Patton (2002) noted that the first step in reviewing data is a thorough reading of both transcripts and notes to attempt to discover patterns or occurrences. Essentially, the

researcher examined the data to develop a coding chart with main codes followed by additional levels of coding or sub-codes within the main codes. Patterns that emerged from the coding process were then examined across all main codes to determine themes that cut across all facets of the research topic. A table (Table 4.1) and narrative text provided a framework to show comparative data and in-depth detail in Chapter 4.

The conceptual framework of the study guided the data review process by identifying key information for any significant differences or similarities presented in the interview process. These similarities and differences highlighted the lived experiences, educational careers and views, and experiences regarding civil rights issues of gays and lesbians. A table (Table 4.1) and narrative text summarized the comparative and in-depth analysis of the data.

### **Background and Role of the Researcher**

The author brings with him a unique perspective as a member of the gay and lesbian community himself. A multi-case study design was chosen since it enabled him to explore a group that had similar characteristics, but at the same time examine how these characteristics were influenced by outside factors such as race, socioeconomic experiences, and upbringing. The author of this study brought to the research a definitive and clear set of biases.

The researcher is an African American gay man that taught successfully for 16 years with an additional four years as an administrator in a large high school. The bias involved the insights gained by feelings of needing to continually be aware of being gay and or black, and of any possible discriminatory or violent statements of others. Within his experience as an educator, the author found a need to assure himself that he was continually pursuing excellence in the form of further education and strictly adhering to being excellent as an instructor. It was found that a sense of professional tenacity was essential, especially at the beginning of the career, along with

a sense of high achievement. Finally, the complications of factors that influence life experiences outside of sexuality such as race or ethnicity presented themselves in the data. The background of the researcher thus influenced the study and, therefore, validation was sought through the several strategies mentioned above.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the study as suitable for a qualitative method along with the purpose and rationale. The protocol for selecting participants was explained along with descriptions of how data collection occurred as well as how validity was maintained. Finally, data analysis was discussed along with the background and role of the researcher. In Chapter 4, the rich descriptions of the participants' cases are presented, followed by a chapter reporting the data analysis and resulting patterns and trends. The study concludes with a discussion of the interpretation of the patterns and themes, the implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 4 - Profiles

### Introduction

The researcher used purposeful selection and a reputational snowball sample to identify study participants (Creswell, 2007, Patton, 2002). Participant similarities included selection criteria such as being self-identified as a gay person and educator. Variations in participant criteria included gender, age, race, region of residence, and educational background relating to the subject they teach. The table below provides an overview of each participant's demographic information.

**Table 4.1 Participant Demographics**

Participant	Gender and Age	Location (Region)	Years in Education	Race or Ethnicity	Current Area of Focus and Grade Level	Degrees Earned and Accolades
P-1	Male / 51	Eastern United States	13	European American (Italian)	Advanced Placement Social Studies and History (High School)	BA History MA Social Studies, Numerous Awards for Research Education
P-2	Male / 47	Midwestern United States	25	European American (Dutch, Irish, English Russian)	Elementary Education all Subjects (2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade)	BS Education, BS Music, MS Educational Leadership Two-time Teacher of the Year Nominee
P-3	Female / 49	Midwestern United States	29	European American (German)	Special Education (High School)	BS Education, MS Special Education
P-4	Female / 52	Midwestern United States	19	European American (White)	English and Language Arts (Middle School)	BS in Education Experience as an Instructional Coach
P-5	Female / 37	Midwestern United States	11	European American (White)	English and Language Arts (Middle School)	BA in English MAE Elementary Education
P-6	Female / 56	Eastern United States	31	European American (Swedish)	Academic Advising (College)	BA and MS in Social Studies Current Ph.D. Candidate Outstanding Faculty Award
P-7	Female / 38	Midwestern United States	16	European American (White)	Executive Director (Day Care)	BA in Education MS Ed. Leadership Reading Specialist
P-8	Female / 38	Northern/Midwestern United States	7	European American	Instructor/Director (Food and Hotel)	BS and MS in Food Service and Hotel

Participant	Gender and Age	Location (Region)	Years in Education	Race or Ethnicity	Current Area of Focus and Grade Level	Degrees Earned and Accolades
				(White)	Management School)	Management
P-9	Male / 32	Midwestern United States	5	European American (Scotch-Irish)	All Subjects (Elementary Ed. Kindergarten-First Grade)	BA and MA in Elementary Education
P-10	Male / 39	Midwestern United States	11	European American (Czech)	Music, Theatre (Middle School)	BS in Music, MS in Elementary Ed.
P-11	Female / 56	Eastern/Midwestern United States	34	African American	Physical Education (Middle School)	BS in Education, MS in Adaptive PE

To best understand the participants, a profile for each participant is presented in Chapter 4 to feature the early life experiences and education of each individual. The profiles also provide a description of the participant in their own voice regarding aspects of identity, experiences as a gay person, experiences as a gay educator, and their feelings regarding civil rights. The profiles also highlight the progress made in civil rights of LGBT people and feelings regarding initiatives needed. Concluding each profile, the researcher included a one word descriptor to highlight a viewed strength or positive characteristic of the participant portrayed in the interview.

### **Participant 1 Profile**

#### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-1 was a 51-year-old educator in a large city in the eastern United States. P-1 was of Italian heritage and moved to this country when he was five. He remembered the impact that his very first teacher had on him, who taught him English and the beginnings of reading and writing. He felt confident about his childhood being one of diversity and awareness of his culture and those around him. “The city is very heterogeneous. You are very diverse, you are exposed to many different things from a very early age and you learn to kind of adapt and live with different people, with different points of views and different religions and different life styles at a very early age.” He further stated, “I would say I was fortunate to have had a really good education in good public schools. And so, what do I bring from that? I bring from that all those experiences. I

mean, I love to take kids on school trips that are relevant to whatever is going on and we are lucky in the city that we have a lot of resources. That is something that I bring from my early education experiences. I have always had a collaborative, cooperative learning school environment; I certainly bring that to my teaching and try to just maintain a very respectful climate in the classroom.”

### **Work and Career Experiences**

His first career was in a successful food service and catering business. “I was happy in my previous career, but I think I had plateaued, and I was thinking about, what I would do in the future as a career. I always thought about, I mean I always liked teaching. I liked that kind of intellectual environment and so I decided to go back to grad school and pursue a degree and see if this was something I would consider and that’s where I am now.”

He has been an educator for 14 years and has a BA in History and MA in Social Studies. He teaches a rigorous day including four advanced placement courses and a research class to an average of 34 students per class in a successful public school. P-1 feels that he has a very supportive environment at his school with both colleagues and students. He is involved in his school leadership team and is in a “Safe Space” school that has had an active Gay Straight Alliance for 15 years. He described the climate at his school as “overwhelmingly positive”.

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

He came out at 17 years of age and was accepted by his family and friends as well as being president of his senior class. Having grown up in a large eastern city in the United States and, in the perception of the researcher, did a minimal amount of struggling regarding identity or civil rights issues regarding being gay. However, regarding violence against gay people, he noted: “I have certainly had my share of hearing it in the news and here in this city we still have

a lot of the hate crime incidents that are still going on, but I mean it really does disturb me quite a bit.” In the state he lives in, domestic partnership and gay marriage were both made legal some time ago. P-1 viewed civil rights as a larger issue that applies to all people not just gays or lesbians. His situation as far as employment stability was comfortable but he would investigate, possibly litigate, or move if threatened with anti-gay discrimination. P-1 has pursued a domestic partnership but is currently not in a relationship and does not have children.

### **Successes**

P-1 has received numerous teaching accolades, most recently being named a Fellow with the Academy of Teachers (2013) and the Department of Defense named P-1 as Research Teacher of the Year (2012). He was also honored by the Worldwide International Student Exchange (WISE) Foundation as a Teacher of the Year.

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

This participant had a successful career prior to teaching. When asked about what inspired him to keep improving and to remain a lifelong learner he stated, “Number one would be the woman who taught me English. I arrived with my parents in this country and was unable to speak any English and she basically just taught me everything; the alphabet, spelling, the whole bit.” He mentioned that there were no services available for present-day English as Second Language and it was the fact that despite simply being a homemaker, the English teacher was very well informed and studious about politics. “She was a great inspiration in terms of her generosity and her love of learning. Besides her, I would say collectively a good number of my teachers. I really had great teachers who supported a very positive learning environment that was more about exploring and discovering than it was about finding the right answer.” He gave credit to this individual woman and the general education that he had received as a young person

for his current success. About the future, he stated “I feel that I am doing exactly what should be and having a positive impact on my students. I am personally getting a lot of satisfaction from my job. I have a nice rapport with my former students who have gone on to have successful careers of their own.”

### **Needed Initiatives**

P-1 had a profound response to questions about needed initiatives for LGBT educators or students which reflected his confidence and comfort with his identity and his job, “I think that Gay History should be part of the social studies curriculum, and probably the English one too. If prominent gay persons were included and recognized, I think that would go a long way breaking down stereotypes and it would empower students and teachers. The Gay Rights Movement is often overlooked in history classes and students read the works of many gay authors, but their personal story is never discussed. Including this would be a HUGE benefit for everyone.” This brought with it the immediate inclusion of and acceptance of the talents and contributions of gay people and the acceptance of gay people themselves. It is reminiscent of the inclusion of African Americans or Italian Americans or any American group that we currently honor or recognize.

### **Researcher’s Perspective: Confident**

This participant is summed up in the researcher’s perspective as Confident. P-1 had a relaxed demeanor about being a gay person and seemed to be very supported in both his current position and by his family and personal past. From this and the success he had in becoming and maintaining a career as an educator, the association between where an educator lives and works seems to be related. The city where P-1 was living is a large metropolis where the subject of sexual orientation is not as much of an issue as in other regions of the country. This city has had established equal rights and protections for some time and could even be considered as a

progressive or liberal climate. Another perspective is P-1's access to considerable resources. Living in this city he had access to all types of locations and real-life experiences readily available to enrich his teaching, especially for high school students.

## **Participant 2 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-2 was a veteran teacher of 25 years. He was 47 years old and lived in a large city in the Midwestern United States. His experiences growing up were difficult and challenging. As a strict Catholic, he was taught that being gay was in violation of the church and indeed, very wrong. He stated, "Growing up in my hometown was a real negative experience. I was picked on, I was called gay, sissy, faggot, and my family experience was also very negative. It was not okay to be gay. Back when I was in middle school in the late 70's it was hell, I mean I struggled with that and it made me want to get the hell out of there. Now I did have, some really good teachers that were awesome. I think they knew that I was being picked on and I think they knew so you know they took extra special care and didn't make me go out to recess and things. I kind of think I had some really unique individuals that were looking out for me in that situation. It was my fourth-grade teacher and my high school music teacher. My love of education was because of him. He was encouraging of my singing and encouraged me to be my own person." From these quotes we can see that despite these factors, P-2 was able to cope through the help of key people in education. He stated, "I knew I was gay from a very young age, but I stuffed it away, I did what the church said, I did what my family wanted". P-2 continued in his life as a straight person and got married to a woman. He had four children in this marriage before identifying as a gay man.

## **Work and Career Experiences**

P-2 was inspired by his talent and interest in music and he continued to have a professional career in singing. A former educator of his in secondary school and other music educators that he had worked with and that continued to educate and direct music, served as a continued inspiration. He had taught every grade from kindergarten to high school and taught second grade at the time of the interview. His considerable education included a B.S. in Education, a B.S in Music, and an M.S. in Educational Leadership.

P-2 was enthusiastic about his involvement in leadership and felt positive about his relationships at school. "I am very active in the school because of the gay issue and I'm in the booster club. I don't want that to be a negative issue, I want people to see that, you know I'm pretty much out. I want them to see me as a friend, that gay is not evil. My job is stressful because of Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). I am also on the leadership team and our job is to take this back to the teachers and teach it to them and say 'we're gonna do this and put a smile on our face'". He also brought his interests and hobbies to his instruction. "I try to cook in the classroom once a month and I try to incorporate reading and math into the technical writing for second graders and of course the music; it naturally lends itself to those young kids. We sing all the time, and we make up songs. I have a good relationship with students."

## **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-2 was bullied heavily as a child being called gay, sissy, and faggot. With both his family experiences and community he noted several times in the interview that it was a very negative experience growing up. This was made even worse by the Catholic church and the explicit and repeated messages regarding the sinfulness of being a homosexual. He began his

career in the Catholic private school system clearly aware of the fact that he could be fired for being gay.

Because of this and the pressure to conform, he chose to attempt a heterosexual relationship which led to a 13-year marriage and four children. Eventually his identity as being gay came to light and his marriage ended in a stormy divorce including him getting kicked out of his house. However, the ex-wife conceded custody of the children to him which he fought for vigorously. He emphasized that it was quite a painful process, but he was happy to be raising his children and to have taken on the challenges of being a single parent as a result. With regard to how this appeared to others, he commented, “I think there is a complete misunderstanding through our society where they say, ‘Well you know you were married and you had four kids, now, why all of a sudden are you gay?’ Well I always knew I was gay and like I said I did what society told me to do. So that’s a blessing and curse at the same time, but I do have four children, they have been raised by me for the last 13 years.” P-2 was not comfortable with self-identifying as gay until he was 37 years old. His process of becoming comfortable was slow and was not one of declaration but simply beginning to trust a few close friends. He mentioned in the interview, in several situations, that his friends were very comfortable with the information or that they already knew. This process included his kids becoming used to his identity and their lives actually including P-2’s new same sex partner. He pursued counseling for both himself and his children to help with this transition.

He taught very young children up to fifth grade and did not feel it was necessary for them to know details of his personal life. The fifth-grade class would occasionally pry about his wife and things like that which he made clear were not issues of their concern. If a colleague knew he was gay they were likely a friend who had been to his home for one of his gatherings. In general,

he did not see a problem with people knowing he was gay. He had some strong feelings about the rights of gay people but was quite pleased with the progress being made in recent times. He mentioned that it seems that the younger one is, the less of an issue being gay was but for someone older in their 40's or 50's, it was a concern. He was clear that he believed in fighting for civil rights and or even relocating but would put the interests, concerns, and education of his children first before taking any action to protect his employment. P-2 voiced he would like to see staff education in how to guide gay or lesbian students especially if this happens during the high school age.

### **Successes**

P-2 was successful in gaining custody of his four children and had also proceeded to raise them after his divorce. P-2 had been with his partner for 13 years who supported him as a parent of the four children. His excellence as teacher was demonstrated by his 25 years in the profession. His undergraduate time in gaining skill as an educator resulted in two bachelor's degrees and his interest and success in education was such that he went back to school to gain a Master's in Educational Leadership. He was very successful in building relationships with kids and parents which was demonstrated by the fact that he had been nominated twice for a Teacher of the Year award by two different parents, only to have the process of that blocked by an administrator that did not like him. P-2 did not let that interrupt being an excellent and involved teacher. He was a booster parent and a member of the school leadership team as well as being the building representative for the teacher's union. He was supported by most of his staff as a mentor for teacher union rights and had close friendships with colleagues as well.

## **Motivation and Inspiration**

He was motivated by two former teachers, one a fourth-grade teacher and the other, a music director in eighth grade that encouraged his musical career and hobby, which he still maintained active involvement in. He was also motivated by a fellow musician and highly accomplished music educator of national popularity. He had some similar lived experiences since both his eighth-grade teacher and musician friend were also married to women and then came out later in life as did he. He also mentioned the writer and LGBT spokesperson Dan Savage as someone whom he admired. The common thread characteristic of those people that inspired him were the focus on courage to come forward and be yourself, despite one's histories or past influences. His future hopes were to enjoy his life with his partner and as he put it "get his personal life back". At the current time, he felt most of the focus, especially financially, should be on his kids until they were adults in college. He sees himself being a counselor (directly related to being gay he says) as well as an administrator which he felt would probably be first.

## **Needed Initiatives**

P-2 was unafraid of litigation and he felt that there would be protection of his civil rights if it came to that point. He felt this way about overall civil rights including the marriage issue as well as the civil rights of being a teacher. When asked about leaving the state or moving for civil rights reasons, he stated, "I would start with the union and it would be a battle, I would have to think long and hard because basically I am married to my school district for benefits and insurance and so since I am in a unique situation where I have children I need to provide insurance for, that would be something I would have to take a long hard look at. Of course, I would leave to move to a state where I don't have to worry about all that stuff, but I would start

with the union and think about leaving as my children get older. I would move in a heartbeat, it would depend on the timing of that issue or that crisis. My response would be to rally together to work to make change which would be very difficult in [Midwestern city and state].” At the time of the research the Supreme Court had not yet passed the bill to legalize same sex marriage, but this came to be and P-2 proved himself right in that regard. P-2 felt that gay people should have the same rights as any other group and was understanding that as an example, the struggle of race was still very real and present.

Finally, when speaking about changes that would improve the climate for gay teachers or students he was clearly reminded of the supports that he would have benefited from as a young person. He stated, “I would like to see the door opened more for those students. I think this is more of a high school issue...the district has started very slowly and quietly addressing how we deal with kids who come out at school. I know the high schools here have a Gay Straight Alliance. I think administrators, teachers, paras, everybody needs to be trained on how to deal with the situation where a kid comes to you and says, ‘I think I’m gay’ or ‘I can’t tell my mom, but I can tell you because I am close to you.’ I have people that come to me and say, ‘I have a gay child or a gay student, what do I do?’ I think we need to train those people on how to get them help, not necessarily help but get them support.” P-2 felt that all people need to be aware of the struggle that gay students go through. He shared that in his life with his four biological children and a partner he has made the idea of acceptance very clear in his parenting. “I taught my kids acceptance...gay, straight it doesn’t matter, black, white, purple, green, polka dotted, it doesn’t matter. We don’t know what is going on in their lives. You know, not to be judgmental that’s [also] something I teach in my classroom.”

### **Researcher's Perspective: Courageous**

A singular word profile that comes to mind for P-2 was courageous. Immediately what came to mind was the influence that geography and religious upbringing can have on any person, but especially on a gay person. Courageous was able to overcome the consistent bashing and bullying of those that hammered against him in a small-town Middle America setting. During the interview it was difficult to hear about this issue even though it brought support to the purpose of the study. Courageous seemed focused on what the struggles were for young people who were gay. It was noted by the researcher that it seemed that since this was such a difficult time for him there were several references to being able to change the awareness of educators, as to the struggles of a young gay person, as well as wanting to be a counselor to advocate for those that are different.

Besides surviving the bullying, Courageous had to overcome another aspect of life in a small town and that is the expectations of family that center on religion. Regarding being gay, Courageous emphasized several times that “My family experience growing up was very negative. It was just not spoken about in the church as it is now. I learned at a very young age that it was very bad.” This aspect of his upbringing and lived experiences had a clear effect on P-2 and was brought to light in the interview regarding a teacher being out or not. “I can see how it would be helpful in a middle school or high school setting because then those kids that are struggling would have somebody to turn to. Which they need, I mean that is what I didn’t have. So, you know – who do I turn to? a Priest?”. Courageous could laugh at the last statement as did I at the time, but it was evident to the researcher that this lived experience had a significant effect on him.

The researcher's perspective on Courageous concluded with the idea that a truly courageous person or soldier continues onward despite struggle or discomfort and most significantly in the service of others. Courageous refused to give up on his devotion to his children. He clearly stated that they come first before he was willing to focus on his needs or desires. He served dutifully every day, using all his positive life experience to expand his teaching such as using cooking in the classroom and creating songs with the students. He was engaging and friendly to his staff and had significant and positive relationships and friendships in his place of work. He was undaunted by an administrator who was less than supportive. Instead he continued to be an advocate for the union, and a lead teacher as well, in support of what was best for his staff to develop professionally and to do what was mandated by the district. Courageous continued to always strive forward and seemed to always have.

### **Participant 3 Profile**

#### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-3 was a 49-year-old veteran teacher of 29 years and was currently living in a large Midwestern City in the United States. Originally, she came from a small Midwestern town with 5,000 residents. Her family was well known and prominent, and after a successful career her father started a popular business. During the time of his working in his career she stated, "We vacationed, we traveled to the lake and water skied, we did all kinds of things like that. We had a group of about six families that we hung out with and those were the people that I grew up with that you can't remember not knowing." She went to high and junior college in that same area and she felt that indeed her teachers in junior college were a big influence on her. "Teaching was not my original plan and I was pre-med for a long time. Teaching science was going to be my back-up plan, but it's been a career and I wouldn't trade any moment of it."

## **Work and Career Experiences**

P-3 found herself to be good at her job and stated, “I’m a believer that some educators are kind of made, but most of them are pretty much born.” I started it as a back-up plan and I was pretty good at it and I got better and I’m still learning cause you know I’ve been doing it for nearly 30 years and I’m not so brilliant to think that I know it all.” She had built good relationships with former students and players that she coached that still stayed in touch with her and were thankful to her for her leadership and guidance.

A more difficult subject to approach was her experience that she had as an administrator in a small community. “I was an administrator at school and lost my job and what most people would feel was my relationship. I was not given a choice as to whether I was going to leave or not, that choice was made for me.” P-3 struggled past this situation and continued as a teacher and became quite good. “I had to reinvent myself and I reinvented myself as a special education teacher.”

## **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-3 was married in a heterosexual relationship for about six years. She had a daughter in this marriage and was collaborative with her ex-husband in raising their daughter who was in high school. She had many challenges along the way to this point. “There has been a lot that has happened since the divorce since he wasn’t aware of my sexuality at that point, so there’s been some growth on both parts, but where we are right now is trying to raise a kid that is going to be a healthy part of society.” P-3 lived with her daughter and was very involved in all of her activities and in making sure of her academic success.

P-3 was in her 40’s before she was comfortable being out to her family or date socially. She felt that people in a previous part of her life knew. “People in my hometown know, I took

my partner to a reunion a few years ago so my classmates know, my hometown knows, but it's not something I broadcast." When asked if there were any problems if a person in her position was out or openly gay she stated, "It depends on where you are, that's just the way it is in the community."

Despite the experience of losing her job as an administrator she felt that she had been treated well by most of her associates at her current job. She felt that other than that situation she had not felt discrimination or harassment. Her awareness was keen regarding how the issue was addressed and she emphasized that the concept of acceptance was much more positive than teaching tolerance per se. She felt comfortable being home for her reunion with former friends and mentioned that many of them came to her and said that they liked her partner. She also lived in a small town currently with her partner and she felt that they were very accepted there. Once again it seemed with P-3 that people who had known them both in her hometown and her partner's hometown had accepted them.

### **Successes**

P-3 was successful in several significant ways. The first success was in the guidance that she was providing her daughter. P-3 had her daughter involved in athletics year-round and she was also very attentive to her academic success. Regarding her ex-husband she stated, "I consider us to be fairly decent friends right now." They both were able to get along because the goal was the success of the child. "We have one goal and that is to raise a child that is productive and has a great relationship with both parents."

P-3 was very accomplished in her education and had a bachelor's degree in education, a master's degree in special education, a master's degree in curriculum and instruction and a master's degree in educational leadership. She was currently teaching Special Education in a

class within a class setting but she had been working in the field of education for 29 years. She was also a successful athlete and played college volleyball, as well as having nine years of experience as a basketball coach. She mentioned that she had built lasting friendships through her former athletes who were now adults. P-3 also played guitar and was a musician in a band as was her daughter.

Finally, her success was capitalized on by the fact that she had acceptance of those from her hometown and in the current town she and her partner lived in. She succeeded in getting to a point of not only self-acceptance but struggling past what she believed to be a situation of discrimination.

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

P-3 was a believer that she grew into the profession and gained the talent and skill over time. “I am still learning after doing this for almost 30 years. I don’t consider myself so brilliant that I know it all. I like to be better, I like to learn.” She had different plans for her career path and was glad she ended up as she did. “I wouldn’t trade any minute of my career.” She was very pleased to see that there were former players that she coached that were still in touch with her after years. “I’m very fortunate to have had some really good people in my life and some good educators that I met at the right time.” P-3 mentioned that she was still in touch and good friends with a former colleague who was considerably younger than her but acted as a mentor and advisor as she was learning her craft as a teacher when she was at the beginning of her career.

### **Needed Initiatives**

P-3 felt that the teaching of respect was a primary goal and needs to be more emphasized in education. “I would like to see some education across the board in teaching our kids respect and I don’t say tolerance, because I don’t like the word tolerance, but acceptance for the people

around us because tolerance implies I'm doing something wrong, and I don't believe I'm doing anything wrong. Acceptance says that I accept you for who you are and until we start teaching our children that value we're never really gonna get anywhere in this world. I think there is a direct correlation to politeness or courtesy education, how we're treating each other, how we're talking to each other. We struggle so much in teaching our kids how to be respectful to one another and it boggles my mind from a day to day basis...we're raising entitled kids who really don't know how to be respectful to one another...we want to point at different cultures, different races, different demographics and say they don't know [how] to treat one another because we see two black kids using the 'n' word. Ok well I kind of buy that I see rich white kids not treat one another very well either. I think it's across the board generationally.”

### **Researcher's Perspective: Devoted**

The researcher's perspective name for P-3 was devoted. Devoted was not only devoted to her career she was committed to being a life-long learner and was quick to admit that despite her years in the business she had much to learn. Despite some choices that she made to be herself, she did not let the loss of a desired position, ruin her frame of mind of what she could do as an educator. She continued to pursue a degree that she knew would be used and currently worked as a special education teacher. Devoted was indeed a good name for her because despite her troubles in a previous heterosexual marriage and a subsequent child, she was committed to her daughter as a single parent, and to the collaboration needed with the father to raise a child with excellent values and a good relationship with both parents. Her daughter was a committed athlete who worked on her sport year-round and Devoted was there for the travel, cost, and equipment needed to keep this going. Devoted continued to communicate with former students and former colleagues, both as their mentor and in some cases where she was the mentee. She was also

accepted and accepting of her former small-town friends and family that were aware of who she was and her lifestyle. Finally, her devotion was capitalized by her successful relationship of four years with her partner.

### **Participant 4 Profile**

#### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-4 had been an educator for 20 years and was 52 years old. She was from a small Midwestern city where she still lived. P-4 had a traditional education and went from elementary to high school in this setting. “The diverse population of the town definitely had an influence on me.” Having grown up with this diversity she viewed it as a positive. “I think in some ways I had an advantage to others in the profession because of having grown up in this area and with this diversity.” Besides this, she was a very active athlete and enjoyed a variety of sports including softball, basketball, volleyball, and bowling. P-4 traveled and took summer vacations with her family as a child. “My dad loves history so wherever we went it was something historical.” She mentioned that this was short lived however since her parents were divorced when she was young, but she mentioned places like Nashville, Dallas, Kansas City, and Vicksburg as places they went to.

#### **Work and Career Experiences**

P-4 had an aunt and an uncle who were both teachers and she felt that influenced her decision to go into teaching. “My mother thought I should go into teaching although I didn’t listen, it seems we never listen to them in time, you just don’t.” P-4 obtained a bachelor’s degree which focused on recreation which was driven by her interest and love of sports. She first worked for a mail delivery service and began coaching prior to that and during that time. She

worked for this company and coached on the side for nine years. Many of her friends she had played sports with had become teachers and they encouraged her to also become an educator.

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-4 was married in a heterosexual relationship for seven years in the town she grew up in. When asked if it was important whether a teacher was out or not, P-4 replied, “No I don’t think so. I don’t [think] that’s even relevant. I think that most people don’t seem to worry about it.” When asked about being out, she also replied, “I um, really I am not out. Part of it is just having grown up in a small town with people knowing me and people knowing of my past and having been married. I feel most people know so I just don’t go there with people regarding that issue. But when I am out of town with my partner’s family they are comfortable with it and it doesn’t bother them at all. Part of it is being in the small town I am from, when you’re in a large city, things are more open I mean that is just part of it. At home I really don’t go out much. When I was younger maybe but now I just want to go home. I may go out but it’s not every Friday night or something. I’m not a real activist, but I am a proponent for anyone’s equal rights.”

P-4 was more comfortable with focusing on maintaining professionalism, than on her identity and personal life being revealed. She had strong feelings regarding those that were highly visible as gay people. “Sometimes I think people are too loud about things and I think our community gets hurt by people that do that and are so loud and so obnoxious about things. They really make us look bad and we’re not all that way. I think of some of the Gay Pride things when I see all of the show, it’s kind of like no wonder people think certain things because you go out there and act like an idiot; I’m sorry but sometimes they blame the majority of the people for that.” When asked if there were any problems with a person in her position being out or not, she stated, “I think there are and that’s one of the reasons I’m not. You know I do know some people

that are very comfortable with that and say they don't have any problems, but again they're not from here which I think, makes a huge difference. For me working with upper administration it's a subject that I don't go anywhere near. With my students I don't talk a whole lot about my personal life anyway, just where I travel and do different things, but as far as intimate things, you know now I may tell them about my past, being married, kind of lead it that way. I think we're professionals, this is our job, we're educators and teachers, we're there for the children, to be their teacher not their aunt." P-4 was comfortable with a certain level of privacy. She still maintained the relationship which she had been in for 15 years and had plans for retiring with her in another state.

### **Successes**

P-4 had chosen to stay in her home town despite the discomfort of having had a previous heterosexual relationship that many knew about. She was successful in continuing to maintain her life despite her change in identity which to her was not a public matter. She was able to maintain her heterosexual marriage for seven years and at the same time worked and coached. P-4 found her niche as a teacher because of being affiliated with coaching for nine years and continued to succeed as a teacher for 20 years. During this time, she also took on a role as both an instructional leader for her building and as a district committee leader for language arts. Besides her time as a teacher, P-4 had been in a successful gay relationship for 15 years.

### **Motivations and Inspirations**

P-4 felt in some ways that it was a family tradition to teach. Her aunt and uncle both were teachers and she was told by her mother that she thought she should be a teacher. P-4 coached softball, volleyball and basketball as well as worked fulltime. She stated, "All of my friends who I coached and played sports with were teachers, so I figured why not just go into it." Part of her

philosophy of teaching was that a teacher should be a life-long learner. “I think that an educator should always be striving to become better in their profession like any profession, I don’t think you should get stale in what you’re doing.” She also mentioned that the requirements and encouragement of the district to continue to develop professionally motivated her as well. P-4 had the future hope of retiring with her partner in another state where they were looking at properties to buy.

### **Needed Initiatives**

P-4 would like to see partnerships and attitudes of young people simplified. “One thing I’ve noticed having had some health issues and like spending time in the hospital and having surgery and emergency stuff going on in both of us...now that the world is a different place I think they are much easier...I mean [with] the doctors and everybody there was never any problems, so you know I could say who I wanted to come in and all that...I think it’s too bad that you can’t, you know for insurance purposes and things I would really like to be able to have [it] that both names are [recognized]. Regarding changes of attitudes she commented, “[I think] that the adult population needs to take a lesson right now from the kids. I mean our kids today are pretty open. Maybe it’s because of you know what they see going on in the world and there’s change and that’s okay, but I think the adult population are the ones that are having a harder time with it...they might say they are more open, but I don’t know that they really are all the time.”

### **Researcher’s Perspective: Committed**

The researcher’s view of the participant was one of commitment. Committed had chosen to stay in her home town and she felt that this place was her home. When asked if she would leave if the civil rights environment became hostile or discriminatory, she stated, “I feel that [town] is my home and it would be very hard to leave, I would be very upset, and I would be

hurt, it would be hurtful.” Committed had chosen to stay and kept her personal life private and felt this was part of the commitment to where she had grown up. Committed had also taken on the career of teaching successfully for the last 20 years. Not only was she committed to her job, but she stuck with her first relationship for several years. She was also committed to her current partner for the past 15 years and planned on maintaining that commitment for life.

## **Participant 5 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-5 had been in the teaching profession for 11 years. She grew up until she was in first grade in a large Midwestern city and then moved to a nearby suburb. She remembered at a young age that the diversity of the city was not there when she moved to a rural suburban area. “I had a much more diverse group of friends in the city. I went from a lot of diversity to absolutely none. It was a really small school district and it was a K-12 building.” P-5 had a strict religious upbringing. When asked if there were any family hobbies or travel that she remembered she stated, “I don’t know because we really didn’t go anywhere. There was no traveling. I had never even left the state until I went to college. My dad was a preacher, but not the kind that had a church, all the men were the preachers or teachers or whatever, but they had regular jobs during the week.” P-5 went from high school to college and then on to graduate school in close succession and then began her career as an elementary school teacher.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

P-5 admitted to changing her mind several times in college about her field of study, and quickly realized that there were not very many options for an English degree. She considered being a reporter which was a low paying job but ended up being a staff educator for a doctor at a medical college. “I was the one who wrote all the presentations, notes, and tests, and I graded the

tests. I did all the teacher work, the doctor would present the information based on PowerPoints I would build, based on the information they would give me-here's what we need to cover, or whatever and I would do all that part. I loved doing that part of the job." P-5 decided to return to graduate school and finish her initial teaching license. "I decided gosh I'm doing all this work to be a teacher, I'm just not the one up there presenting...so I went back to school." P-5 works collaboratively with her teachers as a librarian. "I do some co-teaching, where I actually lead the lesson occasionally, in all subject areas. I've been known to go into art or science not just the English or reading classrooms."

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

When P-5 was asked about a religious upbringing she mentioned, "It was strict, very strict." When asked about being reluctant to coming out, she stated, "There was like ... a lot because it would mean I was going to hell." P-5 came out when she was a freshman in college where she mentioned dating a boy for some time. "This is no good for me and so that stopped." Regarding the question, whether it was important if a teacher was out or not, she responded, "I think yes, if that teacher is comfortable with it, then it's important because it's obviously important to them if they are comfortable sharing that with colleagues and students. Ultimately the goal should be that it doesn't matter one way or another. It's important, I think for all of us to feel safe enough to have that, but I unfortunately don't think we feel safe enough in our jobs to be able to do that. I know people who would worry about getting fired for no reason other than that." P-5 related a situation about a colleague that was out with staff and students regarding her partnership. This staff member used very open and controversial language with students when referring to her 'wife' and their plans to have a family. She mentioned, "I don't feel like I hide but I don't advertise, she advertised." P-5 mentioned this open attitude did cause parental

concerns and there were concerns about a gay staff member who was terminated for what was suspected, a situation of dating another colleague. “So like my principal knows but I have never gone to her and said ‘Hey did you know I am?’ so I have never said that to her but she knows; like everybody knows.” Regarding work environment she remarked, “I actually feel like right now in my building, I feel the safest, most supported. I feel we have the best culture in our school that I’ve ever experienced before, ever. I couldn’t have always said that I mean it’s changed over time... There were [gay] people that were non-renewed that were good teachers and I can’t figure out why they lost their jobs... there was nothing in their teaching or management that warranted them losing their jobs. Even if that isn’t the reason why, that’s exactly what I am going to think. I think we might have the smallest population now that we have ever had, I mean we used to have eight, nine or 10 [gay] people in the building.” It was evident that P-5 had strong emotions regarding the past leadership in the building and what happened to some of the gay employees. However, concerning equal rights for gay people she mentioned, “I’m stunned at the progress that we’ve made in the years since I came out cause when I was a teenager I pretty much thought that not only are they going to hell, which is how I was raised but, what’s my life going to be like? It’s going to suck. Now I feel like pretty much [gay] people are okay and I feel like someday, my partner and I had a commitment ceremony, and you know, someday I would like to have a marriage certificate. I would like for her to have the benefits of my job and vice versa I would like for us to be able to take care of each other the way that married couples can in terms of that.”

### **Successes**

P-5 succeeded in finding her place in education based on a previous job where she was basically doing the preparation that would have been done by a teacher. After this realization,

she was successful in getting her master's degree in elementary education. During the 11 years she worked, she was known as a collaborative teacher as well as having the duties as school librarian. P-5 did not settle with just doing the work in the library but successfully co-taught with her fellow staff in several subject areas. When asked about ideas or influences in her teaching she replied, "Because I teach middle school I feel it is a perfect time to teach tolerance, so I do a lot of that and so I will absolutely stand up for kids when they need me to and they know to come to me about stuff. I make a big deal about being tolerant of the people around you. I build strong relationships with kids I'm around a lot, and certain kids have discussed tough topics with me, and I do my best to support them." P-5 was in this way, successful in supporting her students and building relationships in a positive mentor. Finally, an important success was the relationship with her partner that she had been committed to since 1998.

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

P-5 admitted to one of her motivations being her own love of school. "Oh my God I loved school! I liked writing the lessons and the tests and stuff. I like the curriculum part, I loved school and I loved learning. I'm super curious, so I read a wide variety of stuff. The kids will ask what I am reading and why and I will tell them that it might be something I need to know someday." Regarding the question on who or what inspired her she responded, "Everything inspires my curiosity but also [my partner] inspires me all the time. She has [two diseases] which affect her autoimmune system that cause her a lot of pain. She has also had a number of surgeries on her knee and shoulder. She has had all these bad things happen to her especially in terms of her athletic career and so I just draw a lot of my inspiration from her because she's very tough and she's also an awesome teacher, so we do a lot of talking about school in our regular life." P-5 also mentioned both her mentor and colleagues at her school as

among those that motivated and inspired her. Her thoughts about the future were to possibly pursue her doctorate but because they both love their jobs, she stated, “I think I will be living with [my partner] in the same house and still working at the library and that would be where I see us in five to 10 years.”

### **Needed Initiatives**

P-5 would like to see a celebration and encouragement of acceptance and she felt this would be good for all involved. “I would like it to be more of a celebration of diversity rather than us teaching tolerance. I think that sometimes tolerance isn’t enough. Like you know what I mean, like I’m just gonna tolerate you, makes me feel like I’m gonna be around people that always have a bad taste in their mouth. Instead I wish there was more of a celebration of diversity for both the teachers and the students. I wish the teacher felt like they could be more free with their sexuality in terms of just being themselves...so we don’t feel like we have to hide about it so we can just celebrate who we are instead of having to work about whether or not people would tolerate our being who we are.”

### **Researcher’s Perspective: Enthusiastic**

The word to summarize P-5 was Enthusiastic. Enthusiastic had seen several different combinations of leadership in her experience and had been able to adapt to them all. Part of this success was the fact that Enthusiastic knew why she was there and was enthused and curious about everything. “Everything inspires my curiosity,” she stated, and she showed this in her collaborative co-teaching in multiple subjects. It was possible for her to do less but that was not who she was. She was happy to be there and saw herself doing this job for some time. It was also important to note she was enthused about helping kids and building relationships with them. She was there for the students and remained enthusiastic and inspired about her colleagues and fellow

staff. Enthusiastic was very clear that the climate at work was "...the safest, most supportive...culture in our school that I've ever experienced." Finally, her enthusiasm and inspiration for her partner was very clear. Enthusiastic had indeed earned this one-word description.

## **Participant 6 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-6 grew up in a large Midwestern city to immigrant parents who were working class people. Neither of her parents graduated high school so there was a focus and emphasis on self-improvement and learning. "My father was raised in Sweden and immigrated in the 1930's so he's always been the type that you know you come here to this country to better yourself ...and he insisted upon me learning as much as I could. So, I think that's where that comes from, I have that working-class work ethic, where I work hard at what I need to do, and I was always trying to find the faster, better way and learning was always fun to me. My mother taught me to read when I was four and I would start reading everything, the back of the cereal box, the entire newspaper, by the time I was in junior high I had read all the books in the library and they had to send me to the high school to find books for me." Regarding influences growing up she mentioned music and travel. "I sing, and I play the saxophone, I started playing when I was in the fourth grade, I still actually play the saxophone, not as well as I did in college but better than usual." Regarding travel, she mentioned that she particularly enjoyed the experiences of traveling with her parents. "I remember the first trip we all went together and were gone for like a week. We went all the way around the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and down to the locks at St. Marie. My dad took me out at six a. m. and we watched the boats go up and down and I thought that was like the best thing...I mean he was explaining it to me and I got to bond really well with my dad. I was

always daddy's girl anyway...but we really did have a wonderful time. It was really fun.” P-6 ended up in a southern state where she resided in high school and ended up graduating and going to college and beginning her career.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

Teaching was P-6's first career and she had been through some learning experiences as she gained her skills. Regarding becoming a teacher, she had not come out yet and was not sure if a teaching environment was the right thing for her. “I disliked being a teacher when I first went off to college. That was the last thing I was gonna do is be a teacher because you know I just didn't think it would be good for me and I wasn't sure why, cause at this point you talk about being 'closeted' I really wasn't sure who I was at that point, but I'm sure something wouldn't have been right, I am sure about that, but I finally gave in and said it's what I am good at doing, I love history, I love explaining things to people, I love arguing with people, so this is what I have to do and apparently I'm pretty good at it, at least that's what everyone tells me, that I've always been good at it.”

P-6 taught high school for five years and then went into working with college age students as an academic advisor. “I love to discuss history and politics; we do a lot of that since I advise education majors. I have to warn them about what they are getting in to.” P-5 had some degree of confidence being out at work. When asked whether it was important if a person in her position was out or not she replied, “In my current position as an academic advisor, I think it does help me for the most part in two ways, One, our state [southern state] is not one of the more progressive and 'moral turpitude laws' are a part of the teacher contracts so [gay] teachers can be dismissed. I think my being out and open helps encourage LGBT students to come talk to me, in fact a group has come to me that are worried, they're getting ready to graduate and want me to

do a little discussion about what it is to be LGBT in [southern state] because like I said it's not the most accepting place in the world. The other thing is that for those that aren't out because I am out, and you can tell in my office even if I don't say anything that I am, it makes them more aware of the diversity of population. The county right next to us is very conservative and some of them who come in, they look around, cause I have things all over my walls. I have a poster of gay historical figures, I have things about being narrow not straight and those kinds of things they usually look around and start asking questions which I think leads to more conversation which leads to more inclusion." P-6 in this way acted as an advocate for diversity and acceptance of LGBT people by being open about her sexual orientation at the workplace while at the same time encouraging future educators.

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

Although P-6 had found a positive sense of identity this was a process that took some time. She related how various elements in her life including her love of learning and courageous attitude coincided to have gotten her to where she is now.

"I always knew I was different even as a little kid. I just knew I didn't fit in with everything, although I could beat up all the boys, so they would follow me around, I was in charge. I remember being very confused as to whether I should go jump rope with the girls, which I hated or go play football and catch with the boys." P-6 felt distant from her parents regarding the issue of her sexual orientation. "I knew not to say anything out loud about it...my parents didn't want to talk about it with me because they were older and didn't want to deal with that. I knew enough that if I talk to anybody there might be something wrong." During this time, she was teaching high school, and had not come out yet. "Teaching high school is kinda hard when you're a positive lesbian or you haven't realized you're lesbian and there's a lot of good-

looking women wandering around and I'm like thinking I'm having thoughts I'm not supposed to have, so being the good historian and researcher, I am I started doing research." P-6 noted that she had limited resources without the internet and used libraries and the local gay bookstore to find literature. "I had never heard of lesbianism before for the most part, never really entered my mind, I just didn't think I had met the right man yet, that kind of thing, I wasn't attracted to the guys in high school and stuff, I got to thinking I just hadn't met the right one you know and it will happen. Then I started reading all these things and started putting two and two together...I started to be aware of it by my fourth or fifth year of teaching and when I finally figured it out I know that wouldn't be a good place for me because it was like suddenly realizing you know when you're in your teens and you first figure out what sex was all about you know boys and girls and all that. Having suppressed that for as long as I had, it was like going through puberty all over again." P-6 mentioned going through awkward times after realizing she had friends she was coming out to, that either already knew or were disappointed she had not come forward earlier. "When I came out to my roommate at that point she got mad at me because we lived together for 12 years and we were just roommates and she's going like everybody is going to think I'm that way...She didn't speak to me for a year. The most frustrating thing was that most of my friends were like well we figured that. I was like really how did you know? Now when I came out to my cousin she goes, well I've known that for years. I said, 'Why didn't you tell me, so I didn't have to go through all that?' That would have been so much easier." P-6 was 30 when she was comfortable to be out as a lesbian, and now, refused to hide. "It's something that I have never hidden since I worked for [workplace title] because I hid it for the first 30 years of my life, I decided I wasn't going to do that anymore and I really think it helped in a number of

ways, and opened up the minds of some of the people I work with as well over the years, and so I think it's a help more than anything else."

Finally, P-6 shared a story of her mother who was in her 70's when she found out about her daughter being gay. P-6 and her partner were moving into a home and were showing it to her mom as she proceeded to ask where she slept and then asked where the partner slept and P-6 indicated the same room. P-6 stated, "She looked at me and said, 'Well there are other bedrooms' and I said, 'Yes mother I know', and she didn't say anything about it. Like a year later she called me on the phone and goes 'I wanna talk to you and I said okay' and she goes 'Are you a lesbian?' I looked at the phone, going, 'does she know what that word means?' maybe we need to think about this, so I said, 'Do you really want to have this conversation on the phone?' and she said, 'Yes this is how I wanna do it'. I said okay and then I said, 'Yes I am' and then her next question, you just had to have known my mother but she said, 'Do you have to be?' and I'm like well that's an interesting thought, I said, 'Yeah I think I do', she said, 'Yea but you could date boys if you wanted to' and said, 'Well yes I could date boys if I wanted to but I don't want to.' 'Oh' and then she goes 'Well I have to think about this' and she hung up, no goodbye I mean she just hung up the phone. She called me back in about an hour and half and I said, 'Mom are you okay?' 'Yeah I think I'm okay I don't like it', I said ' Well you don't have to like it.' She said, 'Are you happy?' I said 'Yeah for the most part I am most of the time I'm very happy' She goes 'Well okay, well I still love you' and I said, ' Well I still love you to ma' and the next word out of her mouth was 'And we don't need to talk about this anymore' and I said 'okay.'"

## Successes

P-6 was successful in navigating the difficulties of coming out to family and this difficult process, part of which was described above was part of this success. When discussing her years as a high school teacher P-6 mentioned some of the struggles she had regarding coming out and her identity and desires, but she also had a realization, “It was like I can’t control this and if I don’t get away from girls I mean that environment because they did... I mean it’s really funny because apparently a lot of the kids looked up to me. Kids would be in my classroom until 8:30 when I had to be at school by 7:30 because I had kids hanging around my classroom all the time, boys and girls.” Shortly after this she left and returned to graduate school, but this struck the researcher as a possibility that P-6 had the ability to build relationships well with her students. When asked about her current situation as an advisor she responded, “On the one hand it is mostly positive. There are some of them that when I first you [know] started putting stuff up on my walls and things like that they stopped coming. I think now because this is who I am, and they know it from the get go for the most part, I think that most of them are okay with it. With this new generation coming up I can’t wait for some of them to become teachers.” P-6 was a successful communicator which was demonstrated by her ability to build relationships in both the first part of her career as a high school teacher and later as an advisor to future educators. A local LGBT organization had awarded her for her candor and spirit in supporting the education of the gay and non-gay community. Finally, P-6 was successful in her education, with a Bachelor of Science in social studies, a master’s degree in American history and she was currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program. P-6 had also been in a successful relationship with her partner for nine years.

## **Motivations and Inspirations**

When asked what motivated her to want to become an educator she mentioned a love of learning but also how it related back to her identity and the realization that she was different very early. “I always liked learning, learning was always fun for me. I think a lot of it is very intrinsic and was built into me and it might partly be because I knew I was, because I think about this, and I remember reading Greg Loganis’ book, *Breaking Surface* his autobiography and one of the things he mentioned in there was trying so hard to do you know, do everything really, really, well so his parents would be proud of him, and the more I think about that part, is part of me knew that at a young age that I was different and that someone would think something was wrong with me if I wasn’t good at everything I did. So one of the things and that’s part of the reason I think I excelled in school so well because I had to make sure that my parents were proud of me and everybody thought, that I knew what I was doing because in case they found out the bad parts about me...but I look back on it, I was an overachiever ...things came easy to me for some reason I loved the learning. But I think that’s part of what makes me, it’s very intrinsic with me and I’m not that I don’t want people to be proud of me, I want my family to be proud of me and my partner, but it’s more intrinsic that I do the best that I possibly can and I get mad at myself when I don’t, even when I pass something.”

## **Needed Initiatives**

On the topic of what is needed to enhance learning, P-6 felt that there should be more discussion and exposure of diverse people including LGBT people. “Inclusion in the curriculum, to me is very important so that the students see that there are other people like them. I think that’s still an issue as open as it is out in the real world, especially in the public-school system. At least here in [state of residence] it’s still a hush, hush thing and we’re still trying to be so

politically correct that we fall over ourselves trying not to say anything for fear of retribution either way. So, I think just inclusion of all different groups would be very helpful to understanding them at least exposing people to them.”

### **Researcher’s Perspective: Role Model**

The researcher’s one phrase or word reference for P-6 was Role Model. Role Model received this name because her behavior went beyond just being brave, but she allowed an intrinsic pride to justify her right to be here and be queer. This was not an attempt at being funny but truly the perspective of what it takes to be out and representing everyone. It was that college advisor who fearlessly says ‘it gets better’ to all around her including colleagues. Sometimes it was easier to just be out to students who in my experience have a resiliency that some older gay people don’t. Despite the experience with her mom, or any of the older people that she had met along the way she was herself and saw no reason to be ashamed or she so aptly put it no more ‘hiding’. Whether it be, to protect someone you don’t want to offend or because there are laws that could threaten our jobs she was modeling what it took to be out. She was a model for not just gay educators but for any gay professional to not be silent. Role Model was letting people young and old know that there was absolutely no reason to be afraid and no more reasons to hide.

## **Participant 7 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-7 was an educator for 16 years and was 38 years old. She was from a small-sized city in the Western United States. She was taught in Catholic schools for her elementary school years and then went on to public schools. Her influences included significant participation in multiple sports. She related how she challenged the status quo by playing boy’s baseball. “I

played boy's baseball and it was a big deal because they weren't going to allow me to because I was female and my dad being an attorney, said 'well I think otherwise' and so [the local recreation commission] found a coach who would take me, and he actually is somebody I keep in contact with still to today. He ended up being my coach for several years and then he was my high school athletic director and now I work with him because he works at [former college attended] I work with him in that capacity there." She played softball recreationally as well as golf. Her early enthusiasm with sports and athletics continued to influence her educating through coaching. She had coached boys' basketball, volleyball, girl's basketball during her time as an educator.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

P-7 left high school and went from [small Western city] to [large Western city] to attend college for a year. "I left [small Western city] for [college in large Western city]. I was not successful in that venture. I was very distracted I mean it was my first time being out of [home town] there was a city full of things to do, people to meet." At this point she was given the option to return home or continue to pay for school on her own and she returned home to finish at a local college. P-7 went on to get both her bachelor's and master's degrees at this location and was successful as an educator and eventually became an administrator in a small Western town.

When asked if there were any problems with someone in her position being openly gay she recounted a situation that occurred as an administrator. "Well you know they're not going to come out and say – well we're not going to have you here because you're gay, but they made it very clear in many ways, I was harassed sexually, referring to my partner as certain things or saying 'how's that little [job title] friend of yours? She's doing a job for you?' just stuff that was

not appropriate. I was threatened, I was told I was too vocal and too public and what I was doing which was nothing – I would go out with my partner, things like that I was told not to do those things – because it looks bad to the parents. If you continue to do this we'll find a way to get rid of you, and I was told my attire was not feminine enough, that I should, [they] said to me – ‘now isn't your mother a professional?, and I said ‘yeah she sure is’ - he said ‘why don't you get a lesson from her’ - which was again a hostile situation because it wasn't dressing professional it was that I wasn't dressing feminine, I wasn't dressing masculine I was just dressing in khakis, slacks, a button down, a polo. In fact, the quote that was given to me, because I said, ‘why don't you give me an example of what you want me to dress like?’, and [they] said ‘[we] can't really give you an example, it's kind of like porn you know it when you see it.’ I was called in on numerous occasions, basically told to get back in the closet and I wasn't even out. I will tell you that in all my years I have zero write ups not a single reprimand nothing, and all of a sudden it became an issue and once it became their issue it made me uncomfortable enough to say I don't want to do this anymore.”

P-7 no longer works for this employer and made this comment regarding her current position as an executive director of a small education-related organization. “In my current position it's perfect, it's great, nobody has a concern and I don't feel like I have to hide who I am, or I mean I'm not out like I don't flaunt it, but I don't hide it either, you know somebody comes and talks to me. You know people randomly come up to me and say, ‘I saw you and your partner’ – oh well I didn't know you knew I was gay – but I will talk about doing whatever.” P-7 currently remained in her position.

## **Experiences as a Gay Person**

Regarding the question; “At what point in your life did you feel comfortable enough about your sexuality to be out to friends and go out socially?” she responded, “old, boy twenties maybe, and even now sometimes even now in my 30’s there are moments that I’m like jeez who was just staring at me. Like you still have that, it’s like it’s ingrained in you because of whenever your circumstances were to really be on guard or cautious to who’s looking at you and what they’re thinking.” P-7 gained considerable experience with her job as an administrator; she also had some good supports. “Of course, I was scared to come out and I didn’t come out to my parents one of my partners did it for me, I mean yeah it worked out. And of course, my parents said well duh we’ve known since the third grade or whatever but my dad started really getting politically into gay rights and that’s not something he has ever expressed to me or told me about and it feels empowering. I always knew that he was on my side and he loved me unconditionally but for him to go fight the bigger fight is really cool and unusual and still trying to wrap my head around it. He will send me articles or things, alright dad. Thanks.”

## **Successes**

P-7 was doing well in her current position and related her experience with reviving the business, “When I originally got hired my job was to dig us out of a hole because we’re a non-profit organization and so my first year was spent digging us out of ...the financial hole. So, I really took on the role of grant writing and making connections in the community and now I’m able to focus a little more on staff training and in making sure we have resources available to staff and kids. So, a typical day at work, anywhere from classrooms, I still go into classrooms, I will cover classes, I will teach or do a lesson, and just day to day operations.” P-7 succeeded in

earning her bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a reading specialist certification. She had also been in education for 16 years.

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

P-7 was motivated in high school to become an educator. "I think my senior year of high school was the defining moment. I got to take a class where I got to go to an elementary school every afternoon and because I didn't really know I wanted to be a teacher. But once I got around the kids it was like Oh, this is where I'm supposed to be, this is where I feel comfortable and natural and myself, yeah part of that was that it was so accepting, and I just felt like Aha! This is it! This is who I am supposed to hang out with all day." When questioned deeper regarding the subject of motivation, she responded about good school leadership as well. "I had a really cool principal, I wasn't a great student freshman and sophomore year and I was a good athlete but not a great student and this new principal came in and I don't know if I was on some committee or I don't really know how I got to know her – I think she just came in the summertime and my aunt worked for human resources and she said 'Hey I need you to go meet with this principal that's coming...show her around the high school' so I think I got to know her outside of school in the summer and you know she actually is probably the biggest influence [as to] how I went into education when I look back then." She responded simply to the question of "Who inspires you regarding self-improvement and continuing to educate or lead?" with "my parents."

### **Needed Initiatives**

P-7 had strong feelings regarding enhancing the awareness of teachers and administrators as well as doing what she felt was best for the kids. "I would like there to be more training on the part of teachers and administrators...I really don't necessarily think we have to become a protected class but at the same time, all in the same breath, that's the only way we are going to

have protection. I think awareness training and you know having real live gay and lesbian students come and talk to administrators and teachers and say, this is how I feel when this happens, or this is what we want you to do when this happens or this is the response we are looking for. Instead of teachers just brushing it to the carpet, or saying kids will be kids and in some cases, encouraging, you know that kind of behavior and talk from other students...but just having a lot of awareness training and sensitivity training because most kids and teachers that I know that are gay and lesbian don't feel like they have a voice and don't feel like they can stand up for themselves especially in the middle of a situation. And so, if there was a process or way for people to understand how to deal with it, maybe it would be you know less harmful to the student.”

#### **Researcher's Perspective: Appreciative**

The researcher's summative name for P-7 was Appreciative. Appreciative had a strong sense of survival and was able to succeed after an attempt at independent college life. Once she changed schools and returned home she was productive in earning her bachelor's and master's degrees. Her attitude was one of appreciation and for her parents especially. They were a significant motivator for her to return to her home and finish at the local university. She was also appreciative for her current position. She was aware that her previous situation was not one that was going to be able to be changed and she acted. Her success at the new job was a statement as to her appreciation of being given an opportunity to prove her talent as an educator and to be herself without fear or having to hide her lifestyle.

## **Participant 8 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-8 was a young teacher of vocational students in the hospitality industry. She was 38 years old and was from a Northwestern state in the United States. She spoke fondly of her early life and growing up and responded about what influences the place had on her and her life, “I would say just [Northwestern state] in general, a couple of things. My father was a police officer for 30 something years and so that had a pretty big impact on my family and my life just growing up for respect for the law and everything that the police officers do, you know a lot of bonding time with fellow officers and things of that nature. I have a lot of great childhood memories, very good neighborhood to grow up in – a lot of the kids I grew up with went to grade school together and some of us went to high school together, so a lot of long-term relationships came out of that. Huge, huge, hockey fan, winter sports, love to downhill ski. With a love and appreciation for the outdoors, you know fishing, camping, [city in Northwestern state] is one of our favorite tourist places to head up to...I do love living here.” Regarding her education, P-8 grew up in the Catholic school system and moved on to earn her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in a university in a neighboring state.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

P-8 studied the hospitality industry and realized that she enjoyed teaching while attending graduate school. “Once I got my master’s degree and found out I was able to teach, I went ‘that’s really neat’, and so obviously it was finding something I was interested in and that I had an education in. But as I got more into it, it became more like ‘wow, why didn’t I realize that I like to teach when I was going for my undergrad degree. I just love it.” When P-8 was questioned about performance at managing services at her organizations and teaching online, she remarked,

“Typically I am able to balance it out really well I honestly view teaching online as an escape from everything. I will do it while I’m at work, I’ll take an hour or two to focus on answering questions or maybe grade some papers or things of that nature...I try to break up my day, I oversee three retail locations on casino properties so I really try to break up my weeks and spend some at each location you know take a break and do some schoolwork...I enjoy what I do, I like to keep busy. So, I really enjoy it because it gives me that break.” When asked if there were any problems if one was openly gay or lesbian she remarked, “No it’s not a problem, it’s based on my performance, it’s based on the person I am. There’s no label...Being in an online environment it’s a little different because obviously you don’t have that one-on-one, face-to-face contact. I’m really one of those instructors who is completely available if they have questions they can call and e-mail me, I try to get back with them within 24 hours, we can Skype. So, I try to do my best to personalize that classroom and let them know that I’m available.” It was clear P-8 enjoyed her job and kept a positive communicative relationship with her students.

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-8 came out when she was a teenager. “I would say that I had a pretty young coming out experience, so I would say probably 16 or 17 years old and after that I just didn’t really feel the need to hide anymore.” When commenting on the subject of whether or not it was important if a teacher is out or not she stated, “I’m going to two tone this a little bit, I don’t think it should be an issue whatsoever whether they are open or not. I think that it’s a person’s choice personally whether they feel they want to be open in the classroom or not, however I don’t know if you are aware of this. I’m sure you are but it seems that it’s getting much more difficult for teachers to be out in the open in the Catholic school system. A former high school that I went to, just this past year, made national headlines [for firing] [an administrator] of this school because he was gay as

well as another teacher who came out in support of him and said she was gay so that has been a personal struggle for me. But I feel it's their choice to be open or not. You know depending on the type of environment they are in it becomes very difficult to make that decision." P-8 felt compassion for these educators and others that were in a similar situation. "That was pretty deceitful, but there's a lot of teachers that are still there and former teachers that are [and] have left the school that that they have lived in...in silence for years knowing that could happen." Regarding the mistreatment of gay people, she recognized the progress made regarding civil rights. "Yeah that goes back to the school thing too. I get pretty angry... obviously. I feel for every step we make, like recently [home state] is recognizing gay marriage which is huge, for every step we make there's you know so many things that are happening out there that knocks us back a few more steps. But I have to be honest with you I feel like it is moving forward for the most part. There's going to be hiccups and things of that nature, but I feel we've made great strides in the last ten years especially."

### **Successes**

P-8 was successful in achieving a graduate degree that lead to her professional work as an educator and operational manager. She had received several service awards and related accolades and enjoyed a continued appreciation of the hospitality industry through travel. P-8 was also successful in being aware of the people in her life that had influenced her that may have had trouble with being comfortable as a gay educator. She had earned a Bachelor of Science in hospitality and a Master of Science in global hospitality.

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

When P-8 was asked what motivated her she mentioned her experiences with her instructors. "It's inspiring, you know there's a lot of times, that it's to share my personal

experiences. One of the biggest things I took away from my personal education is that learning from the instructors that have real practical world experiences in the hospitality industry, and that's what I took away, and that's what I do for my students." Regarding the area of self-improvement and inspiration she stated, "It's gonna sound kind of weird, a lot of former teachers that I went that I [had at] the university...did and actually still inspire me, just because they were there when I was there, they still teach, they're still passionate about what they do. I stay connected to them and one person that really stands out to me like I said this may sound a little weird, but his name is [famous entrepreneurial casino and hotel owner]. He is the Casino model in Las Vegas who really started [and] changed the face of Las Vegas and I interpret his management style, his education style, within his casinos is that he wants his employees to feel every bit as taken care of as his guests. And I've tried to take that motto wherever I go. What I do in my job as well as an educator is to make sure that people are treated you know as if they feel that every day is their vacation in a special place." When she was asked if some of the former teachers that inspired her were her teachers in the Catholic school system she responded, "Absolutely, yeah there were people in college especially but there were a couple in the Catholic schools that I will never forget that inspired me to move forward as well."

### **Needed Initiatives**

Having had grown up in the Catholic school system, P-8 was particularly sensitive to the treatment of teachers within the contractual concerns of moral turpitude. "It seems that it's getting much, much, more difficult for teachers to be out in the open especially in the Catholic school system... that has been a personal struggle for me. I think just open communication...there are a lot of Catholic schools that require a teacher to sign a contract...I

think that contract should go away. I think it shouldn't matter what a persons' sexual orientation is if that person is an educator.”

### **Researcher's Perspective: Compassionate**

The researcher's perspective name for P-8 was Compassionate. Compassionate had a very understanding attitude about what it felt like to be one of the educators in the Catholic school system. Although she had not experienced the discrimination that they had, she still had empathy for what they had been through. Her childhood experiences related to this in her having grown up with great respect for her father and his occupation as a police officer. The dedication of Compassionate to her career involved an appreciation of a philosophy of excellent service. This involved an understanding from the employer of what it was like as an employee in a service industry and thus how that related to making a guest feel appreciated. Compassionate is caring in how she handled her students, staff, and how she felt regarding the mistreatment of those that like her, were gay educators.

### **Participant 9 Profile**

#### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-9 was a young man of 32 that started in his career five years ago. He lived in a medium-sized Midwestern town and grew up in a large city in the same region. P-9 mentioned that he had a positive upbringing and education that was influenced and added to by the church he attended. “Yeah it was all positive. I loved going to church. I would go to church, well I didn't go to church camp until high school but then following that, I worked a church camp every summer for about five years in college.” P-9 was able to travel in conjunction with the church which influenced him greatly to become an educator. “My junior year of high school I went to El Salvador with the church and that's kind of when I decided I wanted to be a teacher

and I wanted to focus on Spanish in college. It was kind of a big turning point in my life, and from El Salvador then in college I went abroad in Costa Rica and then I [taught] in the Peace Corps and went to Belize and I kinda spent a lot [of time] in Central America from that.” P-9 continued to travel after high school and into the college years and eventually earned a master’s degree.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

P-9 was a kindergarten teacher. Regarding how he felt about doing his job he stated, “I’m trying to think of something extrinsic like honestly I really just enjoy [teaching]. I don’t want to sound dorky or like um I just really enjoy it, I like the planning and I like changing and growth in kids, planning things that they enjoy and that they do a lot of and get a lot out of.” P-9 shared thoughts about his continued learning, “I’m doing a reading specialist [certification], I like to know more, I feel that in five years I’ve learned so much as a teacher and I’ve learned so much more than I thought and in five years I will know even more. Like you know what works best and how the mind works, what motivates [people] and why...I’m very interested in why people act the way they do, you know and why people function the way they do.” In response to the question regarding any problems with being out or openly gay he commented, “My initial answer [to this] was yes but to be honest it’s not something I would discuss with my kids...I think that the age I work with and the clientele like the parents I have are very conservative. I really think it depends on what grade you teach, I feel that a lot of parents will talk about me at home in front of the kids, so the kids have an idea...I mean to talk about it, I feel like they should, you know, ‘what am I afraid of?’ But I also feel, ‘Why am I opening a can of worms when I don’t need to...And really does it have anything to do with the teaching?’ but I am really being honest, and I keep telling myself I feel that if I taught older grades I would be out.” P-9

lived in a very progressive community and he also related an experience that he had of great support at his school. “Last year at the end of the year I won a teaching award and the superintendent was there and presented this award to me and the principal was there and the teachers kind of knew about it and my whole family was there and also my partner of two years. She invited him, so he came out and we embraced, so it was a very big moment for me because I don’t think anybody knew who he was, the other teachers knew who he was, but I doubt the kids knew who he was at all...but my workplace is a very open place.” P-9 was clearly supported and respected by his district and school. However, through his experiences in other countries as an educator for the Peace Corps, he discovered the struggles of other gays in places not so open. “When I lived in Belize for that two years it was so bad, and AIDS is a big problem down there and people can’t come out and they also have to go to a different country to get their treatment because the whole country knows each other, they have to hide it that much, that really opened my eyes.”

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-9 came out in high school and his parents accepted him. He shared, “I came out in high school to my friends and I didn’t go around and come out to everybody around but if they asked me I told them. I went on my first date in high school and came out to everybody in college. My family really didn’t talk about it until a few years ago when I started dating my partner. They are very supportive, very happy, it’s not a problem at all. They are kind of pushing me to get married to my partner.” P-9 was comfortable in the community where he lived and was comfortable being out. Regarding being out at school he stated, “I am out to everybody pretty much.” Regarding equal rights he remarked, “I’m for equal rights and I’m passionate about it but I also think it’s so nonsensical to me, you know I should probably get out more and campaign and do

these different things. I also feel I honestly like I live a married life already you know, and I just feel comfortable in [my] town and in my work environment. I had a pretty lucky life of the gay boy and man growing up in [Midwestern state]. I really haven't dealt with very much harassment or discrimination; that I'm aware of..."

### **Successes**

Besides his positive experiences as a gay person, P-9 was successful in obtaining his education. His numerous travels to Central America were the foundation of his knowledge of Spanish which was his undergraduate minor. He obtained a bachelor's in education, a masters in curriculum and instruction and a reading specialist certification. Besides this, beginning in high school, he traveled abroad and continued to successfully teach for the Peace Corp in Central America. On top of this enriching world travel experience, he was an award-winning teacher in his school district.

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

As mentioned before, P-9's interest in teaching began in high school. "Honestly I felt very lucky like I knew I wanted to do that since my junior year in high school and I never hesitated, never questioned it, I just enjoy it and I can't imagine myself doing anything else really." Regarding what motivated him he stated, "It was the time I spent in El Salvador and the kids had such needs and reading with them and realizing what a difference that can make, chalking up to the experience as a whole. I was always interested in working with the young kids like from the beginning like forming letters and sounds and everything. 'School' is still very new to them at that age group." P-9 had a clear sense of what had motivated him, and it was simply that he loved teaching each day. He and his partner of three years hoped to move to a larger Western city that had more opportunities for both and the possibility of starting a family. "I think

I could take on more of a leadership role [in my job] and probably in a bigger city, in [large Western city] or in the suburbs. Still working with at risk population of kids I really enjoy that. I'm sure we'll be married and have a baby. We're in the process of adopting a child, having a house hopefully."

### **Needed Initiatives**

P-9 felt that there needed to be an openness about sexuality in general, as well as all aspects of diversity including race and sexual identity. He mentioned the importance of making it a normal thing to see all people represented. "I think introducing into the curriculum human sexuality; it goes with the common core all the way down to kindergarten. I helped write that curriculum for our district...you know using the correct words for the body parts...good touch, bad touch...gender roles. I know that homosexuality is addressed in the upper grades I think even in fifth grade. It was kind of a surprise to me, but they just use the words, like gay, lesbian. I think it would be wonderful, like reading books...any books where there's any gay couple, they don't have to be the heart of the story...I think that's important to normalize it in the same manner where in kindergarten we are going to start to use 'penis' and 'vagina'. We're going to use the correct vocabulary so as they grow up, it's not something scary or awkward. I mean we're flexible in our curriculum in that the books that we read people of color are represented enough...something you would see every day or more representative of your students. I think we need to realize that these students are out there and there's a real need for it. There's need for identification and I don't know about dropout rates, I think the drop out rates might be higher for gays and lesbians but surely the suicide rate is higher for gay and lesbian teens. The last time I knew it was almost three times as high for gays and lesbians and bullying as well. I just think

normalizing it in being an everyday thing through exposure and curriculum and being well represented is what I would like to see in our schools.”

### **Researcher’s Perspective: Inspired**

P-9 earned the researcher’s perspective name of Inspired. Inspired was motivated by positive early experiences related to his faith and exposure to world culture and education through travel. These experiences were the foundation for him teaching kindergarten. He enjoyed having direct influence on the students when they were very young. It takes inspiration not to mention patience, to plan for and teach small children. He was young and successful in his career and was ready to continue building his life by having the hope for the future in a larger city and possibly adopting a child to begin a family.

## **Participant 10 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-10 was a 39-year-old teacher who had been in the business for 12 years. He grew up in a small town in a Western state. Talking about his home town he stated, “It’s where I got a lot of my background. It’s just a smaller school and so I was able to be involved in a lot of different things, so I think that is probably the biggest influence that it had on me is the small atmosphere.” P-10 was a musician and he remarked about what began his influence when he was young. “My great grandfather was always very musical, he was an accordion player and he was extremely popular in our area and they would play at the senior centers and play with the polka band that would come through and things like that. He kind of influenced my music so that’s where I kind of got a lot of my interests there.” P-10 took his interest and talent in music to the communities in his area. “Back in the nineties the [local theatre] had a summer dinner theater program that I started and ran for four seasons, and then I’d done some community

theatre in [neighboring city] and some other stuff like that.” Since P-10 was a music teacher it made sense that his talent was part of his teaching. He had both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

Teaching was the first career for P-10 and he had been teaching for 11 years. “My experiences in [city in a nearby region] and [city in a nearby region] were mostly positive. I taught one year in a very small, I use the term ‘redneck’ community...I hated it absolutely hated it.” Other than that, he had good experiences as an educator. “One thing we do at [my] middle school is [citizenship program], which is something that I am really into...I think that we have a pretty good relationship between me and my students. I think that there is a mutual respect between each of us. I also try to be as fair as possible not necessarily equal, you know each student getting what they are needing. I have students that will come in and talk with me before class you know at the beginning of the school day, stay after school and just hang out and I know that those are times you know, those are relationships that I have built with these kids and they feel comfortable coming in and doing that and they feel safe.” P-10 felt good about the impact of his strong relationships with the students and his ability to connect kids to the content. He felt the same way regarding being out to other professionals. “I don’t think that it is important whether or not they are out or not, because in reality it has absolutely no effect on the teaching. I think that it is important that whatever the teacher is; straight, or not that they are accepting of all kinds...of everybody regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, religious background, cultural background, regardless I think it all falls into the same pot and I think that rather than single out one specific area that it all kind of goes together. A teacher just needs to be accepting.” The feeling that P-10 expressed was affirmed by the acceptance he felt at work. Regarding the

question of whether or not there were any problems being openly gay he voiced consideration for his students and appreciation for the staff. He shared, “I don’t know if there are necessarily any problems; most of the staff at this school know and have been extremely accepting. I would agree that the majority of the kids know even though I haven’t told them. I tend to use very gender-neutral terms, like instead of saying husband I say spouse. I say that because there are some students that are comfortable with it and some of them are not. One of the things that is important to me, is that I want kids to feel safe in my classroom and if they’re uncomfortable with it then they may not necessarily feel safe, and since it doesn’t affect my teaching then you know, why make them feel any more uncomfortable than they need to be. But I don’t necessarily feel there are any problems, in fact, last year I wound up with [health condition] and was out for two weeks and my husband would go in and get a couple things from the school for me to work on you know, and everybody knew who he was and stuff and then a few week later he had [life-saving surgery] and I had to take time off so that I could be with him, and they had no problem with that at all, they said anything that you need just let us know. They were extremely supportive.”

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-10 came out as a senior in college. “That probably would have been my senior year of undergraduate, it took me that long but at that time my friends at college were extremely supportive, the faculty was very supportive and I just felt a lot more comfortable and with my family you know it was just kind of either they will accept it, or they won’t. I was more concerned about my family than anything else.” P-10 was an adoptive parent collaborating with his partner. “My partner and I have been together since 2001 and my oldest four are actually my nieces and nephews. My sister couldn’t care for them and so ...we had only been together for six

months. We got the two oldest, they were about two and six months, we had those two girls for 18 months and then the court said we had to send them back, that we had done a good job [and] that the mother had to try to care for them. During that time my oldest boy was born to her and within that six months they were removed for review and so we got those three and then about a year later my fourth one was born to her and we got him out of the hospital and then my last one is actually my husband's grandson that we adopted so we started in 2001." P-10 and his partner had spent nearly all of their time together in parenting the five children. He commented about having children in the school district where he worked and being out to his students, "With the students I don't, I'm not necessarily out to them but a lot of kids know, with me having kids within the school system it's hard to keep anything a secret. So, if a kid came to me privately and wanted to talk to me about it I would be open to it, but it's not something you know a class full of 25 kids that I would just come out in the middle of class kind of thing."

### **Successes**

P-10 had been successful in adopting and raising his five children with his partner. He talked about the conditions the children were found in. "We had to go help my sister move out of her apartment because they had lost electricity in the middle of July, um [there was] a whole bunch of rotten food, the youngest girl [who] was six months at the time, all she ever did was sit in a car seat and when I picked her up she was so sopping wet I couldn't tell what was wet and what wasn't. When the girls went with us, we were just sent with them ...so we didn't get anything it was just a really bad situation, plus my sister was involved with drugs and things like that and her common law husband [who] was the father of the girls was in jail at the time." Besides being a parent, P-10 had also succeeded in earning a bachelor's in education with a focus in vocal music and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. When he was younger,

his music and theatre background had led to a successful dinner theatre performance that lasted for four seasons. He was also the cornerstone of a theatre program in his school. He shared, “The teacher who had taught [the theatre classes] had left and there was nobody to take over and so it fell by the wayside. My first year here I was doing just band and I was doing like music appreciation classes and stuff like that and I asked the principal if that was something that [she] would be interested in and the principal was ecstatic and said ‘yes, yes, yes, we would love that.’ So, she had me write a proposal and I wrote a proposal and within two weeks it was approved by the board. They had not had a theater program for almost a decade and so last year I restarted it and I had about 150 kids in the program and this year I have about 200 kids that are enrolled in my classes. The program has really been successful, and it has really taken off. I am only required to do two shows a year but because I have so many kids involved we’re actually doing six shows this next year.”

### **Motivation and Inspiration**

Regarding the profession, he stated, “Teaching is something that I always wanted to do. I can remember even at four years old even before I started kindergarten I knew I was going to be a teacher.” When asked about the influences or ideas that are part of his teaching he mentioned the importance of building relationships. “One of the biggest things for me has always been in my teaching it’s developed relationships with my students. I want to get to know my students and for them to get to know me. Now I do draw some lines for the most part I want them to feel safe with me and I want them to feel they can trust me that at the same time they know I am somebody that is going to guide them in the right direction and I think by developing those relationships it really increases the ability to be able to teach the content.” Regarding his bachelor’s degree with an emphasis in vocal music he stated, “The nice thing about what I teach,

I get to teach what it is I enjoy.” When P-10 was asked about what inspired him to continue to self-improve and continue educating or leading he made a powerful statement about learning from his students. “[It’s] very much my students, they are what ...going to work you know, you can wake up and feel the cruddiest in the world but once I get to school there is just that energy especially with middle school kids that is just very contagious and it’s like this is where I need to be. I’m feeling better now so let’s get to work, and so my students teach me something every single day and so I might be teaching them, that’s my job you know, I’m teaching them content but they teach me so much more than they realize and so that kind of encourages me to keep going. It’s like ‘what am I going to learn today?’, ‘what are they going teach me today?’” When the researcher asked about the future and what he envisioned himself doing he responded, “In all honesty doing exactly what I’m doing and doing it at this middle school. I really enjoy it there and I love what I am teaching.”

### **Needed Initiatives**

“One of the major things that I would really like to see happen is some kind of a [Gay Straight Alliance] GSA in every school. Um you know they have Stuco and they have you know their cheerleaders and all these other groups why can’t they have a GSA at least one per district, you know, if there can’t be one per school have one per district so that students that you know, identify; can go and have a place they feel safe and that I think that the GSA whoever is that kind of facilitator needs administrative support.” Besides the support of administration, P-10 also felt that it should be an issue that the staff should be made aware of and that eventually would need to deal with. “I think there should be some lessons for all of the staff and faculty as well. So that it’s not if they’re going to be addressed with it, it’s when, because it is going to happen, and how do they deal with it so that they’re not confrontational about it, regardless of whatever their

beliefs are, so that they are not criticizing or they don't make the students feel inferior, or you know, how would you handle that kind of situation rather than just 'go talk to a counselor'". P-10 pointed out that it does not matter who the sponsor is for the group that supports students who are LGBT. "I mean they find out who people are and what they enjoy and what their interests are and just because you have a GSA doesn't mean that the leader themselves has to be LGBT. There are many, I know of many GSA leaders across the country that I've spoken with or heard about that are just that...straight allies. So just because you have a particular group doesn't label you as being you know right then and there, you are just supportive, and you feel a connection to whatever belief whatever ideal that group is doing whether it be robotics or Latino or LGBT."

### **Researcher's Perspective: Provider**

The researcher's perspective name for P-10 was Provider. He was firmly devoted to his family and it was clear that his priority was providing for and ensuring the education and safety of his five adopted children. Provider had gone to considerable length to aid in saving his extended family and making them part of life to create a healthy environment for them to grow up in. Provider had been an innovator in his past in how he provided for others. He was a key factor in creating an opportunity for community and youth participation in a summer dinner theatre program. He acted as the producer and director for this community group and provided an opportunity that would not have been there without his presence, knowledge, and skill.

## **Participant 11 Profile**

### **Early Life Experiences and Education**

P-11 was a female African American, veteran teacher of 34 years who grew up in a large Eastern city in the United States. P-11 was very active and involved as a young person and as she shared, "I was very active and into everything, all the way through high school, through college,

and even into adulthood. I was very active in my youth group at my church. I was active in the community doing very similar things. I was an athlete involved in sports and I was also a sports official. I did school plays, school musicals, church musicals, volunteered with my church to the work camp, bible school, and that stuff. I would say that, because of where we lived and because of my upbringing I was very involved and very active. You wouldn't find me at home very often, sitting around. She mentioned when asked about where her musical background came from she commented, "Just church, I went to church with my parents I didn't have anything formal, I tried lessons but that didn't cut the mustard, I played the cello for six years and I played the piano...I still play the guitar. I have played the guitar for over 40 years. One of the people in my church taught me how and I took lessons most of that I just picked up. I was blessed with being taught by [famous guitarist]. He was a friend of mine and that family went to my church, and he owned a music store." She mentioned that her parents viewed all situations as a chance to learn and they taught her this through respect and honesty. "I'm always respectful and polite but very honest. I just think that I learned it from my father and mother. Especially, just growing up, the way that they raised us... You were never wrong because you are a child and you teach a kid how to do stuff. You don't just assume that they're going to pick it up. There is always a positive lesson that should be learned from everything. One time specifically I don't know how old I was, but I reached in the refrigerator and got the milk out and dropped it. Instead of saying oh you horrible person my father used it as a lesson – he asked 'are you big enough to get that out of the refrigerator? No, then what should you have done?' I should have asked for help, and he helped me clean it up. Not a big deal and that's what I do with kids. I think a lot of teachers even now, and a lot of parents that focus on the negative instead of the positive." P-11 had taken what she felt were positive aspects of her education and put that forth in her teaching. Her education from

both community involvement and the education that happened at home enriched her as a person and as a teacher.

### **Work and Career Experiences**

P-11's positive attitude was clearly seen when she responded to the question about how she would describe her work environment. In responding to whether the environment was negative or positive, she talked about a gay couple, employed at her school, and the reaction to their presence. "I think it's mostly positive because they're together in the same classroom, they teach the same thing and actually one started teaching first and they hired the other one...once again we don't sit around and talk about what's it like being gay. You know in 2014 in the public school because a) we don't have time and b) it doesn't come up. When I've talked to them I just ask is everything going okay, and they say, 'yeah everyone is treating them like everyone else.' With that said it doesn't mean that [a] teacher isn't going home saying 'I can't believe we have gay people at our school.' But that person is not saying it around us. [The] kids are really good to me, they know me, we get along really well, and they talk, and I'm sure if some teacher were to say something derogatory in a classroom in our school that somebody would hear about it. I mean they would go talk to somebody. I would say we have a really safe environment at our school that if there were a teacher that spoke ill of lesbians or gays or any minority it would probably get around pretty quick that that teacher said something about them." P-11 was strong on interaction and building relationships with her students and sensitive to the needs of all including those she served as a special education teacher. When asked to describe the relationships she had with her students, she stated, "I think it's pretty darn good. We get along really well with each other. They are respectful of me and I am respectful of them and they're very helpful and very caring, and they know I care. They know I care about them and I think that

I get more out of them because of that. I think it's more about how to care about people and once you've learned how to treat each kid as an individual. I would say it's more [about] that. I don't know why I've just always liked the kids that need that tough love that need to know you really care they are marshmallows and I know that is true conversation. 'Well, he doesn't do anything for me, he doesn't do any of that work for me.' And I turn around and say 'Have you told them you love them? Have you told them with words or with actions that you care about them?' And that's with any kid but it's best in those, you know, most of our behavior disorder kids come from homes with behavior disorder parents. At least they are where I'm from. So, you have to find them where they are and look at them from where they are." P-11 was clearly focused on her students and what was best for them and overall staying positive. She commented about that, as a significant aspect of her job and remarked, "I get up in the morning and I've always been told that I'm always happy. I say that because that's my job, is to be happy. I am very positive and very upbeat and very helpful and I'm very honest. I'm a hard worker and I would say my typical day is helping kids find themselves and sometimes helping adults."

### **Experiences as a Gay Person**

P-11 came out later in her life and mentioned it being during her later years in college. She spoke with a great sense of humor when asked about when it was she felt comfortable enough about her sexuality to be out to friends or go out socially. She laughed and remarked, "[you mean] without hiding and parking two blocks down the street from a gay bar? I don't know I think I was always gay. I didn't know it until I was in college probably not until later in college my junior or senior year when I discovered it. I went to bars but in the bar in the town I lived I was very careful of where I [went], I went around the back. And of course, that was in the 80's when it's that self-induced fear. I hadn't ever heard or seen anyone do anything to gay

people it was just my fear. I had never heard anybody say anything negative about them, me, or any of my friends, but I never said, ‘well, I’m gay so how do you feel about that?’ I still probably wouldn’t say that [or] when I’m 80 years old. I just am what I am.” P-11 had a slightly different experience as a gay person since she was a gay person that was also African American. When asked to describe her feelings about violence or harassment against gay people this aspect was part of her response, “It angers me...[and] it bothers me, but if you ask [me] to choose between that and the African American, the black part, I would get angrier at the black then the gay [issue] because I kind of look at it as a voluntary minority. The voluntary minority because you never have to, I’m not saying you don’t have to come out either you are, or you aren’t, and I don’t have a choice but how I handle my gayness is a choice. Now I’m not saying being gay is a choice but how I handle my gayness is a choice. And I have no choice with my blackness. When I’m walking down the street and you know I’m black as soon as you open your eyes. You may or may not know I’m black by the way I speak but you will definitely know I am as soon as you look at the color of my skin.” She mentioned race as a factor in her identity when she was asked if there were any problems with a person in her position being out or openly gay. “I haven’t seen any [problems] outwardly. If it’s me and someone doesn’t like me I mean [if] it’s because I’m gay or because I’m black I just kind of assume it’s because I’m black all in the way they act. I haven’t had any [negative] experiences knowingly. Again, I notice more with the color of my skin than being gay especially here in [conservative Eastern state]. I don’t walk into a room and... see myself as gay.” Describing her feelings regarding civil rights for gays and lesbians she mentioned the importance in her lived experiences of race as she witnessed it. “I think everybody should have them I am thrilled that there are a number of people supporting that action and I think that the time has come. Still there are a few things that gays will never have to

deal with that Blacks and Latinos [do]. It still is...an invisible minority. I think that [with] marriage equality I completely would do it but I'm not going to go somewhere to get married just because someone said I could." P-11 made it clear that her identity was founded in the cultural identity of being African American as well as being gay. P-11 expressed how she felt times had changed to make it even more challenging being open about being out at work. "If I had [taught] middle school 20 years ago it wouldn't bother me...today's child is different. I would be less trusting of trusting the child now. It's just the way they are, how mean they are and how more calculated they are, like I can ruin your career if I go say this...If a kid thinks I'm gay now I don't know about it and I think part of that is my reluctance with it [is] I'm a middle school [P.E.] teacher and I'm in the locker room. There's actually a gay couple at my school and they're out and the kids know but I think that is different and I'm not being paranoid...well I am being a little paranoid I just don't trust today's kids."

### **Successes**

P-11 was successful in staying in her first career for 34 years. She viewed her positive attitude as something that contributed to her success. "[I am] pretty happy, pretty positive. I believe that was how I was raised, and I also believe that in my own self-improvement. Books that I've read and stuff that I do. That's the way to be successful doing what you're doing in life." Regarding her students and learning how to relate to them best she remarked, "I was very good at what I do and I'm always striving to do something else or find something else for kids to do to try to reach them from where they are...I enjoy the kids, and I enjoy watching them and getting to know them. I enjoy letting them know me." P-11 had earned a bachelor's in education and a master's degree in adaptive physical education and motor development. P-11 had been in a successful relationship with her partner for 13 years.

## **Motivation and Inspiration**

P-11 mentioned her family as a major part of her motivation and influence to become an educator. When she was asked about what influenced her as a young person, she consistently credited her upbringing and her parents. “It was my mother who gave me the desire to learn and get better [and ask] ‘Can I do that better?’ With both my parents [I was taught] that you should always give back and you should always help people and I decided one day that I would be a teacher.” P-11 shared what motivated her to become an educator. She also added, “I think it was being able to play games. I like to teach. I’ve been teaching since I was in junior high school. I would hang out with the little kids and I always enjoyed their reaction to doing something they couldn’t before...I just decided one day that I would be a teacher and since I was an athlete and I knew every sport on the planet, that would probably be the easiest thing to do in college...”

## **Needed Initiatives**

P-11 felt that besides open acceptance, there should be consequences for any judgment against gay people expressed by educators. “I would like to see more acceptance, open acceptance...I would like for the teachers who express their opinions and think everybody should agree with them regardless. I would like for them to be removed from the teaching profession...because it’s detrimental to the children. I would like for people to be more open to stop that behavior than they are. I guess I’m talking about administrators. I’m talking about teachers that [hear] the behavior or see the behavior or hear of the behavior than doing something for the kids. I would like for that to happen and I would like for there to be more people willing to stand up to the bullying. If you don’t do anything you accept it. So if you know that this teacher over here is down on gays and thinks homosexuality is ridiculous and says so out in the class and the kids that are either, and it doesn’t have to be a gay kid, it could be kids

that don't think that way. I think that kid when he comes to you, the administrator or the parent or another teacher, I think you owe it to that kid to go and report it. I would like for the reporting of [bullying] to be more often, more open, more accepted and encouraged, because many of those people...you wouldn't let a teacher in front of a room of colored and call a kid a nigger or let them call them faggot." P-11 brought up race as a comparison to sexuality and made it clear that prejudice was exactly the same no matter what one was referring to.

### **Researcher's Perspective: Soldier**

The researcher's perspective name for P-11's character was Soldier. Soldier was undaunted by the circumstances encountered historically by African Americans and gays. She gained her strengths via several factors. First was the positive and strong style of parenting that she had. She was clearly devoted to what her parents instilled in her, including lifelong learning, staying involved, being philanthropic, and primarily sensitive to the needs of others. Soldier gained her demeanor of strength as a gay person by being careful and mostly by being herself first before being gay. She admitted to having some reservations of being overly out but instead focused on just being positive and being her own person as she performed her job which always included building relationships with her students. She loved what she does and stood out as a soldier for all whom she encountered and for all whom she taught.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the participants were allowed to tell their stories. These narratives were a way to present the data in the voices of the participants. These narratives were written in a way to present the best and most vivid and honest portrayals of the lived experiences that these educators had. Chapter 5 will present the data analysis and findings.

# Chapter 5 - Data Analysis

## Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected related to the following research questions: How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to have impacted their work life?

1. What does the examination of life experiences reveal about struggles for the gay or lesbian educator, or a formal leader? (QT)
2. What does the examination of life experiences, and teaching experiences of the gay or lesbian educator reveal about the connection of issues related to civil rights and their career success? (QLT)
3. How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to differ and vary from those in their profession that are not gay or lesbian? (QT and cultural hegemony)
4. What does the examination of life experiences, reveal about gay identity in relation to becoming an educator or choosing education as a career? (QT)
5. What do gay and lesbian educators perceive as need action or initiatives in schools to enhance their success? (QLT and research literature)

The chapter begins with an explanation of the procedures for gathering and analyzing the data. It then provides tables presenting the main aspects of the participants lived experiences that emerged from the data. First, six main categories or codes are defined and presented that were determined from the research questions to organize the data. The researcher analyzed participant responses within these categories and determined a degree of significance as to how the categories influenced their experiences. Then tables showing the emergent sub-codes are

presented as well as tables presenting the patterns from this analysis. The patterns were then used to determine themes and finally the overarching themes were used to form conclusions presented in chapter six.

### **Procedures for Analyzing the Data**

The data for this study came primarily from interview transcripts; however, interview or field notes and demographic information were also used to aid in understanding and to validate what was found. The details of the data analysis are described in the sections below.

#### **Demographic Questionnaires**

Prior to the interview, demographic information was gathered in the form of a brief questionnaire (Appendix B) presented to the participants and this was followed by the interview questions for the first interview. The demographic questions as well as the main questions for the interviews were provided to the participants to give them an opportunity to look over the questions as well to respond to the researcher in a prepared manner. Information about the participants included name, age, gender, ethnic background, years in the profession, degrees obtained, and subjects taught. This provided participants with the opportunity to give thought to the questions and to save time during the interview process. The questionnaire and the interview questions served as an interview guide where the researcher could ask for any information that was needed or probe for further information relevant to the process. The interview guide served as a document to record anecdotes and thoughts by the researcher both during and after the interviews.

#### **Interviews**

All 22 of the interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and were done by telephone and recorded onto a digital recorder using an I-phone on speaker. The recordings were then slowed

down and transcribed and checked for clarity. All transcriptions were sent to the participants for review and to allow participants to confirm accuracy of the obtained information. The review of the actual transcription document provided the opportunity to gain an overview perspective and to ponder further relevant questions, as well as a location to take marginal notes and jot down relevant ideas and questions needing clarification. The initial interviews were transcribed and then analyzed throughout the process to explore needed clarifications, and to prepare for the second interview where an opportunity was provided to explore more direct questions regarding needed changes or initiatives that related to gay educators or LGBT students.

### **Interview or Field Notes**

The researcher used the same copy of the interview questions as an interview guide (Appendix C) to assist in recording field notes and main ideas expressed in the interview, as well as a place to record follow up questions for the second interview which expected to be approximately 30 minutes depending on the responses to questions and elaboration of experiences or clarification in following up on previous questions. All interview documents in the form of transcriptions or notes taken during or after the interview were labeled and filed by the participant number.

Transcriptions were compared to these notes in the analysis of the main codes to verify sub codes and to add clarity to the data. The researcher continued to review and revise the category definitions as needed. The transcriptions were read, reviewed, and repeatedly compared when needed, to the actual recordings to clarify and confirm statements and views of the participants and to add to the depth of the narratives in Chapter 4.

The conceptual frameworks for the study (as discussed in Chapter 1) as well as the research questions were the foundations for organizing the data into certain areas of experience.

The researcher took steps to reduce the data by using the technique of “lean coding” or the reduction of the vast amount of data to combine into five or six main codes or themes and then expand the categories as needed to encompass all the data (Creswell, 2007). The data were first analyzed by reading the transcripts in entirety for each area of experience and then a color code was determined to represent each area. This required each individual transcript to be read thoroughly for each main area of experience, and then highlighted and examined for that specific area of experience or code. For each of the eleven participants who each gave two interviews, six different areas were thoroughly explored and color-coded for 22 separate transcripts totaling over 100 pages of transcription. After the color coding, a simple two column table was used for each area of experience for each participant. This further served to exhaust the data and was a way of organizing the information for comparison. The organizing and reduction of the data involved, reading, interpreting, coding, describing, categorizing, and comparing. Nearly all the data was found to fall into one of the six main areas of experience. Classifying the data first into main codes, led to realizing what specific sub-codes emerged and allowed for the coding of all the data.

A sample of the interview transcriptions, were analyzed by a fellow researcher to confirm and clarify consensus on coding. This outside reviewer served to peer-debrief and acted as a peer reviewer only with no stake in the results of the study. Initially, the peer reviewer coded a 10% sample of the data for the main codes and subsequently coded the same data for confirmation of sub-codes. The rate of consensus was close to 90% on the main codes after consulting with the peer reviewer to adjust definitions of the codes and sub-codes to include as much of the data as possible. It is important to note that within the main codes, there were frequent overlaps in how

the data were classified and this could easily allow for the variation in the data classification for the remaining 10%.

### **Data Presentation**

Patton (2002) stated that, “Developing some manageable classification or coding scheme is the first step of analysis” (p. 463). The data in the study was represented in narrative text to relate the lived experiences of the participant and then in tables to show emergent sub-codes, patterns, and themes. Table 5-1 consists of the six main codes and definitions of the sub-codes and examples from the text. Subsequently tables 5-2 through 5-23 show the patterns for the sub-codes. Table 5-24 presents a summary of the patterns and table 5-25 presents the themes that emerged from the data. Finally, tables 5-26 through 5-35 present the patterns contributing to each theme. The data was categorized into six main areas or categories each with its own color code for visualization, which included:

#### **Struggles (St)**

Definition: This refers to the possible struggles of the gay or lesbian educator, including any event posing a challenge. Key words could include bullying, stress, discrimination, unfriendliness, racism, budget cuts, and family struggles.

#### **Supports (S)**

Definition: Anything or anyone that supported, motivated, influenced, or inspired a participant. Key words could include motivations, life experiences, and supportive key people.

#### **Issues of Identity (I)**

Definition: Experiences related to being a gay or lesbian educator such as issues of identity and civil rights limitations or expansions as found in the legal and research literature. Key words could include identity, coming out or being out, equality, and legal issues.

### **Differences and Similarities (DS)**

Definition: Any aspect perceived by the researcher or participant as a similarity or difference between gay educators and non -gay educators. Key words could include marriage, children, relationships, hometown friends, and hopes for the future.

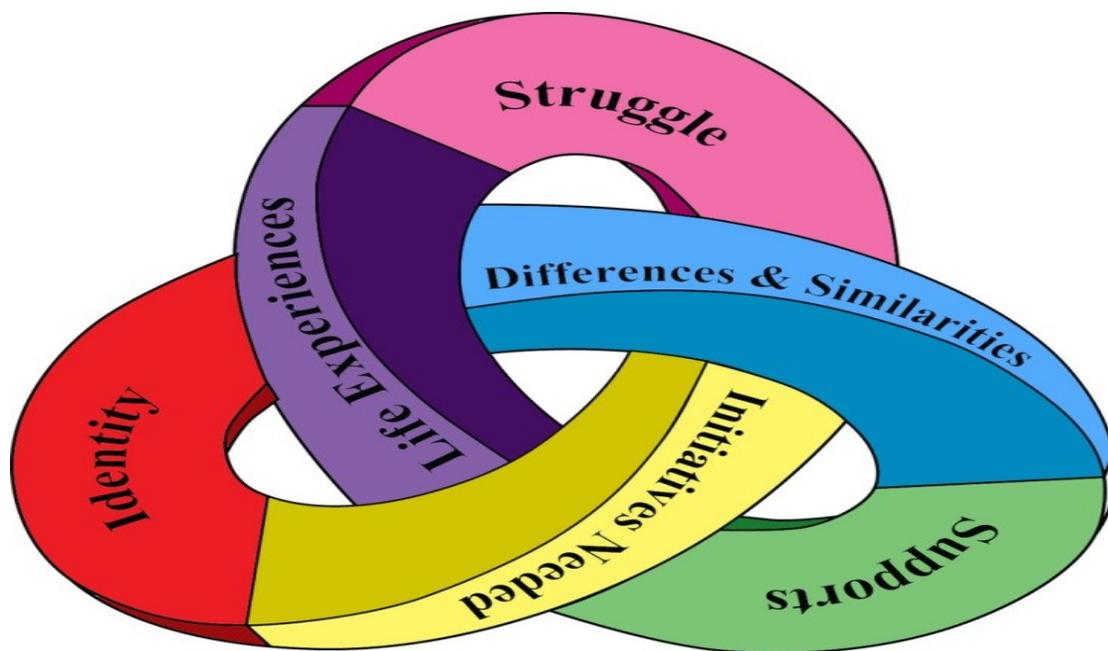
### **Life Experiences (LE)**

Definition: Any, education, training, focus, interest, accolades, awards, or successes that influenced their careers. Key words could include education, degrees, awards, hobbies, interests, successes, and motivations.

### **Initiatives Needed (IN)**

Definition: Anything needed to enhance educational careers for gay or lesbian educators or learning for gay and lesbian students. Key words could include changes, legislation, acceptance, training, and awareness.

Along with the six main codes or categories, seven main headings were used to organize the narrative text, which provided for an in-depth analysis of various life experiences of each participant in Chapter Four. The narratives were also a way to ensure that all the data were included in presenting the experiences of the participants. It was important to the researcher to remain faithful to the exact words of the participant in each narrative. When the text was fully analyzed, it was found that many of the main codes overlapped. Figure 5.1 is a visual interpretation of how the main codes intertwined and intersected, followed by the codes presented in the table showing the narrative headings as well.



**Figure 5.1 Intersection of the Main Themes**

Design by Charles Kipp, reprinted with permission

**Table 5.1 Main Coding Categories and Narrative Headings (Chapter 4)**

Main Codes	Narrative Headings
Struggles	Early Life Experiences and Education
Supports	Work and Career Experiences
Issues of Identity	Experiences as a Gay Person
Differences and Similarities	Successes
Life Experiences	Motivation and Inspiration
Initiatives Needed	Needed Initiatives
	Researcher's Perspective

Each transcript was read in its entirety for each color-coded category. For example, the category of struggle was highlighted throughout the transcript for any text that came under that description. This was done with the appropriately colored highlights for each of these main coding categories for all 22 participant transcripts. Thus, each transcript required at minimum, six separate in-depth readings with the appropriate highlighting, notes, and analysis.

The transcripts were then analyzed for each category with text examples and organized into a simple two column chart for each category as it was highlighted according to the color code. For example, all the data for the main code of ‘struggle’ was deposited and recorded into that chart. This served to organize the text into the specific area with some data being repeated in more than one area. It also combed the data repeatedly to discern what patterns emerged. The results were an organizing of data in six separate charts for each participant representing the main codes. This facilitated the researcher by making it possible to compare the categories across all the participants.

Tables were created for each main code with the appropriate sub-codes emerging from the data.

**Table 5.2 Sub-codes for Struggles with Definitions and Examples from Text**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
Struggles (St)	Struggles (early in life)	Any negative experiences that were shared such as rejection, name calling, or bullying.	“I was picked on. I was called sissy, gay, faggot... when I was in middle school in the late 70’s it was hell.” (P-2)
	Struggles (at work or professionally)	Any negativity at work such as discrimination, lack of communication, or threat to employment.	“I was harassed sexually. I was threatened, I was told that I was too vocal and too public.” (P-7)

	Struggles (with family)	Any struggle or conflict due to coming out or identity.	After coming out to an elderly parent, the parent stated, “I still love you and we don’t need to talk about this again.” (P-6)
	Struggles (in relationships)	Any conflict that occurred in partnerships or marriages.	

**Table 5.3 Sub-codes for Supports with Definitions and Examples from Text**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
Supports	Supports from family or early in life.	Positive experiences growing up with family or friends.	“It was my mother who gave me the desire to learn and get better.” (P-11)
	Supports from past educational experiences.	Positive experiences with former students, teachers, or mentors.	“I played boys baseball...and [the coach] actually is somebody I keep in contact with still to [this] day. He ended up being my coach for several years, and now I work with him.”
	Supports from current educational experiences.	Positive experience with current educational experiences.	“I would describe the atmosphere at my school as overwhelmingly positive.” (P-1)

**Table 5.4 Sub-codes for Issues of Identity with Definitions and Examples from Text**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
Issues of Identity	Issues of identity early in life or schooling.	Any issues as being singled out or bullied early in life for not being seen as the	“I learned at a very young age that [being gay] was a very bad thing. My family life

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
		same as others.	was also very negative.” (P-2)
	Issues of identity as a as a young gay person.	Any issues with coming out and identifying as a young gay person.	“It was not really a big deal when I came out to my family.” (P-1)
	Issues of identity as a gay adult in personal life.	Any issues with coming out or identifying as a gay adult.	“Really, I am not out, and part of that is just because of growing up here” [Midwestern small town].” (P-4)
	Issues of identity as an adult professional.	Any issues encountered as a gay person at work as an educator.	“I have never come out to my students, but I have never denied I was gay if they asked me.” (P-1)

**Table 5.5 Sub-codes for Similarities and Differences with Definitions and Examples**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
Similarities and Differences	Similarities in early life experiences to heterosexual or non-gay educators.	Anything that stands out that significantly influenced the early life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher as the same as that of educators who are not gay.	“I grew up very diverse and exposed to many different things from a very early age and I learned to adapt and live with different people with different points of view and different religions and lifestyles at a very early age.” (P-1)

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
	Differences in early life experiences to heterosexual or non-gay educators.	Anything that stands out that significantly influenced the early life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher as different from other educators who are not gay.	“I played boys baseball and it was a big deal because they were not going to allow me to.” (female participant, P-6)
	Similarities in adult and or professional, experiences to that of heterosexual or non-gay educators.	Anything that stands out that significantly influenced the adult life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher, as the same as other educators who are not gay.	“I was married [to a woman] for 13 years and I have four children.” (P-2)
	Differences in adult and or professional, experiences to that of heterosexual or non-gay educators.	Anything that stands out that significantly influenced the adult life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher, as different from other educators who are not gay.	“I am not an administrator anymore probably because of my relationship. I wasn’t given an option [to quit my job] that decision was made for me.” (P-3)

**Table 5.6 Sub-codes for Life Experiences with Definitions and Examples**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
<b>Life Experiences (LE)</b>	Life Experiences in past educational settings.	Any positive experiences with education, that influenced their educating.	“I would say I was fortunate to have really good education in good public schools. I have always had a collaborative cooperative learning

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
			school environment; I certainly bring that to my classroom.” (P-1)
	Life Experiences in areas of interest or expertise.	Any positive educational experiences with areas of interest or expertise that influenced their educating.	“My first degree was in recreation, with my interest in sports. Actually, I started coaching prior to that and that got me interested in teaching.” (P-4)
	Life Experiences with successes.	Any experience of receiving recognition, accolades, awards or success connected to their educating.	Last year at the end of the year I won a teaching award and the principal and the superintendent was there [and] presented this award to me and the principal was there...my whole family came and she invited my partner so he came out and we embraced. So, it was a very big moment for me.”
	Life Experiences with graduate degrees.	Any educational experiences received at the graduate level or anticipated toward achieving.	“I am working on my Ph.D. on looking at how social studies teachers...are making sense of the common Core Standards.”

**Table 5.7 Sub-codes for Needed Initiatives with Definitions and Examples**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
<b>Needed Initiatives</b>	Needed Initiatives for Curriculum or Instruction.	Any change seen as needed to be taught or added to curriculum.	“I think Gay History should be a part of the Social Studies Curriculum. That would go a long way

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-Codes</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data example (excerpt from transcript text)</b>
			in breaking down stereotypes and it would empower students and teachers.” (P-1)
	Needed Initiatives for staff development.	Any change deemed appropriate for staff awareness of LGBT people or students.	“the comment was made we need to teach our kids to tolerate each other’s differences...I said we need to teach to accept people’s differences...tolerating is negative term.” (P-3)
	Needed Initiatives for students who are LGBT.	Any change deemed as helpful to LGBT students.	“One of the major things I would really like to see happen is some kind of GSA in every school.” (P-10)

As the researcher continued to analyze and re-read the transcripts, adjustments were made to coding categories and sub-codes as needed and deemed appropriate. This was done by repeatedly going back to the transcripts and re-reading for evidence of all codes being thoroughly explored to cover all the text in its entirety. It is important to reiterate that the areas of color coding in many cases overlapped.

### **Patterns and Themes Emerging from the Data as Related to the Literature**

The researcher chose to include what was deemed as not only patterns but important data to be presented at it related to issues that have been important in the literature and historical context of living as a gay educator. Each sub-code was reviewed for its content of important issues as well as patterns.

**Struggles Early in Life**

Struggle as experienced early in life was not reported as having shown itself to be a significant experience to this group of participants. It is mentioned repeatedly in the literature that young people can have trouble regarding acceptance by society and family. Uribe (1991), commented regarding gay youth that,

Young men and women struggling with their sexual orientation during a time of intense physical, social, and developmental change are failed by physicians, educators, mental health professionals, and clergy who breach their ethical and professional obligations by being uninformed and unresponsive to the special problems and needs of these youth. (p. 11)

The data had one participant who experienced significant negative experiences that were not only negative regarding home and religious life but that permeated his experiences at school as well. The researcher saw value in revealing this information since it showed a common pattern revealed in the literature that could reflect an overall change in societal values and acceptance.

**Table 5.8 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Struggles Early in Life St-1**

Sub-Code of Struggles (early in life)	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any negative experiences that were shared such as rejection, name calling, or bullying or strict religious beliefs.	Ten of the participants did not experience significant struggles early in life.	“I haven’t really had any negative experiences. I had a pretty lucky life of the gay boy and man growing up.” (P-9)
	One of the participants had significant negative experiences of rejection and bullying connected to religion as well as in school.	“It was a very negative situation because we were Catholic, and they just scratched their heads and said, ‘I can’t believe he’s gay.’” (P-2) “In middle school it was just hell. I mean I just struggled with that.” (P-2)

### Struggles at Work or Professionally

Many of the participants had no issues at work or in the professional setting or felt that the climate in their schools had evolved into safe spaces. It was found that there were issues of several of the participants having suffered mistreatment from administration, including making decisions to deny recognitions, sexual harassment, and loss of employment in one case.

Participants mentioned that to be out about one’s sexual orientation was not fully welcomed in their school districts and was considered controversial.

**Table 5.9 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Struggles at Work or Professionally (St-2)**

Sub-Code of Struggles (at work or professionally)	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
<p>Definition: Any negativity at work such as discrimination, lack of communication, or threat to employment.</p>	<p>Seven of the participants felt that they experienced little to no issues of discrimination at work or professionally.</p>	<p>“I actually feel like right now in my building I feel the safest most supported. I feel we have the best culture in our school that we I’ve ever experienced.” (P-5)</p>
	<p>Several (three) of the participants experienced discrimination or unfair treatment including termination of employment.</p>	<p>“I am not an administrator anymore probably because of my relationship. I wasn’t given an option of whether I was going to leave or not, that decision was made for me.” (P-3)</p>
	<p>Some of the participants had observed issues related to discrimination in the form of colleagues being out or open about their sexual orientation in their workplace.</p>	<p>“Most of the people I have seen don’t seem to worry about it. There’s really only been one teacher that I’ve ever noticed that [I’ve] been around that felt like they should be kind of out and made a point of telling everybody in the district. I don’t think it helped them at all.” (P-4)</p>

## Struggles with Family or Relationships

Regarding the struggles with family or relationships, the life incidents that stood out as significant are ones involving divorce. Some of the participants reported having some sense of rejection centered on acceptance from family and connected to religion. These issues are noted in the category of Issues of Identity. Divorce is interesting to observe as a struggle, since prior to the divorce was the choice to marry as a heterosexual. It is noted that within this sub-code, the participants who had biological children spoke vigorously about being dedicated to their responsibilities of parenting.

**Table 5.10 Patterns for the Sub-code of Struggles with Family and Relationships (St-3)**

Sub-code of Struggle within families or relationships	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any struggle or conflict with family members or spouses.	Three of the participants have been in heterosexual relationships that ended in divorce.	"I have 4 children. I was married for 13 years. I was 35 when I was kicked out of my house. I made her life as miserable as possible and she finally cracked and gave them to me." (P-2)

## Supports from Family or Early in Life

A large portion of the participants had considerably supportive family or childhood environments. In some cases, the positive experiences that were characteristic of the locale, influenced the participant and involved a variety of activities. This included cultural events, extensive involvement in sports or fine arts, and in a few cases, religious or faith-based activities or groups. When mentioning family support, it is important to point out that four of the 11 participants emphasize the influence of the family traveling and vacationing together as enjoyable and, in some cases, educational.

**Table 5.11 Patterns for the sub-code of Supports from Family or Early in Life (S-1)**

Sub-code of support from family or early life.	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Positive experiences growing up with family or friends.	A majority of the participants had considerable support of their families or people they grew up with.	“I have a lot of great childhood memories. A very good neighborhood to grow up in. A lot of the kids I grew up with went to grade school together and some went on to high school together so a lot of long-term relationships came out of that.” (P-8)

**Supports from Past Educational Experiences**

It is not surprising that the data indicated these educators had very solid upbringings and experienced significant support in terms of educational experiences including those that might be considered as a part of the ‘normal’ family setting. Nearly all of the participants had good educators in their experiences and good educations within their families. Several spoke of being driven and inspired to learn at an early age and that they enjoyed learning. A clear majority of the participants either experienced the support of an excellent teacher and or the support and friendship of former mentees or students.

**Table 5.12 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Supports from Past Educational Experiences (S-2)**

Sub-code of support from past educational experiences	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Positive past experiences or contact from community members, former students, teachers or mentors.	A majority of the participants had some form of support acknowledgement or encouragement from past students, educators, mentors or within the family.	“I have 3 former players that coach and I communicate with them [about] their season. I have kids that are still in contact with me after 20-30 years.” (P-3) “Neither one of [my parents] finished high school but [when I was four] they told me I was

		going to college. I didn't know what college was. but I was okay with that. I think the drive to always be better was there since I was a kid." (P-6)
--	--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### Supports from Current Educational Experiences

All of the participants reported to some degree to have been supported or felt supported in their current positions. Some of the participants were clear to state that they might have had issues in the past where they did not feel that way but either changed employment or made adjustments in a variety of ways. Some simply moved or quit the job where the experience was not what they wanted. Others evolved by changing their focus. For example, going from public school system administration to a private non-profit educational organization or changing their area of expertise, such as gaining education in a different area such as special education. Finally, school related support and respect for individual teachers' experiences was considered supportive and reinforced the value of their presence in the school and community.

**Table 5.13 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Supports from Current Educational Experiences (S-3)**

Sub-code of support from current educational experiences	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Positive current educational experiences or supports from community members, students, colleagues or administrators.	All participants reported that they feel a sense of support at the current time in their careers from various sources, and in some cases multiple sources including community members, students, colleagues or administration.	"I do have four children, they have been raised by me for the last 13 years. People come to me and say I have a gay child or a gay student, 'what do I do?' I think people trust me and have asked for that help so I kind of feel like the model to those parents or family members or people that come to me." (P-2)

### Issues of Identity Early in Life

Prevalent in the research literature is the subject of gay teens and frequent experiences of bullying and harassment (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016). Although there was only one participant that experienced bullying and name calling, it was still deemed a sub-code to issues involving the identity of a young gay person.

**Table 5.14 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity Early in Life or Schooling. (I-1)**

Sub-code of issues of identity early in life.	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any issues as being singled out or bullied early in life for not being the same as others.	Only one of the participants had significantly negative experiences. The participant was bullied significantly in school.	“I was picked on, called gay, sissy, faggot probably because you know kids are mean to each other and I think they just target kids who are different.” (P-2)

### Issues of Identity as a Young Gay Person

Most of the participants stated that they were in college or around that age when coming out. High school was stated next as the time of coming out, with two of the participants self-identifying as gay later in life and one considering themselves ‘not out’.

**Table 5.15 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity as a Young Gay Person (I-2)**

Sub-code of issues of identity as a young gay person	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any issues with coming out and identifying as a young gay person.	8 of the participants stated that they were in college or around that age when coming out.	“That would have been my senior year of my undergraduate...it took me that long...I was more concerned about my family than anything else.” (P-10)
	Three of the participants stated high school was the time of coming out.	“I came out in high school and I was the senior class president. I came out to a few friends and then came out to my family.” (P-1)
	Two participants came out later in life after a heterosexual marriage.	“I was 35 when I got kicked out of my house... [I came out] when I knew I couldn’t be

Sub-code of issues of identity as a young gay person	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
		fired for being gay.” (P-2)
	One participant was in a heterosexual marriage and considers themselves not out.	“Um really um I am not out. Part of that is... people that know me and some of that has to do with they know me as I’ve been married you know those kinds of things.” (P-4)

**Issues of Identity as a Gay Adult in Personal Life (I-3)**

Most of the participants were comfortable as young adults in their personal lives.

In some cases, the participants had virtually no issues with coming out and others were self-conscious of their sexuality but found support or eventually discovered partners and in one case after dating as a heterosexual. Conversely, it is important to note the pattern of choosing to marry into a traditional heterosexual marriage prior to being in a gay relationship or being out. The amount of time married for the participants was six years, nine years, and 13 years. In these cases, coming out happened at a considerably older age than the other participants.

**Table 5.16 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity as a Gay Adult in Personal Life (I-3)**

Sub-code of issues of identity as a gay adult in personal life	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any issues with coming out or identifying as a gay adult.	Eight of the participants were comfortable as gay adults, coming out during high school and or college years and eventually were in a relationship with a partner.	“I would say that I had a pretty young coming out experience, so I would say probably 16 or 17 years old and after that I just didn’t really feel the need to hide anymore.” (P-8)
	Three of the participants experienced or chose to have traditional, heterosexual relationships as adults before either having a gay relationship or coming out.	“I was on a website...I found out there were a lot of guys in my shoes that were unfortunately married because of one reason or another, either by family, guilt church whatever and had kids.” (P-2)

**Issues of Identity as an Adult Professional (I-4)**

Eight of the participants had some sense of safety or acceptance regarding their professional work experience. Three of the participants experienced difficulty in the work setting due to perceptions centered on their sexuality.

**Table 5.17 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Issues of Identity as an Adult Professional (I-4)**

Sub-code of issues of identity as an adult professional	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any issues encountered as a gay person at work as an educator	Eight of the participants feel accepted or feel free to be out at work.	“I think in my current position ...it does help me for the most part. I think me being out and being open helps, encourages the students to, if they are GLBT...to come talk to me...” (P-6)
	Three of the participants, have had negative experiences and or been fired for being gay.	“In the past when I was a principal it was problem and I won’t mince words about it. That’s the reason I’m not there.” (P-7)

**Similarities to the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life**

When analyzing the early lives and upbringing of the participants, they show similarities in the form of where they lived and their experiences. About half of the participants grew up in small towns and the other half lived in larger cities. Their experiences were characteristic of the regions or cities in which they lived, and many expressed that their experiences were not uncommon. It is important to note that regarding what motivated or inspired them to pursue education, a majority all mentioned either an educational experience or a professional educator that inspired them. It was also noted that in a few cases the participants expressed that they really enjoyed their career and job-related tasks such as organization, planning, observation, and relationship building.

**Table 5.18 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Similarities to the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life (DS-1)**

Sub-code of similarities to the non-gay educator early in life (DS-1)	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Anything that stands out that significantly influenced the early life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher as the same as that of educators who are not gay.	All participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding social and geographic environment early in life.	“I grew up in small town America... If your grandparents weren’t you know laying the foundation of this little town you weren’t happy.” (P-2)
	A majority of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being motivated or inspired by educators or an educational experience.	“I think my senior year of high school was a defining moment. I got to take a class where I was able to go to an elementary school every afternoon and because I didn’t really know I wanted to be a teacher, but once I got around the kids it was like Oh, this is where I feel comfortable and natural and myself...” (P-7)
	Several of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being intrinsically motivated or inspired by the characteristics of the career such as planning, building relationships, growth of the students, et al.	“I’m trying to think of something extrinsic but honestly I just enjoy it. I don’t want to sound dorky but I just really enjoy it I like the planning and I like the changing and the growth in kids... planning things they enjoy and that they get a lot out of.” (P-9)

**Differences from the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life**

The primary differences from the non-gay educator for the participants was the fact that in all cases, the individuals had to contend with identity issues that a non-gay person would not. What is a normal or common rite of passage can be for some a difficult internal struggle. Four of the 11 subjects were able to manage coming out as a teenager with some variation in the amount

of difficulty they experienced, but in most cases if they came out as a teen, they experienced some degree of acceptance. In contrast to this is the coming out as an adult. For these subjects, six of them chose to come out as adults or later in life and in three of the cases, they were married first in their lives in heterosexual relationships. Two of these participants came out later in life and pursued gay relationships and one of them chose to not view themselves as out and considered it a private matter as to whether she informed those she knew about being in a gay relationship. She stated that she is not out, however she is in a committed gay relationship. For a non-gay educator, these struggles regarding sexual identity are not as common and thus, for the participants who were not able to come to terms with identity as a young person, these experiences were included in this code as having occurred early in life. A difference that is important to mention is that for one of the participants, religion was a negative influence and added to the struggle to feel accepted and to identify as a gay man.

**Table 5.19 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Differences from the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life (DS-2)**

Sub-code of differences to the non-gay educator early in life (DS-2)	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Anything that stands out that significantly influenced the early life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher as different than that of educators who are not gay.	Five of the participants dealt with identity issues of coming out as a teenager.	“I would say that I had a pretty young coming out experience, so I would say probably 16 or 17 years old and after that I just didn’t feel the need to hide anymore.” (P-8)
	Five of the participants dealt with identity issues of coming out as an adult.	“Well let’s see I had a major revelation when I was 30. I always knew I was different even as a little kid. I just knew didn’t fit in with everything.” P-6)
	One of the participants considers themselves not out.	“Um really um I am not out.” (P-3)

### Similarities in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator

All the participants demonstrated that as an educator, they could assess themselves as to their abilities and success. There are, of course, successful non-gay educators so this ability to self-assess and reflect on their practice is seen as a clear similarity. Another similarity that was clear in analyzing the data was the fact that all but one of the participants was committed in a long-term relationship and or partnership. This was also seen as a clearly demonstrated similarity to the non-gay educator. One surprising similarity was the fact that three of the participants were in heterosexual marriages, and one of them also was engaged once before getting married, prior to self-identifying as gay. One of the partners of another participant had been in a heterosexual marriage as well. So, four participants altogether were touched in some way by the behavioral norm of heterosexual marriage. Finally, it was noted that most participants had earned graduate degrees and three stated interest in doctoral degrees.

**Table 5.20 Patterns for the Sub-Code of Similarities in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator (DS-3)**

Sub-code of similarities in adult and or professional experiences to the non-gay educator. (DS-3)	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples or facts gathered from transcripts)
Definition: Anything that stands out that significantly influences the adult or professional life experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher as like that of educators who are not gay.	All the participants were like non-gay educators regarding success as educators in various aspects.	25 years in education (P-2) 13 years in education [second career] (P-2) 31 years in education (P-6)
	Eight of the participants were like non-gay educators regarding behaviors regarding life partnerships with others.	“I have a partner and we have been together for almost 18 years...we are getting married in May.” (P-8)
	Three of the participants were similar in the fact they married traditionally at one point in their lives.	“We were married for 7 years.” (P-4) “Yes, I have four children...I was married for 13 years.” (P-2)

	A majority of the participants have graduate degrees or beyond, and three are pursuing doctoral degrees.	“I would like to earn my Ph.D.... I would like to be a curriculum and instruction person.” (P-5)
--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Differences in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator**

A primary difference as an adult or professional educator centered around the fact that one who identifies as a gay professional, has to contend with whether or not they share this factor of their lives. Many of the participants were to some degree, comfortable with this information being discreetly shared with those they trusted in the work setting. In some cases, being an adult who is acknowledging their sexuality was seen as a positive, especially for other LGBT people. Several of the participants either acknowledged or had experienced discomfort with being out or that others were more explicitly out. For two of the participants, being out was the cause of losing their positions in administration.

**Table 5.21 Patterns for the Sub-Codes of Differences in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator (DS-4)**

Sub-code of differences in adult and or professional experiences to the non-gay educator (DS-4)	Pattern or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Anything that stands out that significantly influences the adult or professional experience that can be noted by the participant or researcher as different than that of educators who are not gay.	Nearly all participants have had some experience in one way or another with identifying as a gay person to fellow staff or students.	“People know it about me at school...they’ve been to my house, they know I’m gay.” (P-2)
	Several of the participants have had experiences of discomfort or discrimination in relation to them being open about their sexuality.	“There was a [staff] at my building who, my personal feeling, that’s why she lost her job...because she started dating a teacher that was in my building.” (P-5)

	Several of the participants feel that their sexuality is unimportant or helps them in doing their job.	“I have never come out to my students, but I would never deny it if they asked me... I am not sure if putting it out there changes anything.” (P-1) “I think me being out and being open helps encourages the students too if they are LGBT to come talk to me.” (P-6)
	One of the participants mentions race as a component of her identity that she is more conscientious of than her sexuality.	“If it’s me and someone doesn’t like me, it means because I gay or because I’m black I just kind of assume it’s because I’m black, in the way they act.” (P-11)

**Positive Life Experiences or Successes**

The participants in the study had many areas of similarity about what sub-codes best categorized successes and positive experiences. Nearly all the participants had areas where they showed previous enjoyment or were still involved with that interest. Among the interests were sports (participation or coaching or both), musicianship, and travel. Three of the participants mentioned solid and quality relationships with their nuclear families. Three participants were raising biological or adopted children. One participant stated they had plans to adopt children and another was collaborating with her current partner in raising her partner’s biological children. All but one participant expressed being currently in a long-term relationship with a partner or soon to be spouse. It was interesting to note that five of the participants have received recognition for their work, such as teacher of the year or some type of distinct award related to their work as educators. Finally, all the participants except one had one or more graduate degrees with three of these currently pursuing their Ph.D. and one expressing desire to continue to an advanced degree.

**Table 5.22 Patterns for the Sub-Codes of Positive Life Experiences or Successes (LE)**

Sub-code of Positive Life Experiences and Successes (LE)	Patterns or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Definition: Any education, training, focus, interest accolades awards or successes that have influenced their careers.	Nearly all participants expressed current or previous involvement in career influencing first careers, or interests, such as music, sports, coaching or travel.	“Yeah back in the nineties the [local professional theatre] opera house...had [a] summer dinner theatre that I started, and I ran for four seasons.” (P-10)
	A majority of the participants are currently involved in positive family relationships of raising children or maintaining good relations with nuclear families.	“I was married (heterosexual marriage) for about six years...no divorce ends peaceably but you know her dad and I have one goal and it’s to raise a child that’s productive and has a great relationship with both parents.” (P-3)
	All but one participant has a long term partnership or spousal relationship ranging from 3 to 20 years.	“She was my first out relationship and we were together for nine months and broke up and then I ‘d say probably close to almost 20 years later now I guess we’ve been together for the past eight or nine years now.” (P-6)
	A majority of the eleven participants have received awards or accolades for their teaching.	“Most recently I was named a Fellow with the Academy of Teachers [and] the Research Teacher of the Year.” (P-1)

**Initiatives Needed**

When analyzing the sub codes for initiatives needed, the results were highly varied in the details, but could be summarized into several main areas. The main categories involved awareness or diversity training, acceptance and inclusion, and the willingness of the participants to stay the course of initiating changes involving making personal changes or accepting the challenges involving civil rights. Awareness and acceptance were a combination of statements around the concepts of diversity, respect for differences, inclusion, sex education, celebration of

diversity, including high schools having a GSA, and zero tolerance for prejudice and bullying. An interesting comment was made about including significant gay historical figures and their overall role in history. Two of the participants mentioned the need for equity in the medical and insurance system for same sex partnerships.

**Table 5.23 Patterns for the Sub Codes of Initiatives Needed (IN)**

Sub-code of Initiatives Needed (IN)	Patterns or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
Anything perceived by the participants that would enhance the educational careers for LGBT educators or learning for LGBT students.	Nearly all the participants expressed a need for training, regarding some aspect, concerning awareness and acceptance of LGBT people.	“I wish that teachers felt like they could be more free with their sexuality in terms of just being themselves.” (P-5) “I would like there to be more training on the part of teachers and administrators...I think awareness training...having real live gay and lesbian students come talk to [them].” (P-7)
	Nearly all participants expressed an attitude and willingness to fight any discrimination they might encounter	“I would seek legal counsel and if necessary I would sue somebody.” (P-7) “I’m pretty sure I would probably stay and at least find out what is going on and probably make sure the wrong was right whether it be through the law suit or whether it be through the threat of the law suit.” (P-11)
	Two of the participants expressed a need for including significant historical gay people and their contributions in the curriculum.	“I think that Gay History should be part of the Social Studies curriculum and probably the English one too. If prominent gay persons were included and recognized, I think that would go a long way to break down stereotypes and it would empower students and teachers.” (P-1)
	Two of the participants expressed the benefit of	“Why can they not have a GSA at least one per

Sub-code of Initiatives Needed (IN)	Patterns or Significant Incidents	Evidence (examples from transcripts)
	making a GSA available for students.	district...so that students that you know identify can go and have a place they feel safe.” (P-10)
	Two of the participants mentioned equity regarding medical issues for domestic partners.	“I think it’s still too bad that you can’t...for insurance purposes and things, have it so that both names are [recognized].”

**Summary of Patterns**

A summary of patterns or significant incidents is depicted in Table 5.24. The six main areas led to determining sub-codes that encompassed all the data and variations to the experiences. For example, the main code of “Struggles” led to determining that there were sub-codes of struggles early in life, at work or professionally, or with family and relationships. From the sub-codes, there could be differing areas remaining such as some having struggles early in life or having little to no significant struggle. In this way, any significant incident could be acknowledged for all the participants.

**Table 5.24 Summary of Patterns or Incidents across Six Main Emergent Codes and the Subsequent Sub-Codes**

<b>Struggles (St)</b>
Struggles Early in Life (St-1)
a. A majority of the participants did not experience significant struggles in early in life.
b. One of the participants experienced significant negative experiences early in life in school and related to his religion.
Struggles at Work or Professionally (St-2)
a. Most of the participants felt they experienced little to no issues of discrimination.
b. Three of the participants experienced discrimination or unfair treatment.
Struggles with Family or Relationships (St-3)
a. Several of the participants have been in heterosexual marriages that ended in divorce.
<b>Supports (S)</b>
Supports from Family or Early in Life (S-1)
a. A majority of the participants had support of their families or as they grew up.
Supports from Past Educational Experiences (S-2)

a. A majority of the participants had some form of support from past students, educators, or mentors.
Supports from Current Educational Experiences(S-3)
a. All participants reported that they felt supported at the current time in their professional educational experiences.
<b>Issues/Identity (I)</b>
Issues of Identity Early in Life or Schooling (I-1)
a. One of the participants had significantly negative experiences related to being different.
Issues of Identity as a Young Gay Person (I-2)
a. Most of the participants stated that during college or during college age years was their time of coming out.
b. Three of the participants stated they came out during high school or at that age.
c. Two of the participants came out later in life after a heterosexual marriage.
d. One of the participants was in a heterosexual marriage and considers themselves not out.
Issues of Identity as a Gay Adult in Personal Life (I-3)
a. A majority of the participants were comfortable in their experience of coming out and eventually being in a relationship or with a partner.
b. Several of the participants experienced or chose to have heterosexual relationships prior to having a gay relationship or coming out.
Issues of identity as an Adult Professional (I-4)
a. A majority of the participants felt accepted or free to be out at work.
b. Two of the participants, had negative experiences or had been fired for being gay.
<b>Differences and Similarities (DS)</b>
Similarities to the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life (DS-1)
a. All participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding social and geographic surroundings early in life.
b. A majority of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being inspired or motivated by an educator or an educational experience.
c. Several of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being intrinsically motivated or inspired by the characteristics of the career such as planning, building relationships, growth of the students, et al.
Differences from the Non-Gay Educator Early in Life (DS-2)
a. Nearly half of the participants dealt with identity issues of coming out as a teenager.
b. Over half of the participants dealt with identity issues of coming out as an adult.
c. One of the participants considers themselves not out.
Similarities in Adult and or Professional, Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator (DS-3)
a. All the participants were like non-gay educators regarding success as educators in various aspects.
b. Nearly all the participants were similar to non-gay educators regarding behaviors involving having life partnerships with others.
c. Several of the participants were similar in the fact they were in a traditional heterosexual marriage at one point in their lives.
d. A majority of the participants had graduate degrees or beyond with three pursuing doctoral degrees.

<b>Differences in Adult and or Professional Experiences to the Non-Gay Educator (D-4)</b>
a. Nearly all participants had some experience in one way or another with identifying as a gay person to fellow staff or students.
b. Several of the participants had experiences of discrimination in relation to them being open about their sexuality.
c. Several of the participants felt their sexuality was unimportant or helped them in doing their job.
d. One of the participants mentioned race as a component of her identity and that she is more conscientious of race than her sexuality.
<b>Life Experiences (LE)</b>
<b>Positive Life Experiences or Successes (LE)</b>
a. Nearly all participants expressed current or previous involvement in careers, or interests, such as music, sports, coaching or travel that influences their teaching.
b. Most of the participants currently had positive family relationships including raising children and or maintaining good relations with nuclear families.
c. All but one participant had a long-term partnership or spousal relationship ranging from three to 20 years.
d. Five of the 11 participants had received awards or accolades for their teaching.
<b>Initiatives Needed (IN)</b>
a. Nearly all the participants expressed a need for training, on awareness and acceptance of LGBT people.
b. Nearly all participants expressed a willingness to place priority on their families and children first before being willing to move or alter their lives.

### **Themes Derived from the Analysis of Six Main Codes and Sub-Codes**

After listening to and transcribing and analyzing numerous pages of transcripts and field notes, distinct patterns emerged, and evidence provided the most important experiences of this group of participants. After discerning the six main codes, 15 sub-codes emerged, which led to 37 patterns or incidents deemed significant to the participants' lives. The last step in the analysis was to determine themes that provided support from the patterns that established these themes as significant.

**Table 5.25 Themes Emerging from Six Main Codes and Sub-Codes**

<b>Themes Emerging from Six Main Codes and Sub-Codes</b>
1. Most gay educators experienced little to no discrimination early in life or in the professional setting.
2. Some gay educators struggled in several areas including early in life, unfair professional treatment and in relationships.
3. Gay educators had support of their families, past students, educators or mentors, as well as in current professional experience.
4. Issues of identity do and did exist for gay educators, including having been in heterosexual relationships, and either coming out later in life or choosing not to.
5. Gay educators showed similarities to non-gay educators in being comfortable in either being out or in a life-partner relationship including the duties of raising families.
6. Gay educators felt accepted or free to be out at work and or had received accolades or recognition for their work in education.
7. Gay educators showed many similarities to non-gay educators regarding social and geographic surroundings early in life, enjoying characteristics of the career, various successes in current and in previous careers, and being motivated by educators and educational experiences.
8. Gay educators showed many differences to non-gay educators including having to ‘come out’ or not at various points in their life or career.
9. Gay educators would like to see training regarding acceptance of LGBT people.
10. Gay educators placed a priority on their families and raising their children before considering changing their lives for the sake of civil rights.

**Theme one.** Most gay educators have experienced little to no discrimination early in life or in the professional setting. This theme was derived from the main codes of Struggles and Supports. This theme was derived from patterns St-1a, St-2a, S-1a, and S-3a. Most of the participants did not experience or express serious concerns of struggles related to either their upbringing or in current positions.

**Table 5.26 Patterns Contributing to Theme One**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Most gay educators have experienced little to no discrimination early in life or in the professional setting.	St-1a A majority of the participants did not experience significant struggles early in life.
	St-2a Most of the participants felt they experienced little to no experience of discrimination (at work or professionally).
	S-1a A majority of the participants had support of their families as they grew up.
	S-3a All participants reported they felt supported in their professions currently.

**Theme two.** Some gay educators struggled in several areas including early in life, unfair professional treatment, and in relationships. This theme was derived from the main codes of Struggles and Differences and Similarities. This theme was supported from the intersection of the patterns St-1b, St-2b, St-3a, and DS-4b and revealed some of the struggles encountered by gay educators.

**Table 5.27 Patterns Contributing to Theme Two**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Some gay educators struggled in several areas including early in life, unfair professional treatment and in relationships.	St-1b One of the participants experienced significant negative experiences early in life.
	St-2b Three of the participants experienced discrimination or unfair treatment (at work or professionally).
	St-3a Several of the participants had been in heterosexual marriages that ended in divorce.
	DS-4b Several of the participants had experiences of discomfort or discrimination in relation to them being open about their sexuality.

**Theme three.** Gay educators had support of their families, past students, educators or mentors, as well as in their current professional experience. This theme was derived from the main codes of Supports, Issues/Identity, and Differences and Similarities. This theme was supported from the intersection of the patterns S-1a, S-2a, S-3a, I-4a and DS-1b which presented the presence of significant support for gay educators from many sectors of their lives including current professional experiences.

**Table 5.28 Patterns Contributing to Theme Three**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators have had support of their families, past students, educators or mentors, as well as in their current professional experience.	S-1a A majority of the participants had support of their families or as they grew up.
	S-2a A majority of the participants had some form of support from past students, educators, or mentors.
	S-3a All participants reported that they felt supported at the current time in their professional educational experiences.
	I-4a A majority of the participants felt free to be out at work.
	DS-1b A majority of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being inspired or motivated by educators or an educational experience.
	DS-1c Several of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being inspired or motivated by the characteristics of the career such as planning, building relationships, growth of the students, et. al.
	DS-3a All participants were similar to non-gay educators regarding success in their careers in various aspects.
	LE-b A majority of the participants are currently involved in positive family relationships of raising children or maintaining good relations with nuclear families.

**Theme four.** Issues of identity do and did exist for gay educators, including having been in heterosexual relationships, and either coming out later in life or choosing not to. This theme was derived from the main code of Issues/Identity. Theme four was supported by patterns I-1a, I-2a, I-2b, I-2c, and I-2-d which express the issue of self-identifying as gay or coming out.

**Table 5.29 Patterns Contributing to Theme Four**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Issues of identity do and did exist for gay educators, including having been in heterosexual relationships, and either coming out later in life or choosing not to.	I-1a One of the participants had negative experiences as a young person seen as different or gay.
	I-2a and I-2b Most of the participants chose to come out in either high school or in college.
	I-2c Two of the participants came out later in life after a heterosexual marriage.
	I-2d One of the participants was in a heterosexual marriage and considered themselves not out.

**Theme five.** Gay educators showed similarities to non-gay educators in being comfortable in either being out, or in life-partner relationships including the duties of raising families. This theme was derived from the main codes of Issues/Identity and Differences and Similarities, and Life Experiences. Theme five was supported by patterns I-3a, I-3b, DS-3b, LE-b and LE-c which show the experiences of the participants as comfortable with their identity, relationships, and focus on family.

**Table 5.30 Patterns Contributing to Theme Five**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators showed similarities to non-gay educators in being comfortable in either being out or in, life-partner relationships including the duties of raising families.	I-3a A majority of the participants were comfortable in their experience of coming out and or being in a relationship or with a partner.
	I -3b Several of the participants experienced or chose to have heterosexual relationships prior to having a gay relationship or coming out.
	DS-3b Nearly all the participants were similar to non-gay educators regarding behaviors related to having life partnerships.
	LE-b A majority of the participants were currently involved in positive family relationships of raising children or maintaining good relations with nuclear families.
	LE-c All but one participant had a long-term partnership or spousal relationship ranging from three to twenty years.

**Theme six.** Gay educators felt accepted or free to be out at work and or received accolades or recognition for their work in education. This theme was derived from the main codes of Struggles, Supports, Issues/Identity, Differences and Similarities, Life Experiences, and Initiatives Needed. Theme six was supported by patterns St-2a, S-2a, S-3a, I-3a, I-4a, DS-3a, DS-3d, DS-4a, LE-d, and IN-b.

**Table 5.31 Patterns Contributing to Theme Six**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators felt accepted or free to be out at work and or received accolades or recognition for their work in education.	St-2a Most participants felt they experienced little to no discrimination professionally.
	S-2a A majority of the participants had some form of support from past students, educators, or mentors.
	S-3a All participants reported they felt

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
	supported at the current time in their professional educational experiences.
	I-3a A majority of the participants were comfortable in their experience of coming out and eventually being in a relationship or with a partner.
	I-4a A majority of the participants felt accepted or felt free to be out at work.
	DS-3a All the participants were similar to non-gay educators regarding success as educators in various aspects.
	DS-3d A majority of the participants had graduate degrees or beyond.
	DS-4a Nearly all participants had some experience with identifying as a gay person to fellow staff or students.
	LE-d Nearly half of the participants had received awards or accolades for their teaching.
	IN-b Nearly all participants expressed a willingness to place priority on their families and children first before being willing to move or alter their lives.

**Theme seven.** Gay educators showed many similarities to non-gay educators regarding social and geographic surroundings early in life, enjoying characteristics of the career, various successes in current and in previous careers, and being motivated by educators and educational experiences. This theme was derived from the main codes of Supports, Differences and Similarities, and Life Experiences. Theme seven was supported by patterns S-2a, S-3a, DS-1a, DS-1b, DS-1c, DS-3d, LE-a and LE-d.

**Table 5.32 Patterns Contributing to Theme Seven**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators showed many similarities to non-gay educators regarding social and geographic surroundings early in life, enjoying characteristics of the career, various successes in current, and in previous careers, and being motivated by educators and educational experiences.	S2-a A majority of the participants had some form of support from past students, educators, or mentors.
	S3-a All participants reported that they felt supported at the current time in their professional educational experiences.
	DS-1a All participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding social, and geographic surroundings early in life.
	DS-1b A majority of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators or an educational experience.
	DS-1c Several of the participants showed similarities to non-gay educators regarding being intrinsically motivated or inspired by the characteristics of the career such as planning, building relationships, growth of the students, et. al.
	DS-3a All the participants were similar to non-gay educators regarding success as educators in various aspects.
	DS-3d A majority of the educators had graduate degrees or beyond and three indicated a pursuit of doctoral degrees.
	LE-a Nearly all participants expressed current or previous involvement in careers, or interests such as music, sports, coaching, or travel that influences their teaching.
	LE-d Five of the 11 participants received awards or accolades for their teaching.

**Theme eight.** Gay educators showed many differences to non-gay educators including having to ‘come out or not’ at various points in their life or career. This theme was derived from the main codes of Struggles, Issues/Identity, and Differences and Similarities. Theme eight was

supported by patterns St-2b, I-1a, I-2a, I-2b, I-2c, I-4b, DS-2a, DS-2b, DS-2c, DS-4a and DS-4b.

**Table 5.33 Patterns Contributing to Theme Eight**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators showed many differences to non-gay educators including having to ‘come out or not at various points in their life or career.	St-2b Three of the participants experienced discrimination or unfair treatment.
	I-1a One of the participants had significantly negative experiences related to being seen as different.
	I-2a Most of the participants stated during college or college-age years was when they came out.
	I-2b Three of the participants stated they came out during high school or at that age.
	I-2c Two of the participants came out later in life after a heterosexual marriage.
	I-4b Two of the participants had negative experiences or had been fired for being gay.
	DS-2a Nearly half of the participants dealt with identity issues of coming out as a teenager.
	DS-2b Over half of the participants dealt with identity issues of coming out as an adult.
	DS-2c One of the participants considered themselves not out.
	DS-4a Nearly all the participants have had some experience in one way or another with identifying as a gay person to fellow staff or students.
	DS-4b Several of the participants had experiences of discomfort or discrimination in relation to them being open about their sexuality.

**Theme nine.** Gay educators would like to see training regarding acceptance of LGBT people. This theme was derived from the main code of Initiatives Needed. Theme nine was supported by the pattern IN-a.

**Table 5.34 Patterns Contributing to Theme Nine**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators would like to see training in regard to acceptance of LGBT people.	IN-a Nearly all of the participants expressed a need for training, regarding awareness and acceptance of LGBT people.

**Theme ten.** Gay educators placed a priority on their families and raising their children before considering changing their lives for the sake of civil rights. This theme was derived from the main code of Initiatives Needed. Theme ten was supported by the pattern IN-b.

**Table 5.35 Patterns Contributing to Theme Ten**

Theme	Patterns for Six Main Codes Contributing to Theme
Gay educators place a priority on their families and raising their children before considering changing their lives for the sake of civil rights.	IN-b Nearly all participants expressed a willingness to place priority on their families and children first before being willing to move or alter their lives.

### Summary

This chapter explained the details for analyzing the data and presented the patterns related to the six main codes used to categorize the data. It also examined the themes derived from a close analysis of the patterns.

It was interesting to note that upon examining Table 5-25, there is a possible intersection of the themes 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10. All of these themes showed the lived experiences of the people in the study as primarily positive and supported. At the same time, themes 2, 4, and 8 speak of the primarily inherent negatives to the experience of the gay educator or person.

Chapter 6 will include this finding in the discussion of the conclusions of the study, possible implications for practice, and recommendations for further studies.

## **Chapter 6 - Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

This study sought to understand how the lived experiences of the gay or lesbian educator influences or effects their professional practice. It examined the ways that participants are impacted by social norms including issues of civil rights as well as lived experiences that formed them as individuals. Based on the perceptions of the participants, ten main and equally important themes were discovered that addressed the overall research questions and sub-questions for this study. The main overarching research question based on the theoretical framework was: How successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their lived experiences to have impacted their work as educators? The main research question led to the following sub-questions presented below. Along with a discussion of each research sub-question, this chapter will also include the significance of the study, implications for practice, and possible ideas for future studies.

### **Discussion of Research Question One**

**What does the examination of life experiences, reveal about struggles for the gay or lesbian person who is an educator, or educational leader?**

Themes two and four stated that gay educators struggle in various aspects of their lives and that issues of identity do and have existed for them. This study found a great variety of experiences from the participants and indeed it was found that there were struggles. The primary struggle for a gay educator was the ever-present question regarding whether to be 'out of the closet' or not. In some cases, participants shared that heterosexual marriage was pursued prior to a gay relationship. In two of the cases, biological children were part of the relationships and in both situations, the gay parents took over primary care of the children. In a third case, the

participant was in a partnership with someone who was also in a straight relationship and they collaboratively raise the biological children. Both were primary caregivers and custodial parents.

It was clear that the process of having to come out presented a significant struggle and in some cases, coupled with whether to come out or not or act as a heterosexual and marry for acceptance from society or family mentioned later in this chapter as “passing”. One of the participants stated, “I was on a website...I found out there were a lot of guys in my shoes that were unfortunately married because of one reason or another, either by family, guilt church whatever, and had kids.”

This finding was prevalent in the literature as well. Numerous books have been written about the struggle of gay people having to deal with various aspects of being in the closet or not being out. This literature is also clear in explaining the struggle that gays and lesbians have had in fighting discrimination in various occupations, including the field of education (Claussen, 1997; Eaklor, 2008; Jennings, 1994; Harbeck, 1992; Kissen, 1996; McNaught, 1997; Newton, 1994; Nutter, 2006; Signorile, 1993; Signorile, 1996). Heterosexuality more often allows straight people the opportunity to openly discuss their sexuality. In contrast, gay people that come out are perceived as going too far, making an issue of their sexuality. “As children, homosexuals are forced into the closet by straight society, the experience retards the development of their personalities and of their identities as gay people.” (Signorile, 1993, p. 1).

All participants except for one, considered themselves having come out in their teenage years or during college. Three of the participants had struggles with acceptance at one point or another with past jobs and two of them were educational leaders. The two educational leaders were terminated from their jobs because of being open about their sexuality. Author Christopher Lee Nutter (2006) stated in his book, *The Way Out*,

while straight people have it 'easier' in the worldly sense and it is truly a first-class world for straight people-they do not have it easier when it comes to waking up from unconsciousness because they are not challenged in the profound way that gay people are. (p. 13)

Gay people are also subject to the scrutiny of the law and currently, 18 states allow being gay as a just cause for job termination (Bellis, 2017).

This study revealed interesting evidence about the major influences on participants and how they grew up. The upbringing of the gay people of this study showed a high level of enthusiasm in a variety of interests and hobbies, with clear support of their families. They had several positive life experiences including sports and coaching, musicianship, hospitality, world travel, and, of course, educational experiences including pursuit of advanced degrees. The participants in all cases had either the support of family from their upbringing or had the support of their current families and partners. Most important was the support from their current professional circumstances. All the participants reported feeling supported and enriched by their current jobs. One participant stated, "I would describe the atmosphere at my school as overwhelmingly positive." Whatever struggles that gay people may have outside the job, the conclusion can be made that there are supports and positive environments for gay educators within the profession. Aside from the experiences that the two stated educational leaders had with maintaining their positions, those participants and the rest continued to be successful in their careers. The list of themes showed that there is a clear intersection of primarily positive experiences in nearly all areas. An overall conclusion can be made that it is clear there are challenges in having to deal with identity and the various negatives of coming out but it is also clearly shown in the data that the gay educators were enriched by their upbringing and were supported and endorsed in their current situation.

## Discussion of Research Question Two

**What does the examination of life experiences, and teaching experiences of the gay or lesbian educator, reveal about issues such as discrimination, gay marriage, civil rights, bullying and the welfare of the LGBT student?**

In discussing this research question, themes two, four, eight, nine, and ten were the focus. Theme eight stood out first, as it stated that gay educators have many differences to non-gay educators including issues of identity. This study and its data revealed that it is important that the educator dealt with identity issues which forced the decision to come out or otherwise. Whatever the decision, influences included whether to choose one identity or another or to just be oneself and accept that one may be discriminated against or judged in a number of contexts. A gay or lesbian educator may or may not choose to come out and accept themselves but there is no guarantee that they will be accepted despite the advances that have been made regarding such issues as job protection and acceptance of diversity.

It is important to reiterate the struggles that have occurred for the gay educator historically. Most significant in the literature were events such as the purge of gay and lesbian teachers in Florida from 1957 to 1963 where they were pursued, interrogated, fired from their jobs as educators, and had their credentials revoked (Graves, 2009). Pat Griffin (1992) further mentioned the fact that gay and lesbian teachers often remained invisible due to fear, and in her project entitled, *From Hiding Out to Coming Out: Empowering Lesbian and Gay Educators*, she elaborated on this. In her study, the participants' behaviors related to being out were described in the categories of (a) passing, (b) covering, (c) being implicitly out, and (d) being explicitly out.

This study revealed that the experiences of the participants indeed can fit somewhere in these defined categories. Most powerful was the idea that several of the participants accepted the

role of passing, meaning specifically ‘passing’ as straight. Theme four mentioned the issue of identity by pointing out that three of the participants had heterosexual relationships, two with biological children having been born.

In theme two, the study showed that gay and lesbian educators can experience or have experienced discrimination or unfair professional treatment. Two of the participants were terminated for being open about their identities and another was simply harassed and discriminated against by an African American administrator. Even though we have made some landmark advances, there are still several states that do not protect LGBT people from discrimination based on sexual orientation (Bellis, 2017).

It is a clear and current issue that bullying still exists as it did for one of the participants. The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) reports biannually on the experiences of LGBT youth and the data they have gathered speaks for itself. As an example, 85.2% of LGBT students experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened) at school and 27.0% of LGBT students were physically harassed (e.g. pushed or shoved) in the past year because of their sexual orientation. The harassment of these students included physical assault and cyberbullying (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas & Danischewski, 2016).

These experiences showed that there may be unacceptance and lack of tolerance for the LGBT person. There are still threats to job security as states and school districts exist that have ‘moral turpitude’ laws or in other words, terminate individuals for being gay. In 2014, an educator, Brett Bigham, won Teacher of the Year and was invited to speak at the White House. He reflected on the past experience of a gay friend who took his own life when he spoke to the White House Press Corp in support of LGBT youth and was immediately fired from his job despite the accolades he had received (Bigham, 2014). This situation did not involve physical or

mental abuse or bullying if the teacher, Brett, cooperated by acting as if there was no difference in his experience. However, once he spoke out, it created a controversy that he had to deal with, litigate, and eventually won in court by getting his job back. It was important to the researcher to make sure and include all lived experiences that might have directed a participant to be a supporter and/or advocate for other gay people or most importantly, LGBT students. It is fair to conclude that we are moving from tolerance to acceptance and that the negative experiences of gay educators support the practice of acceptance by making clear that they were willing to be role models and representatives of strength and success in the community, gay or otherwise.

That having been said, it is also clear that the experience of discrimination, even when it ended in losing ones' job, did not interrupt the careers of the participants. Other options were sought, and a certain amount of inventiveness and determination led to new or varied positions in the profession. As well, the participant who felt significantly bullied when younger, took the experience in stride and became a teacher leader and a successful parent.

This participant along with two others made the decision to have heterosexual relationships and in two of the cases not only got married but had children. In addition, two other participants had adopted children or made plans to do so. In one case, the participant and his partner adopted children that a family member abandoned, and they now have four multi-racial children they are raising. The younger participant, just starting his life with his partner, had definite plans to raise a family. It was no surprise to the researcher, that the gay or lesbian educator parent placed priority on the welfare and timeliness of the children's education and livelihood. This was reassuring to learn that besides the focus on success as educators, the participants' focus never strayed from caring for their families.

Finally, the study demonstrated that there were variations and changes regarding identity over time but all but one of the participants were comfortable enough to have current life partners. Theme five stated, “Gay educators showed similarities to non-gay educators in being comfortable in either being out or in a life-partner relationship including the duties of raising families”. This theme was clear and several of the participants were pursuing legal union as a result of the possibility to achieve this realization.

### **Discussion of Research Question Three**

#### **How do successful gay and lesbian educators perceive their life experiences to differ and compare from those in their profession that are not gay or lesbian?**

Themes one (little to no discrimination), three (support), five (comfort with identity), six (feelings of acceptance), seven (success and motivation), and ten (focus on family) all represented positive interpretation of data related to this research sub-question.

A significant and revealing similarity was that participants expressed a comfort in being in their professional positions. It was revealed that they were comfortable in being implicitly ‘out’ at work for the most part and that they felt a sense of acceptance. It was revealed that three of the participants were pursuing doctoral degrees and that five of them had been appreciated with awards or accolades for their teaching or service to the profession. All participants that were with life partners were comfortable sharing that they also placed a priority on the raising of family including two of the participants with biological children.

The study showed that gay or lesbian teachers were like non-gay educators, regarding the influences of the social and geographic surroundings they grew up in. This pertained to the interests that were common to the area, such as skiing in a cold weather region, or appreciation of diversity in urban settings. The study also revealed that the motivations and areas of focus that

one might find in non-LGBT educators were indeed similar to what the gay or lesbian educator might embrace as well. For example the participants expressed prominent interest in music, sports and various activities and hobbies. The participants' exuded passion that was inspired by those that influenced them, including mentors and educators who guided them. Gay and lesbian educators showed an overall positive comparison to non-gay educators.

It was possible to conclude that LGBT educators faced certain struggles with addressing identity which is a substantial difference to the lived experiences of non-gay educators. One of the key findings indicated differences in the acceptance of LGBT educators, based on where one lived and how diverse the population was in certain geographic and social areas of the country. For example, a participant in a large Eastern coastal city had a completely different set of resources as well as lived experiences compared to a participant in a small Midwestern town. An example would be the presence of organizations such as the Gay Teachers Association (GSA) in one of the cities where a participant lived. This was clearly seen in the data, especially regarding coming out openly with ones' identity as a gay educator or educational leader. Participants in more urban and diverse areas clearly expressed the benefit of having been in a diverse climate as a young person. Where there was more diversity there seemed to be more experience of acceptance. It can be speculated that a heteronormative person would have less to contend with identifying as a married or single person. This could vary greatly, but it's important to mention that in comparing the participants to those who were non-LGBT there was a noted acceptance of the gay educator in these settings. The values and skills in being an educator was a key factor along with the clear support that the participants felt from colleagues and students alike.

Another positive comparison was the focus on the family and especially the children of the participants. Children of the participants were a primary focus in all aspects of parenting and care as well as involvement in sports and extra-curricular activities.

#### **Discussion of Research Question Four**

##### **What does the examination of life experiences reveal about gay identity in relation to becoming an educator and choosing to teach?**

The data revealed that themes one, three, five, six, and seven all presented important aspects as to why a gay educator might feel inspired by the career. Theme one mentioned that gay educators in the study experienced little to no discrimination early in life or in the professional setting. Despite the history of discrimination that had been experienced in the past and still exists presently, the current climate was one where either the participants were willing to battle discrimination or felt that it was not an issue.

Theme three stated that “Gay educators have had support of their families, past students, educators, as well as in their current professional experience.” One participant mentioned, “It was my mother who gave me the desire to learn and get better.” The participants showed that their lived experiences influenced by those around them, encouraged and inspired them to want to teach. Most of the participants were inspired by a variety of people including family members, former teachers, former students, or mentors. The participants also made mention of a supportive climate at work. Dan Woog (1999) stated on the topic of straight allies of gay people, “All of them are straight, yet all commit their lives to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people” (p. 16). The supportive people in the lives of the participants may not be gay, but obviously valued the participants and their educational skills and guidance.

Theme six mentioned that the gay educator felt accepted or free to be out at work and had received accolades for their work. This also related to the choice of career and or staying in the career. The themes related to this research question presented positive reasons for a gay educator in choosing their educational career path.

### **Discussion of Research Question Five**

#### **What do gay and lesbian educators perceive as needed action or initiatives in schools to enhance their success and to best support LGBT students?**

Theme nine stated that gay educators would like to see training regarding acceptance of LGBT people. This study clearly found that all participants would like to see some change in awareness and acceptance, whether it is connected to civil rights, professional development for staff and administration, support for LGBT students, or curriculum changes.

This study affirmed that gay or lesbian educators want acceptance. Despite feeling supported in her job, participant five stated,

I would like it to be more of a celebration of diversity rather than us teaching tolerance. I wish the [gay] teachers could be more free with their sexuality in terms of just being themselves, so we don't feel like we have to hide about it.

This study found that there is a need for issues of sexual orientation to be formally addressed with the staff and administrators in training or professional development to increase awareness of the LGBT person and the LGBT student. This training was mentioned as important for students as well as staff. The 2015 GLSEN Climate Survey (2015) pointed out that comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies targeting sexual orientation had not changed significantly between 2013 and 2015 but that LGBT students felt that their peers were more accepting of LGBT people than in previous years (Kosciw, et. al. 2016).

This study also clearly affirmed the need for LGBT students to be supported and feel safe in school. Findings included the importance of organizations such as the GSA to act as a resource and refuge. The data presented made clear statements about inclusion of all students and the importance of diversity training or as one participant called it “acceptance training”.

The related literature presented conclusive arguments that supportive teachers, principals, and counselors are an important resource for LGBT students. The support of these key people is primary in considering intervention for LGBT suicide which is more than three times as likely when compared to non-LGBT students (Schrieber, 2017).

In addition, this study affirmed the need for curriculum that is inclusive of multiple cultures, including, gay history. Participant one stated,

I think that gay history should be a part of the social studies, curriculum, and probably the English one too. If prominent gay persons were included and recognized, I think that would go a long way, breakdown stereotypes and it would empower teachers and students.

Theme ten stated that gay educators placed a priority on their families and raising their children before considering changing their lives for the sake of civil rights.

This study confirmed that there exists, in LGBT educators, a willingness to confront any issues involving civil rights and willingness to challenge decisions that are deemed as unfair or not in the best interest of themselves or their families. Recent victories involving civil rights in view of marriage equality inspired the participants. With this in mind, Signorile (2015) spoke of the phenomenon of “victory blindness” in his book, *It's Not Over*, (p. 24). The author made it clear that the strides in marriage equality do not mean that bigotry has disappeared and that we need to maintain the course against those not supportive of gays and lesbians (Signorile, 2015).

This study affirmed that all participants felt empowered to challenge any civil rights decisions that were deemed unfair or would cause a disruption for their families. The research

confirmed the possibility that the participants experienced a climate where teachers felt supported, however as the title of the study suggests, the participants were not willing to settle for less. In view of civil rights legislation, these participants showed they were willing to fight for their rights to have equality in all areas of opportunity, not just marriage.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it expands the current knowledge and understanding of the experience of gay educators specifically in the main areas outlined in the research questions. In general, these areas included struggles or difficulties, civil rights and equality, lived experiences, self-identifying as gay or lesbian, and needed changes or initiatives. It is evident that there has been progress made by gay people in recent history but not without great struggle and considerable hardship. Gay historian Vicki Eaklor, (2008) wrote, “In these opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the United States perhaps no topic is more divisive than homosexuality, particularly when it is coupled with the deeply rooted concepts of civil rights” (p. 1). This study provided insight in understanding the lived experiences of gay educators and how those experiences influenced them. The study also provided focus on the issues in the field of education.

The research findings were significant as they demonstrated that gay educators are as equally devoted to their careers, education, and families as any other group of people including and especially non-LGBT people. It is important to recognize that the study indicated that LGBT educators are not willing to live in a culture of shame and fear for their jobs and lifestyles. The findings suggest an intrinsic pride and fearlessness expressed by participants that have become the new norm. One of the conclusions of the study indicated that the gay educator is willing to take on civil rights issues that are deemed unfair, discriminatory, or harmful to their family

members or loved ones. One of the most powerful aspects of the study was the suggestion of the significant need for awareness training and modifications in how we approach civil rights and anti-bullying to protect the LGBT student to address homophobia in the classroom and school.

The study brought to light that discrimination still exists, and powerful information is under represented in the news as the topics are deemed unimportant to the majority or simply overlooked. Ironically, the advent of marriage equality has brought on more visibility and thus, an increase in violent homophobic hate crimes. This study supports the fact that society cannot ignore these events. Examples of recent events include:

- A lesbian couple, while with two young children, were denied access to an amusement park because one of them was wearing a t-shirt that said, 'Marriage is so Gay' (Siemaszko, 2011).
- A teacher who won a 2014 National Teacher of the Year was fired from his job for acknowledging being gay and offered support to gay and lesbian students (Bigam, 2014).
- Despite having marriage equality and greater overall acceptance, gay people are more likely to be the victims of hate crimes than any other minority group including Jews, Muslims, and Blacks (Signorile, 2015).
- A man was shot to death in Greenwich Village, New York City, a neighborhood highly accepting of gay people. New York City is also where violent hate crimes were reported nearly every week in 2013. (Signorile, 2015).

In the participants' profiles in Chapter 4, the researcher identified the 'hero work' of the participants by recognizing the positive characteristics they demonstrated in their lives despite the issues of being an LGBT educator. The participants were given these perspective names and showed themselves to have the qualities of being Confident, Courageous, Devoted, Committed, Enthusiastic, Role Modeling, Appreciative, Compassionate, Inspired,

Providing, and acting like Soldiers. They maintained a career in education because of their talent and determination despite hardships and obstacles.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

The results of this study have potential for making a statement that will influence not only future LGBT educators but educators and administrators that are willing to expand the understanding of identity and its importance to the individual. The study was intended not only to increase this understanding but to show complexity in the participants' lived experiences especially as they showed distinct struggles as well as important similarities.

All educators and administrators need to understand that the struggle to be accepted is present and real for LGBT people. The study brought out the differences and similarities that are important in understanding the LGBT student, as well as the educator. All people desire acceptance and what is enlightening is the fact that for any educator or parent, the welfare and health of their children holds the same priority for the LGBT person as it does anyone else.

This study reflects the confidence and resilience that gay people have had in their lives and have now more than ever. The narratives of the participants are important stories to share and are a testimony to the strength of these people as parents, citizens, as well as educators. Through their careers in education, they have built solid relationships that they can rely on allowing them to put identity details aside and focus on doing their jobs as educators first.

It is important to realize that today's climate of visibility and greater acceptance does not mean that the bullying and mistreatment of gay students and people has gone away. Current events continue to show that there is still a great struggle with hate crime and the groups and individuals that support it (Signorile, 2015). The impact of this study draws attention to the fact that as a society, these issues are current reality despite how the news reports or portrays the

issues. The frequent occurrence of hate crimes in recent history showcases that societal issues are present for gays but span larger areas that include race, legalized immigration, and gender equality.

### **Implications for Personal Practice**

#### **Implication 1: Stay Active and Supportive**

As a popular cliché states, ‘the struggle is real’. It is important to mention that part of the researcher’s bias is influenced by 17 years spent in the elementary classroom and the subsequent choice of being out, and or, how to address being gay.

Being in the closet can be harmful. As one tries to hide the truth about oneself it takes a toll on the self-confidence and mental health of the individual. Many potential problems arise due to feeling like a second-class citizen and a general concern for fitting in (Signorile, 1995). As the study exemplified, this is true where several participants chose to get married in heterosexual relationships. The researcher accepts the fact that the study affirms him as a gay man and an advocate for gay rights. It is important for the researcher to stand behind the cause as an activist for the rights of all marginalized people. For most educators in the study, being ‘out’ is implicit and not something that is or needs to be spoken of. In the end, we stand as role models for those that need to understand that our identities do not prevent us from doing great things or doing anything we want. My personal practice is to continue to grow and research how best to support anyone that needs help or advice, in fulfilling a life as a confident adult, free of shame, and full of potential.

#### **Implication 2: Know the Enemy**

It is easy to put aside current events when one is absorbed in fulfilling the busy job of educating and leading. This was easy to do when the political landscape was more approachable and felt supportive, however it is apparent to the researcher that these are concerning times for

civil rights and the maintaining of civil rights. Laws that guarantee civil liberties can be changed. Therefore, this is a time when the researcher needs to model political awareness and involvement. Now more than ever, there is an importance for voting and expressing the continued need for rights and considerations for all people.

Finally, the researcher is committed to becoming a true historian that is willing to connect the current times to the past. We see in America the resurgence of an ‘enemy’. Whether we are referring to being black, gay, an immigrant, or other marginalized group, there is an air of scrutiny and negativity that threatens the progress that has been made in our collective rights. Visibility and winning marriage equality have its caveat. The more we are seen the more we are open to being criticized, judged, or even physically attacked in some cases. As a researcher in the subject of gay studies and history, politics are very important. It is going to be increasingly vital to remain aware of the past and what we have been through to maintain our rights against those that would like to see them go away. The participants in this study were heard and it is the intention of the researcher to continue letting voices shine through the recommendations for future research presented in the following section.

### **Implication 3: Encourage moving from tolerance to acceptance**

Educators must encourage and promote a move from tolerance to acceptance of all marginalized populations as well as supporting curriculum development that addresses bullying and suicide prevention in schools. Although it was only mentioned as a significant factor for one of the participants, mistreatment and bullying were expressed as one of the themes. Many factors should be considered including the reality that gays and lesbians become resilient and resist deterrents and often endure bullying and harsh treatment. Therefore, participants in this study may have experienced more than they mentioned in their interviews. It is also important to

bear in mind that this research did not represent all marginalized groups. Recognizing that the identities of individuals intersect and intertwine, much like the main codes established in this research, is important. In shifting more towards a climate of acceptance, it is vital to recognize that peoples' identities result from varied and combined experiences. Accepting each other as a total representation of these intersecting experiences and events is critical to understanding diversity. Race and sexual preference are two areas that the researcher noted were mentioned by a participant. A larger sample might have revealed more of what is recognized as intersectionality (YWBoston, 2018). Race, gender, sexual preference, and personal upbringing can all play a part in who we become and who we are. Promoting acceptance as a part of school curriculum that specifically addresses bullying of marginalized student populations and research-based programs to support our youth in preventing suicide is necessary. Educators must confront these issues in their daily work and in every student interaction and relationship.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

#### **Recommendation One: Exploring the influence of multiple minority groups**

As a researcher, it was relevant that one of the participants experienced the impact of her race as much as or more than the fact that she was gay. Thus, being in more than one significant minority group offers an opportunity for important comparison and consideration. Being African-American, Hispanic, or Asian is visible evidence of being a minority, and bring with it, historical or stereotypical issues as well. Future research should include the examination of lived experiences combining two or more minority categories such as “What is it like to be black and gay or Asian and gay?” The combination of these factors may present entirely different perspectives worthy of study and future research. The history of gaining civil rights for racial groups, women, and laborers easily recognizes the need to address the significant issues

encountered by minority people today. Recent events such as what occurred in 2017 in Charlottesville, North Carolina where a vehicle was used to assault a crowd ending with death for one of the protestors, is an indication of this (Jacobs, 2017).

### **Recommendation Two: Explore and research hatred versus acceptance**

The continued existence and participation with such groups as the Ku Klux Klan or Neo-Nazi groups gives testimony that white supremacy groups are present in America. Thus, research to expand on racial issues to better understand the lived experiences and narratives of those that hate LGBT people and why is an important consideration. Another arena for further research is the change in the levels of acceptance of LGBT people compared with other marginalized groups. To explore race along with LGBT issues may lead to questions such as, “Is this country truly more accepting than it has been in the past?” An additional consideration is “What evidence would suggest that America has a different societal acceptance for all groups of people?” Lastly, when we look at the presence or even resurgence of racism in America, one can also reflect on and ask, “Who are the enemies of marginalized groups of people and why?”

### **Recommendation Three: Explore and research the influence of region on the educator or various professions.**

One aspect of the study that emerged was the difference that culture and region bring to the discussion. The researcher still wonders how (perhaps even why) an older, gay, black man ever survived the culture of a small Midwestern town. Questions such as, “What lived experiences of the gay individual lead to leaving the support network found in large cities?” and, “What contributes most notably for a gay educator to advance in an educational/administrative career?” The researcher notes that regional differences found in larger cities have benefits for entertainment and recreation while at the same time, foster complacency and possibly negative

lifestyle choices. These regional influences have the potential to impact career advancement and general lifestyle options. An examination of the lived experiences of individuals in varied regional locations may prove to be enlightening in showcasing opportunity and progress.

The researcher poses the additional opportunity for future research to examine similar experiences in case study analysis that depict individuals who developed a niche in a small community regional area with the presence of being a minority of more than one marginalized group. The researcher also poses the question of how various professions might deal with LGBT issues at the work place. Inquiries could lead to the investigation of what experiences were similar, if any, along with identifying survival strategies important to their experience. Portrayal of growth experiences along with struggles and hardships of the lived experiences of being gay and decisions impacting trust related to regional location for the educator are worthy of future consideration.

#### **Recommendation Four: Be aware of the current climate and the loss of civil rights**

Since the time of the participant interviews, there have been significant changes in the administration of the United States of America. As history unfolded over the past few years and the gaining of certain civil rights was achieved, there are key factors to bear in mind in considering future observations. Civil rights can be revoked and lost. The changing of the administration can mean that there can be changes in perspectives and public opinion. The increased visibility can have negative influence on the climate in the country. It will be important to stay aware of the fact that laws can be repealed and the rights and freedoms of a democracy can be lost or changed. The events which shape our history necessitate a continued analysis of the lived experiences of LGBT people. Conducting future research and interviews similar to this research study would provide opportunity to build a historical record of perspectives important to

understanding the lived experiences of gay and lesbian educators. Staying historically and politically aware of the possibility of changes impacting LGBT people is a valid and prudent course of action and opportunity for future research.

### **Summary**

In summary, the researcher hopes to someday be able to meet some of the inspirational people that contributed to his success and to converse with some of the courageous authors and historians mentioned in the dedication. Their hard work provided much of the information and understanding that inspired the completion of this work. This study provides an opportunity for all to witness continued learning in advocating for and helping increase awareness and support for LGBT people as the country continues to work towards true equality for all people. The present-day struggle for equality is rooted in the context of history and the successful realization of civil rights that allow individuals to choose how they want to live, who they want to love, or who they want to be.

As the LGBT community becomes more and more visible, it is important to see their place in our society as educators. The in-depth analysis of the data presented by the participants in this study provided profound and detailed evidence of the valuable and important work they have done. This study provided much needed insight into the lived experiences of talented individuals committed to positively influencing young people and those around them. The gay or lesbian educator continues to advocate fearlessly for what is right, despite struggles with identity and hardship. In addition, this study provided the reader with a deep understanding of the heroic work of educators performed each day and the continued need for awareness and assertiveness, in order to maintain all civil rights for all people.

## References

- Acanfora v. Board of Education of Montgomery County, 491 F.2d 498 (4th Cir. 1974).
- Baker, S. E. & Edwards, R. (2012). "How many qualitative interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research." *National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper*. Retrieved from: [http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how\\_many\\_interviews.pdf](http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how_many_interviews.pdf)
- Bellis, R. (2017). *Here's everywhere in the United States where you can get fired for being gay*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fastcompany.com/40456937/heres-everywhere-in-the-u-s-you-can-still-get-fired-for-being-gay-or-trans>
- Bigham, B. (2017). *You can be teacher of the year and still get fired for being gay*. Retrieved from: <http://educationpost.org/you-can-be-teacher-of-the-year-and-still-get-fired-for-being-gay/>
- Blount, J. M. (2005). *Fit to teach: Same-sex desire, gender, and school work in the twentieth century*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brown, K. (2010). Belmont fires coach for being gay: alumni, students, and faculty protest. Retrieved from: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kassidy-brown/belmont-fires-coach-for-b\\_b\\_792856.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kassidy-brown/belmont-fires-coach-for-b_b_792856.html)
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble*. New York NY: Routledge.
- Burton v. Cascade School District Union High School., No. 5, 353 F. Supp. 254 (D. Or. 1973)
- Partelow, L. Spong, A. Brown, C. Johnson, S. (2017) Center for American Progress. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/>

- Claussen, J. (1997). *Beyond gay or straight: understanding sexual orientation*. Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House.
- Cloud, J. (2010, October 18). Bullied to death? *Time*, 176, 60-63.
- Cole, N. L. (2018). How the ruling class maintains power using ideas and norms. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- D'Emilio, J. (1983). *Sexual politics, sexual communities: The making of a homosexual minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- D'Emilio, J., & Freedman, E. B. (1988). *Intimate matters: A history of sexuality in America*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Denver Post. (2010). Denver man attacked in possible hate-crime. Retrieved from: <https://www.denverpost.com/2010/10/23/denver-man-attacked-in-possible-anti-gay-hate-crime/>
- Downs, A. (2005). *The velvet rage, overcoming the pain of growing up gay in a straight world*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books Group.
- Dunbar, R. E. (1995). *Homosexuality, issues in focus*. Springfield, NJ: Enslow.
- Duncombe, S. (2012, June 14). Cultural hegemony. Retrieved from <https://beautifultrouble.org/author/stephenduncombe/>
- Dynes, W. R. (1990). Queer, In *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (2, p. 1091). New York, NY: Garland.
- Eaklor, V. L. (2008). *Queer America: A people's history of the United States*. New York, NY: Greenwood.

- Edmondson, C. & Stack, L. (2018 August 4). A 'rainbow wave'? 2018 has more candidates than ever. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/04/us/politics/gay-candidates-midterms.html>
- Ellis, H. (1927). *Studies in the psychology of sex - sexual inversion*. Lexington, KY: Filiquarian.
- Faderman, L. (2015). *The gay revolution*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Finneman, M. A. (2009). *Feminist and queer legal theory, intimate encounters, uncomfortable conversations*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Freedman, R. (1985). *Cowboys of the wild west*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Frey, J. F. (1993). *A legacy of cultural, social, and linguistic hegemony in education: Understanding the adult learner's educational past*. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, (2), 33-42.
- Gerassi, J. (1996). *The boys of Boise, furor, vice, and folly in an American city*. Seattle WA: University of Washington.
- Gloucester County School Board v. G.G. (n.d.). *Oyez*. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2016/16-273>
- Gluckman, A., & Reed, B. (1997). *Homo economics: Capitalism, community, and lesbian and gay life*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Graves, K. L. (2009). *And they were wonderful teachers: Florida's purge of gay and lesbian teachers*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois.
- Griffin, P. (1992) From hiding out to coming out: empowering lesbian and gay educators. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 22(3-4), 167-196.
- Gulliford, A. (1984). *America's country schools*. Washington D.C. The Preservation.

- Harbeck, K. M. (Ed.). (1992). *Coming out of the classroom closet*. New York, NY: Haworth.
- Harbeck, K.M. (1997). *Gay and lesbian educators: Personal freedoms, public constraints*.  
Malden, MA: Amethyst.
- Huegel, K. (2003). *GLBTQ, the survival guide for queer and questioning teens*. Minneapolis,  
MN: Free Spirit.
- Hyun, G. (2012). St. Louis catholic school music teacher fired over gay marriage. *The Independent*. Retrieved from: <http://www.studlife.com/news/region/2012/03/01/st-louis-catholic-school-music-teacher-fired-over-gay-marriage/>
- Jacobs, B. (2017). *Man charged with murder after driving into anti-far-right protesters in Charlottesville*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/12/virginia-unite-the-right-rally-protest-violence>
- Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University.
- Jarvella v. Willoughby-Eastlake City School District, 12 Ohio Misc. 288, 233 N.E.2d 143, 41 Ohio Op. 2d 423 (Ct. Com. Pl. 1967).
- Jennings, K. (Ed.). (1994). *One teacher in 10: Gay and lesbian educators tell their stories*. Boston MA: Allyson.
- Johnson, J., & Watson, L. (2013). *Authentic leadership: An engaged discussion of LGBTQ work as culturally relevant*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Khayatt, D. (1992). *Lesbian teachers: An invisible presence*. New York, NY: State University of New York.
- Kissen, R. M. (1996). *The last closet, the real lives of lesbian and gay teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights & The Leadership Conference Education Fund. (2001). Civil rights 101: Gays and lesbians. Retrieved from <http://archives.civilrights.org/resources/civilrights101/sexualorientation.html>
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Giga, N. M., Villenas, C., & Danischewski, D. J. (2016). The 2015 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.
- Lee, R. M. (1993). *Doing research on sensitive topics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lewis, G.B., & Taylor H.E. (2001). Public opinion toward gay and lesbian teachers. *Review of Personnel Administration* 21(2), 133-151. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X0102100203>
- Lugg, C. A. (2003). Sissies, faggots, lezzies, and dykes: Gender, sexual orientation, and a new politics of education? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(1), 95-134.  
doi:10.1177/0013161X02239762
- Mazel, E. (1998). *"And don't call me a racist!": A treasury of quotes on the past, present, and future of the color line in America*. Lexington, MA: Argonaut.
- McConnell v. Anderson, 316 F. Supp. 809 (D. Minn. 1970).
- McCosker, H., Barnard, A., & Gerber, R. (2001). Undertaking sensitive research: issues and strategies for meeting the safety needs of all participants. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 2(1), Art. 22.
- McNaught, B. (1997). *Now that I'm out what do I do? Thoughts on living deliberately*. New York NY: St. Martin's.

- Meeker, M. (2004). Homophile Movement, In *LGBT Encyclopedia of Lesbian Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America* (2), pp. 52-56). New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miramontes, O. B., Nadeau, A., & Commins, N.L. (1997). *Restructuring schools for linguistic diversity: Linking decision making to effective programs*. New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Newton, D. E. (1994). *Gay and lesbian civil rights*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Nutter, C. L. (2006). *The way out: The gay man's guide to freedom no matter if you're in denial, in the closet, one foot out, just out or been around the block*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.
- Obergefell v. Hodges, 135 S. Ct. 2071 (2015)
- Obergefell v. Hodges. (n.d.). *Oyez*. Retrieved October 29, 2018, Retrieved from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2014/14-556>
- Partelow, L., Spong, A., Brown, C. & Johnson, S. (2017) *America needs more teachers of color and a more selective teaching profession*. Center for American Progress.  
Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Perrotti, J., & Westheimer, K. (2001). *When the drama club is not enough: Lessons from the safe school's program for gay and lesbian students*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Rofes, E. (1983). *"I thought people like that killed themselves": Lesbians, gay men, and suicide*. San Francisco: Grey Fox.
- Rofes, E. (2000). Bound and gagged: Sexual silences, gender conformity and the gay male teacher. *Sexualities*, 3(4), 439-462. doi:10.1177/136346000003004005
- Romer, Governor of Colorado, et al. v. Evans et al. (94-1039), 517 U.S. 620 (1996).
- Rupp, L. (1999). *A desired past: A short history of same sex love in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Sarac v. State Bd. of Education, 249 Cal. App. 2d 58, 57 Cal. Rptr. 69 (Ct. App. 1967).
- Savage, C. & Shear, M. D. (2017 July 27). In one day trump administration lands 3 punches against gay rights. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/27/us/politics/white-house-lgbt-rights-military-civil-rights-act.html>
- Schrieber, K. "Why are Suicide Rates Higher among LGBT Youth? Sexual minorities face unique risk factors" *Psychology Today*, 12 Oct. 2017, Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com> Accessed 12 November 2018
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Columbia University.
- Siemasko, C. (2011, July 27). Lesbian couple denied entry into Dolly Parton's Dollywood because of 'marriage is so gay' T-shirt. *The Daily News*, Retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/lesbian-couple-denied-entry-dolly-parton-dollywood-marriage-gay-t-shirt-article-1.159448>

- Shepard, J. (2009). *The meaning of Matthew; Mmy son 's murder in Laramie, and a world transformed*. New York, NY: Penguin Group USA.
- Signorile, M. (1996). *Outing yourself: How to come out as lesbian or gay to your family, friends, and coworkers*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Signorile, M. (1993). *Queer in America, sex, the media, and the closets of power*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.
- Signorile, M. (2015). *It's not over: Getting beyond tolerance, defeating homophobia, and winning true equality*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Solomon, M. (2014). *Winning marriage: The inside story of how same-sex couples took on the politicians and pundits-and won*. Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge.
- Sullivan, N. (2003). *A critical introduction to queer theory*. New York, NY: New York University.
- Tyack, D. B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Uribe, V. (1991) Addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth: The origins of project 10 and school-based intervention. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 2(3-4), 9-28
- Valdes, F. (1993). Coming out and stepping up: Queer legal theory and connectivity. *The National Journal of Sexual Orientation Law*, 1(1), 1-23.
- Vicinus, M. (1985). *Independent women: Work and community for single women, 1850-1920*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Woog, D. (1999). *Friends and family true stories of gay America's straight allies*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson.

YW Boston. (2017). What is intersectionality and what does it have to do with me? Retrieved from <https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/>

## **Appendix A - Debriefing Statement**

Hello! 9-29-13

My name is Roger Syng and I am conducting research on gay and lesbian educators. If you are receiving this e-mail you have been contacted by Roger Syng and are possibly considering, participation in a series of interviews about your life and professional experiences as an educator. This study focuses in particular on the gay or lesbian educator that is tenured in their career. The research is investigating both professional and personal experiences especially in light of the civil rights struggles of gays and lesbians, both in general and as they might pertain to this particular career.

The participation will be in the form of two approximately 30 to 45 minute interviews, and possibly a final phone call or e-mail contact to confirm that the researcher is proceeding and that all procedures for confidentiality are being followed. It is asked that the participant please give oral consent, initially at the time of the interviews, and for purposes of record keeping, also return the consent forms signed as well either by mail or fax. The researcher will be recording and transcribing all interviews. All recordings will be stored safely under lock and key till they are transcribed and a transcription of the interviews will be provided to the participants for their review and to make any clarifications or additions etc. At the conclusion of the research all recordings will be destroyed. This research will be shared with the participants by providing a PDF of the finished dissertation and a final contact made for closure via e-mail or phone.

Thank you for participating and I will be contacting you for more information about times for the interviews. I am very excited to begin research that will help in understanding the struggles and successes of gay and lesbian educators!

Sincerely, Roger Syng

PS. As noted on the consent form the researcher will have resources available if any counseling or advising is needed due to any discomfort incurred due to information shared in the research or anything that emerges during the research process. It is also noted in the consent that a participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

For information on counseling Kansas State provides an excellent set of resources:

<http://www.k-state.edu/counseling/topics/life/gay.html>

## Appendix B - Preliminary Questions

Preliminary Survey for Research Participants

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Race or Ethnic Background \_\_\_\_\_

Degrees earned \_\_\_\_\_

Title / Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

State where employed \_\_\_\_\_

City Where you reside \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Years in Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your duties as you see them in your job:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Appendix C - Interview Protocol**

Interview Protocol for Doctoral Thesis Project / Roger Syng / Kansas State University-2013

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Briefly describe the project as an investigation of the lived experiences of successful gay and lesbian educators.

Interview Questions:

### INTERVIEW ONE

- 1) Where did you grow up and what influences has this place had on you?
  
- 2) What ideas or influences from your childhood continue to influence or have become a part of your teaching?
  
- 3) What do you consider important regarding whether a teacher is out or not about being gay or lesbian?
  
- 4) At what point in your life did you feel comfortable enough about your sexuality to be out to friends and or go out socially?
  
- 5) How would you describe any feelings or reactions you might have experienced in hearing about or discovering in the media, the harassment or violence against gays or lesbian?
  
- 6) What motivated you to want to become an educator or to further your educational career by becoming an educational leader?

- 7) Who and or What inspires you in regard to self-improvement or continuing to educate or lead?
- 8) How do you describe a typical day in doing your job?
- 9) What are some of the problems a person in your position might find in being considered or found out to be gay or lesbian?
- 10) How do you view yourself regarding being “out” at the workplace to colleagues or students?
- 11) How would you describe the environment at your place of work regarding attitudes toward gays or lesbians or any experiences that were positive or negative?
- 12) How would you describe your relationship between you and your students, include anything negative or positive or anything significant that you have learned?
- 13) How would you describe your feelings regarding equal rights for gays or lesbians?
- 14) What influences do the current civil rights of gays and lesbians have on you or people you know? For example, partners, friends etc.
- 15) Finally, we have explored some of the past events in your life, what makes sense to you as far as where you are regarding how you connect life and work?
- 16) Tell me about your family and any experiences growing up that still influence you
- 17) Explain your feelings about being “out” at the workplace to colleagues or students?

18) How would you describe the environment at your place of work regarding attitudes toward gays or lesbians of any experiences that were positive or negative?

19) How would you describe your relationship between you and your students? Include anything significant that you have learned?

20) How would you describe your feelings regarding equal rights for gays and lesbians?

21) What influences do the current civil rights of gays and lesbians have on you or people you know? For example, partners, friends etc.?

22) Finally, we have explored some of the past events in your life where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

#### INTERVIEW TWO / Sub-Questions to questions 17, 18, and 21 of the initial interview

18a) If the environment were to become hostile, or discriminatory, in your district, or state; how would you approach the idea, of moving or relocating, to a state with civil rights protections?

21a) What would be your response to discrimination that occurred or civil rights limitations placed on you or your friends

21b) There are 29 states where someone can be fired for being gay, Kansas is one of them. If this were to be the case in your state; Would you consider relocating in order to gain more civil rights or have protection from bias or discrimination?

21c) What changes would you like to see, in education to improve or enhance teaching and learning for gay or lesbian teachers or students

## **Appendix D - Informed Consent**

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE GAY AND LESBIAN EDUCATOR IN VIEW OF CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: 8/16/2013      EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:  
8/16/2014

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Trudy Salsberry Ph. D.

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Roger Syng

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

Dr. Trudy Salsberry

Campus phone: 785-532-7801

E-mail: [tas@kstate.edu](mailto:tas@kstate.edu)

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION: (This information is for the subject in case he/she has questions, or needs or wants to discuss any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB)

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.
- Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of the research is to explore the experiences of the gay or lesbian teacher. The experiences will involve growing up, personal experiences, and becoming a teacher. The purpose is also to find any information that might relate to civil rights issues for gays or lesbians who are educators.

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:** The information in this study will be obtained in two interviews. Prior to the interviews oral consent will be obtained from the participant. The first interview will focus on life experiences in general and the second will focus on the professional experiences and how they view their job. After the interviews a follow up e-mail or phone call will be used to make any clarifications need or communicate regarding closure and the conclusion of the study.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:** If so needed or desired one longer interview will be given.

**LENGTH OF STUDY:** The participants will fill out a questionnaire that asks for relevant information such as years of education. After that two subsequent interviews of 45 minutes each and follow up e-mails or phone calls as needed for clarification of any information or for closure upon completion of the study.

**RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:** A possible risk is, information that is of a personal and private nature could possibly be given to the researcher. With this in mind, all records will be secured during the time of research and rules of confidentiality and protection of identity will be observed. Resources will be made available in the case of any discomfort that emerges due to the research.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:** A benefit of the research is hopefully, seeing the similarities and differences in the experiences of other gay or lesbian teachers. The exploration of viewpoints on civil rights could benefit future educators who are gay or lesbian and could possibly enhance the profession with information that pertains to educating teachers regarding tolerance and diversity.

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** The interviews will be audio taped including an oral statement of consent, and the participants will receive a copy of the interview and a transcription. During the time period of the study the researcher will have all materials secured under lock and key for confidentiality reasons. After the appropriate time and after the completion of study the audiotapes will be destroyed.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that I have given oral consent to the researcher and that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my consent acknowledges that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Witness to Signature: (project staff)

Date: