IN THEIR OWN VOICES:
THE LIVED PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN/GAY/[BISEXUAL/TRANSGENDER] SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

IN THEIR OWN VOICES:

THE LIVED PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF

LG[BT][1] SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

By

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Historically, educational administrators have been delegated the responsibility of policing the traditionally accepted mainstream gender identities and sexual norms of society and naturally perceived as heterosexual (Harbeck, 1992, 1997). These responsibilities often lead to the creation and stewardship of a hostile educational climate toward LGBT staff members and youth (Kissen, 1996). I conducted a study into the lived personal and professional experiences of LG[BT] school administrators to better understand how power and politics in schools affect the experiences of sexual minority educational leaders.

The following research questions guided this study: 1) How do LG[BT] administrators define leadership and their roles in schools?; 2) How does an LG[BT] administrator's understanding of his or her sexuality influence (the development of) his or her building priorities as a leader?; and 3) Why do some LG[BT] administrators choose to come out while others remain closeted?

The dissertation employed a phenomenological multiple case study design. Using interview protocols, I interviewed eight LG[BT] public school administrators: five gay men and

[1] In this specific study, the use of brackets in the acronym LG[BT] indicates that although bisexual and transgender school leaders were invited to participate, none of the participants identified as such.

three lesbians. Pseudonyms were used in lieu of actual names for confidentiality. For purposes of triangulation, the data were collected from multiple sources including documents, standardized structured interviews, and direct observation.

Five major themes were derived from the data: 1) Fear; 2) A desire to help others; 3) Increased sensitivity to diversity; 4) Personal integrity and resilience; and 5) Mutual respect between administrators, staff members, and students. Additional clusters of subthemes also emerged from these major themes. The findings yielded that LG[BT] administrators sought positions in leadership for the same reasons as heterosexuals and subsequently endured similar challenges. Their priorities varied in accordance with their degrees of public disclosure. Finally, decisions to come out or remain closeted remained dependent on the following factors: 1) The political demographics comprising the school community where each participant lived and worked; 2) The racial/ethnic demographics comprising the school community; 3) Support provided by staff members and higher level administrators; and 4) Degrees of gender conforming behavior as measured by one's perceived masculinity or femininity.

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Finally, I would also like to thank my parents, Cecilia M. Auciello and Joseph R. Auciello, for being my greatest cheerleaders and pushing me forward whenever I was on the verge of giving up; my grandmothers Carmen L. Carlo and Mary Zegarelli for their continuous encouragement and best wishes; and my aunt, Olga Sauter, for continuing to believe in me. I would never have made it without the support from each of you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Cecilio M. Carlo, and my late uncle, Rudolph G. Sauter, whose good examples taught me the value of education and the importance of working hard for everything I desire to achieve. Although you are not here physically to celebrate with me in my accomplishments, I know you are both looking down at me and are extremely proud.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the courageous queer scholars who have come before me: Jackie Blount, Colleen Capper, John D'Emilio, William DeJean, Karen Graves, Pat Griffin, Karen Harbeck, Frank Hernandez, Didi Khayatt, Catherine Lugg, James Koschoreck, Ian Macgillivray, Eric Rofes, Autumn Tooms Cypres, and anyone else who I may have neglected to mention. Your work paved the way for this project, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to make this small contribution.

Finally, I dedicate this work to all LGBT educators and administrators, past, present, and future. Your stories and resilience have inspired me along my journey, and I consider it a privilege to have had this opportunity to give a small handful of you a voice in hopes of assisting in the quest for change in some albeit small way.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> What a long time it can take to become the person one has always been. How often in the process we mask ourselves in faces that are not our own. Parker Palmer, *Let your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation* (2000, p. 9)

For decades, the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) community has endured a lengthy battle full of tribulations amidst a history of oppression and injustice in the United States (Bronski, 2011; Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983; Eskridge, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000, 2004; Lugg, 2003b, 2006; Mohr, 1988). With homophobia permeating just about every personal and public sector of LGBT people's lives, the same attitudes and biases shaping our society are infiltrating our nation's schools (Harbeck, 1997; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b; Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010; Koschoreck & Tooms, 2009). In fact, schools nationwide remain hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBT students, the vast majority of whom continue to endure homophobic remarks, harassment, or assault at school because of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression (Capper, Schulte, & McKinney, 2009; Schulte, 2007).

To better comprehend the magnitude and ramifications of this problem, a distinction must be clearly delineated between sexual orientation and gender. Lugg (2003b) defines sexual orientation as "the sex of the person with whom one can most comfortably establish deep emotional connections—or sexual object choice" (p. 100). That is, the person with whom one is most inclined to fall in love with (Valdes, 1995). It may run from heterosexual, to homosexual, to bisexual. Sexual orientation and sexual behavior, however, are separate entities since individuals may inherently identify with one particular sexual orientation yet not actively partake in sexual acts with a person of that sex (Lugg, 2003b; Terry, 1999; Valdes, 1995). Defining gender presents more of a dilemma because although the meaning has evolved over the past couple of decades, it still continues to be redefined by sociologists, feminists, and queer theorists

(Blount, 1998; Chauncey, 1994; Eskridge, 2000; Lugg, 2003b; Yoshino, 2002). While the terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably, a crucial distinction must be noted. As Lugg (2003b) states, "sex is chromosomal," while "gender is an ongoing, lifelong series of evolving performances" (p. 98). For purposes of this dissertation, gender will refer to a code of norms and behavior expectations imposed by society for what is deemed appropriately male or female (Lugg, 2003b; Valdes, 1995).

Although the politics of gender and sexual orientation have substantially influenced and shaped public education in historic ways, schools continue to "remain stubbornly set in cold war concrete" on these issues (Lugg, 2003b, p. 123). Incidents of bullying and harassment amongst LGBT youth in schools illuminate the reality of these students' plight. In The 2011 National School Climate Survey sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, and Palmer (2012) found that 84.9% of students heard the word "gay" used in a pejorative context frequently or often at school, while 91.4% reportedly felt distressed because of its usage. Additionally, 71.3% of students heard other homophobic remarks such as "dyke" or "faggot" used frequently or often, 61.4% heard negative remarks about gender expression concerning students not acting "masculine enough" or "feminine enough," used frequently or often, and 56.9% actually heard these homophobic remarks or comments regarding gender expression used by their own teachers or school staff members. The report also indicated that 63.5% of students felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation and 43.9% because of their gender expression. A distressing 81.9% were verbally harassed in the past year because of their sexual orientation, and 63.9% because of their gender expression. Additional findings yielded that 38.3% of students were physically harassed and 18.3% physically assaulted in the past year because of their sexual orientation, while 27.1%

were physically harassed and 12/4% physically assaulted because of their gender expression. Of these cases, 55.2% of LGBT students experienced some form of cyberbullying over electronic media. The findings also revealed that the incidence of bullying and harassment was further exacerbated by staff members who rarely, if ever, intervened on behalf of the victimized LGBT students. In fact, 60.4% of students opted not to report incidents of bullying and harassment to school staff believing that little to no action would be taken to rectify the situations while 36.7% reported that the school staff did nothing in response (Kosciw et al., 2012).

Because of such high incidence of bullying and harassment, LGBT students often suffer from poorer academic performance attributed to higher rates of absenteeism, lowered educational aspirations, and poorer psychological well-being (Kosciw et al., 2012). Furthermore, efforts by LGBT activists and their allies so often focus their attention on expanding protections for LGBT workers in the corporate/business world and improving the climates of public schools to increase the safety of LGBT students that they inadvertently compound the problem by neglecting to consider what is arguably the most vulnerable group of all, the LG[BT] administrators entrusted with the task of leading these allegedly safe institutions (Adelman & Lugg, 2012).

While the past two decades have yielded a plethora of research on the experiences of LGBT students (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005; Kosciw et al., 2012) and teachers (DeJean, 2004, 2007; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jackson, 2007; Jennings, 2005; Khayatt, 1992, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Macgillivray, 2008; Olson, 1986, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), little research has been conducted on the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators themselves (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007). A review of the legal literature illuminates the conspicuous absence of research in this area; with superfluous studies discussing the political strides and legislative protections

passed on behalf of LGBT rights (Cain, 1993; Eskridge, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000, 2004; Valdes, 1995, 1998), research on the legal rights of LG[BT] administrators essentially remains nonexistent (Blount, 2003; Capper, 1999; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003).

The absence of literature on the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators is concerning considering how school leaders are generally charged with creating safe learning environments free from bullying and harassment. Even more paradoxical is the fact that adolescent students are coming out in schools in larger numbers at younger ages than ever before (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006) while their teachers and school leaders who should be serving as adult role models are remaining closeted (Fraynd & Capper, 2003). These revelations may be attributed to several factors, most notably that contemporary youth are among the first to have visible LGBT role models along with increased access to information and support about same-sex attraction within their communities and online (Russell, 2002). While these dramatic changes have benefited LGBT youth by creating more possibilities for them to acknowledge their identities at earlier ages and with greater frequency (Russell, Horn, Kosciw, & Saewyc, 2010), the LG[BT] administrators in charge of these youth continue facing lonely journeys navigating the incongruence of their personal and professional identities. Furthermore, research has established that high quality regular interaction with a positive LGBT role model, whether a family member or peer, often coincides with the development of more tolerant and inclusive attitudes (Heinze & Horn, 2009). Thus, as leaders entrusted with ensuring the physical and emotional safety of all students and staff members within their schools, the reasoning for the silence of LG[BT] administrators must be investigated. Understanding the lived experiences of LG[BT] school administrators is, thus, the focal point of this dissertation.

Background Information and the Context of the Study

For generations, LGBT individuals have been described as "persons [living] along the axis of oppression" (Capper, 1993, p. 3); for decades, struggles for equal rights among the LGBT population have been the epicenter of numerous social justice initiatives (Bronski, 2011; Denton, 2009; Mohr, 1988). In the last decade alone, remarkable improvements have been made. Currently, twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have passed laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011); these improvements have, arguably, led more and more LGBT individuals to feel safer about coming out. According to the 2010 United States Census, a total of 116,716,292 households were reported in the United States, reflecting a 10.7% increase from the 105,480,101 households reported in 2000. Of the total number of households in 2010, unmarried couples comprised 7,744,711 of them, reflecting a 41.4% increase from the 5,475,768 unmarried couples reported in 2000. Of these unmarried couples, 901,997 reported having same-sex partners compared to the 594,391 same-sex couples identified in 2000, indicating a drastic increase of 51.8% same-sex households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The aforementioned statistics should not be ignored; as Jones-Redmond (2007) posited, although the census data did not provide a definitive figure for the total number of gay and lesbian citizens, one may reasonably speculate that more gay men and lesbians are openly and honestly reporting their status to the government. Same-sex couples may now be more comfortable with identifying themselves in light of the recent political strides made concerning their rights. In addition, the data excludes information on single gay men and lesbians as well as unmarried same-sex couples who may not be cohabitating, suggesting that the actual number of individuals identifying as gay or lesbian in the United States may be yet even higher. Thus, we must logically assume that gay men and lesbians are professionally employed

in a vast array of career sectors and most certainly hold positions of leadership within these fields (Jones-Redmond, 2007).

The LGBT community's increased visibility is also posing greater newfound challenges for employers than ever before. Although gay men and lesbians have undoubtedly been working together with heterosexuals since the beginning of time (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996), greater credence is now being given to issues of sexual orientation in the workplace as citizens, politicians, and employers debate the topics of marriage equality, adoption rights, and domestic partner benefits (Jones-Redmond, 2007). Heterosexual employers and employees are essentially forced to confront their biases, prejudices, and fears about LGBT individuals to harmoniously coexist in the workplace and reap the most productive and beneficial results (Anastas, 2001; Riley, 2008; Zuckerman & Simons, 1996).

Because of potential quandaries or discriminatory allegations which may arise from misconceptions surrounding the complex nature of sexual orientation, it is necessary to examine some basic facts that should formulate the foundation for any discussion concerning sexual orientation in the workplace. Zuckerman and Simons (1996) outlined five known facts relevant to discussions on sexual orientation and organizations:

1. Population: In any organization regardless of its size, at least 3% to 12% of its employees are gay. The actual number may be even larger depending on how one chooses to define sexual orientation (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996).
2. Distribution: Homosexuality and bisexuality are neither race nor gender specific. Gay men and lesbians can be found in any country, culture, race, social class, ethnicity, and faith (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996).

3. Identification: Individuals must not rely on clothing styles, trends, jewelry, art, music preference, or other modes of self-expression as valid indicators of another person's sexuality. There are no absolute foolproof criteria; the only sure indicator of a person's sexual orientation is a voluntary statement (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996).
4. Responsibility: Issues pertaining to sexual orientation are both personal and professional responsibilities. Attitudes toward sexual orientation must be addressed as they may inadvertently trickle into company policies and politics. Personnel efforts and changes in policies must be enacted to ensure the workplace environment is welcoming for everyone and conducive for success (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996).
5. Legal Protection: Although some states and municipalities have extended legal protection against discrimination in the workplace to LGBT individuals, protection for this group is not mandated under federal law (Zuckerman & Simons, 1996).

Studies have already been conducted on the experiences of LGBT individuals in the fields of engineering (Riley, 2008) and social work (Anastas, 2001). Riley (2008) cautions that the implementation of formal anti-discriminatory policies is a preliminary step that only begins scratching the surface toward creating a safe and inclusive working environment; such policies are not nearly sufficient in and of themselves. Additionally, one must not underestimate the impact that occupational culture alone has on an LGBT employee's experience (Chetkovich, 1997). Riley (2008) describes "invisibility [as] insidious, resting on heterosexual privilege that can be difficult to identify or acknowledge" (p. 22). Her findings corroborated those of Zuckerman and Simons (1996); she affirmed how sexuality often falls on a continuum and that employers must be sensitive to the existence of heterosexual privilege and not make false assumptions about sexual orientation. "For example, a man declaring he is gay does not mean he

does not have children; a man declaring he has a girlfriend does not necessarily mean he is heterosexual (and declaring he has a boyfriend does not necessarily mean he is gay)" (Riley, 2008, p. 22). Anastas (2001) yielded similar data in her examination of the social work profession and called attention to the even fewer protections available for transgender workers.

Overall, the desires of all LGBT workers can be cumulatively summarized in the following often-cited passage:

1. An explicit employment policy that prohibits discrimination based upon sexual orientation;
2. Creation of a safe work environment that is free of heterosexist, homophobic, and AIDS-phobic behaviors;
3. Company wide education about gay issues in the workplace and about AIDS;
4. An equitable benefit program that recognizes the domestic partners of gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees;
5. Support of a gay/lesbian/bisexual employee support group;
6. Freedom for all employees to participate fully in all aspects of corporate (organizational) life;
7. Public support of gay issues.

(McNaught, 1993, p. 66)

Although McNaught's (1993) list was constructed with the corporate sector in mind, the same needs are transferable for LGBT workers across the board in other professions, particularly the education sector. Additionally, the needs of all LGBT workers mirror the needs of LGBT students in schools. At the time of Anastas's (2001) study, Massachusetts was the only state to have legalized gay marriage, and only ten states and some municipalities had passed ordinances prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. At the time of Riley's (2008) study, LGBT persons could still be fired from their jobs simply because of sexual

orientation in thirty-four states. Today, twenty-nine states have still not expanded their discrimination laws to protect LGBT individuals (American Civil Liberties Union, 2016). Although significant work remains to be done, these findings reveal that conditions in the workplace are slowly improving for LGBT persons.

Unfortunately, however, despite the achievement of these milestones for LGBT rights in the United States, progress is still sadly lacking as suggested by the inequities pervading our nation's schools (Denton, 2009). For example, in a comprehensive analysis of litigation comprising legal cases brought forth against schools by LGBT teachers, Eckes and McCarthy (2008) found that the rights of LGBT teachers have not been clearly delineated by our nation's courts. Furthermore, their analysis of the case rulings along with the antidiscrimination statutes in all 50 states suggested that the outcomes of these cases involving adverse employment consequences have varied in consistency across jurisdictions and been settled on a case-by-case basis (Eckes & McCarthy, 2008). Essentially, many of our schools have become lone wolves veering astray from the rest of the pack; whereas many employers have by now adopted anti-discriminatory policies and same-sex marriage has since been declared legal nationwide, our schools are still not doing enough to protect the safety, interests, and wellbeing of their LGBT students and staff members.

Homophobia in the education profession remains a prevalent force continuing to negatively impact students and educators. Many LGBT students and staff members do not feel safe while in school and suffer numerous forms of physical and mental harassment (Blount, 2003; Griffin, 1996; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Kosciw, et al., 2012). For a lengthy period, researchers had been silent regarding the experiences of LG[BT] administrators in particular; only in the last decade has the number of studies slowly begun growing. Early

pioneers such as Griffin (1996), Sears, (1996), and Capper (1999) began calling for research into the area. Preliminary concerns over such studies had initially evolved around their practicality because of the potentially low number of existing participants. Griffin (1996) was one of the first to address this issue, asserting:

> Focusing on sexual minority administrators can expose the underlying power dynamics in schools. The dynamics of oppression are similar from marginalized group to marginalized group. Studies of any marginalized group inform us about others and the similarities and differences among different forms of social oppression in schools. (p. 2)

Another researcher, Sears (1996), offered four goals for research into the area of sexual minority school administrators. First, he believed LG[BT] administrators should be given opportunities to collaboratively reflect and interrogate one another in focus groups to chronicle their life experiences. Second, he posited that scholars should study their records and look for correlations or links between homophobia and other targeted minority groups. Third, he advocated for research designed to cross-examine the homophobic and heterosexist mindsets. Capper (1999) explained that such "collaborative inquiry could help scholars understand themselves, surface multiple identities, and confront the politics that cloud cooperative work between marginalized groups" (p. 6). Sears (1996) finally hoped the data would then lend themselves to transforming schools and their surrounding communities, essentially delivering them from homophobic cultures.

The inability of scholars and administrators to discern the true purpose of education presents a second problem. With more and more bureaucratic initiatives mandating increased accountability and evidence of student proficiency, administrators and scholars often fail to reach joint consensus regarding the most appropriate populations to target for future research. For example, as Capper (1999) stated, one may argue that "if education centers around students' lives, then…the sexual orientation of the administrator [should] not influence student

achievement and is therefore not worthy of study" (p. 5). Additional speculation remains that more practical findings may be yielded from research efforts targeted toward understanding such meaningful and fruitful phenomena as the experiences of LGBT parents and LGBT students potentially at risk for suicide (Capper, 1999). Nevertheless, however, one must inevitably acknowledge that heterosexist cultures still permeate our nation's schools to this day and hinder everyone involved regardless of sexual orientation, gender, or race. In fact, these topics still generate a great deal of controversy as educators find themselves inadequately prepared for dealing with LGBT-related issues, the challenges they pose, and legalities involved in the processes (Meyer, 2010).

Although research has supported the integration of personal and professional personas for more effective leadership (Palmer, 2000), much about the experiences of LG[BT] administrators remains unknown. By investigating the lived experiences of LG[BT] school administrators, this dissertation hopes to provide possible answers for why this group remains so staunchly silent. Palmer (2000) attributes such betrayals of self to a desire to win over the approval of others while concealing deeply held internal truths about oneself. His assertion would certainly apply to any individual finding him or herself conscientiously battling the intensely personal decision of coming out or remaining closeted. Additionally, closeted leaders often resort to using identity management strategies as buffers to deflect any potential suspicion and, thus, offset the ensuing ramifications that might arise from a stigmatized identity (Griffin, 1992; Tooms, 2007). These strategies will be discussed in more detail in the literature review of this dissertation.

In summary, two decades ago, Capper (1993) noted that many books on educational leadership neglected to adequately link leadership practice toward achieving social equity or address the role of the school administrator in establishing social justice. In hopes of remedying

this issue, Capper (1999) later followed the leads of Griffin (1996) and Sears (1996) by positing an array of possibilities for research into the experiences of LG[BT] administrators. According to Capper (1999), "Queer research in administration can open another window on power and oppression in schools, and further expose how heterosexism constrains everyone" (p. 5). Despite her efforts, however, very few studies have emerged (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007) and, to date, little research has been conducted with the intention of understanding the politics of education as they are relevant to the experiences of Lesbian/Gay/[Bisexual/Transgender] (LG[BT]) school administrators. In fact, while researchers have been documenting practically every aspect of the LGBT experience in education for the past two decades, LG[BT] administrators have only known two decades of silence and essentially been cast off as nonexistent (Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003). Studies of the lived personal and professional experiences of LG[BT] administrators would illuminate how the dynamics between power and sexual politics influence the operation of school districts (Capper, 1999; Griffin, 1996; Sears, 1996). Homophobia is still a problem in schools (Meyer, 2010), and sexual minority administrators undoubtedly exist. Until we venture onward and face our fears, however, those fears will only continue to dominate our lives (Palmer, 2000) and ultimately succeed in prolonging the silence.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, educational administrators have been delegated the responsibility of policing the traditionally accepted mainstream gender identities and sexual norms of society and, thus, naturally perceived as heterosexual (Blount, 2003; Eskridge, 1999; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b, 2006). These responsibilities often, however inadvertently or not, lead to the

creation and stewardship of a hostile educational climate for LGBT staff members and youth (Kissen, 1996).

In his article "School Leader as Negotiator," David Stovall (2004) addresses how school administrators find themselves as "easy targets" (p. 8) constrained by politics, torn between the special interests of both internal and external spheres of influence. As leaders, school administrators are responsible for shaping the culture and climate of their institutions into one that is conducive for learning while ensuring that all students and staff members feel physically and emotionally secure. In doing so, however, they too often neglect the needs of their LGBT students, staff members, and maybe even themselves, essentially becoming "gatekeepers focused on protecting their employment instead of addressing issues central to meeting educational needs" (p. 8). Although Stovall (2004) was applying Critical Race Theory and speaking of race specifically, if we heed Griffin's (1996) and Sears's (1996) recommendations, the same pressures would then be directly applicable to LG[BT] administrators who are, essentially, negotiators in their own right, caught between navigating their personal identities while meeting all public and professional expectations. Stovall (2004) then addressed the general public's blatant ignorance to the multitude of pressures and responsibilities facing school administrators, claiming that "although this does not excuse the school leader that chooses to administrate in absentia…we must recognize the various pressures school leaders endure in addition to the demands placed on students and teachers" (p. 8).[2]

As Lugg and Koschoreck (2003) attest, the dearth of research on LG[BT] public school administrators can almost certainly be attributed to their invisibility stemming from a lack of

[2] I am aware of the controversy surrounding the use of race-based literature to make claims about sexual minorities. For purposes of this research, however, I am noting the similarities across these oppressions.

professional safety. Blount (1998) even suggests that education may historically remain the most fiercely homophobic profession of all and attributes their silence to a fear of "the taint of homosexuality even by raising the topic" (Blount, 2003, p. 7). These affirmations suggest that while LG[BT] administrators inevitably exist, the vast majority remain closeted fearing negative repercussions for openly proclaiming their sexuality.

Some scholars have also contemplated whether or not effective leadership can be directly attributed to an LG[BT] administrator's openness or closetedness. For instance, Fraynd and Capper (2003) had initially theorized that that the more open school administrators were about their sexuality to themselves and to others, the more effective they would be in eradicating homophobia and discrimination from their schools. Important questions thus arise concerning the now ambiguous nature of leadership. One can not help but ponder how LG[BT] school administrators could possibly create and foster learning environments where all students and staff members feel safe while acting ethically, fairly, and with integrity if they themselves are reluctant to be openly honest about their sexuality. Additionally, the question arises as to whether or not LG[BT] educational administrators who remain closeted can really be respected as true leaders.

In conclusion, according to Capper (1999):

> Exploring queer research in school administration uncovers additional possibilities for the exploration of power in education. Incorporating both modernist and postmodernist perspectives, scholars need to consider practical research issues related to significance, focus, methods, and theoretical approaches, and to interrogate (homo)sexualities within schools as organizations. We need to consider further how centering sexuality in administration research could influence theory and practice in schools. Administrators and other educators need to understand more clearly how sexuality intertwines every day experience in schools with all students. We need to know the ways the sexual culture and structure of schools can reinforce, resist, reproduce, and disrupt unequal power relations. (p. 10)

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study lies in seeking an understanding of the ways in which power and politics in schools influence the experiences of educational leaders identifying as members of a sexual minority. The primary research question guiding this study is: How do LG[BT] administrators understand their experiences in leading public schools? Additional questions guiding this study are as follows:

- How do LG[BT] administrators define leadership and their roles in schools?
- How does an LG[BT] administrator's understanding of his or her sexuality influence (the development of) his or her priorities as a leader?
- Why do some LG[BT] administrators choose to come out while others remain closeted?

Significance of the Study

The educational system in the United States has a long and brutal history of hostility toward members of the LGBT community. Substantial research has already documented the incidence and adverse effects of bullying and harassment among LGBT youth (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005; Heinze & Horn, 2009; Horn, 2010; Horn et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2012; Russell, 2002) along with the fears and risks associated with educators identifying as LGBT (Blount, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2005; DeJean, 2004, 2007; Denton, 2009; Graves, 2009; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jackson, 2007; Jennings, 2005; Khayatt, 1992, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Lugg, 2003, 2006; Olson, 1986, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Despite this knowledge, however, little remains known about the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators. The research sector involving LG[BT] administrators had probably been ignored for so long due to the potential negative ramifications emerging from public disclosure of one's sexual identity, ranging from public harassment to impeding one's opportunities for career mobility. DeLeon

and Brunner (2009) have already offered some insight about how the personal and professional lives of LG[BT] administrators were shaped by their prior life experiences as students and teachers while Fraynd and Capper (2003) have unraveled some of the factors potentially contributing to the success of currently serving LG[BT] administrators in exerting power over their communities.

This dissertation contributes to the expanding body of literature on the experiences of LG[BT] administrators by exploring how LG[BT] administrators define leadership, how they perceive their roles in schools, and how they establish priorities while navigating the dichotomy of their personal and professional identities. Second, the study will also examine the factors surrounding the decisions of these administrators to remain closeted or come out to their schools and communities in positions of leadership. Third, I am seeking to determine the extent to which LG[BT] administrators' choices to be open or closeted about their sexuality influences their likelihood to create and foster school cultures accepting of diversity where all students and staff members may feel physically and emotionally secure regardless of their sexual identities.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this dissertation, and for its purposes are defined as follows:

Sexual Orientation – the way an individual identifies himself or herself sexually based upon a preference for sexual partners. It is commonly, but not limited to, homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual.

Gender – roles and behaviors expected of individuals as appropriately male or female set forth by society.

Homosexuality – primary sexual attraction toward a member of the same gender.

Heterosexuality – primary sexual attracted toward a member of the opposite gender.

Heterosexism – a belief system perpetuating the superiority of heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity – the normalization of heterosexuality and those practices perpetuating its normalization.

Gay – the preferred term for homosexual often, but not always, associated with males.

Lesbian – a homosexual female or same gender female sexual attraction.

Bisexual – sexual attraction to both male and female genders.

Transgender – sexual identification with the opposite gender (e.g., a biological male identifies with a female gender role).

LGBT – an acronym commonly used for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender. The acronym often refers to the gay community and also includes transvestite and transsexual individuals.

Queer – refers to all individuals who do not identify as heterosexual and/or gender conforming.

Straight – refers to all individuals who are heterosexual.

Straight Ally – refers to a heterosexual who openly supports the gay community and homosexuality as an acceptable sexual orientation.

Assimilation or Covering – refers to an LGBT person concealing his or her true sexual identity while adopting the outward characteristics or expectations of a heterosexual person of the same gender.

Out – open about one's sexual orientation to others; an LGBT person's

degree of "outness" may vary from one person to another.

Closeted – in a state of concealment about one's sexual identity; primarily refers to a person who is queer.

Safe Zone – an area, usually a classroom or school building, where an individual feels physically and emotionally secure or free from any oppression/harm on the basis of his or her sexual orientation.

Transgender – a state in which one's gender identity does not match one's assigned sex.

Summary of the Introduction

The educational system in the United States is indisputably a highly political organization often subjected to the ebbs and flows of the societal norms permeating the surrounding community (Denton, 2009). While the vast majority of these norms have traditionally been fiercely homophobic in nature, several important political strides have been made granting increased protections for members of the LGBT community (Cain, 1993; Eskridge, 1999, 2000, 2004; Valdes, 1998). Unfortunately, however, our nation's schools have often neglected to mirror the changing views in society and have remained inherently hostile toward LGBT persons, particularly with regard to LG[BT] school administrators (Blount, 1998, 2003; Eckes & McCarthy, 2008; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Koschoreck, 2003; Lipkin, 1999; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b; Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003; Sears, 1996). Thus, concerns have been raised regarding this group's invisibility and the dearth of scholarly research available for understanding their personal and professional lives. A study on the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators would help to expose the negative ramifications of heterosexism by

illuminating how power and sexual politics influence and shape our nation's schools (Capper, 1999; Griffin, 1996; Sears, 1996).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

> For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Volume 1* (1978, p. 3).

For the purpose of understanding this review of the relevant literature, it is necessary to succinctly define the terms heterosexism and heteronormativity. Petrovic and Rosiek (2003) define heterosexism as "a form of oppression that both assumes and presumes the superiority of heterosexuality while (and by) casting non-heterosexuality as abnormal, deviant, or immoral" (p. 161). Heterosexism creates and fosters certain "privileges for those in power" (p. 161) including marriage benefits, tax breaks, and the freedom to publicly display affection without judgment (Petrovic & Rosiek, 2003). In turn, heteronormativity refers to "the normalization of heterosexuality and those practices that promote and perpetuate that normalization" (p. 161). In essence, any deviation from heterosexuality is viewed as abnormal. It is imperative to understand that both constructs are interrelated, with each serving as a means of enabling the other (Petrovic & Rosiek, 2003).

The review of the relevant literature is organized into three major sections: 1) A brief history of the gay rights movement in the United States, 2) Gay and lesbian classroom teachers, and 3) Gay and lesbian school administrators. The latter two major sections are divided into shorter subsections. The literature review for gay and lesbian teachers is organized into two additional subsections: 1) A brief history of homophobia in education and 2) The experiences of gay and lesbian teachers. The literature review on gay and lesbian school administrators is divided into the following subsections: 1) Homophobia in educational administration and 2) The experiences of gay and lesbian school administrators.

A Brief History of the Gay Rights Movement in the United States

Popular misconception mistakenly credits the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City and the 1986 litigation of *Bowers v. Hardwick* as cornerstones of the gay rights movement in the United States. A review of the legal literature prior to the 1986 *Bowers v. Hardwick* case, however, reveals not only what is arguably an overt disregard for gay rights cases by the United States Supreme Court, but a wealth of history illuminating lesser known initiatives undertaken by gay rights activists preceding the historical events at Stonewall. In fact, Bronski (2011) claims Stonewall "was less a turning point than a final stimulus" (p. 210). Legal, scientific, and medical constructs of homosexuality and homosexuals were actually nonexistent until the late 19th and early 20th centuries because cultural mores had always assumed that individuals were naturally attracted to the opposite sex for purposes of procreativity. These mores, rooted in English common law and Christian notions designed to govern sexual behavior, essentially outlawed not only same-sex behavior but also all natural non-procreative sexual behavior outside of marriage (Dayoff, 2001; Eskridge, 1997b; Hassel, 2001; Terry, 1999).

Laws demonizing same-sex behavior as a "crime against nature" have an even longer history, some stemming prior to the 1880s. In addition, the oldest sodomy laws in the nation date back to the colonial period (Dayoff, 2001; Katz, 1992). Evidence of consensual sodomy, however, has been documented as far back as ancient Greece and Rome. While perhaps not entirely approved of, the attitudes of these cultures were generally far more tolerant. This tolerance soon waned with the emergence of Christianity and measures designed to regulate nonprocreative sexual activity (Hassel, 2001). Throughout 19th century America, prohibitions against sodomy were haphazardly enforced and typically targeted individuals with limited financial means who, as a result, had few opportunities for potential legal recourse (Chauncey,

1994; Eskridge, 1997b; Hassel, 2001; Lugg, 2003a). Except in cases of prostitution, women generally remained the exception as they were viewed as asexual beings and, thus, exempt from these sanctions (Eskridge, 1997b).

After 1880, the rapid urbanization of post-Civil War America resulted in the emergence of a growing number of existing LGBT subcultures. Along with this increased visibility of the LGBT community came frequent prosecutions for cases concerning both sodomy and "crimes against nature." Much of this was attributed to mass public hysteria over the growing number of prostitutes and cross-dressing men engaging in what was perceived as immoral or deviant sexual behavior and defying appropriate expectations of gender expression while freely intermixing in society. Thus, a movement to purify and regulate sexual behavior and gender norms ensued as each state ultimately toughened its laws in an attempt to criminalize same-sex activity and gender nonconforming behavior (Cain, 1993; Chauncey, 1994; Eskridge, 1997a, 1999; Hassel, 2001; Katz, 1992). Eskridge (1997a) traces the emergence of the classic metaphor of the closet as a safe haven for homosexuals to this time period. Prior to the 1940s, same-sex intimacy was unspeakable and remained cloaked in secrecy. By the 1940s, however, the emerging visibility of LGBT subcultures reflected an erosion of the boundaries separating the double lives many homosexuals had been leading. More and more homosexuals were transgressing the lines separating their public and private lives as more and more heterosexuals became curious about the double life to either censure it, explore it, or both. The homosexual was, thus, forced to make the decision of openly professing his or her sexuality or escaping into the closet (Eskridge, 1997a).

The closet was not always a source of refuge, however, nor was it always a desirable or viable option. As Eskridge (1997a) further explains:

> …the closet can be either protective or threatening. For the homosexual, it could be an embracing even if temporary cocoon, or it could be a scary prison. For heterosexuals, the closet likewise could have two different kinds of meanings, either a place where skeletons are secluded from view so that they do not disturb household harmony or, more sinisterly, a place within the home where lurk creatures who could break out and wreak havoc. (pp. 705-706)

Possibly the most curious phenomenon of post-World War II America was the ambivalence with which both homosexuals and heterosexuals regarded the closet.

Historians have traced the beginnings of the gay rights movement to Germany with the emergence of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee) in 1897, a group credited as the first formal gay rights organization. In an attempt to alleviate the persecution from legal anti-gay sanctions by refuting homosexuality as a choice, members sought to educate the public by theorizing that homosexuals were a "third sex" determined at birth. Despite achieving joint consensus amongst all members, the organization earned credence for its claim by winning the endorsement of a small minority of German sexologists (Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983; Knauer, 2000; Lugg, 2003a). In fact, the emergence of the terms "homosexual" and "heterosexual" into the mainstream lexicon can be attributed in large part to the pioneering work of these early German sexologists (Faderman, 1991; Katz, 1992; Law, 1988; Terry, 1999).

These physicians soon carried their message overseas through lectures given in New York as early as 1906 and 1907. American physicians proved more receptive to the notion of homosexuality as a degeneracy or disease. It is crucial to understand, however, that although the degeneracy theory evolved around a notion that homosexuality could be inherited, it did not mitigate the depravity of the condition or the belief that homosexuality could remain latent until triggered (Faderman, 1991; Law, 1988; Terry, 1999). The physicians, thus, earned great credence for opting to engage in such grisly inhumane treatments as castration, electrical aversion therapy, hypothalamotomies, lobotomies, testicular implants, and other radical "cures"

rather than calling for the complete decriminalization of homosexuality (Cain, 1993; Cruz, 1999; Lugg, 2003a).

Henry Gerber, a German-American, founded the first recorded gay rights organization in the United States, the Society for Human Rights (SHR), in Chicago in 1924. Albeit short-lived, the SHR purposed to defend the interests and rights as guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence of those enduring abuse due to mental and physical deficiencies. Scholars attribute the brevity of the SHR to its failure to recruit reputable sponsors, perhaps resulting from a fear of intermingling with those officially classified as deviant, mentally ill, immoral, and criminal (Cain, 1993; Eskridge, 1999; Lugg, 2003a; Kepner & Murray, 2002; Williams & Retter, 2003). Regarding the disbanding of his organization, Gerber recounted being "up against a solid wall of ignorance, hypocrisy, meanness, and corruption" (Williams & Retter, 2003, p. 54).

As America prepared to enter World War II, millions of young male military recruits found themselves lodging and working in close proximity with one another in single-sex environments for prolonged periods of time. Similarly, several young women seeking helpful roles of service during the war found themselves living amongst each other in women's barracks or apartment houses. The stressful wartime proved conducive for fostering the development of close friendships and companionships among these men and women (Bérubé, 1990; Blount, 2003; D'Emilio, 1983). Female impersonation also emerged as a popular form of entertainment for the male recruits (Bérubé, 1990). Mindful of the dangers and proclivity toward same-sex intimacy that these lodging and working conditions might foster, the United States military implemented screening measures to eradicate all prospective homosexual recruits (Blount, 2003; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948).

Threats were further compounded by the emergence of homosexual subcultures in major cities across the nation. Bars, cafés, and other social establishments largely catering to gay and lesbian clienteles began opening in urban epicenters such as San Francisco, New York, and San Diego providing safe havens for homosexuals, including military personnel, to network, commiserate, and embrace a sense of identity (Blount, 2003; D'Emilio, 1983; D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997).

Perhaps the main catalyst driving the mass conservatism that permeated post-World War II America, however, ultimately came with the controversial 1948 publication of Alfred Kinsey's groundbreaking volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.* Kinsey and his research team had spent a decade studying the sexual behaviors and experiences of men, and their study yielded findings indicating a much higher prevalence of homosexual behavior in men than originally anticipated. Approximately half of all men surveyed admitted some degree of erotic attraction toward other men while over one third confessed engaging in actual sexual activity culminating in orgasm with other men. The research team also described men's sexuality as fluid along a continuum and found that the 4% of the male population who identified as exclusively homosexual was spread throughout every region in the nation and across every work sector (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). A 1953 follow up volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, yielded similar findings among women. Although the level of incidence was lower than that with men, the findings remained particularly noteworthy (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953).

Although Kinsey's work was initially regarded with tremendous esteem, a massive conservative backlash soon ensued. Critics began attacking his credibility and research methodology; others went so far as to brand him as a communist sympathizer guilty of

promoting homosexuality (Blount, 2003; Morantz, 1977). From this point on, the military began launching investigations to rid its ranks of homosexual activity (Bérubé, 1990; Blount, 2003). Other government agencies soon followed, taking drastic initiatives to greatly censor public expression of controversial and taboo topics, primarily those pertaining to sex or sexuality (Cain, 1993; Chauncey, 1994; Eskridge, 1997a, 1997b, 1999; Hassel, 2001; Katz, 1992). The public viewed homosexuals as deficient because of their deviation from traditional sexual mores (Faderman, 1991; Hassel, 2001; Law, 1988; Terry, 1999) and also as "pathological carriers of a terrible social contagion" (Lugg, 2003a, p. 54). As theorist Michel Foucault (1978) posited, "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (p. 43). Eskridge (1997a) analogously compared homosexuals to the "pod people" in Don Siegel's 1950s film *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, describing them as extraterrestrial beings preying on the American people to convert them into additional pod people.

During the emergence of McCarthyism and the "Red Scare" in the 1950s, the House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy collaborated with the federal and local governments in an attempt to eradicate any subversive citizens perceived as un-American and, thus, threatening the nation's security. Among those subjected to loyalty investigations were suspected Communists and homosexuals. The general consensus remained that the degraded moral and legal status of homosexuals made them easy targets for blackmail by hostile foreign entities who would threaten them with exposure unless they complied and subverted (Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983; Lugg, 2003a). Henry Gerber was dismissed from his governmental position at the United States Post Office, and works of foreign literature were banned by the Treasury Department for glorifying "dangerous" radical views of sexuality. Despite the ubiquitous anti-

gay sanctions and repressions, invisible gay and lesbian subcultures still endured (Blount, 2003; Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983).

Now perceived as national security risks, homosexuals were routinely subjected to harassment and violence from state and local police agencies. Undercover and uniformed officers regularly frequented and raided gay bars, arresting homosexuals on charges of solicitation, loitering, or "disorderly conduct." Disputes arose on the ambiguity concerning the criminality of homosexual status versus homosexual conduct; a discernible distinction between the two had yet to be delineated (Valdes, 1995). Many states filed lawsuits attempting to revoke the liquor licenses of gay bars and prohibit the operation of such "disorderly houses" (Cain, 1993; Lugg, 2003a). One case in particular, *Stoumen v. Reilly*, was brought before the California Supreme Court in 1951 and involved a dispute over whether the California Board of Equalization could legally suspend the liquor license of the Black Cat Café simply because it catered to a gay clientele. The case settlement ultimately resulted in a small preliminary victory for gay rights advocates with the court citing the unconstitutionality and arbitrary reasoning behind the board's claim—that a gay bar on premises endangers the public's welfare (Cain, 1993). Despite this ruling, the remaining absence of a distinction between homosexual status and homosexual conduct resulted in the emergence of additional lawsuits such as *Vallegra v. Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control* throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The plaintiffs in these cases continued to assert that the homosexual conduct occurring on the premises of gay bars was offensive to public morals. These lawsuits attempted to stigmatize otherwise harmless acts such as kissing, same-sex dancing, cross-dressing, and the holding of hands with a same-sex partner as offensive to the public's morals and, thus, endangerments to the public's welfare. By 1967, however, high courts in both New York and New Jersey had ruled in favor of prohibiting the

revocation of liquor licenses from establishments reputed for catering to a predominantly gay clientele (Cain, 1993).

The LGBT community faced increasing discrimination in employment. Local and federal governmental officials viewed homosexuality as "an epidemic infecting the nation" (D'Emilio, 1983, p. 44). In April of 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10450, one section of which specifically disbarred "sexual perverts" from federal jobs (D'Emilio, 1983). Along with the continuous purge of homosexuals from the armed forces and federal government positions, the 1950s also brought a shift in focus towards the potentially adverse impacts "sexual perversion" might have on young, impressionable children. There was a growing suspicion that homosexuals may be drawn to particular lines of work, particularly careers that would place them in close proximity to children (Gross, 1962). In the early 1950s, one tabloid columnist for the New York *Daily Mirror* proposed the notion that lesbians were organizing cells in high schools to prey upon the students (D'Emilio, 1983). The appeal of homosexuality was perceived as tempting and powerful enough to subvert young people without the presence of tough, deterring, punitive measures. Public fears escalated, and a movement ensued for increasing the social penalties for engaging in same-sex activity. Even individuals solely perceived as homosexual, whether sexually active or not, were victimized (Blount, 2003).

Civil service regulations of the early 1960s also called for the removal of any employees whose "conduct or capacity is such that his removal, demotion, or reassignment will promote the efficiency of the service" (as quoted in Cain, 1993, p. 1575). With laws prohibiting consensual sodomy in several states, homosexuals were an easy target (Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983; Eskridge, 1997b; Lugg, 2003a). Using Queer Legal Theory as an overarching framework, Lugg and Adelman (2015) suggested that despite lacking an overt connection to schools or those

working or learning within them, the rampant homophobia in the education profession is directly attributed to these state sodomy laws which had essentially criminalized homosexuals, thus making gay and lesbian teachers unfit for educating the nation's children. The next section of the literature review will provide a brief overview of the history of homophobia in the education profession along with a discussion of the experiences of LGBT teachers.

Gay and Lesbian Classroom Teachers

A Brief History of Homophobia in Education

Despite the ubiquitous homophobia permeating the education profession, history reveals that homosexual teachers have been educating our youth since the time of Socrates in ancient Greece (Harbeck, 1992, 1997). Prior to World War II, many administrators utilized the powers vested in the principalship and superintendency to eradicate any suspected homosexuals from their schools (Blount, 2003). Teachers were expected to model exemplary behavior for students, and homosexuality conflicted with this inbred societal expectation. The notions of homosexuality as evil and sinful combined with the financial burdens of investing in any available legal protections left many of the victimized LGBT teachers with no opportunities to fight for the retention of their positions (Lugg, 2003a, 2003b, 2006). The teachers often accepted the injustices, ultimately resulting in their termination or involuntary resignation (Harbeck, 1992, 1997).

Since the late 1940s, however, changing sexual mores and the increased visibility of subcultures of lesbians and gay men have led to discrepancies regarding what factors most accurately constituted or delineated "immoral" conduct (D'Emilio, 1983; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Hassel, 2001). This section of the literature review will offer a brief historical analysis of the evolution of homophobia in the education profession.

As an occupation, teaching has historically attracted single women and nontraditional[3] men. During the early 1800s, however, teaching positions were primarily secured by men. Seen as a stepping-stone, male schoolmasters utilized the financial security provided through teaching as a means toward embarking onto higher education in college and more esteemed professions in society. After the Civil War, the demographics of the profession rapidly changed with an influx of women resulting in a mass exodus of men from the profession. Facing the burdens of a crippled economy, communities were suddenly unable to offer wages comparable to what men could earn in alternative, more esteemed professions. Women became the ideal candidates for supplanting those positions vacated by men, and they welcomed the opportunities to teach despite earning wages lower than what their male counterparts had earned (Blount, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2005).

As the influx of women transformed teaching into a predominantly female profession, a more appealing opportunity for male educators unveiled itself—administration. Administrative positions offered more competitive wages and restored the autonomy and independence men had once previously enjoyed while serving as schoolmasters but reportedly lost (Blount, 2003, 2005). By the mid-1800s, as schools began desegregating students on the basis of gender and the positions of teacher and administrator evolved into more gender-specific roles, schools began imposing expectations for teachers and administrators to model "acceptable mainstream sexual orientation" for their students (Blount, 2005, p. 15). Single women were hired as alleged examples of moral virtues such as chaste for their students to emulate while married women were urged to resign. Conversely, married men were preferable to single men, as communities often questioned the sexuality and values of their single male teachers. The resulting irony

[3] Historically, teaching has been a predominantly female profession. In this context, the term nontraditional pertains to any men who have chosen this historically female profession.

occurred when these same schools, while attempting to police the gender and sexual orientation of their workers and students, inadvertently promoted and fostered an environment conducive for the exact unconventional sexualities and gender behaviors they had feared (Blount, 2005). By the early twentieth century, schools found themselves in such desperate need of male role models that they soon began employing men who did not necessarily meet the societal conventions of masculinity; single women began lodging and forming close relationships with female colleagues, presenting a radical departure from the traditional norm evolving their lives around husbands and families (Blount, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2005).

In the early 1900s, teachers working in same-sex boarding schools found themselves confronted with parental concerns that such institutions fostered unhealthy attachments between students and inadvertently promoted homosexual acts. Public concerns escalated with fears of spinster teachers compelling their female students to abhor marriage and effeminate male teachers encouraging sexual abnormalities and deviation from the traditional societal norms (Blount, 2005). These mounting concerns soon laid the foundation for the homophobia that would soon permeate our nation's schools making LGBT teachers a prime target.

Since the 1920s, the selective enforcement of consensual sodomy laws has historically criminalized homosexuals but ignored their heterosexual counterparts (Hassel, 2001). Several states have barred and revoked teaching and administrative licensures from homosexuals; the homosexuals were presumably unfit for teaching because they were technically criminals in violation of the law for engaging in consensual sex (Lugg, 2006).

D'Emilio (1983) chronicles the post-World War II response to homosexuality, a time of increased persecution and prosecution for consensual homosexual acts, police surveillance and raids of homosexual bars and private homes, blackmail, and heightened concern over the

increased visibility of homosexual subcultures (Harbeck, 1992, 1997). Public schools were also becoming prime targets of investigation for suspected homosexual influence. In 1950, Ralph Major published in the popular magazine *Coronet* a sensationalized article allegedly grounded in extensive research called "The New Moral Menace to Our Youth" which preyed on national fears that homosexual educators were infiltrating the nation's schools. In the article, Major galvanized parents of schoolchildren to vigilantly combat the threat of homosexuality by scrutinizing schools, teachers, and extracurricular clubs or activities to eradicate any potential homosexual influences (Blount, 2003; Major, 1950).

Shortly thereafter, another article appeared in the New York *Daily Mirror* written by a journalist alleging that lesbian teachers were organizing cells in high schools for the purpose of recruiting students (D'Emilio, 1983). In 1955, *Time* magazine published an article about an investigation unfolding in Boise, Idaho, regarding an underground homosexual ring that had allegedly been corrupting adolescent males. The resulting mass hysteria proved so severe that, upon discovering the article, many homosexuals immediately packed their bags, fled their homes, and abandoned their employment never to be heard from again (Gerassi, 1966). As Blount (2003) explains:

> Their fears were justified. At the least, anyone rumored to be homosexual would have been publicly exposed and humiliated. Many would lose their jobs and families. Some would enter the criminal justice system while others would face commitment to psychiatric treatment facilities. Regardless, their lives would be irrecoverably changed. (p.18)

During this time, however, there was a cultural shift in sexual mores and a change in attitudes toward actions between consenting adults. Also in 1955, the same year as the Boise, Idaho, investigation, the American Law Institute's Model Penal Code attempted to legalize all sexual activity occurring between consenting adults. While the motion was defeated, the

legislation undoubtedly illuminated a newfound "judicial leniency and concern for [the] procedural protections for nonviolent criminals" (Harbeck, 1992, p. 125). In essence, administrators were no longer able to rely on arbitrary criminal convictions as sole grounds for terminating any teachers they deemed as unfit for the profession. The changing sexual mores and increased violence combined with the ensuing witch-hunts resulting from Senator Joseph McCarthy's linkage of homosexuality with Communism made schools battlegrounds between administrators and LGBT teachers (Harbeck, 1992, 1997).

Historian Karen Graves (2009) depicts one of the most notable purges of LGBT teachers in Florida during the Cold War from 1956 through 1965. Under the scrutiny of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, which later came to be known as the Johns Committee, dozens of teachers endured interview sessions of intense personal probing and were discharged solely on the basis of their known or perceived sexuality. By 1963, the Johns Committee had caused the termination of 39 professors and deans and revoked the teaching certificates of 71 teachers. The magnitude of this undertaking and the ruthlessness evident in the methods utilized by the Johns Committee have earned the story surrounding the Florida teacher purge an infamous place in educational history as one of the best known witch-hunts in the Cold War era (Graves, 2009).

During the 1950s, a backlash toward the judiciary system's increased leniency toward homosexuals ensued as lobbyists in California launched Penal Code 291 and Education Code Section 12756. Both legislations required law enforcement officials to contact local boards of education regarding the arrest or detention of a teacher and to immediately suspend a teacher's credentials upon conviction for violating any sex and morality statutes respectively. Thus, any suspected involvement in criminal activity became sufficient grounds for termination as a

teacher's reputation was permanently tainted, and he or she suffered a loss of credibility as a positive role model for students (Harbeck, 1992, 1997).

Changing social and legal attitudes toward homosexual educators were further evident in the California State Supreme Court's decision in *Morrison v. State Board of Education*. In its decision, the Court decriminalized homosexual status alone as a sufficient means for termination unless coupled with some job-related misbehavior.

Unfortunately, most courts were able to circumvent the ruling in *Morrison*; arresting officers still targeted those caught engaging in criminal sexual activity. By 1973, however, the *Morrison* ruling was firmly sanctioned in the statutes (Harbeck, 1992, 1997).

During the 1970s, lesbian and gay male teachers benefitted from increased financial and emotional support of special interest groups such as the National Education Association (NEA) that began advocating for gay rights and personal freedoms for teachers. Additional political rights were gained as numerous municipal and school boards passed anti-discrimination ordinances protecting homosexuals and homosexual teachers. By 1973, several states had also decriminalized criminal statutes governing sexual activity between consenting adults and no longer viewed such actions as evidence of immoral conduct. Although the outcomes in emerging lawsuits remained inconsistent, perhaps, most importantly, the statutes which had previously relied on immoral conduct alone as sufficient grounds for dismissal were often no longer available for school authorities to use in cases involving LGBT teachers (Harbeck, 1992, 1997).

Conservative backlashes spearheaded by the Religious Right soon arose against these political advances. One of the most notorious backlashes came in the form of the 1977-1978 "Save Our Children" campaign, spearheaded by 1958 Miss Oklahoma and 1959 Miss America

finalist Anita Bryant in Dade County, Florida, a reputedly politically liberal sector with a large gay and lesbian population (Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jackson, 2007; Lugg, 1998). Despite her admitted minimal knowledge of homosexuality, Bryant launched a crusade to resolve what she perceived to be the chief problem: "lesbian and gay teachers in schools and their supposed recruitment among [and molestation of] children" (Blount, 2005, p. 132). She stated:

> The word gay totally belies the homosexual lifestyle. I don't even know how the word gay was attached to the homosexual lifestyle. The militant homosexuals took the word and with the power that they have, they programmed it into our modern vocabulary. That in itself is a frightening example of what they can do to a society—how they can brainwash you into using their terminology. It's too early to say, and I don't know what the homosexuals still have up their sleeve. They are very dangerous people who will stop at nothing. (as cited in Harbeck, 1997, p. 43)

Utilizing her McCarthyesque tactics and instilling nationwide fear in United States citizens, Bryant proceeded to contend that the Equal Rights Amendment and National Organization of Women were fronts for alleged lesbianism (Denton, 2009).

Bryant's campaign proceeded for five months and successfully ended on June 7, 1977, shortly after Dade County voters repealed an ordinance supporting gay and lesbian housing and employment rights. By 1978, the ramifications of her efforts had transcended the borders of Florida; anti-discrimination ordinances had been repealed elsewhere in Florida, Minnesota, Kansas, and Oregon, with another pending in California (Denton, 2009; Harbeck, 1997; Lugg, 1998). Although Bryant succeeded in reviving the Cold War refrain, she was not adequately prepared for the vehemence of a firmly established gay liberation movement that would eventually challenge the absurdities of her claims (Graves, 2009).

California Senator John Briggs, a reputed sympathizer of Anita Bryant and aspiring California gubernatorial candidate, launched an initiative to continue Bryant's work. Impressed

with Bryant's financial sponsorship, Briggs espoused her cause and subsumed the opportunity to empower his Republican Party and voters. His advocacies for the removal of homosexual teachers and the expansion of capital punishment were at the forefront of the emotional underpinnings comprising his gubernatorial campaign (Harbeck, 1992, 1997).

The referendum, entitled Proposition 6, was introduced for public vote in November of 1978. In his campaign, Briggs sought to engender the support of voters by trumpeting the myth of the homosexual teacher as child molester (Lugg, 1998) and proposed terminating any teacher found to be "advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging, or promoting [any] private or public homosexual activity directed at, or likely to come to the attention of schoolchildren and/or employees" (Harbeck, 1997, p. 64). Despite high levels of optimism over the measure's passage as indicated by preliminary polls, vehement vocal opposition by aspiring Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan proved detrimental, and Proposition 6 was defeated (Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Lugg, 1998). Reagan feared that passage of the measure would result in administrators reverting to their abuse of power in hiring and terminating LGBT teachers, echoing the practices of the Johns Committee already demonstrated in Florida.

While Briggs reportedly abandoned his pursuance of the homosexual teacher issue after the defeat of Proposition 6, he did not do so prior to providing Oklahoma State Senator Mary Helm with copies of the legislation. An exact replica of Proposition 6 was unanimously passed through the Oklahoma legislature in 1978. For several years afterward, Oklahoma judges successfully evaded direct challenges to the constitutionality of the law. Finally, in 1984, the Tenth Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the unconstitutionality of the law. In light of this localized victory, North Carolina, Texas, Nevada, and Arkansas soon began drafting similar legislations (Harbeck, 1997). As Denton (2009) stated, "What began as a

small ripple of judicial leniency and relaxing attitudes toward homosexuals in the early and mid-1970s quickly grew into a tidal wave of resurgent discriminatory legislation that began with Anita Bryant's 'Save Our Children' campaign and continued into the next millennium" (p. 48).

Matters continued appearing grim for the LGBT community in the decade following Anita Bryant's "Save our Children" campaign. In 1981, just three years after Senator Helm's bill passed through the Oklahoma legislature, Representative George V. Hansen of Idaho introduced the Family Protection Act, a bill championed by conservatives containing a long list of provisions collectively designed for terminating any municipal or state antidiscrimination policies prohibiting discrimination against LGBT persons on the bases of housing and employment (Blount, 2005). The bill proposed sanctions on granting any federal funds to individuals or entities supporting homosexuality and became the epicenter of the 1980 presidential election. Throughout his entire campaign, Presidential candidate Ronald Regan openly endorsed the bill; after his election, however, he then opposed it as it discriminated against an entire class of people. The bill was defeated shortly thereafter by the Democratic majority in Congress (Blount, 2005). In 1982, the first non-discrimination law against sexual orientation in the workplace was passed in Wisconsin; a year later, the state altered its sodomy law to decriminalize private consensual sex among adults (Mohr, 1988). In 1989, Massachusetts became the second state to pass a comprehensive anti-discrimination law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, and services (Harbeck, 1997).

Fortunately, the telltale signs of changing times became increasingly evident with the achievement of numerous victories for the LGBT community in the final decade of the twentieth century (Denton, 2009). In 1991, Hawaii and Connecticut granted employment protection

prohibiting LGBT workplace discrimination. They were soon followed by New Jersey, Vermont, and California the following year, Minnesota in 1993, and Rhode Island in 1995 (Harbeck, 1997). The passage of such legislation meant that sexual orientation was now recognized as a legally protected category alongside race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, age, ancestry, and disability (Harbeck, 1997). Rossman (1997) revealed how the safety of LGBT students was also given greater precedence; organizations such as the National School Board Association and the American Association of State Boards of Education coordinated efforts to require schools to provide counseling and curricular material for LGBT students.

In January of 1993, President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, was inaugurated; as expected, his administration and the predominantly Democratic Congress combined their efforts to become stronger allies for the LGBT community (Denton, 2009). Despite all signs of promise, however, efforts to pass national anti-discriminatory measures against sexual orientation through the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) ultimately failed (Harbeck, 1997). This was disappointing because as Harbeck (1997) states, "It was hoped that a Democratic president and Congress would enact legislation that would create a sweeping national change. Instead, advocates for the rights of [LGBT] people have had more success on the state level" (p. 139). To date, efforts to reintroduce ENDA annually still fail "because some [believe] that it would specifically protect educators and severely restrict districts from dismissing homosexual educators for improprieties" (Denton, 2009, p. 51). Furthermore, Clinton's efforts were repeatedly met with resistance; he was later pressured into breaking his promise of ending the military's ban against homosexuals serving in the armed forces to instead enact what became "don't ask, don't tell" in 1994 (Gerstmann, 1999).

The LGBT community did achieve a landmark victory when the United States Supreme Court ruled issued a favorable ruling in *Romer v. Evans*. The case was triggered when the religious activist group Colorado for Family Values introduced Amendment 2 to resist efforts by Colorado Governor Roy Romer and the Colorado Civil Rights Commission to prohibit discrimination against individuals with AIDS and sexual orientation respectively (Harbeck, 1997; Lipkin, 1999). The Supreme Court reviewed the case and ultimately found Amendment 2 unconstitutional on the grounds of excluding individuals from protections enjoyed by other groups on the basis of a single trait. It is important to note, however, that while the court's decision may be perceived as a landmark victory, the ruling did not transcend state boundaries or prevent more localized forms of discriminatory practices from occurring at the municipal level (Lipkin, 1999).

During his tenure, President Clinton continued making some strides for the LGBT community; in 1998, he signed Executive Order 13087—the Federal Employment Nondiscrimination Order—as an addendum to Executive Order 11478, an ordinance signed decades earlier by President Nixon in 1969 (Gerstmann, 1999; Stewart, 2001). His efforts marked the first time any president had issued a directive prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Despite the victory, however, no affirmative action programs were authorized, and the directive remained unenforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Denton, 2009; Stewart, 2001).

Important strides for LGBT rights continue being made into the 21st century. In 2003, the United States Supreme Court issued a ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas* striking down sodomy laws in that state as being unconstitutional and, thus, invalidating sodomy laws in 13 other states (Lugg, 2003a, 2008; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). In 2005, Illinois and Maine outlawed sexual orientation

discrimination; efforts by these states were mirrored in Washington in 2006 with Colorado, Oregon and Iowa following in 2007. Delaware remains the most recent state to have outlawed sexual orientation discrimination in 2009. As of May, 2014, only 21 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression; LGBT individuals remain with no protection in the remaining 29 states (*State nondiscrimination laws in the U.S.*, 2014).

Unfortunately, despite the Supreme Court's decision on June 26, 2003 to overturn the Texas statute criminalizing consensual sodomy in *Lawrence v. Texas*, these consensual sexual acts still technically remain illegal in 14 states. Furthermore, none of these states, including Texas itself, have aligned their public school codes in compliance with the *Lawrence* ruling (Lugg & Tooms, 2010). The powers vested in these laws have continually been abused at the expense of the LGBT community, barring couples from adopting children, achieving parent custody, establishing Gay/Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools, and limiting the scope of sexuality education (Eskridge, 1999, 2000; Lugg, 2006).

These same state laws have also profoundly informed the discriminatory effects on schooling. According to Lugg and Adelman (2015):

> This occurs in three ways. First, purity campaigns and moral panics over the corruption of school-aged children have been endemic to efforts to regulate sexuality and constrain LGBTQ rights in areas such as sexual relations, marriage and the military (Herdt, 2009). Second, this stigmatization and criminalization of queer identity have led to concrete forms of discrimination in the everyday (school) lives of LGBTQ educators, parents and students, and allies. Third, a combination of this regulation and discrimination has led to institutionalized forms of invisibility, rendering absent LGBTQ people who exist within the school community. (p. 2)

The fight for marriage equality continued into the first quarter of the twenty-first century. The year 2015, however, brought about a tidal wave of change in the form of a landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* which legalized the right to marry for same-sex

couples all across the United States. The 5-4 decision granted the fundamental right to marry in accordance to both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Prior to this ruling, thirty-six states, the District of Columbia, and Guam had already permitted same-sex couples the right to marry. The momentum gained through a series of lengthy appeals rulings from the Fourth, Seventh, Ninth, and Tenth Circuits citing the unconstitutionality of state-level marriage bans had previously been obstructed in November, 2014 when the Sixth Circuit upheld the constitutionality of state-level marriage bans as decided in 1971 with *Baker v. Nelson*. The ruling created a dissention amongst the circuits and essentially set the stage for inevitable review by the Supreme Court. Decided on June 26, 2015, the *Obergefell* decision overturned *Baker v. Nelson* and mandated all states to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples and recognize those marriages performed legally in other jurisdictions. The question remains, however, if schools across the United States have yet to concur with the ruling and recognize all LGBT students, staff members, and administrators as equal. Nevertheless, LGBT individuals have now earned a reason to remain staunchly resilient and optimistic for change. As Lugg (2015) stated, "While it is still early, in the aftermath of the *Obergefell* decision (2015), litigators now have a powerful tool to reshape public schools and districts that are demonstrably queer-hostile and impervious to political changes" (p. 99).

The next section of the literature review contains a discussion framed around the experiences of gay and lesbian teachers in the United States.

The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Teachers

Sufficient documentation reveals how careers in the public education system pose numerous challenges for educators identifying as members of the LGBT community (DeJean, 2004; Graves, 2009; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jackson, 2007; Jennings, 2005;

Khayatt, 1992, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Lugg, 2003, 2006; Macgillivray, 2009; Olson, 1986, 1987; Rensenbrink, 1996; Rofes, 2000; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). One may even arguably assert that public education is by far the most discriminatory profession of all for LGBT individuals, with pressures stemming from a multitude of stakeholders including workplace colleagues, students, parents, administrators, and members of the surrounding communities (Hendryx, 1980; Olson, 1987). It inevitably follows then to contemplate why, in spite of such homophobia and fear, gays and lesbians would choose to "work in an environment that…[represents] isolation and pain" by becoming teachers (DeJean, 2004, p.19). Kissen (1996) suggests the underlying reasons are the same as those of their heterosexual counterparts—a genuine interest in children, love of a subject discipline, a fondness for ideas, and a desire for the personal inner satisfaction that encompasses teaching. For others, it may even serve as "a way to create light in a place that once felt so dark" (DeJean, 2004, p. 19).

In light of the stigma and legal ramifications surrounding LGBT teachers in the classroom, it proves worthy to trace the development of the reverberating hostility in the research literature from one probable source, the attitudes and perceptions of school administrators. In 1982, Dressler (1985) launched an effort to anonymously assess the disciplinary measures or regulations imposed by school administrators upon discovering the employment of LGBT teachers in their schools. The principals of four randomly selected junior high schools in each of the 50 states were mailed questionnaires; the resulting data provided insightful accounts of how the principals came to learn of a teacher's sexuality, their immediate reactions upon the disclosure, and the ultimate effects they had, if any, on school stability. Several conclusions arose from the study.

Those principals who had not yet encountered an LGBT teacher in their school, albeit a small minority, were most inclined toward favoring a consequential teaching license revocation for the LGBT staff member (Dressler, 1985).

With the then prevailing sodomy laws criminalizing homosexual behavior, more than half of the surveyed principals maintained that any teacher convicted of private adult homosexual behavior should be dismissed (Dressler, 1985).

A staggeringly high proportion of principals supported teaching license revocation for any LGBT teacher accused solely of publicly expressing a favorable or nonjudgmental view of homosexuality in the school, disclosing his or her sexual identity to students, or maintaining any level of visibility as a political activist in support of homosexual rights (Dressler, 1985).

Dressler's (1985) findings remain relevant to this day because the extent to which school administrators perpetuate cultures of heteronormativity or homophobia within their campuses remains largely unexamined. Nevertheless, the data collected yielded nationally prevailing senses of mistrust and fear amongst the participating LGBT educators (Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008).

Schools continue to remain hostile environments for LGBT staff members and students. For decades, the underlying reason for purging LGBT educators from classrooms was to inhibit the potential recruitment of youth. Historically, administrators have also implemented curricula eschewing topics or issues pertaining to homosexuality and espoused courses advocating proper heterosexual development with adherence to conventional gender behavioral expectations. Should any deviation from these expected codes of conduct be encouraged or occur, administrators were slated to immediately identify and fire any LGBT employees or risk being held suspect to the stigma themselves and threatened with job loss (Blount, 2003).

Despite these troublesome findings, however, the LGBT teachers employed in Dressler's (1985) participating schools were generally subjected to more humane forms of treatment such as verbal warnings or lukewarm responses from their principals. Extreme disciplinary measures were generally reserved for severe infractions such as making sexual advances on students. Still, a small number of principals exerted discipline upon any alleged LGBT teachers solely on the grounds of rumors or stereotypes, but such cases were the exceptions and not the norms. Principals generally relied on the prior performance evaluations of these teachers for determining disciplinary measures should any be warranted. There was no indication that the retention of any LGBT teachers adversely impacted the operation of the schools (Dressler, 1985). Shortly thereafter, several researchers became interested in studying the lived experiences of gay and lesbian teachers (Griffin, 1992; Khayatt, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Olson, 1986, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). With the underlying assumption that the experiences of gay and lesbian school administrators will likely echo those of teachers because of many administrators' prior teaching experiences, the focus of the literature review will now shift toward an analysis on some of the more significant studies and their findings concerning the professional experiences of sexual minority teachers.

Olson (1987) conducted one of the earliest investigations, surveying 97 gay men and lesbians who were currently or formerly public school teachers. Of the 25% of her respondents who had left the profession, more than half had cited their sexuality as a guiding factor in their decisions. Approximately 82% were out to at least one individual; nearly half of these had chosen a fellow teaching colleague in which to confide. The majority of respondents, 70% had reported a positive reaction from their confidantes. In essence, Olson's (1987) findings suggested that gay men's and lesbians' decisions to enter or remain in teaching and/or come out

on the job are "highly individual and very complex" (p. 80). As "education is probably the most discriminatory [profession] against homosexual individuals" (p. 73), it proved crucial for gay and lesbian teachers to consider whether they had trustworthy confidantes, legal protections for sexual orientations stemming from city or state legislations, and the ability to cope against the potential psychological distress arising from maintaining a "double life" (Olson, 1987, p. 80).

Building upon Olson's (1986, 1987) work, Griffin (1992) conducted a groundbreaking study of thirteen gay and lesbian educators resulting in the classification of a series of "identity management strategies" (p. 175) utilized by sexual minority individuals in school. "Passing," (p. 176) while the safest and most closeted strategy, often evoked the greatest amount of psychological distress by burdening the gay or lesbian teacher to consistently modify his or her behavior and often lie in order to "pass" as heterosexual. "Covering" (p. 176) occurred whenever a gay or lesbian teacher attempted to deflect accusations of suspicions about their sexuality; these teachers censored their words and behaviors but never explicitly lied about their identity. Teachers who were "implicitly out" (p. 176) never publicly declared or attempted to conceal their sexual identities; they generally assumed that their colleagues were already aware. Finally, teachers who were "explicitly out" (p. 178) faced the biggest risk and openly proclaimed themselves to their school communities as lesbian or gay.

That same year, Woods and Harbeck (1992) sought to close the research gap concerning lesbian physical education teachers with a phenomenological study of 12 participants and their work experiences. All twelve participants achieved joint consensus on two fundamental assumptions: 1) Any openness regarding their sexual orientation would result in automatic job loss, and 2) Female physical education teachers are often negatively stereotyped as being lesbian. These assumptions manifested themselves in the following identity management strategies which

the participants used for concealing or revealing their sexual orientation: passing as heterosexual, distancing oneself from others at school, and distancing oneself from issues pertaining to homosexuality.

In the majority of instances, the participants experienced great shame over their indifference to homophobic comments and avoidance of LGBT student-related issues. Collectively, they viewed their perceived negligence as a betrayal to their vocation as educators and toward these young people who were in such desperate need of positive LGBT role models. Nevertheless, each feared that incorporating her sexual identity into the school would ultimately prove detrimental to her career. In rare cases, however, they chose not to separate their personal and professional identities and did engage in behaviors that would potentially risk disclosure of their sexual orientation. These risk-taking behaviors were categorized into three types: obliquely overlapping their personal lives with their professional, actively confronting homophobia and supporting LGBT students, and overtly overlapping the details comprising their personal and professional lives (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Essentially, each of these participants' accounts corroborated the findings yielded through prior research into the experiences of similar populations (Griffin, 1992; Olson, 1987).

Attention then shifted toward garnering an understanding of the relationship between LGBT teachers' levels of "outness" and their levels of job satisfaction and stress. Juul and Repa (1993) conducted an early quantitative investigation utilizing multiple surveys to investigate this area. Their study encompassed a broad spectrum of participants with variations in gender, race, ethnicity, geographic region, and teaching experience, and ultimately yielded three important findings: 1) Those LGBT teachers who were out at school often scored higher levels of job satisfaction, 2) LGBT teachers who were out to their administrators scored higher levels of job

satisfaction and demonstrated greater receptiveness toward compliments or acknowledgement for successful job performance, and 3) LGBT teachers who were out more readily embraced the social and interpersonal dynamics of working in education. The study, however, did not include any concrete details for addressing the factors or circumstances contributing to the participating educators' perceptions of the climates within their schools (Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008).

Three years later, Kissen (1996), conducted a larger in depth qualitative investigation into the lived experiences of 105 lesbian, gay, and bisexual teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, and administrators from Oregon to Massachusetts encompassing all grade levels ranging from preschool through senior high school. Kissen's (1996) findings also supported Griffin's (1992) research. While many of her respondents expressed a desire to be open and authentic with students and colleagues at work, the majority remained closeted, some even embracing an imaginary heterosexual identity in order to preserve their mental and physical safety while maintaining job security. The vast majority coped with their isolation through support networks or by joining the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network, (GLSTN) today known as GLSEN.

While most of the aforementioned preliminary studies assumed that gay and lesbian teachers were closeted and primarily focused on the coping mechanisms they utilized to survive in hostile homophobic climates, later studies shifted toward garnering an understanding of the effects of teachers coming out of the closet (Jackson, 2007, Khayatt, 1997). Although a discussion about sexual orientation might, by its very nature, seem to transcend the realm of what constitutes appropriate or acceptable classroom discussion with school-aged children (Khayatt, 1997; Silin, 1995), researchers became interested in examining the effects of the

coming out process on teachers and their students (Jennings, 2005; Khayatt, 1997; Macgillivray, 2008; Rensenbrink, 1996; Rofes, 2000).

In a highly personal and reflective autobiographical account, Khayatt (1997) chronicled her struggles with the question of coming out as a lesbian college professor to her students. Traditionally, the unspoken consensus amongst educational stakeholders had always been that a sexual minority teacher's identity did not belong in the classroom because "a teacher's coming out to students by its very nature is an allusion to sexual matters, and is consequently considered outside the realm of what is appropriate for children to know or discuss" (p. 4). Although she continually maintained that elementary and secondary level LGBT educators faced a different array of pressures and fears than their counterparts teaching adults in higher education, Khayatt (1997) ultimately challenged this notion and established a fundamental set of assumptions galvanizing her decision to declare herself as lesbian to her students. She explained:

> If identity is problematic and performative, the act of coming out performs its own set of assumptions…The first assumption is that students who are lesbian or gay would be gratified and encouraged to see a lesbian or a gay man as a [teacher]. Second, there is the perennial argument of being a role model: by being out, a lesbian or gay teacher becomes a role model for students. Third, being an "out" [teacher] unsettles the heterosexism of an institution ("we're queer, we're here!"). Fourth, not to come out is to institutionalize homophobia (that is, it does not challenge the heterosexual status quo). Finally, coming out is "putting one's body on the line," which is a prerequisite for taking political action. (p. 6)

Unfortunately, Kyatt's (1997) openness resulted in some passive hostility attributed to her students' limited understanding of her sexuality. She ultimately concluded, "As a teacher, quite frankly, I prefer not to stand in as a sexual category" (p. 12).

Additional researchers began focusing on the matter and yielded accounts of teachers who believed that schools with openly gay or lesbian teachers were essentially better schools (Jennings, 2005; Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000). The findings of these researchers, however

seemingly inadvertently, highlight numerous benefits resulting from LGBT teachers voluntarily revealing their sexual orientation to colleagues in the workplace. Considering the typically heteronormative environments permeating so many educational institutions (e.g., Griffin, 1992; Khayatt, 1997; Olson, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), the findings of these studies ironically appear to advocate teachers "coming out" in their classrooms (Macgillivray, 2008; Rensenbrink, 1996; Rofes, 2000). Several scholars have undertaken the challenge of locating such teachers, hoping to illuminate some of the experiences resulting from such courageous choices.

Rofes (2000) spearheaded a qualitative study designed for examining the influences of his coming out as gleaned through the perceptions of his former middle school students. Upon enduring termination from a previous position as a 6th grade teacher in a suburb shortly after confessing his homosexuality, Rofes was rehired at a more politically progressive independent school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Rofes's decision to come out stemmed from an innate desire to personally disclose his homosexuality to his students rather than being "outed" against his will via outside sources. Rofes is particularly notable for being the only openly gay K-12 teacher available to the media in New England during 1978-1983, pivotal years for the gay rights movement. Previously, much of the research in this area was focused on LGBT teachers' perceptions of self and the climate of the schools in which they were employed. Rofes's (2000) study was so pioneering, however, because it was the first to gauge the possible influences resulting from being out in the classroom on a teacher's ability, integrity, and sense of identity through the students' perspectives. His findings suggested that despite the students' awareness of their teacher's highly stigmatized identity, little consideration was given to this knowledge as the students were not interested in the intimate details of their teacher's personal life (Rofes, 2000).

Other researchers soon emerged seeking to explore similar matters more closely. Using Rofes's (2000) study as a framework, Macgillivray (2008) designed a qualitative investigation aimed toward exploring how his former high school students were affected by having him as an openly gay teacher. Macgillivray's (2008) study was particularly significant due to its variations from the aforementioned study regarding the participating sample. Unlike Rofes's former middle school students, the subjects in Macgillivray's study were his former high school students. The students in the latter study also had not been out of school for a long enough period to assess any long lasting influences. Some of Macgillivray's former students also identified as LGBT whereas all of Rofes's former students identified as heterosexual. Additionally, Macgillivray (2008) acknowledged the influence of a 25-year shift in cultural attitudes toward homosexuals that had occurred between the time Rofes's (2000) respondents were students and when his own respondents were students. Macgillivary (2008) reported that his LGBT students experienced a sense of relief and increased comfort over their sexuality attributed to his openness as their teacher. Despite some reputed negativity targeted at his heterosexual students and school for having a gay teacher, the heterosexual students learned to be more accepting of gay people and ultimately realized that sexuality was only one component of a person. These findings additionally supported Dressler's (1985) previous work.

The aforementioned researchers' findings consistently yielded an overarching theme of fear, a theme that reemerged in an autobiographical account by DeJean (2004), a gay man who originally suffered terrible experiences as a novice teacher and referred to the daily demands of his profession as "returning to the scene of the crime" (p. 19). The prevailing sense of homophobia in DeJean's (2004) school was so overpowering that he "took weeks to fill out the credential application" and "didn't think [he] could be a teacher" (p. 20). After enduring a

hateful first year as the victim of numerous homophobic slurs and vandalism in his classroom, DeJean (2004) was honored as an "outstanding first-year teacher of Southern California" by the California Education Placement Association (p. 20). The award was metaphorically perceived as a security blanket, as "[DeJean's] fear was masked in a veil of professional perfectionism" but simultaneously also provided him with confidence to remain a teacher while finding "new ways to move out of the educational closet that [he] felt so tightly locked in" (p. 20). This transition began when DeJean (2004) joined GLSEN and slowly came out to his colleagues, students, and administration.

DeJean's (2004) increased confidence upon coming out corroborated the previously discussed findings of Juul and Repa (1993). His experiences also led him to conduct a qualitative study to gain insight into the experiences of other gay male teachers in his school district. Five gay male high school teachers in the district were contacted via e-mail, and three ultimately agreed to participate. Each member of the sample was subjected to a 30-40 minute off-site interview consisting of 17 questions; each question, while structured, was still constructed in a quasi open-ended fashion to grant the participants the opportunity to speak freely and candidly about their experiences with students, colleagues, what they taught, and how they taught it. The findings suggested that each of the participants consistently experienced a common pervasive theme of fear, although that fear was experienced at varying extremes and in different contexts. Upon commencing his school year, one participant recalled a prevailing sense of fear at the notion of believing himself to be the only gay teacher on campus without an adequate support network. A second participant was previously employed as a teacher in Tennessee before relocating to California, an experience which "taught him the institutional roles of silence required of gay men who choose to work in the K-12 school system" (p. 21). Despite

moving to the more liberal state of California for more "personal and professional freedom," this participant chose to continue "hiding within the structure" throughout his career (p. 21). Although reportedly believing that only obviously effeminate gay men would be victims of harassment, he nonetheless felt uncomfortable in social situations outside of the classroom, felt pressured to attend school functions with a female date, and remained mostly closeted. A third participant was presumably the most capable of empathizing with homophobia as a high school student. This participant was reportedly fired from his position as swim coach once the school learned of his sexuality; while it was never directly cited as the reason for his termination, the decision was made shortly after the revelation and, thus, arguably orchestrated. He also regularly heard numerous anti-gay comments made in his vicinity. These experiences also drove him, like the second participant, to move to California and, consequently, maintain a low profile at his future site of employment (DeJean, 2004).

The findings also indicated that each of the gay male teachers collectively shared a sense of compassion; each asserted that their homosexuality influenced their teaching practices and susceptibility toward creating more inclusive classrooms where derogatory language was intolerable. The participants reported that their sexuality enhanced their sensitivity toward minority issues enabling them to become more personally invested in ensuring the wellbeing of their students (DeJean, 2004).

In a second study, DeJean (2007) discussed how his experiences reminded him of the dangers and risks associated with being "out" on a high school campus and openly discussing the perceivably taboo subject of homosexuality. Through a study with 10 openly gay and lesbian educators in California, DeJean (2007) found that "being out within one's own classroom could be defined simply as an act of 'radical honesty'" (p. 63).

Further research corroborated DeJean's (2004) personal experiences. Jackson (2007) interviewed nine K-12 gay and lesbian teachers in an attempt to understand how one's identity as a gay man or lesbian influenced one's teaching. She expanded on previous work that had explored factors contributing to anti-gay or pro-gay school cultures by analyzing how these factors influenced the identity development of gay and lesbian teachers. Each of Jackson's (2007) nine LGBT participants identified support from their administrators as a crucial factor impacting their levels of openness regarding their sexual identities in schools.

In her study, Jackson (2007) unraveled a theoretical pattern of development consisting of three stages the LGBT educators underwent: 1) The *pre-teaching* stage, 2) the *closeted teaching* stage, and 3) the *post-coming out* stage. The *pre-teaching* stage encompassed experiences prior to becoming teachers while the *closeted teaching* stage included the years of classroom teaching experience in which participants masked their sexual identity. Those participants who chose to openly disclose their sexual orientation to their students experienced a radical shift in their ways of thinking and teaching which became the catalyst for entering the *post-coming out* stage. While each participant linearly progressed through each of these stages, individual nuances were found in levels of intensity and duration (Jackson, 2007).

Aside from these three stages, Jackson (2007) also identified more fluid intervals of development called phases which occurred flexibly between each stage. Within the *pre-teaching* stage, participants progressed through the *coming into gayness* and *coming into teaching* phases, where they worked to ultimately accept their sexuality and newfound roles as teachers respectively. Upon entering the *closeted teaching* stage, participants traversed through the *super-teacher* phase where they masked their identities in order to assume the role of the perfect teacher and the *on the verge* phase where they contemplated coming out to their students.

Finally, the *post-coming out* stage contained the *gay poster child* phase, where participants readily embraced their identities as openly gay teachers, and the *authentic teacher* phase where participants learned to effectively navigate their sexual and professional identities while integrating LGBT issues into the classroom (Jackson, 2007). Ultimately, ach of Jackson's (2007) participants believed that coming out and attaining the *authentic teacher* phase benefitted them and positively influenced their students because they were able to bring a newfound sense of authenticity to their instruction in the classroom. Ascertaining the climate of LGBT educators' schools continues to remain an important focus (Smith, Wright, Reilly, & Esposito, 2008).

The next section of the literature review will provide a brief overview of the history of homophobia in educational administration along with a discussion of the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators.

Gay and Lesbian School Administrators

Homophobia in Educational Administration

While there has been an explosion of research over the past 30 years gauging practically every sector of the LGBT experience including public education, a void remains in the body of literature concerning the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators. Lugg and Koschoreck (2003) go so far as to refer to educational administration as "the final unrecognized and unexamined closet" (p. 4) for LGBT educators. The conspicuous absence of apposite research investigating the lived experiences of LG[BT] school administrators mitigates the urgency of such knowledge while erroneously imparting a notion that no such individuals securing administrative positions in education exist. Sears (1996) advocated that newly proposed research studies should be designed with the intent of documenting the personal lives and professional

experiences of LG[BT] school administrators; such knowledge, he argued, would foster a broader understanding of the heterosexist and homophobic mindsets in order to improve school cultures for LGBT educators and students. While Sears's propositions have been honored by some notable historians (Blount, 1998, 2003, 2005; Graves, 2009; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2008) and legal theorists (Harbeck, 1992, 1997), only a handful of scholars have followed by chronicling the experiences of practicing LG[BT] administrators (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007).

The inevitable question arises as to why two decades after Sears's (1996) proposal a gap yet remains. Blount (1998) proposed that, historically, the educational administrative sector may have been the most homophobic of all educational specializations and suggested that scholars intentionally evaded the topic for fear of self-incrimination by inadvertently "outing" themselves (2003). She claimed that "sexuality has played a substantially more important role in the structuring and functioning of administrative work than most existent scholarship in the field would indicate by its omission" (Blount, 2003, p. 8). Koschoreck (2003) corroborated Blount's (2003) assertion. As a gay male doctoral student interested in researching gay and lesbian issues in educational administration, he found himself "confronted with a decision of whether or not to align [his] scholarly production more closely with the exigencies of the academic market" (p. 30) in order to increase his marketability for a professorship. Despite the committee's approval of his proposal, Koschoreck (2003) indeed changed the focus of his dissertation to a more mainstream topic midway through his data analysis. Essentially, the underlying presumption remains that only LGBT individuals would be so impassioned enough to conduct LGBT-related research.

According to Blount (1996, 1998, 2003, 2005) and Lugg (2003b, 2006), sexuality has been an important factor in the field of educational administration since the beginnings of recorded history in the profession. Existing sodomy laws in several states "can place individuals with police power, including public school administrators, in positions of enforcing majoritarian notions of sexuality and gender performance" (Lugg, 2006, p. 42). Despite the aforementioned absence of research pertaining to LG[BT] school administrators, "the fear of administrators who cross gender-appropriate lines and of LGBT administrators themselves has compelled shifts in how school administration has been structured, who has been selected for service, and what duties have been performed" (Blount, 2003, pp.7-8). Blount (2003, 2005) argued that sexuality has critically defined the profession in three ways, the first evolving around the conception of education as a profession traditionally dominated by females. Drawing upon the analogy of marriage and the historical sanctions of male dominated households, Blount (2003) theorized that "[men] needed positions that affirmed their masculine prerogative [as husbands and fathers]" (p. 8). In essence, jobs in educational administration provided men with this necessary outlet while females traditionally remained serving as teachers.

Second, those hired as school administrators have continuously and conscientiously asserted their heterosexuality. Men, particularly male superintendents, have historically demonstrated higher proportions of supposed heterosexuality by implication of marriage than men in any other sector of the general workforce. Involvement in athletics, coaching, and men's groups has also catapulted these men into power by aggrandizing their marketability in the eyes of school boards seeking to employ positive male role models for the youth in their respective school districts (Blount, 2003).

Finally, from the Cold War into the present, male school administrators have historically been charged with modeling heterosexuality and ensuring the heterosexuality of their staff members and students. States and communities have consulted with these male administrators while investigating allegations of homosexual employees in schools. Many have resorted to instituting screening practices for ensuring that any gender non-compliant candidates, who by implication might be perceived as homosexual, would not be hired (Blount, 2003, p. 8). The infamous purge of gay and lesbian teachers by the Johns Committee in Florida was a prime example (Graves, 2009).

Tooms (2007) understands this phenomenon evolving around politics pertaining to issues of sexual identity as *fit*, a game where the community—as the primary governing body of a school—delegates to administrators the duty of enforcing an unwritten code of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; naturally, homosexuality thus conflicts with the ethical implications behind this fundamentally invisible canon. Individuals who find themselves pressured to conform to the established societal norms governing gender-specified behavior often resort to internalizing these identities, ultimately resulting in an incongruence and disparaging sense of self as they juggle the idiosyncratic natures of their personal lives and professional lives to adhere to the rules of the game (Tooms, 2007; Weedon, 2004). Koschoreck (2003) understands the same phenomenon similarly as "a never-ending game of push-and-pull…play[ed] according to the rules of the heteronormative script" (p. 29), while Lugg (2003) coined the phrase "*assimilationist imperative*" (p. 75) to describe the resulting phenomenological behavior of LG[BT] administrators rapt in playing the game.

Lugg (2003) addressed the conspicuous absence of LG[BT] research concerning educational administrators, attributing the gap in the law review literature to their "absolute

invisibility" (p. 75) and the "tacit assumption…that to be an educational leader in a public school setting, *by definition*, means to be heterosexual, or at least the enforcer of heterosexuality and 'nongay'" (p. 76). As educational administrators, by nature of their job descriptions alone, find themselves in positions where they must reflect community values and enforce societal norms, the expectations remain that the typical school administrator be "male, married, and…*fiercely* homophobic" (p. 76). Thus, by implication, the ideal school administrator carries the duty of shunning any matters pertaining to LGBT issues, ignoring or even bullying LGBT students, and terminating the contracts of LGBT staff members (Dressler, 1985; Lugg, 2003). Such a notion paves a conscientious battleground should the school administrator be a closeted member of the LGBT community him or herself.

Despite the relative ignorance surrounding the sector and prevailing fears of self-incrimination, there are undoubtedly members of the LGBT community serving in administrative positions. Todd Whitaker, Professor of Educational Leadership at Indiana State University, once quoted, "When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold" (Whitaker, 2003, p. 30). The aphorism reinforces the notion that school administrators, through simultaneous or unintentional efforts and actions, ultimately establish the tones permeating their buildings. Should the scope for the context of the aforementioned axiom be broadened, perhaps what should then be considered are the levels of comfort and anxiety faced by school administrators over prospectively publicizing their sexual identities. Indeed, research suggests that a pervasive culture of heteronormativity in schools and communities fosters the creation of a specific kind of administrator who must wrestle with adopting notions of what constitutes normal and abnormal sexuality and appropriately base his or her decisions upon those notions (Fraynd & Capper,

2003). The next section of the literature review will provide an overview of the available research concerning the lived personal and professional experiences of LG[BT] administrators.

The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian School Administrators

The earliest glimpses into the experiences of gay and lesbian school administrators may be traced back to the studies of Olson (1987), Griffin (1992), and Kissen (1996). Each of the respective participating samples was comprised of both LGBT teachers and administrators. However, neither researcher disaggregated their data, thus, preventing the revelation of any salient findings differentiating the experiences of the participating administrators from those of teachers.

It was not until Fraynd and Capper (2003) conducted their groundbreaking exploratory study chronicling the experiences of both out and closeted gay and lesbian administrators that any illumination was shed on the area. More specifically, their study aimed to gauge the impact of degrees of "outness" on LG[BT] administrators' ability to successfully circumvent the influences of power and sexual politics in schools. Fraynd and Capper (2003) theorized that LG[BT] administrators utilized the same identity management strategies described by Griffin (1992). Their participants consisted of two female and two male European American school administrators, one of each gender who was out and one who was closeted respectively. Each participant was subjected to an interview lasting approximately two hours.

Fraynd and Capper's (2003) findings indicated that administrators' success in exerting power over communities was not dependent upon their degrees of openness about their sexuality as originally theorized; rather, their success was dependent on individual levels of confidence and perceptions of self garnered from staff and community perceptions of their effectiveness as leaders. In essence, "their leadership positions, along with their perceived effectiveness, gave

them the courage to take a public stand on the issues [of community resistance toward sexual minorities], regardless of their degree of outness" (p. 117).

Building upon Fraynd and Capper's (2003) findings, Jones-Redmond (2007) followed with another study exploring how gay and lesbian school administrators negotiated their personal and professional identities with professional roles and responsibilities in heteronormative institutions. Her findings yielded evidence of enormous and strategic efforts exerted by her participants to conceal their sexualities, which consequently had an adverse impact on their leadership abilities. Essentially, the participants were so preoccupied with cloaking their identities that their exhausting efforts ultimately distracted them from effectively performing their duties. Additionally, the identity management strategies and consistent censorship practices utilized by her participants also conflicted with their desires to uphold personal integrity and remain truly authentic leaders for their students and staff (Jones-Redmond, 2007).

Jones-Redmond (2007) uncovered five emergent themes in her research: 1) The challenges of meeting the societal expectations of a school leader; 2) A constant awareness and need to perform above expectations; 3) A desire to maintain authenticity; 4) The necessity of feeling safe and secure in the workplace; and 5) Fear of career mobility, job loss, and the stigmatization of pedophilia. Although the study was the first of its kind to include LG[BT] administrators of color—three of nine participants were of color—Jones-Redmond (2007) did not disaggregate her data to explore whether LG[BT] administrators of color perceive their sexual orientation as an attribute or burden to their efficiencies as school leaders.

Tooms (2007) continued exploring the area with a study documenting the experiences of six additional gay and lesbian administrators—one man and five women. All six administrators were partnered and described themselves as closeted or semicloseted. In her study, Tooms

(2007) also sought to determine how closeted and semicloseted administrators intersected their personal identities and professional duties. Her findings suggested that LG[BT] administrators generally linked their perceived effectiveness in accordance with their ability to function within the boundaries of "a heteronormative margin of tolerance in their communities" (p. 612). Essentially, "the right kind of queer [administrator]" is one who looks the part of a public servant, that is, presents him or herself externally as a heterosexual, works vigorously and diligently, downplays the nature of his or her sexuality and personal relationships in social settings, masks his or her sexual identity by maintaining a "straightened office" (p. 614), and disengages from participating in any LGBT political advocacy initiatives (Tooms, 2007). Political activism proved disastrous for one openly gay elementary school principal who soon found his original parental and community support transformed into resentment following his increased visibility and political advocacy (Hernandez, 2009). Tooms's (2007) research echoed the findings of Jones-Redmond (2007) and Dressler (1985) regarding LGBT teachers, particularly when considering the avoidance of political advocacy initiatives.

Political activism leads to an increased visibility, and increased visibility may lead community stakeholders or an administrator's superiors to question their leader's loyalty toward his or her duties. Hernandez (2009) chronicled his experiences as an openly gay elementary school principal whose initial community, school, and parental support network rapidly transformed into resilience because of his gay rights activism. As a leader, he believed his responsibilities should be broader in scope and transcend the daily confines of his building. Because of the ensuing tensions, he voluntarily decided to change schools.

DeLeon and Brunner (2013) have conducted the most recent study to date on the experiences of LG[BT] administrators. They explored how the prior life experiences of LG[BT]

administrators as students and teachers shaped their personal and professional lives. Their findings yielded similarities with those of Fraynd and Capper (2003) and Tooms (2007), illuminating an overarching Cycles of Fear model that had intricately woven itself throughout the participants' early experiences in their youth but later evolved into manifestations of their strength and character as LG[BT] administrators.

The Cycles of Fear model yielded the following conclusions: 1) The LG[BT] administrators traversed to and fro from silence to voice and vice versa with varying degrees of intensity; 2) Transcending societal homophobia or self-imposed oppression proved extremely challenging; 3) Conquering one's fears and oppression resulted in several newfound personal and professional gains; 4) Experiences with personal and professional fears were deeply rooted within the participants' core senses of self; 5) Levels of societal homophobia and intolerance were directly proportionate to the participants' levels of resilience and visibility as LG[BT] administrators; and 6) The commencement of each new Cycle of Fear augmented the LG[BT] administrators' strength and resilience (deLeon & Brunner, 2013).

Growing up as LGBT youth, each of the seventeen participants—ten who identified as gay males and seven who identified as lesbians—had reportedly "learned to navigate their identities by remaining silent in the face of heteroprivilege, overcompensating for what several viewed as 'flaws,' and striving to validate their lives in a heteronormative society" (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, p. 174). Their ingrained fears stemming from the endurance of hostile childhoods and adolescent years with a homosexual stigma manifested themselves by transforming them into more resilient LG[BT] administrators with greater sympathies toward the plight of LGBT youth and teachers through their heightened sensitivities toward diversity and understandings of marginalization from personal experience (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013).

These findings were consistent with those of Koschoreck (2003), who interviewed one gay male administrator who recalled demonstrating great sensitivity for the wellbeing of a transgender male student in his school.

Summary of the Literature Review

The underpinning attitudes of heterosexism are based on a presumption that perpetuates the superiority of heterosexuality and views any deviation as abnormal and immoral. Heteronormativity refers to the normalization of a heterosexual orientation. Both constructs are interrelated, with each serving as a means of enabling the other (Petrovic & Rosiek, 2003).

The beginning of the gay rights movement can be traced back to a group of prominent early German sexologists who classified homosexuals as a "third sex" determined at birth and brought their message overseas to America. Despite their belief that homosexuality could be inherited, American physicians also theorized it could remain latent until triggered, thereby giving credence to the practice of such inhumane treatments as castration and conversion or aversion therapy (Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983). The origin of homophobia in education can be attributed to the mass conservatism permeating post-World War II America. Under Senator Joseph McCarthy, homosexuals were perceived as national security threats and subjected to constant harassment and violence from state and local police agencies. In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10450, essentially preventing homosexuals from holding federal jobs. Further civil service regulations of the early 1960s calling for the removal of any workers engaging in immortal conduct combined with the state laws prohibiting consensual sodomy ultimately contributed to the criminalization of LGBT persons deeming them unfit for holding positions in education and working in close proximity with children (Cain, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983).

Although teaching was a predominantly male profession during the early 1800s, an influx of women eager to work for lower wages soon emerged following the Civil War and transformed the demographics of the profession. Men then shifted their focus toward more masculine leadership positions in administration (Blount, 1998, 2003, 2005). Additionally, by the mid 1800s with the emergence of single-sex schools, more pressure was placed on teachers and administrators to model appropriate gender-specific behaviors for their students. Ironically enough, however, these single-sex boarding schools more often than not inadvertently promoted the very same homosexual acts parents and educators feared (Blount, 2005).

Since the 1920s, the selective enforcement of sodomy laws has resulted in several states revoking teaching and administrative licensures from LGBT educators and banning them from educating children (Lugg, 2006). After World War II, homosexuals were also subjected to increased attacks and raids in their bars and private homes and blackmailed over heightened concern regarding their increased visibility (D'Emilio, 1983; Harbeck, 1992, 1997). Senator Joseph McCarthy's rhetoric linked homosexuality with Communism resulting in a series of witch-hunts intended to oust LGBT persons from civil service or governmental positions. One of the most infamous witch-hunts occurred in Florida where the Johns Committee terminated 39 professors and deans and revoked the teaching credentials of 71 teachers (Graves, 2009).

During this time, however, changing sexual mores resulted in increased social and judicial leniency toward LGBT persons; in the 1970s, the National Education Association (NEA) soon began advocating for the rights and freedoms of LGBT teachers (Harbeck, 1992, 1997). Conservatives soon retaliated against these important political strides. Some of the most notorious efforts came in the form of 1959 Miss America finalist Anita Bryant's "Save our Children" campaign, California's Proposition 6 sponsored by Senator John Briggs, and

Oklahoma Senator Mary Helm's bill. Although Bryant's "Save Our Children" and California's Proposition 6 ultimately proved unsuccessful, Senator Helm's bill unanimously passed and remained unchallenged until it was overturned in 1984. The states of North Carolina, Texas, Nevada, and Arkansas soon retaliated against this victory by drafting similar legislations (Harbeck, 1997).

Essentially, during the 1980s and 1990s, members of the LGBT community enjoyed a sense of greater sexual liberation yet endured a multitude of dangers evolving around their sexuality. Formidable death tolls following the emergence of AIDS also ravaged the gay community leading to mass hysteria ultimately casting a shadow that stigmatized sex and what had previously been safe zones for existing LGBT subcultures. While some feminists leaned toward the state for protection, the state had already, by this point, arguably evolved into an apparatus of oppression toward the LGBT community, a notion further consecrated by the 1986 Supreme Court ruling upholding state bans on consensual sodomy in *Bowers v. Hardwick*. Although feminists and women found themselves enjoying their newfound victories and liberation as legal barriers came tumbling down, members of the LGBT community instead garnered additional notoriety with the erection of additional legal barriers further sanctioning their already marginalized status. For example, discrimination on the basis of gender became outlawed, but discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation remained intact. A lesbian teacher could not be fired for being a female, but she could be fired solely for being a lesbian (Fineman, 2009).

Despite the vocal criticism of critical theorists and influences stemming from the original civil rights movement, gay politics subsequently became shaped by efforts to naturalize binary sexual identities and harmoniously assimilate homosexuals and heterosexuals into society.

LGBT political activists sought to adopt a formal equality model designed for winning antidiscrimination measures for LGBT persons in accordance with Title VII with full citizenship rights and equal protection under the laws through the Fourteenth Amendment (Fineman, 2009). Since the commencement of these efforts, the LGBT community has won numerous victories; in the case of *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003, the United States Supreme Court overturned its prior ruling in 1986's *Bowers v. Hardwick* while, in 2011, President Barack Obama successfully repealed "don't ask, don't tell" ending the United States military's ban prohibiting homosexuals from openly serving in the armed forces.

Several of these victories, however, remain bittersweet. For instance, although the United States Supreme Court overturned the Texas statute criminalizing consensual sodomy in *Lawrence v. Texas* on June 26, 2003, consensual sodomy still remains illegal in 14 states. Furthermore, neither of these states, including Texas, has aligned its public school codes in compliance with the *Lawrence* ruling (Eskridge, 1999, 2000; Lugg, 2006). Additionally, as of 2014, twenty-nine states have still neglected to pass antidiscrimination laws against sexual orientation or gender identity (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011).

With the lack of empirical research yielding any evidence that LGBT teachers adversely impact their students or schools, researchers then began shifting their focus toward understanding the lived experiences of LGBT persons in education. Education has often been described as the most homophobic profession of all (Blount, 2003; Lugg, 2003b; Olson, 1987) thanks to power vested in sodomy laws and the expectations placed on administrators to act as gender police. Olson (1987) conducted an early study in which she discovered that sexual orientation played a major role in the decisions of LGBT educators to leave the profession. Griffin (1992) followed with a groundbreaking study delineating four identity

management strategies that would lay the foundation for future research in the area: "passing," "covering," being "implicitly out," or being "explicitly out." Researchers then shifted their focus toward understanding the effects of coming out of the closet in the classroom (Khayatt, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Jackson, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Other openly gay teachers (Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000) soon came forward chronicling their positive experiences. Coming out of the closet was not a desirable option for everyone, however; in his study of closeted gay male teachers, DeJean (2004) ultimately found they shared unanimous senses of fear and compassion along with a collective desire to foster more inclusive classrooms.

The absence of research on the experiences of LG[BT] administrators has long been attributed to a false speculation of their nonexistence (Lugg, 2003b) along with the fear of self-incrimination (Blount, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003). Since the last decade of the twentieth century, however, notable researchers have been pushing for research into their lived experiences (Capper, 1993, 1999; Griffin, 1996; Sears, 1996). Only a small handful of researchers have chronicled their experiences (deLeon & Brunner, 2009; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007). Fraynd and Capper's (2003) research suggested that LG[BT] administrators' success in their leadership was not dependent upon degrees of openness regarding their sexuality as original theorized; rather, levels of self-confidence combined with positive community and staff perceptions of their leadership efficiency played a prominent role. Tooms (2007) followed with a study illuminating several identity management strategies utilized by LG[BT] administrators to navigate their personal and professional identities: maintaining a strong work ethic, downplaying one's sexuality and discussion of personal relationships, maintaining an otherwise bare or "straightened office" (p. 614), and avoiding any LGBT-related political activism. Involvement

in political activism proved disastrous for one openly gay elementary school principal whose support network soon turned against him in retaliation for his increased visibility and perceived agenda statement (Hernandez, 2009). Finally, deLeon and Brunner (2009) explored how the early life experiences of LG[BT] administrators as students and teachers shaped their personal and professional lives. Their findings illuminated an overarching theme of fear resulting in personal losses, safety losses, and professional losses; fear initially played a significant role throughout each LG[BT] administrator's experiences as youth but later manifested itself in the resilience and strength of character each displayed as a school leader (Denton, 2009). Both Tooms (2007) and deLeon and Brunner (2009) found that employing identity management strategies mirroring those delineated by Griffin (1992) was critical for the success of any LG[BT] administrator.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Having presented a review of the available body of relevant literature concerning the lived experiences of LG[BT] public school administrators, it was clear that a significant number of questions remained yet to be answered. Grounded in the context of anti-discriminatory laws and policies along with the current and evolving societal norms and attitudes toward members of the LGBT community, the purpose of the study was grounded in achieving a broader understanding of how power and politics influenced the experiences of LG[BT] public school administrators. The following research questions guided the study:

- How do LG[BT] administrators define leadership and their roles in schools?
- How does an LG[BT] administrator's understanding of his or her sexuality influence (the development of) his or her priorities as a leader?
- Why do some LG[BT] administrators choose to come out while others remain closeted?

Research Study Design

Phenomenological Approach

To investigate the lived personal and professional experiences of LG[BT] public school administrators, I utilized a phenomenological multiple case study design, a form of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Because of the sensitive nature of the study and its grounding in the context of anti-discriminatory policies and societal attitudes and norms, qualitative methods were used for gathering the data. Qualitative research methods are "pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people," (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2) which, thus, made them particularly suitable for the purposes of this study. They allow researchers to investigate and understand "the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life…[using] the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions" (p. 2).

The phenomenological approach was particularly suitable for exploring, describing, and analyzing the meanings of individual lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011); essentially, a phenomenology is ideal for the researcher seeking to comprehend and capture the very essence of a phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) outlined six steps for conducting a phenomenological study:

> (1) Turning to the nature of lived experience which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
>
> (2) Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
>
> (3) Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
>
> (4) Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting
>
> (5) Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relationship to the phenomenon;
>
> (6) Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (p. 30)

It is important to note that a phenomenologist need not engage in each of these listed steps. In fact, classical phenomenologists frequently engage in only the first three: 1) Describing a phenomenon of interest to the researcher and others; 2) Investigating these experiences; and 3) Reflecting on the themes emerging from the yielded data (van Manen, 1990).

Analysis stemmed from the underlying assumption that a collective *essence*, endemic to the experiences of those encountering a particular phenomenon, would be unraveled in the data. The experiences of each study participant were accepted and treated as individually unique and ultimately compared with one another for identification of the essence (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Van Manen (1990) further explained the essence of a phenomenology as follows:

> Using philosopher Edmund Husserl's interpretation of phenomenology; the essence is the genesis of a phenomenon. Every phenomenon can be fragmented down into pieces and those pieces can be explored. A deeper understanding of the pieces will yield a deeper understanding of the whole. The essences are stages by which phenomena inaugurate

> themselves in our consciousness and gradually develop before our inner eye and allow us to assign meanings to what we experience. (p. 25)

Using a phenomenological framework for this dissertation allowed me to explore the essences surrounding LG[BT] administrators' experiences in positions of leadership. The phenomenon under study involved the nature of power and sexual politics in schools. With a primary focus on exploring how individuals understood their experiences and transformed them into both individual and collective consciousness, the phenomenological approach allowed me to understand how the participants perceived, described, felt about, judged, remembered, comprehended, and discussed the phenomenon with others (Patton, 2002).

Multiple Case Study Design

For the researcher aspiring to understand the nature of a complex social phenomenon, the case study approach allowed for the integration of the most broad spectrum of methods available for exploring a contemporary situation. Yin (2009) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). Essentially, the case study approach allows researchers to "provide an intensive, holistic description of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1997, p. 41). Although the logistics comprising every research method available for collecting and analyzing empirical data are inherently limited with each possessing its own respective strengths and weaknesses (Merriam, 1997; Yin, 2009), the case study approach is particularly advantageous as it enables a researcher to potentially study the significant factors influencing a phenomenon in varying contexts (Yin, 2009). Additionally, while any research method can be tailored for any of three purposes—exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory—all of which are dependent upon the type of research questions posed, the extent of control exerted by the researcher over potential

behavioral outcomes, and the degree of focus on current or historical events, the case study approach distinctively lends itself to the understanding of process, making it an ideal method for answering "how" and "why" questions of inquiry (Yin, 2009). Due to these inherent strengths, Merriam (1997) argues that case studies are particularly appealing for practitioner-based fields of study such as education as they have yielded success in informing policy decisions, evaluating programs, and studying innovations.

Among the several available case study designs, I opted to utilize a multiple case study design for this study, one intended for investigating several cases for the purpose of studying a phenomenon (Stake, 2006). Stake (2006) refers to this phenomenon as a "quintain" (p. 6) and argues that a primary focus within the individual cases comprising a multicase study lies in the characterization of the quintain; essentially, the characterization may be viewed differently under differing circumstances. Thus, it is imperative for the researcher to clearly illustrate the phenomenon as it appears in a variety of contexts (Stake, 2006). Stake (2006) further explains:

> A quintain is an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied—a target, but not a bull's eye. In multicase study, it is the target collection…This quintain is the arena or holding company or umbrella for the cases we will study…Multicase research starts with a quintain. To understand it better, we study some of its single cases—its sites or manifestations. But it is the quintain we seek to understand. We study what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain better. (p. 6)

The multiple case study design allowed me to conduct a comparative analysis of the cases while maintaining the holistic nature and characteristics of each individual case. It was through this comparative analysis that I identified similarities and differences amongst the individual cases as well as any internal or external factors influencing the quintain under study.

To recapitulate, this dissertation was conducted using a qualitative method specifically employing a phenomenological approach within a multiple case study design. The research questions guiding this proposed dissertation asked the questions "how" and "why," questions

which were more explanatory in nature and lent themselves to the use of case studies. Utilizing a multiple case study design allowed me to conduct a comparative analysis of the individual cases through which I identified similarities and differences for the purpose of better understanding the internal and external factors influencing the quintain under study.

Data Collection Methods

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling, sometimes referred to as *purposive* or *judgment* sampling, (Patton, 2002) was used to select the study participants. This means that I made specific decisions concerning prospective participants for the study because they were able to purposefully inform understandings of the central research problems and phenomenon guiding the study (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological research typically focuses on relatively smaller sample sizes for understanding the full complexity of the targeted population's experience. Thus, it involves locating and selecting participants who either have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon of interest to the researcher as opposed to larger sample sizes selected randomly with the intent of generalizing findings to the representative population (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) further explains:

> What would be 'bias' in statistical sampling, and therefore a weakness, becomes intended focus in qualitative sampling, and therefore a strength. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations. (p. 230)

I relied on the snowball (or chain) method of sampling, a technique in which a researcher relies on previously identified participants for locating additional prospective participants or critical cases for participation in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Rudestam

& Newton, 2007). Essentially, because of the sensitive nature of the study and potential risks including lack of job protections facing the participants, I had hoped that some of the participants would know of and refer additional participants whether they were friends, colleagues, relatives, or acquaintances for participation in the study. Additionally, I posted a call inviting participants for the study (Appendix B) at traditional LGBT venues and LGBT-specific community centers in major cities across the United States. My name, e-mail address, and phone number were provided for interested prospective participants to contact me confidentially and inquire about the study.

The participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- They had to be a resident of the United States.
- They had to be holders of appropriate administrative credentials by their respective state Department of Education.
- They had to self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or transgender.
- They had to be currently or recently employed (within the last ten years) as a school administrator. Recently retired LG[BT] administrators were also welcome to participate.

I intended to solicit the participation of at least twelve male and female participants. I was seeking participants in a wide range of administrative positions including Superintendents of Schools, Assistant Superintendents of Schools, Chancellors, Principals, Assistant/Vice Principals, Directors of Curriculum, Content Area Supervisors, and Department Chairpersons. Additionally, the study was also open for participants who were currently employed as administrators in standard public schools and charter schools.

Standardized Interviews and Interview Protocols

Data for this study were collected through the use of standardized structured open-ended

interviews (Patton, 2002), sometimes referred to as focused interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990), and an interview guide approach using protocols generated by the researcher based on the review of the relevant literature discussed in Chapter Two. For the purposes of this dissertation, interviewing was an ideal method for data collection since it was impossible to physically observe how LG[BT] administrators have organized their personal and professional lives or the meanings attached to their experiences. As Patton (2002) states, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341).

According to Patton (2002), standardized interviews ensure that every participant is asked the same series of questions in the same chronological order, including any additional probing questions whenever further inquiry is deemed necessary. In fact, such probing questions were appropriately dispersed throughout the interview protocol to minimize interview effects and reduce the need for interviewer judgment (Patton, 2002).

Each participant was asked questions from the interview protocol (Appendix A). The interviews were open-ended and provided all participants with opportunities to reflect freely and honestly upon their experiences. Additional probing questions were appropriately dispersed for attaining additional clarification whenever necessary. The questions were arranged in chronological order for the purpose of attaining an overall picture of each participant's experiences in his or her adolescence, adulthood, personal life, and professional life. The questions ultimately culminated with additional inquiries into all participants' lived experiences as LG[BT] school administrators.

Interview Guide Approach

The interview guide approach was also utilized during second and third interviews conducted with the study participants. With interview guides, researchers often list questions

derived from topics of interest that are intended to be explored during the course of an interview. Like standardized structured interviews, interview guides are designed in advance to ensure all essential bases of inquiry remain congruent for all participants (Patton, 2002). The interviewer enjoys greater freedom with enhanced opportunities for asking probing or exploratory questions.

Collection of Documents

Various documents relevant to the individual school districts and/or schools led by the participating administrators were also collected to facilitate a more thorough understanding of the characteristics surrounding the participants' experiences. The documents for collection included vision statements, mission statements, statements of district and/or building goals/objectives, minutes from past Board of Education meetings, employee non-discrimination policies, newspaper press releases, and the personnel files of the participating administrators. I gained access to all of these files via the Internet by visiting archives posted on the schools' websites or through special permission granted by the participating administrators. The documents provided background knowledge to corroborate and augment my understanding of the participating administrators' narrative accounts in the interviews. It is important to note, however, that documents alone are not inherently accurate. As Yin (2009) posits, one must appreciate that the documents were intended for a specific audience outside of the case study investigation; thus, any information contained in them is subjected to bias and almost certainly edited to fulfill its intended purposes accordingly (Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis Plan

Procedures for the Study

The study drew on three primary sources of data: the open-ended standardized structured interview, the interview guide approach, and the collection of documents. Before commencing

the interview process, I presented my research proposal to the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Upon securing the permission of the university's IRB to conduct the research, I posted the calling for participants (Appendix B) at LGBT-specific venues and community centers and began contacting prospective participants who had voluntarily reached out to or been referred to me through other participants to invite them to participate in the study. The same calling for participants was also e-mailed to LGBT community centers in major cities across the United States. Each prospective participant was furnished with an informed consent form (Appendix C) delineating the purpose and procedures of the study along with a notification emphasizing their freedom to potentially withdraw at any time without repercussions. The participants were also advised that all information gathered during the interviews was to be kept confidential. Confidentiality was ensured through several ways: 1) Pseudonyms were used in lieu of all participants' actual names; 2) No identifiable data such as names of people, workplaces, and/or places of residence was included; 3) All data collected from the interviews was transcribed as quickly as possible; 4) All transcriptions and audio recordings will be stored for three years in a locked filing cabinet in the residence of the principal investigator; and 5) Upon the conclusion of those three years, all data files will immediately be disposed of accordingly. An interview protocol (Appendix A) was used as the principal source of data collection during the standardized structured interviews.

A copy of the informed consent form was sent to each prospective participant via e-mail, and follow-up telephone calls were made to solicit and confirm participation in this study. Additionally, participants were e-mailed an optional audiotape consent form (Appendix D) granting me permission to digitally record the interview session for further accuracy. Upon receiving the approval of the study participants, I then began conducting a first confidential in-

person structured interview lasting approximately one hour in length at a comfortable site of the participants' choosing. Since some participants were located outside a reasonable radius of my residence or were hesitant to meet in person, phone interviews or webcam interviews via Skype were also offered as options.

Upon the completion of the preliminary interviews, I transcribed the resulting data verbatim and invited participants to review them for accuracy, a procedure known as member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Once all participants verified the accuracy of these transcriptions, I then proceeded to schedule a second or third interview utilizing a combined structured interview and interview guide approach with each participant at a location of his or her choosing. Member checks were again conducted with each participant to verify accuracy of the transcriptions.

Once all interviews were completed with each participant, I then looked for emerging patterns to identify the essence of the phenomenon under study, a phase of analysis known as *phenomenological reduction* (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). Here, I clustered the data around themes describing "the textures of the experience" (Creswell, 2007, p. 150). For those participants who opted to be digitally recorded, I listened to each recording three times for additional accuracy. In the last phase of *structural synthesis* (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002), I engaged in an exploration of all possible interpretations and varying perspectives (Creswell, 2007) and culminated with a descriptive narrative of the essence comprising the phenomenon and its rooted structure (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Finally, as previously stated, in order to ensure confidentiality, each participant was invited to select a pseudonym to serve as a secure identification (ID) code for the duration of the study. The pseudonyms were used in lieu of names during the interview sessions and in the final

written report as the interviews were transcribed and the data coded, sorted, and analyzed. The transcriptions derived from the interview sessions will also be confidentially stored in a locked safe for three years and eventually destroyed by shredding as per federal guidelines.

Data Analysis

Standardized structured individual interviews and an interview guide were utilized as principal forms of data collection in this phenomenological multi-case study. The techniques utilized individual one-on-one interaction with the participants. The participants each selected a pseudonym that was used during the digital recording sessions and coding of the data for maintaining privacy and disaggregating individual experiences with those of other participants.

The standardized interviews served a dual purpose: 1) They enabled the collection of experiential narratives which led to a deeper and more enriched understanding of the phenomenon under study; and 2) They established a more conversational relationship with the participants so they felt more comfortable sharing accounts of their experiences (van Manen, 2001). The interview guide was utilized as an additional means of collecting data during second and third follow-up interviews and provided the opportunity for further elaboration of previously discussed topics relevant to the phenomenon under study. All interviews took place at a secure location that was mutually agreed upon by the participants and the researcher. Additionally, pseudonyms were selected and mutually agreed upon to maintain the anonymity of each of the study participants. Individual interviews were no longer than one hour in length.

For the purposes of this study, I used the psychologist Moustakas's (1994) approach for transcendental or psychological phenomenology since it was more focused on describing the experiences of the participants as opposed to the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Through this approach, the researcher reaches out to collect data from a sample of

participants who have experienced the phenomenon and proceeds to utilize quotes or significant statements which are then grouped into themes, a phase known as "phenomenological reduction" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148). Finally, the researcher prepares a "textural description" of what participants experience, a "structural description" of how they experienced it, and a combination of both in order to report on the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007), a process which Marshall and Rossman (2011) refer to as "structural synthesis" (p. 148).

Analysis of qualitative research often begins with the identification of key themes and patterns from the collected data. The qualitative researcher often finds himself or herself overwhelmed with the burden of sorting data collected from innumerable pages of field notes and/or verbatim interview transcriptions. Naturally, it would be impossible to incorporate every datum into a final written report for a study (Patton, 2002). Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that the challenge lies in maintaining the focus of the study and engaging in sufficient depth while resisting overload. Thus, qualitative researchers must essentially learn to "condense the bulk of [their] data sets into analyzable units by creating categories with and from [their] data," (p. 26) a process commonly referred to as coding. It is imperative, however, that the qualitative researcher not use the terms coding and analysis interchangeably; coding is not, in and of itself, the same as analysis. Rather, the term coding encompasses a variety of methods to make sense of qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis was generative and recursive, beginning during phase one of the study prior to the collection of data. I utilized my research journal to conduct my own reflection on my personal experiences with the phenomenon under investigation as a gay educator aspiring for a career in school administration. In addition, the research journal was also used to record notes from my observations of the participants' nonverbal cues during the interview sessions. The

field notes provided in the journal were then analyzed holistically during the process of identifying key segments and themes emerging from the phenomena.

Interview Narratives

Upon transcribing the interview narratives, I engaged in member checks with each of the participants to ensure accuracy. I conducted an analysis of each of the transcripts from the individual interviews using the aspects outlined through the transcendental or psychological approach toward phenomenology. The interviews from each participant were carefully transcribed shortly after they were conducted and analyzed holistically for the emergence of key segments and themes amongst the data. The data assisted with unraveling the multiplicities of identity; these along with the narratives themselves assisted with identifying any external influential factors informing the experiences of the participants.

Identifying Key Themes

Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that phenomenology rests upon the assumption that the collective experiences endemic to a specific population or group share a common structure that can be narrated. The meaning of a phenomenon or experience is often multifaceted and multidimensional for each participant. Thus, in attempting to garner a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, a researcher must try to determine what these experiential structures or themes that comprise the experiences are (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Van Manen (2001) outlined three approaches for researchers to use in isolating phenomenological themes from interview narratives: 1) Holistic, 2) Selective, and 3) Detailed. Through the holistic approach, a researcher analyzes a narrative in its entirety and attempts to decipher its underlying meaning as a whole. The selective approach mandates numerous readings of a narrative for the researcher to identify key quotes or elements essential for

understanding the essence of a phenomenon. Finally, the researcher utilizing the detailed approach scrutinizes every resulting datum collected; quotes or clusters of data are closely analyzed in order to identify the essence of a phenomenon under study.

For the purposes of this study, I utilized both the selective and detailed approaches to assist me in unraveling emergent themes from the data. I first utilized the detailed approach by conducting a careful reading of each interview transcript in which I identified potential major themes and coded them in accordance with the procedures outlined in the following section. Upon completion of this preliminary analysis, I then utilized the selective approach and conducted an additional analysis of the narratives by color-coding potential minor themes or clusters of themes that supported the major themes and enhanced my understanding of the experiences of the participants.

Coding of the Data

For this next phase of data analysis, I continued the process of "phenomenological reduction" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148) by identifying the essence of the phenomenon under study and coding the data by using the key words of emergent themes and color-coding supporting cluster themes amongst the data, a process known as *convergence* (Patton, 2002). Miles and Huberman (1994) define codes as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 56). They "link different segments or instances in the data…together to create categories…having some common property or element" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 27). The name of a code should be a word serving as an all-encompassing generalization to the meaning of a particular chunk of text. Most importantly, perhaps, is for the researcher to understand the emergence of codes at different levels of data analysis. For instance, some codes emerge conspicuously from a surface glance of

data; others, particularly descriptive and inferential codes, follow from subsequent readings of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The field notes in my research journal and verbatim interview transcriptions constituted the reality of the phenomenon under study. Developing a coding scheme allowed me to identify categories by labeling emerging patterns in the data (Patton, 2002). Data was coded using the key words of emergent themes and supporting clusters of themes. As major, minor, and supporting cluster themes emerged from the interview narratives, key words for the major themes were noted in the margins while minor themes and clusters of data supporting the major themes were color-coded by the use of individual highlighters; a different color was assigned to each major theme (Patton, 2002). Finally, I recorded my initial thoughts in my research journal and prepared analytic memos based on the data and coding processes in order to synthesize my thoughts in preparation for the findings section of the final written report.

Role of the Researcher

When conducting research, one must determine whether to position oneself as an insider or outsider within the context being studied. Unluer (2012) delineated the crucial differences between both of these unique perspectives:

> It is crucial for social researchers to clarify their researchers' roles especially those utilizing qualitative methodology to make their research credible. The researchers that undertake qualitative studies take on a variety of member roles when they are in the research setting. These roles can range from complete membership of the group being studied (an insider) to complete stranger (an outsider) (Adler & Adler, 1994). While there are a variety of definitions for insider-researchers, generally insider-researchers are those who choose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group under study (Breen, 2007). (p. 1)

For the purposes of this study, I positioned myself as an insider-researcher. According to Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), positioning oneself as an insider-researcher presents three unique key advantages: (a) An increased familiarity of the cultural dynamics being studied, including a

greater understanding of institutional and hierarchical politics; (b) Avoiding any actions that may inadvertently alter the natural flow of social interaction; and (c) Establishing a sense of trust with study participants which may promote greater intimacy and, thus, a stronger inclination to more accurately decipher and interpret the truth of a phenomenon being studied. Essentially, these advantages arm insider-researchers with a unique skillset that outsider-researchers may otherwise take a long time to acquire (Smyth & Holian, 2008).

Despite these unique advantages, however, assuming the role of an insider-researcher also presents some unique challenges, particularly greater proclivity toward a loss of objectivity. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), "in qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument" (p. 112). Therefore, it is imperative not to negate the possibilities of human bias or error; a researcher's role and preconceived notions may color his or her interpretations of the data and findings resulting from a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Another dilemma may also arise as the researcher struggles to successfully balance both roles as insider and researcher (DeLyser, 2001; Unluer, 2012).

As a gay man and aspiring school administrator myself, I acknowledged my unique perspective as an insider and was confident that my background and experiences as an LGBT professional in the field of education would allow me to conduct a thorough and credible investigation into the lived personal and professional experiences of LG[BT] school administrators. As an insider, I brought to this study a unique sensitivity to the literature in the area and a self-awareness of my own identity that guided me in conducting my inquiries, interpreting the data, and preparing the final narrative. Smyth and Holian (2008) acknowledge that because of their unique positioning within the contexts of their studies, insider-researchers are privileged by often gaining access to very personal and sensitive information although they

must always remain respectful of the anonymity of their participants and their respective organizations.

As an insider, I was aware of threats to the personal and professional safety of my participants. As someone who spoke the same insider jargon as my participants, I sought to establish and foster an underlying sense of trust with each of my study participants in which they felt comfortable and safe enough to share personal information. Establishing this sense of trustworthiness also allowed me to more smoothly fill in any missing gaps within the data through the use of clarification questions and follow-up interviews when necessary (Unluer, 2012). In addition, during the data collection phase of the study, I carefully observed the nonverbal cues of each participant during our face-to-face interactions and recorded them in my research journal. I also nonchalantly observed, whenever permissible, evidence of school décor and interactions between students and colleagues to gain a better understand of the overall climate and tone of the participants' school buildings. For the security of the participants, however, the digitally recorded sessions were stored and labeled according to the respective pseudonyms chosen.

Validity and Transferability

Approximately twelve participants were invited to participate in the study. Patton (2002) argues, "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 245). The findings of this dissertation mirrored those of previous researchers (deLeon & Brunner, 2009; 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007, Tooms & Lugg, 2010) and apply to other LG[BT] educators or administrators experiencing the

same phenomena. Triangulation was also employed through the use of multiple sources of data including the collection of documents, structured standardized interviews, and direct observation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Summary of the Methodology

The dissertation was conducted using a qualitative method employing a phenomenological multi-case study design. Marshall and Rossman (2011) define phenomenology as "the study of lived experiences and the way we understand those experiences to develop a worldview" (p. 148). LGBT public school administrators were the targeted population for the study; therefore, purposeful sampling was employed for selecting the study participants. Some participants were recruited through the posting of an advertisement (Appendix B) at traditional LGBT venues and community centers. Additional participants were secured using the snowball (or chain) method of sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). As the research questions were explanatory in nature and ask "how" and "why" regarding the phenomenon, they lent themselves toward utilizing a multi-case study design (Yin, 2009).

The data were collected from three chief sources: 1) Documents, 2) Standardized structured interviews, and 3) Direct Observation. Upon attaining the necessary informed consent (Appendix C) from each participant, I proceeded to conduct a standardized structured interview utilizing the interview protocol (Appendix A) with each at a location of his or her choosing. Pseudonyms were selected for maintaining each participant's anonymity. Once the interviews were transcribed, member checks were conducted with each of the participants. Developing a manageable classification or coding system was then the first step of analysis. I proceeded to identify and code emergent themes using key words or phrases while color-coding subsequent cluster themes through the process of convergence (Patton, 2002).

For the purposes of this study, I assumed the role of an insider-researcher. Insider-researchers are more inclined to understand the cultural dynamics and politics of the institutions they are studying and are, thus, often more adept at earning the trust and confidence of their participants (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Unluer, 2012). My experiences as a gay male educator aspiring for a career in administration furnished me with a unique perspective as I collected and interpreted the data.

To increase the validity and transferability of my data, I triangulated by using multiple sources of evidence including documents, standardized interviews, and direct observation. Additionally, member checks were conducted with the study participants to further strengthen the validity and credibility of this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FINDINGS

> "Every gay person must come out. As difficult as it is, you must tell your immediate family. You must tell your relatives. You must tell your friends if indeed they are your friends. You must tell your neighbors. You must tell the people you work with. You must tell the people in the stores you shop in. Once they realize that we are indeed their children, that we are indeed everywhere, every myth, every lie, every innuendo will be destroyed once and for all. And once you do, you will feel so much better." – Harvey Milk (from Harvey Milk's "That's what America Is" speech, Gay Freedom Day, June 25, 1978; cited in Tooms, 2009)

I was able to solicit the participation of eight administrators: five gay men and three lesbians. None of the participants identified as bisexual or transgender. Six additional participants (five gay men and one lesbian) had initially agreed to participate but subsequently either failed to respond to my attempts to schedule an interview or could no longer devote the time necessary for multiple in depth interviews. One newly appointed openly gay male Superintendent of Schools had also agreed to participate but was too preoccupied establishing himself in his new position at the time of data collection. A recently retired transgender administrator who had undergone gender reassignment surgery to complete her transition from male to female while serving as a middle school principal was also invited to participate but ultimately declined. A brief phone correspondence revealed that she viewed her transition as a necessary but private medical matter and did not wish to relive the trauma and community backlash wrought upon her as a result.

Interviews with six of the participants took place in person while the remaining two participants were interviewed via phone and webcam using Skype. The participants encompassed a variety of ages; two were between the ages of 30-40, two between the ages of 40-50, and four were between the ages of 50-60. Seven of them identified as Caucasian, and one identified as Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, they stemmed from a wide variety of geographical

locations across the United States including the northeast, west coast, and the southwest. Table 1 illustrates the demographic information for each participant on the bases of name, age range, sex, race/ethnicity, most recent administrative position held, and degree of "outness."

Table 1. Demographic Information for the Participants

Participant Name	Age Range	Sex	Race/ Ethnicity	Most Recent Administrative Position	Degree of "Outness"
Alex	40 – 50	M	Caucasian	High School Principal	Out
Barbara	50 – 60	F	Caucasian	High School Principal	Out
Claire	50 – 60	F	Caucasian	Middle School Principal	Closeted
Colin	50 – 60	M	Caucasian	Elementary School Principal	Out
Edward	30 – 40	M	Caucasian	High School Principal	Closeted
Fernando	30 – 40	M	Hispanic/Latino	Content Area Supervisor	Closeted
Lorraine	50 – 60	F	Caucasian	Content Area Supervisor	Out
Paul	40 – 50	M	Caucasian	High School Assistant Principal	Out

For purposes of confidentiality, the participants and I agreed upon the following pseudonyms: Alex, Barbara, Claire, Colin, Edward, Fernando, Lorraine, and Paul. At the time this research was being conducted, Alex, Claire, and Edward were serving as building principals, Paul was serving as an Assistant Principal, and Fernando and Lorraine were serving as Content Area Supervisors. Participants Barbara and Colin were formerly building principals but were no

longer serving in those capacities—they had been removed from their posts once district administrators had learned of their sexual orientations. In addition, Lorraine had previously held the position of Athletic Director in another school district but was ultimately dismissed from that position on the basis of her sexual orientation. The experiences of Barbara, Colin, and Lorraine exemplify how education remains a hostile risky profession for LGBT individuals, particularly those in positions of leadership (Blount, 1996, 2003, 2005; Capper, 1999; Chauncey, 1994; deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; D'Emilio, 1983; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Koschoreck, 2003; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b; Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003; Sears, 1996; Tooms, 2007, 2009). Homophobic attitudes stemming from early twentieth-century society remain rampant forces in our nation's schools compelling LG[BT] administrators to voluntarily or involuntarily conceal their true identities while living in constant fear of potential reprisal from higher district-level administrators and their school communities (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007).

Based upon the data collected from the transcriptions of recorded structured interviews with the eight participants, I identified five prevalent themes: 1) Varying levels of fear in the participants' personal and professional lives; 2) An innate desire to help others; 3) An increased sensitivity to diversity and the diverse needs of students; 4) Varying degrees of personal integrity and resilience while holding positions of leadership in predominantly heterosexual environments; and 5) A mutual respect between administrators, staff members, and their students. Additional clusters of subthemes emerged from each of these larger overarching themes and will be discussed in greater detail under their respective headings.

Theme 1: Fear

The first of these themes, fear, manifested itself in varying degrees in each of the

participants' lives. The individual accounts of each participant indicated that fear played a role in their experiences as both adolescent students in school and as adults holding positions in educational leadership. Thus, two different types of fear essentially emerged: 1) Fear in the participant's personal life, and 2) Fear in his or her professional life. As the participants shared their accounts, it became evident that a cause-effect relationship was a fundamental component of the ensuing dichotomy. Fear in one's professional life was essentially the effect of prior fear in one's personal life.

Fear in One's Personal Life

Throughout the interview sessions, each of the study participants illuminated their coming out experiences, the coping mechanisms they had employed throughout their lives, and how they ultimately came to accept their sexual identities. The majority of the participating school administrators revealed that the societal attitudes toward homosexuals in their youth adversely affected their perceptions of self as adolescents and professional adults, a finding which corroborated previous research conducted with similar populations (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003). The pathways from coming out to personal acceptance often proved arduous and sometimes painful; the process often commenced with an inherent feeling of alienation from one's peers in his or her youth.

Content Area Supervisor Fernando reportedly first used and fully acknowledged the term "gay" as a sophomore in high school but remembered feeling that something just didn't feel right with him in about the fourth grade. "I knew at the time that somehow I was different from other guys my age, but I couldn't pinpoint how," he stated. "I used to sit in my room and think to myself 'I want to be this guy's best friend' or 'I want this boy to be my best friend.'" Fernando

eventually fell in love with a male student playing the lead role in his high school musical; the experience of falling in love ultimately galvanized his decision to come out. While pivotal in the sense that it allowed him to fully embrace his identity, the experience simultaneously proved to be one of the most painful of Fernando's adolescence as he broke down crying in school upon encountering rejection and unrequited feelings for the first time. "I just assumed that because he was gay and I was gay that we would be boyfriends," Fernando shared, "but little did I know that it did not work that way, and gay men have their own types of men that they are attracted to and not attracted to as well."

Although unrequited love was never a factor in Assistant Principal Paul's journey toward self-acceptance, he too recounted his own experiences with fear and isolation in his youth. "I guess this is a little bit cliché," he began, "but I would say I always felt that I was different from the other students or from my friends or from my peers or from my cousins." Growing up in a very small conservative town made the experience particularly difficult for Paul. Prior to coming out to his friends, family, and himself at approximately age 20 or 21, he described himself as an "asexual being" who dated neither women or men. Paul's religious upbringing, conservative family, and the surrounding culture augmented his difficulty toward self-acceptance and echoed the earlier findings of Denton (2009) and deLeon and Brunner (2009, 2013) who found that hostile environments were interrelated with the Cycles of Fear experienced by LG[BT] school leaders and, more specifically, the safety losses, self losses, or opportunity losses they endured.

Although Paul was extremely rational and invested a great deal of intellectual energy coping with his same-sex feelings, he still endured hardship upon initially coming out. His religious background provoked him to consult a pastor while his curiosity inspired him to

conduct research in the library and seek the advice of a gay and lesbian student association on his college campus to better comprehend his feelings. In retrospect, Paul regretted how difficult coming to terms with his sexual orientation was, particularly for his mother who allegedly suffered the most pain of all.

Fear continued factoring prominently in Paul's life as he struggled to accept his identity. Describing his community as "*very* conservative" and "very southern Baptist in its kind of way," he captured the essence of the setting as he explained how prohibition against alcohol had only ended there the year prior. Paul also came to understand what homophobia was through conversations in his family and the community; rumors and gossip targeting potential gays and lesbians circulated frequently, and his own mother even made hurtful homophobic remarks. "My mother would say homophobic things like 'All the gays should be put on an island, and they should all be killed,'" he explained.

Principal Alex had a similar experience with his own mother. He offered a unique distinction between realizing one's gayness as opposed to acknowledging it. Although he claimed he was somewhat aware of his gay feelings from five years of age, fear made him reluctant to act upon or label those feelings until coming out at the age of twenty. Aside from his mother, his coming out experience was overall pleasant as he established support networks through his friends and cousins. When asked about his current relationship with his mother, Alex stated, "Things are fine now, but it took her a long time for her to be okay with it."

Principal Claire also felt disconnected from peers in her youth. Unfortunately, as someone who traversed adolescence a decade earlier than Paul, going to the library to seek answers to her questions wasn't even an option. She explained,

> I think from the very beginning [in] my earliest memories I always had a gender confusion with what things I was drawn to. My sisters wanted Barbie, I wanted Ken doll.

> I wanted to wear cowboy hats and all that kind of stuff. But then in middle school, I realized I wasn't having the same type of urges that the other kids did, and at the time…Obviously there wasn't the Internet, but there wasn't much literature out there, and it certainly was not something you talked about.

Other LG[BT] administrators were compelled by fear in their youth to compartmentalize their lives and embrace duplicitous identities to conform to societal and familial expectations of dating (deLeon & Brunner, 2013). Claire proceeded through middle school and high school "*terrified*" of anybody suspecting her to be a lesbian. Her fear was so debilitating that she reportedly lived in denial and endured numerous failed attempts at potential relationships with some of her male classmates. It was not until the end of her undergraduate college career that she had her first true relationship with another female.

As in Alex and Paul's cases, Claire's fear was compounded by a somewhat hostile home life. She explained that she too had often heard derogatory comments from a parent while growing up; in her case, however, these comments came from her father instead of her mother. The fear of her parents' reactions prevented her from coming out up until the age of forty. It wasn't until her mother lay on her deathbed from leukemia at the age of sixty-five and given only a couple of days to live that Claire realized her mother had suspected her sexuality all along.

> She's there lying in her hospital bed having just gotten basically her death sentence, and she said, 'I need you to promise that you'll tell your brothers and sisters and dad.' And I was like, 'Tell them what?' And she said, 'You *know* what I'm talking about.' And I'm like, 'Mom, are you outing me on your deathbed?' And she's like, 'Yeah, you have to because I see how you are always at an arm's length from everyone, and you need to be a part of the family. You *are*, but there's always a distance. There's always a big grand canyon in between what you're willing to share with us.'

Although dumbfounded by her mother's candidness, Claire ultimately chose to honor her request later that day. To her surprise, other immediate family members had already long suspected her sexual orientation as well. Claire's puzzlement led her to question their longstanding silence regarding the matter, to which they revealed they were sparing her from

potential embarrassment and believed she would confide in them when she personally felt ready.

Another lesbian growing up in a similar timeframe, Principal Barbara, recounted a similar experience where she also resisted her same-sex feelings. Historically, marriage had long provided a sanctuary for gay male educators to assimilate into mainstream society and suppress their same-sex desires (Blount, 2003; Harbeck, 1997; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b). All female educators were expected to remain single as teachers and were, thus, unable to seek refuge in marriage until the post-World War II era (Blount, 2003; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b). Marital status has long been synonymous with an administrator's heterosexuality, with traditional marriage representing the single chief indicator of success (Evans, 1999; Jones-Redmond, 2007). Despite increased tolerance of homosexuality, however, marriage and children remain an ideal means for LGBT individuals to comply with accepted dominant societal expectations of family (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013). Barbara explained how her youth was compartmentalized by the cookie-cutter future she had long envisioned for herself. "I was going to match that perfect world of get out of college, get a job, get married, have kids, and live life the way that everybody else seemed to think that you were supposed to," she explained, "but there were always little nagging things in the back of my mind that just never made it feel that that was right." Like Claire, she lacked the skillset to address her issues at the time and, thus, lived a lifestyle shrouded in constant denial and avoidance. Upon graduating from college, Barbara unsuccessfully attempted to date men and never accepted herself as a lesbian until her first same-sex relationship at the age of thirty-one.

Unlike Claire however, Barbara never came out to her parents; she and her partner were only out to a small handful of gay and lesbian friends. "Well, we thought we were really good at hiding it," she explained, "and…I wasn't *ashamed* of the life that I was living, but the

consequences of being open about it were larger than any of us were ready to tackle at the time." Although she believed her parents had probably always speculated, it was not until that twelve-year relationship ended that she ever discussed her sexuality with family members, and only then with her brother and some other relatives.

Principal Edward also struggled greatly with his identity throughout his youth. Like the others, he too recalled knowing he was gay from a very young age. Edward claimed, "I think I knew from the second grade…because I had older relatives in my family who were gay, and so it was something that even as a youngster I would hear people talking about." Unfortunately, as previous research (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009) indicated, Edward's fear was also compounded by the hostile pejorative attitude his older brother projected toward their older gay cousin. "I remember in my home…maybe in my mid teens, 12, 13, my older brother who was seven years older than me, sort of talking about an older gay cousin who was my father's cousin about, 'Don't touch the silverware, he has AIDS, and you'll catch being a fag,' and things like that," he explained.

For Edward, coming out was a fully "conscious decision" that arose after he waged a long inner battle against himself on a daily basis. Similarly to Principals Claire and Barbara and the participants of previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007), Edward too tried to conform to a heterosexual lifestyle. "God, I tried to be with women in the worst way, and I tried to play it straight," he vented. Edward ultimately experienced the revelation that his feelings were not going to change when he finally became tired of depriving himself of a happy social life with people of his own kind.

I probed further for insight into how Edward "tried to play it straight" and yielded additional accounts depicting struggles ranging from succumbing to peer pressure to outwardly lying to further isolating himself from friends as a high school student. Edward's experiences in his youth reflected a tactical usage of the identity management strategies coined by Griffin (1992), particularly the "passing" and "covering" strategies. Furthermore, Edward continuously shielded his identity by immersing himself in work, an additional finding reinforcing the workaholic lifestyles embraced by LGBT educators in previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007). In all scenarios, overcompensation and the devotion of long hours to work not only allowed the participants to demonstrate their efficiency as leaders to their subordinates (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Tooms. 2007) but also discouraged any potentially incriminating inquiry into their private lives (Fraynd & Capper, 2003). "I tried to really throw myself into work and hope that folks wouldn't sort of notice I never have a girl around," Edward explained, "and then when my friends would go out to places, I used to have to dodge the question as to how come I wasn't hooking up with girls…"

Edward also found himself pressured to conform to gender identity roles and societal norms to meet the expectations of his parents, conflicts which had disparaging effects on his levels of anxiety as a young man embracing his newfound independence in college. The constant fear of breaking his parents' hearts drove him to the extreme of pursuing recreational athletics despite a lack of genuine interest at the time. As a young man, he joined a baseball team solely for the purpose of pacifying his parents. "I couldn't stand baseball and I hated sports," he explained, clearly frustrated, "and I remember my mother saying to me when she found out that I told the coach that I didn't want to play in [one] particular game, 'You better not

be gay. If you're gay, I'll kill you.' As a college student, he proceeded to change his routine and many of his friends to further pass as straight.

Like Paul, both religion and church played a role in Edward's upbringing and identity acceptance. The more Edward came to understand his feelings, the more he suppressed them and sought comfort in religion. Attending mass weekly at 8:00 A.M. every Sunday had become such a ritual that he even endured the bullying of a priest who adamantly demanded that he become a Eucharistic minister. Eventually, Edward grew so tired of masking his identity, feigning interest in the girls who his friends tried pairing him up with, and conforming to the expectations of others that he strategically researched and orchestrated a plan for coming out to his parents upon graduation from college. "I read Michelangelo Signorile,"[4] he explained, "I read his book on coming out, and it talked about some strategies because I really wanted to do this the right way." He was convinced that coming out to them at a proud moment would somehow soften the resulting pain. Edward elaborated,

> So the day after my graduation party, I sort of sat them down, I told them that I love them, and I told them also that I was gay. And my mother sort of jumped up and she said, "No you're not! You just think that!" My father, more of a thinker, is a little bit more like me. You could tell that he had been thinking this. He had all the questions that the book said that he *would* have. My mother's response was more emotional, denial, and then hurt. My father was more pragmatic, and my relationship with my father was always good, but somehow then it got even better because he really had the level head. He had all the questions that you could tell somebody who had been thinking this had, and my parents certainly smelled smoke.

Although Edward had never yet brought a partner home to meet his family, it was obvious to his parents that he never had a girlfriend. For example, he had difficulty securing a date for his high school senior prom. Fortunately, Edward's parents grew to accept him sooner

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[4] Michelangelo Signorile, an American journalist, author, and talk radio host, wrote a self-help book entitled *Outing Yourself: How to Come Out as Lesbian or Gay to Your Family, Friends, and Coworkers.*

than he had anticipated, and the rest of his family met his recent ex-partner when he joined them for holiday festivities. Unfortunately, however, he lost some friends who were admittedly uncomfortable with his sexual orientation.

Principal Colin also struggled with the coming out process. Like Fernando and Paul, he coped with underlying feelings of isolation that left him disconnected from the general population. Similarly to Claire, Colin exhibited early nonconforming gender tendencies to play with females instead of males. "I always wanted to play with the girls and not with the boys because I liked what they did," he explained, "and I didn't really have that many friends."

Colin's self consciousness led to continuous questioning of himself and his feelings. Although he acknowledged his tendency to stare at attractive men whenever he traveled, he consistently blocked out the possibility of being a gay man. "I thought, 'Why do you do that?' And I thought, 'What's wrong with you?' I kept thinking that there was something wrong with me," he claimed. Similarly to Alex, he also drew a unique distinction between his awareness of his same-sex feelings and his personal acknowledgment of them.

Despite the initial denial of his sexuality, Principal Colin retrospectively affirmed he knew he was gay his entire life. Thus, in his case, fear also factored prominently by adversely influencing his ability to come out earlier in life. Of all the participants, Colin came out the latest—at age fifty-five. Similarly to Edward and Paul, and further reinforcing the findings of deLeon and Brunner (2013), he was brought up in a staunchly religious household, a fact that he now attributes his coming out so late in life to. Unlike the previous participants, however, Colin was the victim of bullying from a young age—even at the hands of his older brother—for his conspicuous flamboyance. He explained,

> *Everyone* used to call me 'faggot' because I'm a kind of a flamboyant person in the way I talk with my hands and stuff. And I used to get really…angry inside because I'd think,

> 'I'm not gay! Why does everybody call me a faggot?' And even my brother who's eighteen months older than me. He would say, 'Colin you're such a faggot!' And so my whole young part of my life I kept telling myself, 'I wish people would quit calling me gay. I wish I…just had a girlfriend and I was married so I didn't have to have people call me a faggot.'

Colin inadvertently succumbed to a self-fulfilling prophecy; the ensuing torment from his classmates and brother provoked him to ultimately seek refuge in marriage living as a heterosexual man, a notion one of deLeon and Brunner's (2013) participants termed a "vanilla life" (p. 177), a dishonest life devoid of emotion. Jones-Redmond (2007) yielded similar findings, with society maintaining that a school administrator's life should evolve around a "picture-book image" (p. 73) incorporating children, a white picket fence, involvement at church, and attendance at sports games. Colin married his ex-wife with whom he fathered an adopted son in 1990. Approximately six or seven years into his marriage, however, Colin was suddenly plagued by feelings of loneliness; he knew he was unhappy but couldn't understand why. "It wasn't until I'd been married for 17 years," he shared, "[that] I thought, 'You know what? You *are* gay. Yeah, you're gay, and now what?'"

Shortly after this realization, Colin began talking to men online. A lesbian friend even took him on a vacation to Palm Springs, California, where he attended his first gay bar and freely explored himself, his feelings, and the lifestyle for the first time. This newfound comfort did not last long, however, as Colin eventually confronted the reality of coming out while facing an impending divorce.

The prospect of coming out to his eighty-eight year old father, brother who had bullied him his entire life, and friends who always regarded him and his ex-wife as the perfect couple proved daunting for the then fifty-five year old Colin. Nevertheless, the reactions from his friends and relatives were surprisingly better than he had anticipated. Much like Principals

Claire and Edward learned through their experiences, Colin's friends and family members had already long suspected he was gay. Fortunately for Colin, coming out did not result in a severance of friendships as it did for Edward; in fact, his friendships—even his relationship with his brother who had initially bullied him—were instead strengthened, and Colin remains close to his brother even today.

Claire also battled extreme fear over coming out despite believing, like Colin, that others had already made assumptions about her sexual identity. Claire, however, wasn't as brave as Colin or Edward in testing the loyalty of her heterosexual friends. "I didn't have a single *straight* friend that knew," she explained. "I always assumed *they knew* but were too polite to say, as is the case, I think, with the overwhelming majority of students and teachers through my career. It's like *they knew*, but it's not any of your business." The vast majority of LGBT educators in previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) shared similar sentiments where, despite lacking evidence of any potential recourse from openness about their sexual identity, they diligently separated their personal and professional personas. Even in cases without existing sanctions or homophobic anti-disclosure policies, LG[BT] administrators kept their sexual identities deeply guarded by limiting their attendance at personal social gatherings (Tooms, 2007) and even opting to live 60-70 miles away from their schools (Jones-Redmond, 2007).

Not all of the participants shared the same fears, however. Content Area Supervisor Lorraine admittedly accepted her sexuality at approximately age twelve. Although Lorraine, like Claire, acknowledged that same-sex attraction wasn't a frequent topic of conversation, her coming out experience proved to be a simple and positive one. If anyone inquired about her

sexuality, Lorraine always answered honestly. "For me, it was very simple," she stated, "and then like in the early 90s, the world changed."

Discrepancies between the participants' levels of openness both professionally and personally were also noted. Ironically, some of the participants who were out professionally remained otherwise reserved about their sexual identities in their personal lives and interactions with others. Paul described a brief encounter with an acquaintance at his gym that illustrated the extent to which fear still permeated his personal life as an openly gay high school assistant principal.

> The other day I was talking to this guy at the gym who I presume is straight. He's from Columbia…and I could almost imagine the conversation going in this direction like, 'Oh those Columbian women are really hot.' I can't remember what we were talking about, but…it would be one of those classic moments where I'd say [to myself] well [should I] talk about the guys I was chasing? Or…it would be one of those classic moments where (pause), like which way do you go?

Edward experienced a similarly awkward situation upon crossing paths with a former partner at a gym with former students in the vicinity. He vividly recalled using his astute thinking skills to explain a sudden unexpected public display of affection.

> Recently, there was actually an incident where some of my alumni workout in my gym, and an ex-boyfriend came running over to me and kissed me on the cheek and hugged me. And a number of my former students were all sort of (pause) *looking*. And I said, 'It's all right guys. It's just my cousin. I haven't seen him in a while.'"

Edward's search for a life partner also compromised his discretion. The risk of discovery on online dating sites always posed a threat to his job security. He described a time when a former student came to visit him shortly after locating his profile on the dating website match.com.

> On a lot of sites, I don't have my face pictures accessible. And it just so happened that I was on match.com and, over the summer, one of our alums came [to visit me] and said, 'You *know*, I saw your picture on match.com.' And I said to him, '[Sam], (pause) I *really* appreciate your discretion.' He was somebody who understood.

Edward was cognizant of his good fortune in this particular scenario; another openly gay student could have easily "outed" him with no consideration for the potential ramifications or their impacts on his career. As time went on, his fear eventually gave way to sadness as he reflected upon the uncertain future of his romantic life. As principal of a school for international studies, he frequently traveled overseas with his students; since his tenure began, he had already traveled to Italy and visited Florence, Venice, the papal state, and Rome. "I sometimes wonder if I get partnered again what that will mean to that person," Edward reflected. "If I had a *husband*, what would I do with him if he wanted to come?" Edward's fears mirrored Tooms's (2007) findings; the participants in her study downplayed their sexual identities at school functions. He continued:

> If there was a social event at school, prom, or…fundraising dinner, or an event at the baseball stadium for fundraising that I go to, if I was partnered, I'm mindful that as time goes on, somebody might get sick and tired of staying home and say, 'I don't want to stay home. Why are you ashamed of me?' I could imagine that sort of thing happening.

Edward also acknowledged the possibility that he might tire of hiding and living in constant fear of his sexuality. He remorsefully expressed his yearnings to someday have a wedding, commitment ceremony, or honeymoon as he pondered the risks they would pose to his career. Edward's experiences affirmed the findings of earlier researchers whose participants lowered their personal and professional aspirations (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Fraynd & Capper, 2003) and abandoned hopes of ever entering into lasting loving relationships for fear of public incrimination (Jones-Redmond, 2007).

School administrators are expected to comply with a broad spectrum of societal expectations. The LG[BT] administrators in Jones-Redmond's (2007) study all agreed that school administrators must be knowledgeable, provide safe environments, serve as student and parent advocates, mold students into productive citizens, and establish solid relationships.

However, societal and institutional expectations are not always congruent with individual administrator's personal needs (Jones-Redmond, 2007), particularly if the administrator identifies as LG[BT], as the following account demonstrates.

Edward always took great pride in his students until one of them was suddenly convicted for bashing a patron at a local gay bar in a neighboring city. Even more shocking was that Edward was out that same night at a different bar only a few blocks away. He expressed his dismay over the attack:

> I had just gotten done playing football, and I went to celebrate for a gay flag league event…And I remember thinking that this student who I deal with every day, who I've had run ins with, who I've suspended, who I've had arrested at this school for other infractions, that this particular student beat up and robbed a man very much like *me* who was the same age, in the same area, in the *same* night that I was there. And what the *hell* would I have done if that was *me*—if I was in the bathroom when he came in to (pause) and instead of tapping on somebody who was a stranger, he tapped on someone who was his principal? What the hell would have happened *then*?

Edward's somber tone reflected the profound impact the experience had on his psyche. Following his conscience while simultaneously honoring the delicate politics of his profession was no easy task, and Edward was expected to not only sympathize with the student's family but also to advocate for the student and defend his character to court officials. "I remember thinking that that was not an easy day for me," he vented. He elaborated on the experience:

> I had to…make these reports up the chain of command to the chancellery, to the superintendent, to the building community about one of my students committing an atrocious act of hate, and then the parent coming in and looking for sympathy from me, saying that I would support the kid in their education and hope that he'd graduate from high school and do everything that I could, and also that I would report good things that he was doing in school to the courts when in my heart of hearts, I hated the student before that because he was a mean person. He was mean to other kids, he was cruel, he wasn't nice to the staff, and frankly that he attacked somebody who could have been me, who was a man very much like me, similarly situated and all the rest of it.

The ensuing negative publicity from the student's hate crime also transcended the boundaries of Edward's psyche. A resounding sense of failure soon permeated the entire school

building and rippled into the hearts of Edward's staff members compelling him to take further action. "I have to tell you that on *so* many levels it was disastrous to me," he claimed, "and it also let me know that I had to sort of pep talk my staff and say, 'This is not your fault. You did not do this. You did *not*. He learned *better* from you. *Many* lessons. He just chose to be a horrible person and act on hate.'" This particular finding was unique to this study as no prior studies of LG[BT] administrators (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007) had ever incorporated the experiences of an administrator facing the pressure to cast aside his personal convictions—and personal sense of safety—to advocate for a homophobic student or staff member. The superintendent, school board, and parents of this particular student fully expected Edward to advocate for him as the principal of his school not only to fulfill the expectations of a school leader but also as a means of damage control for any ensuing negative publicity.

A student from Assistant Principal Paul's school was also accused of sodomizing and bashing a neighborhood gay man. Fortunately, however, the accusations in his case were found to be false. According to Paul, police had just assumed the teenager was involved because he was known to associate with a troublesome group of students. The student's alibi was later upheld in court as evidence proved he was not present at the time of the crime.

Fear figured prominently in each of the participating administrators' personal lives as they struggled to accept their sexual identities and come out to their families and friends. Principal Alex offered a noteworthy distinction between realizing one's homosexuality as opposed to openly acknowledging it. Principal Colin, Principal Edward, and Assistant Principal Paul struggled while coming out to their families as a result of their staunchly religious

upbringings while Principals Barbara, Claire, and Colin endured senses of alienation in their early youth attributed to their gender nonconforming behaviors. Fears of disownment and rejection by family members and friends respectively also permeated the participants' personal lives; Principal Colin in particular spent a significant portion of his life married to a woman before fully accepting his sexual identity.

For some participants like Content Area Supervisor Fernando, fear was the result of experiencing rejection and unrequited feelings for the first time while, for others, it was often compounded by family members' usage of homophobic language or hate speech. Some of the participants' relatives had already been suspicious about their sexuality but respected their discretion. Principal Alex, Principal Edward, and Assistant Principal Paul consulted available literature and the guidance of a preacher to help them cope with their confusion and better understand the nature of their romantic feelings.

In some instances, fear even trickled into the mundane interactions of the participants' daily lives. Assistant Principal Paul recalled feeling obligated to censor his sexuality while engaged in conversation with a man at the gym while Principal Edward recalled the discomfort he experienced over a former student who visited him after stumbling upon his profile on an online dating website. Edward also recounted the awkwardness of having parents make assumptions about his sexual identity through suggestive comments regarding his alleged spouse and family.

In extreme cases, participants even found their personal safety compromised. Principal Edward revealed how a former student was arrested and convicted for a hate crime after gay-bashing a patron at a local bar; ironically, Edward revealed he was out that same night in the same vicinity with friends.

Fear in One's Professional Life

Fear in one's professional life manifested itself as another prominent subtheme amongst the experiences of the participants in the study. Job security and career mobility were prime concerns for several of the closeted participants in particular. Fernando confronted his own variation of fear shortly after securing a supervisory position in his school district. At the conclusion of the hiring process, he realized he had inadvertently "outed" himself by completing the requisite paperwork to negotiate and secure health benefits for his civil union partner (and now husband) of thirteen years. Although he referred to the matter as a "concern" rather than a fear (perhaps for matters of personal integrity), I detected levels of apprehension in his voice and body language that indicated discomfort and, thus, for purposes of this research, classified his "concern" as a fear. Discussing the matter in regards to future career prospects, Fernando claimed:

> The first concern—I will *not* use the word fear—is having to negotiate my benefits for myself and my partner. It may catch [human resources] off guard when they ask, "Okay, what is her name?" Dealing with that initial shock when I say, "No, *his* name is [Andrew]" or having to sit tight during that initial shock and wondering in my head whether or not they regret the decision to hire me…My concern is how I will respond to a district that realizes the fact that they hired a gay man which they hadn't realized in the interviewing phase…because my partner's benefits are more important than the decision of whether or not to admit my sexuality.

The fear of coming out also posed numerous challenges for administrators who diligently strived to maintain healthy professional distances from their colleagues in the workplace. At times, their subordinates or superiors attempted to transcend professional boundaries by stepping into the comfort zones of their personal lives. Edward recalled the immense stress he endured while working under a female principal who sought to establish intimate relationships with her administrative colleagues. He elaborated:

> She wanted to be able to call me on a Saturday night and just *talk*, and she wanted to go to the mall and go shopping for dresses. She wanted to, on a day that we had to go to the prom, be able to come to my house and freshen up and then go to the prom. Or on the night that we had to go to graduation she would come to my house…I mean every time that the woman came over, I had to take my "Out" magazines out of the magazine rack of the bathroom and take down pictures in my house, things of that nature.

Edward also experienced discomfort over the invasive tendencies of his teachers. An avid athlete and sports aficionado, he was a member of the gay flag football league in a nearby urban locale and usually returned to work on Monday mornings visibly injured from practices the prior weekend. Noticing his jammed fingers, pulled muscles, and other bruises, teachers naturally questioned what had happened to him. "I always tell people, yes, I've been playing football all weekend, but I *never* tell them that I've been playing *gay flag* football all weekend," he affirmed.

Traveling with students presented additional challenges. While attending the "We the People" competition with a team of students he had trained, Edward shared a hotel room with his boss. He vividly recalled the pressures of maintaining a safe distance and changing pronouns while speaking to his partner on the telephone in his boss's presence to avoid any suspicion of being gay.

In some instances, even other gay men and lesbians themselves were perceived as threats to the closeted members of their own community (Blount, 2003, 2005; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Edward spoke candidly about his fear of being labeled as homosexual for associating with LGBT staff members, particularly those who were out, a fear he experienced to the highest degree in the earliest days of his leadership. "It took me like three years before I even conferred with them," he stated. "Sometimes you can tell who is gay or lesbian by who hangs out with each other, and I remember I used to keep a very careful distance from them initially because I didn't want anybody to suspect."

The challenges of maintaining a private personal life in a public profession also permeated his interactions with parents. Edward described the onslaught of invasive questioning he endured as a newly appointed principal:

> I'll never forget when I first came here, I went to my first PTA meeting…I met the school committee on the first evening, and people came running up to me and asked me *very* personal questions. 'Where on _____ do you live? What parish? Where did you have your kids baptized? Where's your wife from? What neighborhood on _____?' And they asked me *all* these questions that I really wasn't comfortable answering.

Knowing what appropriate image to convey and disciplinary approach to exert over any given culture are also fundamental ingredients for success. In Edward's experience, his success or failure was dependent on the image he projected to his students and the community. Essentially, he advocated that a leader's standards, expectations, and philosophy of discipline must be compatible with the nuances of whatever population he or she is serving. For this reason, while formerly working as Assistant Principal of Safety and Security in an urban high school plagued by gangs, violence, and drugs, Edward took great caution in masking his identity to ensure that he conveyed an image of assertive confidence and masculinity. "Being out as an open homosexual in an environment like that is just *not* the type of thing that's conducive," he affirmed. "They need to see someone who's *tough*, who's *fearful*, and peoples' personas and stereotypes about gay men, you know, Jack from Will and Grace is not fearsome and aggressive *at all*."

Edward disavowed his sexuality in yet another incident involving a gay male student who approached him regarding rumors that he could not bring a male date to the prom. Although he championed a vision grounded in inclusiveness, Edward chose not to make a spectacle of the matter. Instead, he merely informed the student that the rumors circulating were false and that

imposing such a policy would be akin to restricting dates on the bases of race or disability. "But I *didn't* say gay rights for all!" he attested.

As a former science teacher, Paul recalled moments when he downplayed his sexuality for the sake of better teaching, particularly in lessons involving sex education. He described one lesson that vividly stood out in his mind in which his students had placed questions inside a little box; he then pulled them out individually and answered them in the format of a TV show:

> There were all these questions about gayness, and why are people gay and what does it mean for people to be gay, and how do they have sex if they're gay. And…when I would answer those questions, the kids would always have follow-up questions, and so I'd say, 'Well, I think for most gay men…' And so those were like really clear moments for me where I didn't say 'me' or 'we' or 'I,' and I wouldn't answer questions about my own sex life. But I wouldn't say 'I.'

As an openly gay assistant principal, Paul retrospectively regretted his choice to downplay his sexuality and answer questions in the third person, realizing the negative message, lack of self confidence, and evidence of shame he had inadvertently communicated to his LGBT students.

As a former sex and health education teacher herself, Principal Barbara echoed Paul's concerns. At the time she was teaching, one could still be legally fired for being gay or lesbian. Barbara was fortunate to have been given a great deal of liberty in choosing the sex education units she was allowed to teach and the amount of depth she could delve into with topics evolving around social issues, but she always kept in the back of her mind the need to be really careful because if the wrong person ever heard her at the wrong time, her career would have been in jeopardy. For that reason, very few people in her school were aware of her sexual orientation.

The decision to come out is always a "tough call," according to Paul, as people naturally question the necessity of telling one's students. Responding honestly to a student's inquiry about sexual orientation is one matter, but making a point to sit students down and come out to them

directly is another. Fear also influenced the LG[BT] administrators' discretion in choosing those they came out to; for example, Paul came out to students and teachers but not to cafeteria or custodial staff members. His underlying rationale was attributed to an inherent resilience that stemmed from his experiences as a young closeted gay man who was conditioned for years to believe that being gay was inherently wrong. In retrospect, Paul acknowledged that gay men and lesbians have more opportunities to come out than they actually realize. "I think as a gay person, it's so easy to get accustomed to changing the pronoun or…avoiding the pronoun altogether," he explained. "It's so easy to *circumvent* because…it's what I spent a lifetime doing."

At the time of her interview, Principal Claire was nearing her retirement. Although her imminent departure proved bittersweet to discuss, she simultaneously viewed it as a blessing. As she discussed her coming out experience, Claire emphasized the "debilitating" dichotomy of identifying as a lesbian educator. Shortly after graduating from college, she developed a small group of friends; they were always very careful about where they went as she lived in constant fear of potentially running into a student or parent. Claire chose a very solitary lifestyle because she did not want to endure the constant intense public scrutiny.

As she progressed through her career in an age of rapidly advancing technology after coming out at the age of forty, Claire eventually discovered that navigating her personal and professional identities entailed sacrificing a large portion of her social life. In Claire's case, the fear of being filmed by a student with a cell phone was a motivating factor for her early retirement. "God forbid you should go out to a bar with people of your own kind who want to dance with each other," she explained. "And yet if somebody has a video camera, I will be on YouTube! This is a new world. I didn't have to worry about that ten years ago."

Claire's fears had become so pronounced that she was driven to the point of contemplating a different career path. She vehemently took issue with individuals who exploited homosexuality by making it a point of ridicule; her anger manifested itself as self-professed internalized homophobia. During our discussion, I also noticed an underpinning tone of regret that illuminated a yearning to be authentic despite her private demeanor and fear of job loss. Looking back, while she acknowledged that taking the leap to come out would have been beneficial to herself and her students, two factors influenced her to remain closeted: 1) The fear of a public outcry that would ultimately bring shame upon her parents, and 2) Working for a homophobic Superintendent of Schools and Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

The aforementioned belief statements were cause to ask for elaboration. Further probing unveiled that Claire had previously served as a high school principal and attempted to launch a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) on the campus. Her attempts were met with harsh resistance from the central office administrators, and she was ultimately transferred to another post. Although this particular incident will be discussed in greater detail with another emerging theme, Claire emphasized that administrators lacked the same level of protections enjoyed by teachers. Although she acknowledged the existence of anti-discrimination laws, she more importantly noted how they could easily be circumvented. "You can't sit there and say, 'Oh, I'm protected by the law,'" she explained. "The law is the law, but once somebody wants to get you, they won't get you for *that*, they'll get you for something else."

Claire's body language conveyed the resentment she harbored over her impending transfer and the lackluster support of her union. If she had been serving in the capacity of a classroom teacher while her transfer was being bantered about, her union would have proactively encouraged her to file a lawsuit against the district for alleged discrimination; she probably

would have won. The administrators' union, however, was more passive in its approach, almost indifferent to her plea. "It's subliminal," she explained. Instead of resisting her transfer, her union's attorneys instead opted to bargain with her district leaders. Claire reflected further on the outcome of her transfer and her prejudiced district leaders:

> The bottom line was there's a lot of people who feel like if you as the principal are *gay* and there's a kid in class and they see a good gay role model, 'Oh, maybe that'll influence it' because the bottom line is there's a lot of people who still think it's contagious. That it's *influenced*. Like 'Oh, he wasn't gay until he was in *your* class.' That you *converted* them. And that it's a *choice*.

Principal Barbara found her professional life entangled in an ever-weaving web of lies and deception. Identity management strategies (Griffin 1992, Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) became a routine aspect of her daily work life as she consciously monitored her behavior around colleagues.

> It was always being careful about pronouns when you talked about with other teachers, 'What did you do for the weekend?' It was always a very careful selection of pronouns of whom you were with, and what you did, and *constantly* altering the truth and then the pressure of trying to remember what the altered truths were that you told.

Aside from withholding the more intimate details of her personal life, Barbara also refrained from actively partaking in political activism supporting the LGBT community. "It was always a low lying level of discomfort because…*I* couldn't allow *myself* to be authentic," she explained, "and there was a piece of that that was extremely difficult, and I paid prices for that over the years." The fear of negatively publicity overshadowed her yearning to advocate for the rights of herself and other LGBT citizens. "My greatest fear was being in the front page of the newspaper," she explained, "and…I always *wanted* to do those things, [but] it would be my luck I'd be the one that was in the photograph that got taken, and so yeah, you *did* mask, you *were* careful."

Not all participants succumbed to self-induced pressures to curtail their behavior. Although she never experienced any drawbacks for being out in her current district, Lorraine discovered in her previous district that anyone could be the target of slander outside of their immediate presence. "I'm *sure* there are people out there who throw stones," she posited, "but people are cowards, and they don't throw stones *at* you." For the previous three years, Lorraine served as Athletic Director in another school district where she had been victimized for her lesbian relationship with the high school principal. The district was in administrative turmoil over negotiations with the teachers' union; a new superintendent had been appointed who began firing each administrator one by one, including Lorraine. "She didn't give me any reason or anything, and so I filed a lawsuit," Lorraine explained, "but I *definitely* believe that…the *main* thing that they threw stones at was our relationship, but it was because that was *easy*. Lorraine maintained that if negotiations had never reached the point of such extreme hostility, she would have remained employed in that district. According to her, "It was just something they could use."

Fears of job loss and career mobility galvanized the closeted administrators to remain closeted. Content Area Supervisor Fernando described the apprehension he felt while completing paperwork to secure health benefits for his civil union partner upon his appointment to his administrative position while Principal Edward recounted the dilemma of working under a female principal who fostered very close relationships with her administrative colleagues. She would often request if she and Edward could pass the time at his residence on days where evening school functions mandated administrators to be present, essentially forcing Edward to modify his décor and hide personal belongings such as LGBT-themed magazines that might otherwise have inadvertently led to his self-incrimination over his sexual identity.

Additionally, while he remained conscientious about the inclusiveness of LGBT students in school, Edward defended their rights using general terminology in order to mask any underlying empathy or bias that might inadvertently influence his decision-making. He also spoke of the pervasive intimidation he suffered during numerous onslaughts of invasive questioning at the hands of parents shortly after his appointment as principal. Edward also addressed the necessity of conveying an exterior heterosexual persona to effectively assert his authority as a disciplinarian while formerly working as an assistant principal with a very troubled urban population of students; projecting an exterior image of masculinity, ruggedness, and toughness was essential for successfully reaching such a challenging demographic.

For some of the participants, the challenges of navigating both personal and professional identities proved arduous. Assistant Principal Paul and Principal Barbara revealed challenges they endured earlier in their careers as teachers of sex education facing questions from students regarding LGBT-related topics; Paul and Barbara were spontaneously forced to utilize individual discretion while formulating their responses to the students. Principals Barbara and Claire both faced fears of self-incrimination because of their innately private nature; Claire spoke of sacrificing a significant portion of her social life out of fear of encountering students who could potentially utilize cell phone technology to videotape her while out with friends and, thus, “out” her. She also revealed how she was essentially forced to transfer to another school building after fighting to launch a GSA on her school campus on behalf of LGBT students. Finally, Principal Barbara recalled consistently altering truths and changing pronouns while engaged in conversations with staff members and colleagues. She also expressed feelings of demoralization over the necessity of downplaying her desires to be a more visible advocate for the LGBT community.

Theme 2: A Desire to Help Others

A strong desire to help others also emerged from the accounts of the participants. In the vast majority of cases, their yearnings to teach led them down career paths in education. Alex explained that his career in education essentially "just happened" because he always loved helping people understand things that they never understood before. Initially he had contemplated becoming a college professor, but he became disenchanted with the idea during his later years in university. He then worked for approximately two years running education programs at a museum for the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Realizing that he enjoyed teaching, he decided to travel abroad for the experience of teaching overseas and ultimately pursued a Master's degree in education.

Both Claire and Lorraine discovered early on that they were athletically inclined and enjoyed teaching others how to play sports so it naturally followed that they pursued careers in physical education. Lorraine's father was also well known in the community as president of her school board. Her athleticism and father's passion for education collectively inspired her to share her love for sports with others through teaching. "I went into sports medicine and Phys-Ed because I wanted to be in athletics, but I also wanted to be in some type of medical field," she explained.

Barbara's love for teaching was implanted by her great aunt who taught for 50 years in a one-room schoolhouse and introduced her to reading, learning, and exploring. From that moment on, Barbara's passion for education blossomed and ultimately evolved into her lifelong vocation. "I was real involved in the local swimming pool and taught swimming lessons and just…I guess *intuitively* knew that I had a gift for teaching," she explained. "And so it was just kind of a natural call for me to go into health and Phys-Ed."

Education was actually a second career choice for Colin inspired by his love of people. After working for years in the hospitality industry and hotel management sector, Colin realized at the age of twenty-eight that he would be happier in a profession involving a service to others and decided to change careers. His innate desire to help others galvanized him to seek employment in an extremely impoverished school district with notoriously challenging high needs students and parents. "I loved working with that clientele," Colin explained, "but as an administrator I worked there for six years in this one building that had gang member wannabe kids in it, and gang member parents, and a lot of alcoholics and drug abuse." Although the work was initially rewarding, it subsequently became so draining midway through his career that Colin eventually sought employment elsewhere. "I loved what I was doing," he elaborated, "but it burned me out because I was constantly looking for help for kids for clothing, for food, for parents, for what they needed." He later accepted a position as an elementary school principal in a more affluent school district—a decision he later rendered as the biggest mistake he had ever made.

Despite the negative ramifications that switching school districts imposed on Colin's career, he remained ever passionate about education and his commitment to helping students. The unpredictable nature of the work and opportunities to help young people grow while coping with life's challenges were the most rewarding aspects of his days. "Every day in a school is different," he explained, "and you can never plan out what it's going to be like because you've got 600 little faces and 600 little kids, and they come to school with various things going on in their lives the night before or that morning."

Barbara's school was also extremely diverse. The demographics of the student population indicated that approximately 22% of them were enrolled in special-education courses,

54-55% were given free or reduced price lunches, and 10% were enrolled in the ELL program. In addition, at the time of Barbara's appointment, the school was stigmatized by its negative reputation, and the town was suffering from white flight. The open enrollment system provided parents the liberty of choosing to enroll their children in any of the five area high schools providing there was room. As the new principal, Barbara was entrusted with the tasks of changing the community's perception of the school and increasing student enrollment.

Working in a diverse environment was an entirely new experience for Barbara; she had previously been accustomed to working with homogenous student populations in predominantly Caucasian communities. Barbara embraced the change wholeheartedly, and the experience proved so rewarding that she regretted not having such opportunities earlier in her career. "It was absolutely amazing how accepting students were of diversity, and race, religion, sexuality," she explained. "It had an extremely low discipline rate…and we had kids transfer into our school because they had heard they would be accepted, and it really held true. And it was a *magical* four years."

Having grown up in a small conservative town in the rural Southern United States, Paul joined the Peace Corps shortly after completing his studies at university. As an undergraduate, he yearned for a profession where he could enact positive change in society. After initially contemplating careers in social work or law, Paul concluded that education provided the most ideal means for promoting social justice and moving toward social equity in society.

Memories of an inspiring high school teacher compelled Fernando to enter education "with an idea of secular salvation." An admittedly horrible student who had previously never read a book in his life, Fernando always doubted his ability to succeed until he finally encountered one female teacher whose patience and persistence not only saved his life but also

instilled within him a zeal to help similarly struggling youngsters. "It was the chance to actually take kids and mold them," he fondly recalled, "and hopefully be able to do to others what I was fortunate to have done unto me."

The aforementioned findings solidified Kissen's (1996) earlier research, previously discussed in the literature review, which suggested that LGBT educators entered the profession for the same reasons as their heterosexual counterparts. It was also worth noting that three of the four male participants were currently serving in schools comprised of immigrant student populations. Edward and Alex were both principals in international high schools while Paul was the assistant principal of an international high school. For these administrators, working with diverse populations of students was directly attributed to their own stigmatized identities as members of a sexual minority group themselves.

Alex and Paul recalled similar experiences teaching overseas. Upon joining the Peace Corps, Paul's preliminary exposure to working in education came when he spent two years teaching science in the South Pacific in Tonga. From there, he relocated to Spain where he taught for an additional two years prior to returning to America to attend university. Initially, he contemplated returning overseas to continue teaching, but he ultimately decided to settle in his current location. Originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Alex spent two years teaching English as a foreign language in Spain before settling in his current location in 1998. After teaching for four years, he was then promoted to assistant principal, a post he served in for two years before starting his own school in 2005. Edward entered education "quite accidentally" after an unpleasant experience in law school. Although he initially viewed teaching as a potential backup plan, it ultimately evolved into his career.

The desire to teach and help others guided each of the participants toward careers in education. Principal Alex had initially contemplated becoming an academic due to his love of learning and reputation as a conscientious student. Upon disenfranchisement with the politics of higher education, he then sought a career in the public education sector. Principal Claire and Content Area Supervisor Lorraine grew up displaying natural flairs for athletics. The enjoyment Claire reaped from teaching others how to play sports ultimately led her to career in physical education. Both Content Area Supervisor Lorraine's and Principal Barbara's passions for education were instilled by family members. As an active school board member for years, Lorraine's father was always a strong advocate of education; Principal Barbara recalled fond memories of a great aunt who had taught for years in a one-room schoolhouse and inspired within her a love for learning at a young age.

Principals Colin and Edward began their careers in education later than their counterparts. Colin had always enjoyed working with people and, thus, initially begun his employment in the hotel industry while Edward initially sought a career in law; in the end, education evolved into a truly passionate vocation for both men. Because of their natural inclinations toward helping people, both Principals Barbara and Colin particularly relished the opportunities to work with impoverished students in diverse school districts; Barbara actually regretted not beginning her career sooner in such an environment. Assistant Principal Paul had previously volunteered as a member of the Peace Corps and sought education as a means of helping others while promoting social justice. Content Area Supervisor Fernando's passion for learning was ingrained by inspirational teachers he was fortunate enough to encounter as a student.

Theme 3: Increased Sensitivity to Diversity

Another theme emerging from the data came in the form of an increased sensitivity to diversity combined with a greater conscientiousness of the diverse needs of students. No variations in levels of this perceived sensitivity were detected in comparing the accounts of those participants who opted to be open about their sexuality as opposed to those who remained closeted. From this major theme, three clusters of additional subthemes emerged: 1) The experiences of participants as based on gender conforming and gender nonconforming behaviors during their adolescence or youth, 2) Greater senses of compassion with the ability to empathize with gender non-conforming students, and 3) The implementation of initiatives to combat bullying within school buildings. All three of these subthemes appeared to be the culmination of experiences with loneliness or victimization from bullying during the participants' adolescent years.

Gender Conforming vs. Gender Nonconforming Behavior in Youth

As previously stated, several of the participants reportedly either felt different or were different somehow from their peers in their youth or adolescence; these differences frequently manifested themselves in the form of gender nonconforming behavior and ultimately led to senses of fear and alienation from one's peers. Occasionally, the participants' sexuality also led to victimization from bullying. While Principal Claire didn't "ever remember getting *called* things," she did recall in her youth "being very tomboyish…[and] feeling very much out of the norm and excluded," although she confessed, "a lot of it might have been my own paranoia."

Principal Barbara also described herself as "always a bit of a tomboy." Unlike many other young women her age at the time, Barbara demonstrated an interest in physical activity in

her early youth. "I grew up in a time when there were not a lot of sports opportunities for girls," she explained, "but we played kickball in the empty lot that was down the street from me."

Like Claire and Barbara, Lorraine also grew up with a flair for athletics in the middle to late seventies, a decade when terms like "homosexual," "lesbian," or "dyke" were essentially nonexistent; LGBT-related topics were taboo, and any discussion of them was, thus, ignored. She played three sports, and because her teams played very well, the football team would occasionally poke fun, albeit harmlessly. "It was kind of like cancer," Lorraine explained. "Nobody said the word. They more or less called you a tomboy or a jock."

Barbara further illuminated her life experiences during her adolescence in the seventies. "I didn't even have the *words* for a lesbian," she explained. "It just wasn't part of the culture, it wasn't part of the vocabulary, it wasn't recognized." Prior to attending college, Barbara, like Principal Colin, had no way of connecting her feelings with the reality of her identity. "I thought, 'Well, maybe I'm just ugly, and that's why I'm not dating a lot," she explained, "or maybe I'm just too difficult." Society and the world were so vastly different at the time that it wasn't until Barbara entered college that her eyes would be opened to the offerings of a diverse student body.

Although Barbara played three sports in high school and initially conceived of herself as a decent athlete, she later realized that she wasn't as good as she thought. While she never experienced any overt sexual discrimination, Barbara, like Lorraine, attested to an underlying prevalence of discrimination against female athletes. "They were considered to be animals," she explained, "and…there was an underlying sense of girls should still not be playing sports, and that wasn't where they belonged, and it wasn't the feminine thing to do, and you should be a cheerleader." The stigmatization she endured provided yet another snapshot of how society

viewed women at the time and ultimately ingrained her with a greater compassion and sensitivity to the needs of gender nonconforming students.

Like Claire, Principal Edward was similarly timorous as a student. Although he attended an allegedly progressive high school with reputable programs in theater and acting, he was never interested in the performing arts. "I'm just not that kind of gay man," he stated, "I wasn't that kind of closeted gay kid." The only extracurricular offerings were the theater arts and a chess team; there were no athletics whatsoever. In order to compensate for his shyness, Edward associated with a "tough guy crew" and selected a wardrobe consisting of Starter jackets and Starter hats with the intent of conveying a tough persona. Among his friends, homosexuals were spoken ill of very frequently.

Edward spent the majority of his youth playing on baseball and soccer teams. Similarly to Claire, Barbara, and Lorraine, he attested that gay men and lesbians remained deeply closeted during those times and never recalled hearing them spoken of affirmatively or pejoratively. "There weren't really any places where I saw anybody act like they were gay, or say 'I think I could be gay,' or 'I like boys,' or anything like that," he claimed, "certainly not openly." It is worth noting that Edward's case was particularly unique. As a gender conforming man who exhibited natural athleticism and perceived masculinity, the majority of his youthful experiences were favorable compared to those of other participants in this study. For instance, Edward was never outwardly bullied, a testament to his good fortune considering how "athletes tend to be some of the most critical [people]."

As previously stated, although Edward never heard LGBT persons spoken of affirmatively or pejoratively, he heard, like Principal Alex, antigay slurs ranging from "fag" to the expression "that's gay" used as a high school student. While his high school climate wasn't

exceptionally hostile, Edward's cognizance of the potential ramifications stemming from allowing such pejorative comments to pervade his school hallways ultimately shaped his firm approach to discipline and inspired him to implement a zero tolerance policy against bullying.

> You say the word fag, you make fun of somebody for being Jewish, you make fun of somebody, those are some of the things [where] I throw the book. And I suspend for things here that other people in other high schools would *never* suspend for because we will *not* have that kind of culture.

Unfortunately, not all participants were as fortunate as Edward in their youth. Fernando and Colin were both victimized by bullying in school because of their sexuality. While Fernando was reportedly only harassed rarely, these few instances still yielded violent results. "One kid named Paul called me 'gay' in eighth grade, and I knocked the shit out of him," Fernando explained. Although he was suspended for breaking the student's nose, the experience allegedly shaped Fernando's philosophy toward combatting bullying. "I know bullying is a major issue in schools, and I do not believe that violence is the answer," he maintained, "but it did sure end up making my life easier." The experience had many positive ramifications for Fernando; although he wasn't exactly popular, he wasn't a target for bullying any longer. His height at 6'1'' equipped him with a towering presence, and his reputation followed him throughout high school. "People basically left me alone because they knew me as 'they guy who broke Paul's nose,'" he explained.

Fernando eventually discovered that his classmates were fascinated by his sexual orientation and curious about what it entailed. Many had long held preconceptions of gay men as effeminate or weak, and Fernando's masculinity, confidence, and openness about his identity defied these stereotypes while garnering him a great deal of respect.

> People would ask or say to me, 'Is it true you are gay? We want to know.' Whether they were friends or acquaintances, I would be completely honest and say, 'Yeah, I am. It is what it is.' But I didn't experience any homophobia. I think people were just very

> curious and wanted to know about what it was like or meant to be gay—all except for one kid who decided to pick a fight with me in the gym locker room…I challenged him on some of his statements. He didn't expect me to challenge him, but I did, and he backed off after he realized that I would crush him.

Lorraine asserted that being an out lesbian administrator allowed her to be a positive role model for students. "I do think that kids who are either struggling or who are *out*…have a role model to look up to," she explained, "and I think they believe that, 'You can be somebody, you can do something.'" Unlike the other participants, however, Fernando and Lorraine maintained that their sexuality had no impact whatsoever on their efficiencies as school administrators. According to Fernando, "Sexuality does not determine professionalism," and he was adamant that his ability to inspire and empower others would be determined by his human relations skills, "not by who I fall asleep with at night." He continued:

> Just because I am gay doesn't mean I'm going to defend or protect the gay students anymore than I would protect any other minority students. I challenged black students in my class as a teacher because they were black. I am not going to defend the Puerto Rican students any more because I am Puerto Rican myself. Everyone is entitled to an equal education opportunity regardless of sexuality, ethnicity, economic class, and general attitude. I am able to separate my sexuality from the job I have at hand. I think there is a big distinction between personal and professional. As a true consummate professional, I must remove my personal biases from the workplace and champion all.

Fernando was fortunately largely unscathed by homophobia during his years in education. He, like Edward, attributed his good fortune to his masculinity and overall pleasant demeanor. "People can't be mean to someone who is authentically a nice guy," he asserted, "and I am a nice guy." In contrast, he believed that educators who wallowed in negativity or projected an aura of self-righteousness lent themselves to being frequently crucified by their students.

Principal Colin experienced a much broader magnitude of homophobia in the latter half of his high school career due to his perceived effeminacy. For the first two years of high school, Colin attended a private boarding house in the Seattle area; he then transferred to a public school

along with his father's corporation to the state where he currently resided. Unfortunately, his experience at this public school, particularly in his junior year, was horrific.

> I act like I am gay…I talk with my hands…So in high school, my junior year was horrible. When I would walk by, they would laugh…All the jocks would come up to me and yell, 'Colin's a faggot!' and, as I'd go down the hallway, it was horrible. And so I hated it, and I thought, 'Why does everybody call me that?'…I think that even though I knew inside that that's what I was, I kept hiding it…trying to act butch or something.

High school proved traumatizing for Colin until his senior year when he befriended a popular student athlete whose father was a renowned physician in the community. Similarly to Fernando who earned the respect of his classmates after physically confronting a homophobic bully, Colin enjoyed the newfound respect of his classmates upon befriending the athlete and ultimately enjoyed the remainder of his senior year.

Lorraine attributed her positive experience in her current position to the inherent privileges of working in a diverse school in the same community where she grew up as a popular renowned athlete. Her reputation as a successful student athlete, teacher, and coach followed her into administration and proved beneficial even when she briefly left the district to assume a post elsewhere. Being out ultimately had no impact on her job mobility or efficiency. "I really didn't *decide* to come out," she explained. "When it became *okay* to talk about it, people asked me so I answered, and it kind of…just took on a life of its own."

For several participants in this study, feelings of alienation from peers and victimization by bullying were attributed to gender nonconforming behaviors exhibited in their youth. Principal Claire, Principal Barbara, and Content Area Supervisor Lorraine each identified as self-professed tomboys who exhibited varying degrees of athleticism, unconventional behavior perceived by society as atypical for females at the time. Societal norms were radically different in those times as was evident in Lorraine and Barbara's assertions of homosexuality as a taboo

topic that remained unspoken, absent from the media and casual conversation. Identifiable terms as “lesbian” and “dyke” were essentially nonexistent in the common vernacular. The topic was so foreign to the mainstream culture that Principal Barbara was reportedly unable to even delineate a connection between her own feelings and her sexual identity.

Principal Edward spent a significant portion of his young adult life masking his sexual identity. Describing himself as a “tough guy,” Edward and his friends intentionally concocted a wardrobe consisting of garments designed to convey a tough exterior persona. In addition, his perceived masculinity and avid athleticism served as testaments of how gender conforming behaviors contributed to his positive adolescent experiences. Despite his good fortune, Edward evolved into a strong advocate for LGBT youth and the fair and equal treatment of all students in his career. His overall positive experiences as a young adult ultimately shaped his approach to discipline and informed his zero tolerance policies toward bullying within his school.

Content Area Supervisor Fernando also reported predominantly positive experiences. Like Edward, Fernando earned the respect of his classmates by defying preconceived stereotypes of gay men as effeminate and weak, albeit through violence. A homophobic bully had been taunting Fernando in school when Fernando finally had enough and retaliated by punching the bully, ultimately breaking his nose. From that moment on, Fernando’s classmates found him alluring as he contradicted preexisting notions perceiving gay men as effeminate and weak through his ability to defend himself. Thus, similarly to Edward, Fernando attributed his positive experiences as a gay man to his masculinity, confidence, and overall pleasant demeanor.

Not all participants were as fortunate as Edward and Fernando. Principal Colin’s experiences as a high school student were miserable until his junior year. His perceived effeminacy resulted in his enduring intense bouts of bullying from crowds of students at a time.

The bullying continued for almost three years until he finally befriended a popular male athlete who he still remains in close contact with today. Upon befriending the athlete, the student body's perceptions of Colin changed; he earned the respect of his classmates almost immediately solely on the basis of the company he kept.

Content Area Supervisor Lorraine attributes her overall positive experiences to her confidence and reputation as a well-known former student athlete; for Lorraine, working in a diverse school system as a lesbian administrator has also proved extremely beneficial.

A Greater Sense of Compassion and Ability to Empathize

Several of the participants also alleged that belonging to a sexual minority group equipped them with a greater sense of compassion and ability to empathize with gender nonconforming students, skillsets otherwise foreign to their heterosexual counterparts. For example, although Principal Alex claimed he was never specifically targeted as a gay high school student, homophobic slurs were still a part of his adolescent life. "I'm sure I got called 'homo' or 'faggot,' but not in a way that was different from the way those same people used those terms to describe other people who actually weren't," he explained. As someone who witnessed the bullying of his own classmates and knew himself to be gay despite neglecting to come out until he was twenty, Alex believed that his sexuality "absolutely" gave him a greater sensitivity to working with a diverse student population. As an out gay high school principal, he was adamant that homophobic language was unacceptable in his school.

> I know it still happens at my school, but…we try to curb it as much as possible, and…this is an environment where whether you're gay or whether you're from…whatever country, or you have whatever skin color, or your English is at whatever level, you have an accent, you can't really speak well, we don't make fun of people for their unique attributes such as they are.

Because of her personal experiences as a young gender nonconforming female, Claire also felt a unique connection toward students who generally felt disenfranchised over issues of race, sexuality, intelligence level, attractiveness, socioeconomic status, or weight. Although she posited that belonging to a sexual minority armed her with a greater sensitivity to nonconforming students, her shyness presented an additional array of challenges. She further elaborated:

> Newsflash, very few [kids] feel they are in the norm. So almost everybody has something that makes them feel not one-hundred percent about themselves. So it made me, I think, very attune to how kids felt, and so I wish I could have done more, but I really felt, aside from being personally very *shy*, I am just not a person who talks about those kinds of things to *anybody*, much less is it anybody's business?

Despite his overall positive adolescent experience, Edward also embraced the diverse cultures comprising his high school population. He vehemently affirmed his strong stance against bullying, particularly his intense distaste for the ignorant use of antigay slurs in casual conversation. "Being…gay and knowing what it is for that fucking 'gay' word to be used a lot in the pejorative…is a real strength," he explained. Upon setting foot in his building, I was greeted by a display of student projects in celebration of Black History Month. When I questioned him about them, he explained how he always strove to foster an atmosphere conducive for diversity, where students never felt compelled to feign differences over issues of sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion. "These children are a reflection of me," he passionately advocated. "They are a reflection of *my* vision and mission, of the kind of institution *I* run, of values that *I* help drive for them to be instilled in them…This is *not* a school where intolerance is tolerated *at all*."

Additionally, like Claire and Alex, Edward acknowledged that being a gay man made him a more compassionate administrator with a personal flair for handling LGBT-related issues more effectively than his heterosexual counterparts. He elaborated:

> Whenever you deal with somebody who's racked with a terrible problem or conundrum or something that they're laboring under, *understanding* comforts them. But too often

> folks sort of come at their approach to solving problems from a very artificial point and they're just…not that good at showing empathy and understanding. They're just going through the motions because it's their job, but in the end they don't really give a shit. I think that one of *my* strengths is that in situations like that I'm somebody who *gets* it.

Edward learned of this unique skillset through personal experience. At one point in his leadership, he was confronted with a sensitive matter involving the breakup of two lesbian high school students. Neither girl had yet come out to her parents about her sexuality; as a gay man who witnessed his own mother's despair over his sexuality and had previously loved and lost, Edward was able to empathize with and counsel the two girls' mothers—both of whom had been previously oblivious to their daughters' sexuality yet saw them brokenhearted and at the most vulnerable of states—from a genuinely honest vantage point. The girls' plights resonated with him to a degree that, he insisted, only an LG[BT] administrator could ever understand. Edward described the aftermath of a conference with one mother along with the commendation he received from his principal:

> When I got done with them…the parent hugged me and the kid hugged me, and the parent said, 'She's blessed to be in a school with people like you two,' meaning my principal and I, and that struck me. And my principal said, 'Wow…you *really* took the bull by the horns in *that* situation. You should be getting charged by the hour for helping that family.' And I remember thinking, 'You should only know *why* I was so good at that.' So in circumstances like that, I think my sexual orientation has been helpful.

Paul's inclination to empathize with minority students was also attributed to his sexual orientation. "One important part of being gay," he argued, "is this whole idea of having an openness or willingness to see the world in a different way and to see things from a different perspective." After enduring an upbringing in which family members, religion, and society had ingrained in him for years that it was inherently wrong to be gay, Paul was inspired to adopt a new worldview and question everything he had learned. His focus on creating a learning

environment where all minority students could feel physically and emotionally secure emerged as a manifestation of the insecurities he endured prior as a young gay man. He remarked:

> I think it brings in a certain kind of…critical lens that you look at everything with, and I also think it brings a lot of compassion to what you do because [I] realize that in all the ways that I didn't feel safe as a young person…I'm now in a position to make a very safe space for everyone.

At his core, Paul equated his openness with deep-rooted senses of honesty, truthfulness, and personal pride. For this reason, he was particularly troubled by an encounter with a female Egyptian student who had been driven by her classmates' persecution to stop wearing her headscarf and, thus, stripped herself of one fundamental component of her identity.

> She said at the beginning of the year [school] was really difficult because these other kids…were making fun of her headscarf and mocking her for wearing it. And she's like, 'I stopped wearing my headscarf, and now they all like me.' And so it was a very sad moment and very *disturbing* moment because it was one of those things where it's just like this is so much a part of who you are for like the past fifteen years of your life, and now all of a sudden it's literally been stripped away.

Since school leaders, regardless of sexual orientation, are entrusted with keeping schools free from bullying and harassment, Paul's response was cause for further elaboration. I asked to what extent he believed his leadership might have been hindered had he been closeted, and although he initially disavowed any linkage between one's sexual identity and leadership practice, he acknowledged the likelihood as dependent upon situational context. "If I was arguing or asserting that we need to have more things to support gay and lesbian youth, then it might make me a target," he determined. Thus, Paul's claim may also be interpreted as additional evidence of the theme of fear. Furthermore, he posited that the incident evolving the Egyptian student and her headscarf would probably have not resonated so profoundly with him had he been closeted.

Barbara attended a very middle class white school with a miniscule African American population. Although she never endured any direct bullying, she recalled empathizing with a classmate she felt badly for who was stigmatized for both his race and conspicuous effeminacy.

> There was a young man, [and] not only was he black…but he was also very effeminate. And I look back on it, and he was a gay high school boy in a world where he was already a minority by his skin color and became a minority to the exponent *two* because he was also most likely gay…He was just the nicest guy, but there were people who didn't know him who just saw the exterior, saw the shell, and he endured…an awful lot of verbal bullying because of those two diverse factors that he brought to that school. And…I don't know that I addressed it other than always trying to treat him like a *person* and not as a man of color or as a gay man.

As a lesbian administrator, Barbara also possessed a compassionate sensitivity to the array of issues students and staff members brought to school. "I could understand those spheres, and not always telling the full truth, and being different, and feeling different," she explained. Her ability to empathize with the plights and situations of others motivated her to take a step further than the other participants by providing professional development and awareness training to her staff as preparation for facing these challenges. She explained some of the topics of the training:

> We spent so much of our time working on recognizing why kids behave the way they do, how the Millennials were different than the boomers, and the X generation or the Y generation, and just really taking the time to look at the individual, and not just adapting your lessons because of their learning style but also putting that compassion in your classroom, that you might give a kid a lifeline, that there's somebody who can understand them and gets them, and you might be that one person that makes all the difference in the world for them and their outcome.

Identifying as LGBT armed several of the participating administrators with greater levels of compassion and empathy toward disenfranchised students. Although Principal Alex was never a direct victim of homophobic bullying, the guilt he felt over witnessing the harassment of other LGBT students as a closeted gay man instilled in him a greater sensitivity to the diverse needs of LGBT students.

Growing up as a gender nonconforming female, Principal Claire felt a unique connection toward students who did not fit into the norm; she regretted how her naturally shy tendencies occasionally obstructed her attempts to establish closer connections with those students while serving as a more inspiring role model.

Principal Edward upheld his students to rigorous standards of conduct and vehemently viewed each of them as a reflection of himself. He recalled a particular scenario involving the romantic breakup of two lesbian students who had remained closeted to their families. Edward found himself assuming the role of a mediator while consoling one of the students and her parents over the sudden revelation of their daughter's sexuality. His principal was so impressed by his performance that she jokingly suggested that he charge families by the hour for therapy; Edward appreciated her commendation yet found himself contemplating how foreign LGBT-related issues probably appeared to his heterosexual colleagues.

Assistant Principal Paul also acknowledged his proclivity to view matters through different perspectives. He shared an anecdote involving a female Egyptian student who was driven to disavow an important element of her individuality; she stopped wearing her headscarf after enduring the frequent verbal taunts of her classmates. Paul believed his experiences as a gay man equipped him with a unique "critical lens" that allowed him to more compassionately empathize with her plight.

Similarly to Alex, Principal Barbara recalled feeling sorry for a young African American man she went to high school with who was marginalized not only for his race but also because of his sexual orientation. The fond memories of this young man combined with Barbara's own knowledge of her sexual orientation also equipped her with a greater sensitivity to the diverse issues her students faced on daily basis.

Anti-Bullying Initiatives

The participants' experiences in their youth also incentivized their passionate stands against bullying in their schools. As an administrator who completed a Master's degree in special education with a concentration in behavior disorders, Principal Colin was a natural advocate for disenfranchised students. "I have always looked out for the underdog and tried to help the underdog or kids who…were being bullied," he explained, "and tried to figure out how to make it so they were accepted by others." Incorporating his love of song and dance, Colin sought the assistance of his music teacher, parents, and Mary Travers from the folk group Peter, Paul and Mary to conduct a groundbreaking weeklong anti-bullying initiative in his elementary school. Lessons from the "Don't Laugh at Me" curriculum sponsored by the nonprofit organization Operation Respect were also incorporated. The event began with a flash mob performed to Katy Perry's song "Firework" and ultimately culminated in a weeklong celebratory function in which students and staff members commemorated their unity against bullying by wearing a pink T-shirt. After six months of planning, Colin succeeded with his goal of making a bold anti-bullying statement in his school.

The T-shirts provided an ideal outlet for Colin to unite his students and staff while conveying his anti-bullying message. "Everybody's here together," he explained. "That's why I wanted everybody to have those pink shirts—because we're all in it together, we're going to stand up against the bullies, and nobody here in this school is going to bully." After raising the necessary funds, Colin had hot pink T-shirts printed for every student and staff member in his school. "I ordered all the shirts," he recalled, "and the day this thing happened, the kids dropped their coats and they had hot pink shirts on." Hot pink symbolized an international color against bullying.

The event ultimately proved so successful that it won the attention of the media; a major news station in the city where Colin worked decided to broadcast the event. Four crews spent the day at the school filming the celebration while an anchorwoman for the network interviewed six of Colin's students.

A project known as Respect for All Week galvanized Principal Alex's and Assistant Principal Paul's decisions to come out to their staff members and students. During this weeklong initiative, schools in Alex's and Paul's district had the opportunity to highlight or build upon continuing diversity programs through curriculum-based instruction. Schools also had the opportunity to embark upon new initiatives to promote respect, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity while engaging students in meaningful lessons or activities focused on preventing bias-based harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Alex embraced his newfound authenticity knowing he had full district-wide support to come out without the risk of jeopardizing his employment.

Paul echoed Alex's sentiment as he explained the formula he and Alex used to come out to their students; my structured interviews indicated that the process was never conducted arbitrarily. He revealed that they always chose to come out within the context of a social studies lesson. For example, in past years, their discussions evolved around Supreme Court cases involving civil rights and marriage discrimination. Paul elaborated upon the process:

> We just come into the class, and all the students sit in a circle. There are about twenty-six or twenty-seven students…We're in the circle with them. And then we tell them that we are visiting the class, we wanted to find out whatever issue they were talking about, and that we want to share with them that we're gay, and this is why we think it's important to share that…I think we say, 'This is a little bit of our experience,' but mostly it's just a question and answer session for like an hour…We'll also talk about diversity.

As Paul advocated, communication was an integral factor toward combating bullying and eradicating homophobia. His philosophy of leadership evolved around the notion of change

encompassing a shared vision; all staff members in a school, beginning with the classroom teachers, must unite to realize a vision together. "Change is going to happen at the classroom level," he explained. "It's going to happen at the student by student level, and my biggest impact is only going to be as much impact as each of those teachers have with each of their groups of students." Essentially, in Paul's school, the teachers laid the groundwork for change in their respective classrooms and worked collaboratively in grade-level teams with guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and administrators to monitor student progress and growth. "There's no way that the principal or I can do *all* of it," he reaffirmed. He further explained the process for assisting at-risk or struggling students:

> We have a regular thing called 'Kid Talk' that happens on the teams where the teachers will meet with the social worker and focus on students that they are concerned about, or we'll talk about different strategies that we're trying. So [let's say] all of our students are in the process of learning a language. So we'll look at where's their language development, at what other ways can we support them, and share best practices.

Although it had been initially conceived to benefit academically or behaviorally challenged students, "Kid Talk" had reputedly succeeded in helping struggling LGBT or homophobic students. Additionally, Paul confessed that coming out mitigated a great deal of the homophobic commentary that was initially directed at him. Although he acknowledged that varying degrees of homophobia would remain prevalent in schools and society, he found the inherent irony comprising the phenomenon fascinating. "All of a sudden, when they *know*, and you're open, and you're honest," he explained, "it's somehow much easier to address than homophobia that's directed or that happens in other circumstances."

One anti-bullying initiative Principal Claire undertook with the support of a handful of teachers was launching a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) on her campus. A Gay/Straight Alliance is a student-led organization intended to provide a safe, supportive environment for lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) youth and their straight allies. The teachers in support of establishing this organization also attended training sponsored by GLSEN to become straight allies and turn their classrooms into safe zones, locations free from harassment, intimidation, and bullying, where all LGBTQ students could feel physically and emotionally secure. These safe zones were identifiable by the presence of a rainbow sticker containing the words "Safe Space" placed upon the classroom doors.

Participants who were personally victimized by bullies in their youth were naturally more compassionate in their approaches to leadership and prone to taking passionate stands against bullying. With the assistance of his music teacher, parents, and even Mary Travers from the folk group Peter, Paul and Mary, Principal Colin prepared and launched a weeklong anti-bullying initiative known as Acceptance Week within his school. The initiative incorporated activities from the "Don't Laugh at Me" curriculum sponsored by the nonprofit organization Operation Respect; it commenced with a flash mob and ultimately culminated with a unified weeklong stance against bullying symbolized by the students and staff members wearing a pink T-shirt. Acceptance Week proved so successful in Colin's school that it garnered the attention of a major news network in the area.

In Principal Alex's and Assistant Principal Paul's school district, an annual project known as Respect for All Week was launched. The project was conceived through a design intended to celebrate tolerance and diversity through curriculum-based instruction. Respect for All Week ultimately galvanized Alex's and Paul's decisions to come out annually to students in the contexts of social studies lessons. They seized opportunities to incorporate their personal experiences into a curriculum grounded in diversity and found comfort knowing that their school district had encouraged such tolerance.

Additionally, Assistant Principal Paul spoke of a collaborative program called "Kid Talk" where teams comprised of teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and administrators work together to formulate, implement, and assess the effectiveness of action plans to improve student achievement while enhancing academic and personal growth. He also acknowledged that once he decided to come out, the number of homophobic attacks directed toward him had lessened drastically.

With the assistance of a group of teachers, Principal Claire also launched a GSA on her high school campus. The teachers had assessed levels of student interest and expressed interest in attending training to serve as straight LGBT allies and turn their classrooms into safe zones for LGBT students.

Summary of the Findings

Eight administrators—five gay men and three lesbians—ultimately agreed to participate in the study. Six additional participants (five gay men and one lesbian) had initially agreed to participate but failed to respond to my requests for scheduling an interview. One transgender principal was invited to participate but ultimately declined. The participants encompassed the following administrative positions: Principals, Vice/Assistant Principals, and Content Area Supervisors. The majority of them were interviewed in person; two of them were interviewed via webcam over Skype.

Five major themes were identified in the data: 1) Fear; 2) A desire to help others; 3) Sensitivity to diversity; 4) Personal integrity and resilience; and 5) A mutual respect between administrators, staff members, and students. From each of these major themes, additional subthemes emerged and were discussed under their respective headings.

Fear played a major role in each of the administrators' personal and professional lives. Levels of fear figured most prominently in the their personal lives as each of them came to embrace their sexual identities; the fear was often compounded as the administrators faced the challenges of coming out to their families and friends. While some reportedly grew up in staunchly religious or conservative households, others feared rejection or potential disownment upon disappointing their families by the revelation of their sexual orientation. Several administrators also shared experiences ranging from encountering senses of alienation from their peers to displaying gender nonconforming behavior in their early youth. The findings corroborated similar fears identified by additional researchers who previously studied the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms 2007).

Concerns over potential job loss or future career mobility figured prominently in many of the participants' professional lives while simultaneously mirroring earlier research findings (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007). Maintaining healthy professional distances toward invasive colleagues who might attempt to transcend professional boundaries proved challenging for some of the administrators. Some even reported feelings of guilt over voluntarily disavowing or avoiding other LGBT colleagues in the workplace for fear of self-incrimination (Blount, 2003, 2005). Fear also trickled into some of the administrators' early experiences as teachers; some recalled the isolating feelings of resorting to personal discretion while determining the appropriate extents for either including or censoring LGBT-related topics in

subject area curricula such as sex education (Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Kissen, 1996; Woods & Harbeck, 1992).

As previous studies also indicated, the vast majority of the administrators attributed their paths toward pursuing careers in education to an innate desire to help or teach others (DeJean, 2004; Griffin, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Olson, 1986, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Many of them offered accounts illuminating how teaching simply felt like a natural calling or vocation for them; some discovered that they had a natural flair for athletics in their youth and relished opportunities for teaching others how to partake in sports while others reportedly had a family member who had assumed a teaching role in some capacity and was ultimately idealized as a role model. Those without a familial background in teaching simply enjoyed human interaction and opted for a career enabling them to work closely with people.

As members of a sexual minority group, the participating administrators were also naturally equipped with a greater sensitivity to diversity. For many, identifying as LG[BT] had instilled in them greater inclinations for compassion and empathy toward the plight of disenfranchised or gender nonconforming students (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Hernandez, 2009; Kissen, 1996; Koschoreck, 2003; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Some shared accounts illustrating how their sexual orientation equipped them with unique abilities to tackle LGBT-related issues or connect with LGBT students that their heterosexual counterparts otherwise lacked. Many of the administrators also either displayed a preference for working in diverse school systems or reported more positive experiences upon coming out as a result of working in such environments. The school buildings of several administrators celebrated diversity. Some of their straight teachers even attended LGBT training to become allies and shortly thereafter turned their classrooms into safe zones for

LGBT students. Others who were victimized in their youth were reportedly equipped with a broader level of passion for combatting bullying within their schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

> The Right Kind of Queer is an educational leader who lives and works within a double bind of "don't ask, don't tell" politics that reproduces heteronormative power through his or her efforts to fit as a leader. This individual is constantly searching for the margin of tolerance in the school community. The Right Kind of Queer constrains him- or herself by adhering to gender norms in terms of the presentation of self (women look womanly with hair that is not too short, and men look manly, rather than effeminate) and by not displaying any picture or items that represent personal relationships in the office. Such a person does not engage in LGBTQ activism and does not wear jewelry or clothing that incorporates LGBTQ symbols. He or she is a workaholic who sees hard work as a shield against homophobic fallout. Unfortunately, the Right Kind of Queer lives in fear of the "shield" failing. (Tooms, 2007, p. 192)

Previously, three prominent themes emerged from the data and were discussed at length: 1) Personal and professional fears of the participating administrators; 2) Their innate desire to help others; and 3) Their increased sensitivity to diversity and the diverse needs of their students. Each of these themes was corroborated by earlier research (DeJean, 2004; deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Koschoreck, 2003; Olson, 1986, 1987; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Personal and professional fears were identified and conceived as Cycles of Fear incorporating personal, professional, and safety losses respectively (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009), while the administrators, like previously researched LGBT educators, also illuminated that their decisions to embark upon careers in education stemmed from an innate desire to help others realize their goals and dreams (DeJean, 2004; Griffin, 1992; Kissen 1996; Olson, 1986, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Furthermore, as a result of their childhood and/or adult victimization attributed to their sexual orientation, several of the participants were naturally equipped with a greater sensitivity to diversity and inherent desire to combat bullying in their schools (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Koschoreck, 2003; Woods & Harbeck, 1992).

In this chapter, the two additionally identified major themes will be discussed at length along with their relevance to existing research: 4) Personal integrity and resilience; and 5) Mutual respect between administrators, staff members, and students. As was the case with the three previously discussed major themes, additional clusters of subthemes also emerged from each of these larger overarching themes and will be discussed in greater detail under their respective headings.

Theme 4: Personal Integrity and Resilience

Coming out or remaining closeted was a deeply personal decision rooted in each participant's notion of his or her integrity. Their respective comfort levels, fears, and personal experiences ultimately influenced how authentic they chose to be in their respective positions of leadership. In some cases, as previous research affirmed, closeted participants faced hostile repercussions including potential job loss attributed to the mere speculation or revelation of their sexual orientation (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007). In these instances, their personal integrity manifested itself through their assertive resilience while combating the homophobia and discrimination within their respective school buildings or districts.

Because of the unique nature of each participant's experience, the overarching theme of personal integrity and resilience was divided into three additional subthemes: 1) Levels of authenticity in positions of leadership; 2) Compromising moral principles; and 3) Resilience with the threat of job loss. Several of the participants' accounts evolved around direct interaction with students, parents, and administrative colleagues in which they—in some cases—faced potentially hostile repercussions despite the disclosure or nondisclosure of their sexual identities.

Levels of Authenticity in Positions of Leadership

The participants' levels of authenticity as school leaders were directly proportionate to the disclosure or nondisclosure of their sexual identities (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007). Alex's personal integrity was challenged and subsequently affirmed upon his discovery of a homophobic epithet in his classroom. "Someone had carved the word *homo* into my desk at school when I was a teacher, and that *really* pissed me off in a way that I didn't want…kids [to feel] like they could hold something over me," he revealed. With the intent of eliminating the formation of a possible "unspoken bully club" in his classroom, Alex came out to his students and proceeded to do so annually until his promotion to principal. Fortunately, no drawbacks had arisen from his decision. "I'd like to think I'm some kind of role model for LGBT youth at my school, but I don't know if that's giving myself too much credit," he reflected. "It sucks being a teenager and especially a gay one, [and] I wanted to show those kids that there's a light at the end of the tunnel, basically." As a result of coming out, Alex experienced stronger connections with his students and an overall tolerant atmosphere in his school—findings concurring with previous research (DeJean, 2007; Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000) involving other LGBT educators who reported positive experiences upon coming out to their students.

Edward conceived of personal integrity as being inherently synonymous with earning the respect of students, parents, community members, and staff members. Although he—like many of Fraynd and Capper's (2003) participants—staunchly maintained that realizing this venture necessitated absolute closetedness, he simultaneously remained conscientious of his LGBT students and their needs. "I think that to students who *are* closeted and who are gay that I'm less

of a role model than I could be," he reflected, "and I think that to *those* students that's unfortunate because…studies show that the highest bunch of folks who commit suicide are young people…specifically young males who are gay." Edward's apprehensive tone belied the logic behind his reasoning, illuminating some degree of remorse hidden behind his calm and collected demeanor. Jones-Redmond's (2007) and deLeon and Brunner's (2013) participants similarly yearned for greater authenticity to serve as visible role models for sexual minority students. "[LGBT students comprise] 10% of my student population," Edward continued. "If I was out, I might be making graded records for *them*, but for the *other* 90% I would be somewhat limited in authority, limited in being able to be taken seriously."

To command the respect of his students and earn the confidence of community stakeholders, Edward was impelled to take precautionary measures to mitigate any speculation regarding his sexual orientation (Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). While such behavior would perceivably constitute evidence of fear, the underlying yearning for authenticity compelled me to classify this particular data under the theme of personal integrity. Edward provided one example:

> I've always worn *something* on my ring finger. I kind of view this as a very subtle thing. The integrity part of me says I don't want to out and out *lie*, but the *other* part of me says I want folks to maybe think that I'm married. Of course, *gay* men wear these too who are in long-term relationships, and I'm not wearing a gold or platinum band or anything like *that*, but it *does* look like a Tiffany band.

Participants in previous studies (DeJean, 2004; deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Tooms, 2007; Tooms & Lugg, 2010; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) similarly employed such "covering" strategies through the use of jewelry, clothing, makeup, omission of details, or changing of pronouns. The challenge of establishing equilibrium between his dual identities became

particularly pronounced when Edward invited a male student's father in for a conference during his first year as principal. The father was concerned about his son's performance, and Edward scheduled the conference for 7:00 P.M. so that the father would not have to request time off from work. He was evidently surprised by Edward's long working hours, noticed Edward's ring, and naturally assumed he was a married heterosexual man with a very patient wife. Edward explained,

> The gentleman came in…and I remember him saying to me, 'My God! Your wife must be a very patient woman!' And I said, 'My wife?' He says, 'Oh, yes! You know, you're married!' And I said, 'Well, my family is very tolerant of me, yes, when I'm not around.' I didn't quite lie, but I did kind of omit. It *is* true that my family does miss me, but a wife and children are *not* waiting at home.

Claire was particularly sensitive to the use of homophobic epithets. She began her career teaching in a racially diverse school with a very low level of discipline where it was not uncommon for students to speak disrespectfully toward their teachers. "I had a couple of experiences where students would make a crack with a zinger, and all they could get is suspended," she explained, "and that's a frustration because what else *can* we do?" I asked if, like Alex, she ever considered coming out to deflect the homophobic comments to which she bluntly responded, "God, no!" LGBT-themed jokes—even those told by family members, friends, or popular television comedians—were also extremely offensive to her. Claire shared her frustration:

> It's *always jokes*. We're either hated or joked about. And…I don't want to be joked about. I don't want to be the butt of a joke…[It's] very offensive, *very* offensive. When I hear late night comedians make little innuendos and references, they don't say *mean* things, but it's making fun of the lifestyle. And it's not a barrel of laughs.

Like Edward, Claire endured her share of awkward interactions with parents, except in her case the situations were reversed; parents, although never outwardly, perceived Claire as a lesbian and occasionally made suggestive comments. She explained,

> The parents—I can tell you I've never been called something outright—but times when there have been intense disciplinary consequences on the table, the pulling the straw out of, 'Well how many kids do *you* have? You don't know anything about raising kids!' And I could tell the way that they said it, it was like, 'Well are *you* a mother?' And I already know they know the answer to that, and I see their point.

Claire's experience highlighted a particularly disturbing trend where the perceived competency of LG[BT] administrators was, in some instances, dependent on whether or not they had children of their own—a finding further corroborating how marriage historically implicated heterosexuality (Blount, 2003; Lugg, 2003a). "I think that sometimes parents feel like only another parent can feel their pain when their child has really screwed up something," she continued, "but my role is not to help them choose their sexuality, my role is to help them all feel healthy about themselves."

Before coming out annually six years ago, Paul's integrity was also mitigated by fear (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Olson, 1986, 1987; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Paul described how he once circumvented his own sexual identity when confronting the hateful homophobic remarks of a male student. "I pulled him aside and was like, 'Look, I'm sick of this, if you have something to say, you need to say it, we could talk about it, but otherwise this needs to stop," he claimed, "but what I really wanted to say is…'Yes, I'm gay,' "whereas at that point I couldn't quite say that." LGBT educators in previous studies (Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) similarly negated their sexual identities while actively confronting instances of homophobia.

Fernando opted for declassification. "I am neither in nor out, he asserted, "I don't hide it, but I don't broadcast it." Because Fernando's personal integrity was grounded in choosing a noble non-lucrative profession to make a positive difference in young people's lives, he scoffed

at the prospect of ever monitoring his mannerisms, behaviors, or statements. Like Fraynd and Capper's (2003) participants, Fernando was adamant that sexuality neither impacted one's efficiency as a professional nor dictated success or failure in the workplace. "I am an appropriate responsible educator regardless of the fact that I am gay," he explained. "If someone were to ask me, I wouldn't deny it, but I don't make it a part of my classroom experience for my students because that would be inappropriate. LG[BT] administrators in previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007) similarly preferred to be recognized as effective leaders as opposed to leaders who are also sexual minorities.

While Claire never consciously modified her behavior, her personal integrity stemmed from an innate desire for privacy. She explained,

> If somebody asked me directly, I'm not sure what I would have said. But I never brought a fake date to a dance. I never pretended that I was seeing some man. I never brought up anybody per se. So to *me*, it's none of anybody's business. But I thought there was always an understanding that they knew because I'm sure that enough rumors went around that how could they *not* know? But it was never *outwardly* stated.

Previous research (Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007) affirmed that although many LG[BT] administrators assumed their students and colleagues held preconceived notions of their sexuality, they never raised any concerns. Despite Claire's claims, however, my direct observation unveiled her inclination to dress femininely for special occasions when parents were expected in the building. During parent/teacher conferences, holiday concerts, and graduation celebrations, Claire wore skirts and heels; the rest of the time, her wardrobe primarily consisted of pantsuits and sweater vests. Thus, for purposes of this research, I interpreted Claire's wardrobe as evidence of subconscious identity management (Griffin, 1992). Lugg and Tooms (2010) chronicled the experience of one newly hired lesbian principal who was pressured

by her female superintendent and administrative colleagues into wearing an expensive St. John suit to feminize her appearance and conform to the district's ideal of how a female school administrator should present herself.

While Fernando opted for declassification, he revealed in his structured interview that he had previously been out as a high school teacher. Thus, for purposes of this research, he was classified as an out participant. According to Fernando, several students knew of his sexual orientation firsthand by his own accord while others pieced together indicators on their own. In either case, although being out certainly generated increased comfort and freedom, Fernando negated its relevance as a topic of discussion and primarily focused on conducting himself as an appropriate educator regardless of his sexual orientation (Fraynd & Capper, 2003).

Principal Barbara echoed Fernando's sentiment. Although she was "really big on authentic leadership and being honest," she paradoxically remained closeted for the duration of her tenure and strongly advocated the separation of personal and professional identities (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007). Barbara explained,

> There was always a piece that I had to hold back on that honesty, and I believe that bothered me as far as my integrity went…I'm always going to be a private person. That's just my nature. I'm never going to be someone who *flaunts* a relationship…My lifestyle is my lifestyle, and that's who I am. And when I'm at school, school is about being an educator. You can't divorce yourself from who you are in your private life, but my *main* focus is doing what's right for everybody in the building that I'm responsible for.

As a principal, Barbara's wardrobe routinely consisted of suits, heels, and makeup. Although she insisted that her attire was selected to convey a professional persona and not with the intent of concealing her sexuality, her experience nevertheless also concurred with previous

research regarding the importance of an LG[BT] administrator's presentation of self (Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007).

There were occasional instances where Barbara endured great distress in remaining closeted and silent, however, most notably whenever she overheard adults speaking pejoratively against homosexuals. She explained,

> I think the other thing that was really hard was biting my tongue because I do tend to speak my mind when there were slurs made against anybody who was LGBT and that, 'Wow, somebody's chosen that,' and 'They're deviant,' and 'God turns his back on them,' and all those kinds of things. And I just wanted to say, 'No, you're just a person. You're a good person or you're *not* a good person, and who you are partnered with doesn't necessarily make a difference in that.'

Colin was impelled to believe that the close relationships he had fostered with his secretaries and other immediate colleagues over the years would ameliorate his fears of coming out so late in life. "I think I felt so close to the people who I worked with that I thought that they wouldn't care," he explained. He even consulted a guidance counselor for advice regarding his decision. Colin elaborated,

> I remember telling the counselor whose office was right next door to mine and crying in her office. And she said, 'You know what?' She said, 'Nobody is going to care. Nobody here is going to care.' And then she said, 'I think you should tell the secretaries. And go ahead and tell whoever you want.' But she *did* say to me…'Just be careful because you're in Redneckville.' And she meant that about the district office.

As a content area supervisor who was self-professedly "one-hundred percent out," Lorraine advocated honesty and professionalism as key ingredients for success. Having been out since the early 1990s, she explained, "I knew who I was so it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't a big deal at all. If people asked, I said, 'Yes.' That was it." Lorraine expressed shock and dismay at the thought of engaging in identity management claiming, "With everything that's on television, whether it's TV shows or the news, I can't believe that people still do that." While she acknowledged that some people still might "throw stones," she, like Fernando, remained

adamant that honesty and professionalism would surmount any potential obstacles. "I think you have to be *professional* in your personal life," she affirmed, "so if you are going to be involved in something that can possibly hit the news, as long as you're *professional*, there's no problem with it."

The notion of conducting oneself professionally in one's personal life essentially mirrored Tooms's (2007) notion of "The Right Kind of Queer." Although Lorraine perceived of herself as explicitly out (Griffin, 1992), she inadvertently censored her openness through what could be understood as selective honesty—a system entailing the distinction between who *should* know one's sexual identity versus who actually *needs* to know. Although she refuted Colin's advocacy for complete authenticity, both she and Assistant Principal Paul congruently engaged in selective honesty. For instance, although Paul condoned complete openness with students, he did not deem it imperative to come out to cafeteria or custodial staff. Previous study (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007) participants employed similarly varying degrees of selective honesty. Lorraine elaborated,

> In order to be out I think you have to be honest with yourself, and you have to be honest with the people in your life. I don't believe the people you work for *need* to know, but the way I feel is if someone asks, I think I need to be honest enough to tell them. I don't believe that it impacts your work ethic at all. They don't ask people if they're straight, and they don't *care* if people are straight. I know sometimes the *world* doesn't see it like that, but I think if everybody just treated gay people like straight people, there wouldn't *be* issues.

Making light of her departure from her recent principalship, Barbara reflected further on the importance of authenticity for students and future generations and agreed with Paul. Her convictions on these matters were evident through her reasoning for agreeing to participate in this study. "I tell my kids all the time, 'Stand up for who you are. Be proud of who you are.'

There's nothing to be ashamed of," she explained. "I don't know where your research will *go*, but every little bit of making a difference for the people who follow, it's worth it."

As previous studies found (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007), the participating administrators' openness or closetedness regarding their sexual identities directly influenced their levels of authenticity in their respective administrative positions. Each participant had his/her own reasons for coming out or remaining closeted. Principal Alex's personal integrity drove him to come out as a teacher when he felt personally attacked upon discovering the word "homo" carved into his desk. In his case, coming out was a means of combatting homophobic bullying in his classroom. Alex ultimately experienced stronger connections with his students, a finding congruent with previous research (DeJean, 2007; Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000) concerning "out" LGBT educators.

Principal Edward's personal integrity was grounded in earning the respect of his school community. Edward felt winning the confidence of parents, administrators, staff members, and students necessitated absolute closetedness. Essentially, he was pressured to project an outwardly heterosexual self-image (Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007). While he felt somewhat remorseful over his decision, he affirmed that an exterior heterosexual image allowed him to more effectively exert leadership for the entire student body and school community, not just the statistically present ten percent of LGBT students or staff members. To accomplish this, Edward resorted to using identity management strategies (Griffin, 1992; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) including wearing a ring that resembled a wedding band. He occasionally found his personal integrity compromised as he encountered parents who commented on his long hours at school and assumed his alleged wife and family waiting at home must be very patient.

Principal Claire spent her professional career in fear (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007) of the negative ramifications that could potentially arise from being "outed." She recalled her frustration over what she perceived to be overly lenient disciplinary consequences issued to a student over a homophobic slur directed at her as a teacher. Her experiences as an administrator mirrored Edward's to an extent as recalled one irate mother who merely assumed she had no children and, thus, questioned her ability to empathize with parents and students.

Assistant Principal Paul recalled a time where his personal integrity instilled him with the courage to confront the hateful remarks of a homophobic student. At the time, Paul was closeted and, thus, more passive in his approach, neglecting to address the matter as a personal attack against him. Paul's experience echoed those of other LG[BT] administrators (Fraynd & Capper, 2003) who've taken assertive stands against homophobia directed toward their students while negating their own sexual identities. Paul's resilience and integrity have since grown, and he is now officially out—unafraid to more assertively confront homophobia in his school.

Content Area Supervisor Fernando's personal integrity was rooted in his cognizance of having chosen a noble profession in which he could inspire students the same way his own teachers had inspired him. He never found it necessary to utilize identity management strategies (Griffin, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) since he believed sexuality had no bearing on one's effectiveness as a leader (Fraynd & Capper, 2003).

While Principal Claire also claimed to have never used identity management strategies (Griffin, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), my direct observation revealed that she employed them on a more subconscious level; for instance, on evenings for school functions when parents were expected to be present, Claire's wardrobe was more visibly feminine. The pressure Claire

felt to conform reinforced Tooms's (2007) notion of "The Right Kind of Queer" and the importance of the outward presentation of self (Lugg & Tooms, 2010).

Principal Barbara advocated authenticity yet remained closeted for the duration of her educational career. Like Claire, she separated her personal and professional identities and opted to wear visibly feminine attire in the workplace (Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007). Her personal integrity made it challenging at times for her to remain silent whenever she heard of LGBT people being spoken of pejoratively. Furthermore, her personal integrity emerged to the forefront following the sudden publicity she endured upon her resignation. She ultimately chose to embrace the opportunity to openly profess her sexuality and participate in this study to empower other members of the LGBT community in their battles against discrimination.

Principal Colin had always fostered close relationships with his staff and secretaries and, thus, believed being open about his sexual orientation would be in his best interest. After consulting the insight of a school counselor who cautioned him about the potential reactions of district office administrators, he made the decision to come out at school.

Content Area Supervisor Lorraine also advocated honesty and professionalism toward oneself as a leader. For her, coming out was never a "big deal." Although she never utilized identity management strategies (Griffin, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) and didn't exactly feel it was essential for her colleagues to know about her sexuality, she believed honesty and personal integrity were of utmost importance if her sexual orientation was ever brought into question.

Compromising Moral Principles

Principals Colin, Barbara, and Claire compromised their moral principles regarding their sexuality while attempting to fulfill their job obligations. Shortly after coming out, Principal Colin noticed that his immediate supervisor, the Executive Director of Elementary Education for

the school district, had begun nitpicking his efficiency as a leader and accusing him of completing tasks incorrectly. Essentially, he soon found himself questioning his competence and his job performance "scrutinized under a microscope." One of Fraynd and Capper's (2003) participants attested that administrators always find themselves more closely scrutinized than teachers. Although Colin's apprehension certainly constituted evidence of fear, for purposes of this research, the circumstances surrounding his experience were interpreted as evidence of homophobia in the school system and as attacks on his personal integrity.

Colin discussed an incident involving a student who had previously relocated but was intending to return to the district. Although he fully intended to follow proper protocol for readmitting the student, his immediate supervisor mandated that he disregard these procedures and, essentially, illegally admit the student. All school administrators in Colin's state of employment were legally bound to only admit students whose parents or guardians provide proof of a home address in the form of a utility bill, rental agreement, or mortgage for a residence confined within the boundaries of their particular school. The prior spring, a young third grader had relocated and enrolled in another school district. The student's mother had informed Colin and his secretaries of their impending relocation, and Colin had personally removed the student from the school's enrollment records. On the first day of school, however, the mother approached Colin to enroll her son claiming that the family never relocated, and Colin refused to expeditiously admit the student. The mother overstepped her bounds and took the issue to the next level of the administrative hierarchy. Colin's supervisor ultimately intervened and demanded—against his better judgment—that he readmit the student. "She *insisted*," Colin explained. "And I said, 'Well that isn't proper procedure'…and she said, '*I'm* telling you to let him in,' so I let him in." Colin's personal integrity combined with the threats of potential fiscal

and legal ramifications compelled him to begin documenting his every action should legal backlash ensue or his competency be brought into question. The finding was critically important because no previous studies of LG[BT] administrators (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007) have ever indicated that the participants were forced to comply with illegal administrative directives shortly after professing their sexuality.

Principal Barbara also found herself slowly but surely targeted by a devout Mormon school board member who began questioning her appointment as principal because of her alleged sexuality. After Barbara's appointment, a member of the school site council who served on her interview panel revealed that this same board member approached her regarding Barbara's sexual orientation and claimed, "I'm concerned about her lifestyle." The board member's son was a sophomore in the high school at the time so she regularly confronted Barbara with concerns pertaining to his schedule or complaints about his teachers. As time went on, Barbara became increasingly cognizant that she had inadvertently created an enemy in this board member. "I was supposed to be impressed because her daughter was married to Mitt Romney's son," Barbara recalled. "However, I had just finished working under Mitt Romney in Massachusetts as a governor, and it was a nightmare so I didn't pay a proper homage to Mitt Romney."

The implicit hostility culminated at a commencement ceremony where the school board member's son was expected to deliver a speech as president of the student council. The administration had mandated that all speeches be reviewed and proofread prior to their delivery. Initially, Barbara perceived his speech as a bit overly pompous and exclusive of the approximately 400 graduates. "He was mentioning his friends by name and everything about his

graduation speech as the president of the student body was self-centered," she explained, "and I *insisted*—and it was quite the battle—that he had to take out all of his personal references and…be able to reach out to every kid who was graduating because it wasn't just his graduation."

Barbara's decision to edit the speech was met with great dismay. The school board member passive aggressively retaliated and circumvented Barbara's leadership, affronting her by presenting her son's previously rejected speech herself at the graduation. Barbara continued,

> She was furious with me, and at graduation that night she was the governing board member who spoke, and so he gave the speech that we approved, and then she got up and gave the speech that we disapproved, and there was no yanking the microphone away from *her*. And she just came back with kind of a smirk on her face.

Principals Barbara, Claire, and Colin also found their personal integrity compromised when district level administrators began questioning their discretion regarding conflict resolution. Unfortunately for these administrators, a job they once passionately loved had evolved into a living nightmare. Colin loved the unpredictability of his job as an administrator. "It was *fun…until* I started getting attacked because of who I am," he explained. "I *constantly* looked behind my back. I *constantly* questioned myself because I was getting called upon by my direct supervisor saying I didn't do something properly when I knew I did too." Colin was most insulted by the fact that his supervisor—a former colleague who he had once mentored—was now questioning his competence. "She used to be a principal with me," he vented. "She used to ask me for advice, and [now] she's telling me that I'm doing things incorrectly and improperly, and it was like, 'What the hell?'"

Principals Colin, Barbara, and Claire each found others' perceptions regarding their sexuality hindering their abilities to effectively fulfill job obligations in their respective positions. No previous studies of LG[BT] administrators (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013;

Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007) had unraveled such a finding. Shortly after coming out, Principal Colin noticed a sudden change in his relationship with his immediate supervisor; she had begun scrutinizing his efficiency as a leader while accusing him of completing tasks incorrectly. Colin shared scenarios in which his supervisor, the Executive Director of Elementary Education for his school district, insisted that he disregard proper protocol to illegally admit a newly enrolled student making him susceptible to mismanaging school fiscal resources.

Principal Barbara found herself targeted by a female Mormon school board member who claimed she was "concerned about [Barbara's] lifestyle" and had a son enrolled at the school. From the moment Barbara was appointed, the school board member had begun exerting her political influence by maintaining a strong visible presence and actively involving herself in school matters to the point where Barbara requested that the superintendent intervene. At a commencement ceremony where the school board member's son was expected to speak as president of the student council, she passive aggressively usurped Barbara's authority on behalf of her son by giving a speech that Barbara had initially rejected for being too self-centered.

Increased Workload and Questioning of Judgment

The pressure to compromise his moral principles was the beginning of innumerable problems for Principal Colin. Matters worsened, and he perceived himself—accurately to be—the only principal who was unfairly being delegated additional tasks, none of which were being requested of his administrative colleagues. Colin's immediate supervisor began questioning his scheduling of the paraprofessionals within his school building, demanding written justification for each of their placements. "[She] told me that she wanted me to write a memo to her about how I was putting each one of the educational assistants in their spot and why," Colin explained.

He felt like a scapegoat as he pondered whether all other administrators in the district were expected to comply with this same directive. "I thought *who else* is being asked to do the same things you are asking me to do," he explained. "I'm *fine* with…writing a memo to you—but I'm *not* fine with that if I'm the only one being asked." As his frustration increased, Colin prepared an e-mail to his immediate supervisor with a carbon copy he intended to send to the Director of Human Resources.

Shockingly enough, Colin's supervisor actually refuted the claims, affirming that she had never asked Colin to write a memo delineating the duties of each staff member. "The next day I got a phone call from her telling me that she never said that, that she never asked me to write a memo, and [asking me] why was I doing that." Colin was left feeling as though his administration had resorted to playing mind games with him.

Principal Colin's district also began limiting his influence over hiring decisions. For the duration of his tenure as a closeted elementary school principal, Colin had always enjoyed full autonomy to hire candidates to fill any teaching vacancies in his building. "Always and forever…in every district, the principal always hired the teachers or the education assistants," he said. "Not ever in my entire career in any of the districts that I worked in did I ever get told who I could hire. Not ever." Shortly after coming out, however, his influence over the hiring process had apparently begun to dwindle. Central office administrators who had once eagerly consulted Colin's insight eventually began curtailing his influence over the interview process. "I never got to interview any of them until the very end," Colin explained. By the time Colin met any of the candidates, other administrators had already narrowed the pool of finalists down without even consulting him.

Not surprisingly, Colin also learned through discussions with his former colleagues that the principal who ultimately succeeded him was treated much more fairly. "There [were] three openings in the school that I just left," Colin explained, "and the lady who took my place has invited the teachers in to help her hire to replace these teachers, which is what I used to do. So therein lies…proof right there that I was the only one [treated unfairly]."

Colin wasn't the only participant who experienced a radical change in treatment attributed to his sexuality. After three consecutive years of flawless evaluations, Principal Barbara described how she was suddenly placed under close scrutiny as her relationship with the Mormon school board member deteriorated. "I got called down to the district office and told that I'm being put on a plan of improvement because…there were people who didn't like my leadership style, and I needed to work on *that*," she explained.

Perhaps most troubling was the lack of consistency in the reasons cited for monitoring Barbara's leadership and, ultimately, refusing to renew her contract. The trepidation commenced with a survey designed to assess her leadership that had allegedly been distributed to her faculty and yielded unsatisfactory scores. The situation was further exasperated by Barbara's strained relationship with an administrative colleague. "I had an assistant principal who was absolutely inept, and I pushed at her and…went toe-to-toe with her sometimes," Barbara explained. Barbara was offended by the blatant favoritism the assistant principal exhibited toward certain students when administering corrective actions for their behavioral infractions. "She just broke rules all the time for the [students] that she liked and the ones who she didn't like, they just got the book thrown at them."

Despite the ensuing trepidation, Barbara exerted her authority to combat incompetent teachers. "I had probably five or six teachers who were not doing their job, and I was pushing at

them," she affirmed. Unfortunately, office politics soon permeated the dynamics of her administrative team; both one of the allegedly incompetent teachers and the incompetent assistant principal were closely acquainted with the Mormon board member. Thus, unsurprisingly, Barbara's plan for improvement was immediately reinstated. Upon returning from the holiday break the following January, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources was due to assess Barbara's performance and remove her from the plan. However, that never transpired. Instead, another survey was piloted in the school to again monitor the staff's opinion of her efficiency. Barbara continued,

> So she interviewed eleven teachers, called me down a week later, shared the results, and she said, 'They're good, [Barbara]. They all look the same. It's you're honest, you're open, everybody had one or two things they wished you did differently, but they also had things that they liked the way you did. So…we're going to take you off the plan of improvement.' I go, 'Okay.' Another week goes by, and still no coming off my plan of improvement.

Unfortunately for Colin and Barbara, matters only continued to worsen and ultimately culminated in the decisions of their respective school districts to not renew their contracts. Principal Claire would probably have experienced a similar fate, but as a tenured administrator in her district, the only available feasible option for disguising any professional retribution entailed transferring her to another administrative position.

Some of the participants experienced what they perceived to be a sudden increase in their workload combined with intensified scrutiny of their judgment upon coming out. The finding is noteworthy because none of the participants from previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007) had ever reported such claims. Principal Colin eventually found himself facing pressure to compromise his moral principles. As matters proceeded to worsen for him, he noticed he was being given an increased workload in comparison with other principals in the

district. His supervisor, the Executive Director of Elementary Education demanded that he begin documenting the schedules and assignments of each staff member, a monumental time-consuming task neither he nor any other principal had ever been asked to do prior. When Colin reported the matter to the Director of Human Resources, his supervisor suddenly denied ever making the request, proceeding to make him appear more incompetent.

Colin also found himself suddenly excluded from hiring decisions. For the duration of his tenure, his judgment had always been valued in the hiring of staff. Upon coming out, he soon found his supervisor and other administrators questioning his judgment and excluding him from the interview process; essentially, they began narrowing the applicant pool down on their own and invited Colin to participate only as a mere formality at the conclusion of the process.

Principal Barbara shared a similar experience. While she already knew she had made an enemy in the Mormon school board member, she now found herself suddenly under close scrutiny and placed on a plan of improvement after three consecutive years of flawless evaluations. Most troubling was how the administrators of her district neglected to cite any valid reasons for placing her on a plan of improvement in the first place.

Had Principal Claire not already been tenured, she too would have suffered a similar fate; instead, she was merely transferred to another school building.

Resilience with the Threat of Job Loss

For some of the participants, their sexuality became an underlying factor that guided their impending transfers to other positions or the termination of their contracts for employment. Principal Claire illuminated the circumstances surrounding her push for establishing a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) at the high school where she had previously served as principal. It is worth noting that she was ultimately transferred from the high school to serve as principal of

the middle school in the same district. Claire recounted the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the GSA once student interest had been sparked:

> …I put it in my budget, and it was my turn to present my budget…and they listened to everything. And then he [the Superintendent of Schools] asked the other people to leave, and he said, 'You need to take it out. Our community is not ready for that.' And I said, 'Well, I know it's ready for it because we have kids, and it's the leading cause of suicide in kids this age so we *have* to be ready for it.' And he said, 'Well, I think that this is a bad influence, and that's why I'm asking you to put in for a transfer to the middle school.' And I said, 'I don't want to go to the middle school. I never taught in the middle school. I don't know anything about the middle school. This is something we need *here*.'

Although Claire was not "out," she attested that she believed the Superintendent of Schools initially proposed her transfer over speculation of her sexual identity based on preconceived notions of her exterior appearance and presentation of self. The central office administrators remained unreceptive to her proposal and student advocacy. Matters continued worsening for Claire as the Superintendent of Schools acted vindictively and attempted to make her professional life miserable. Similarly to Colin, Claire's administration began nitpicking her efficiency and finding faults in her performance when none had previously existed. No prior studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007) have ever illuminated such vindictive actions on behalf of district-wide administrative teams. That is, no prior studies have ever documented such evidence of professional retribution. She continued:

> From day one for a whole other year, it was a brawl. It was a bloodbath. He was writing me up for things that didn't even happen. He wrote me up for not having a multimedia presentation at Back to School Night. And I was like, 'Okay, I *did*. Here it is. You were sitting there.' It was an iMovie that I created myself about the whole curriculum. 'So you can say it wasn't good, but you can't say I didn't do it.' And it's still sitting in my file up there.

Claire allowed me to review the letter in her file; as she stated, the letter questioned her effectiveness as a school leader and noted her failure to follow directives on utilizing technology

while representing her school to the community. She proceeded to reveal how the newfound criticisms continued:

> So he would just write me up, write me up, write me up. And toward the end of that next year, I realized that he was going to find *something* to hang me on. There would be $5.00 of Snickers bars missing from the cafeteria, and their fingerprints would be on me. They would find *something* because when people are willing to *lie* to get their way.

Nevertheless, despite Claire's concerns over the retention of her position as high school principal, her devotion to her students combined with her personal resilience led her to confront the administration with the prospect of launching a GSA again the following year. She continued:

> So towards the end of that year, I put it back in the budget again. And I said, 'Well, would you do this? If I agreed to go, would you leave it in?' And he's like, 'I would do that.' And I said, 'Then we're going to start with a clean slate because if it flops and it doesn't go anywhere and it's not of any use, then you cut it or not cut it. I don't care whatever it is, but we're not getting along, and if I go to the middle school, truce? And we start with a clean slate? Whatever happens up there happens up there. And I'll try to support and talk well and leave it go.' And I did until the day he left.

Claire went on to reveal how she had actually initially consulted GLSEN when her relationship with the central office administration had begun to sour. According to GLSEN, Claire had enough evidence to file a lawsuit. Her fear of publicity, however, led her to avoid pursuing legal representation. "They said, 'You have a clear lawsuit,'" she explained, "but I [didn't] want money…I [didn't] want press. I just [wanted] the kids to have this club." Thus, Claire gracefully accepted her transfer to the middle school and ultimately came to embrace the newfound challenges that came along with it. She did reveal, however, that the administration had also retaliated against the lesbian teacher who had initially approached Claire with the idea of launching a GSA by failing to renew her contract; unfortunately, the teacher had not yet earned tenure despite having previously earned glowing evaluations.

Principal Colin was also the victim of institutionalized bullying while planning the anti-bullying Acceptance Week at his school. The persecution he endured began with a phone call from a homophobic parent questioning his decision to have the students wear pink shirts. The parent had assumed that he had made students wear pink shirts because he was gay when, in reality, pink was the symbolic international color for anti-bullying. Colin explained that while he had initially contemplated young male students' reluctance to wear pink, he remained adamant on promoting an environment to combat bullying. "If you go and Google International Stand Up to Bullying Day in the country of Canada, it *is* pink, and they call it Pink Shirt Day," he explained. "So I called it Pink Week, and I didn't call it Anti-Bullying, I called it Acceptance Week. Accept people for who you are." The week culminated with a school-wide photograph of all 600 students wearing pink shirts arranged in the courtyard to spell out the words "Stand Up" in reference to their efforts to combat nationwide bullying.

Perhaps most disturbing of all was how the district level administrators made no attempt whatsoever to either compliment Colin or acknowledge his efforts in preparation for this huge undertaking which, nonetheless, ultimately reaped positive media reception for his school. Colin vehemently expressed his frustration:

> The superintendent didn't say 'Good for you,' my supervisor Rita ignored it, never came over even though I asked her to come over and see what we were doing, and then at the school board meeting—and they never said *one* thing about *anything* that I did, and it was *all over* the news in a metropolitan area of 3 million people. And then not one person from our district office ever said, 'Good job,' ever said 'Good for you,' or *anything*. Not *one* person…Not one compliment.

Colin wasn't the only person outraged by the lack of public acknowledgment and praise. The mother who had assisted him and the music teacher in preparing the flash mob also took extreme offense and, subsequently, decided to vocally express her dismay at the following school board meeting. To her and Colin's shock, the administration blatantly denied having any

knowledge of the event. "She *asked why* there were no compliments being given to the principal…because of the media," he explained, "and they actually said that they didn't *know* that it was going on, that I didn't *tell*. And she said, 'But he *did* because I was there when he sent the e-mail.' And they just *ignored* her."

Not long afterward, the board decided not to renew Colin's contract, and the media happened to be in attendance while this announcement was made. Representatives from numerous network stations and channels were present, both locally and nationally, and the board's decision garnered international attention as news of an openly gay principal not being rehired broke across the United States, England, and several other countries all over the world.

Colin proceeded to reflect on the negative ramifications his coming out had on his career. He offered the stunning revelation of how one particular anchorwoman had asked him the same exact question he was asked in his interview for this study. She "asked if I thought [coming out] would affect my career," he shared, "and…I never even thought about that…and it *did*. It horribly affected my career…after being so *so good* at what I did, how did my career end up like that?"

I asked Colin for more specific details surrounding the decision not to renew his contract, and he opted to share a very personal conversation that occurred behind closed doors between him and his immediate supervisor which illustrated how homophobia blatantly influenced his termination. According to Colin, this particular supervisor had previously been friends with him and initially supported every administrative directive he ever issued. He elaborated:

> It was like she flicked a light switch on and off when I went [into her office]…She said, 'You know, you really should look for another job.' And I looked at her and I said, 'Why? What did I do wrong? No, I'm not going to look for another job!' And…she said, *'And you need to keep your gay life to yourself.'* (italics added) And she said, 'You need to not talk about the gay pride parade at your school.' That's what she said.

When questioned about other potential factors that may have impacted his terms of employment, Colin unveiled how another influential homophobic parent may have ignited the events into motion. An administrative assistant who Colin was friends with informed him that this parent had apparently contacted higher level administrators in the district and falsely accused him of engaging in public displays of affection with his partner at school events. "This loud parent wrote a letter to the superintendent," he explained, "and his administrative assistant…told me that she said horrible things about me, about my partner, and said that she didn't like that we came to a music concert at the school holding hands and kissing in front of the kids."

Colin's body language indicated the pain of the memory and how appalled he was that a parent would go to the extreme of fabricating stories that he evidently believed may have been the catalyst sparking his eventual termination. He denied all of the claims and insisted that had it not been for their plans to attend an event afterward, his partner would not have even been at school with him. "I never saw that e-mail," he continued. "I don't know if parents sent e-mails to the superintendent and not even to the school, [or if] there were more e-mails sent than what I know of, but I never heard of any of them, and I never saw any."

To this day, Colin remains adamant that no other parents had called or complained about his openness regarding his sexuality except for the one who had mocked his choice of colored shirts for the Acceptance Week. "There was not one person…who came to the office and said anything to my secretaries," he explained. "They didn't care, but somebody at the district office *did*."

Nevertheless, he could never have foreseen the downward spiral of negative ramifications that would ultimately ensue. Colin's convictions were evident through the passion displayed in his voice as he corroborated previous research findings (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009;

Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Tooms, 2007) by recalling the necessity of downplaying his romantic relationship in the public's eye. He vented his frustration:

> The sad thing is people who are gay or lesbian or bisexual, whatever they are…should be able to walk around and hold hands or even kiss or put your arms around each other in any public *anything* if [they] want because everybody else does who's heterosexual…But it isn't okay for *me* to do that because I was the principal of an elementary school where little kids might question or they're not used to that and they might wonder…

Barbara also chronicled the dramatic events ultimately culminating in the loss of her position as a high school principal. Perhaps most disturbing were the false rumors and accusations of sexual harassment underlying the numerous inquiries into her efficiency as a leader. Furthermore, prior to the sudden revelation not to renew her contract, Barbara had been falsely given the impression she had been successfully meeting each of the requirements in her plan of improvement during her probationary period. She recounted the traumatic events that commenced on an early Monday morning the day before state standardized assessments were to be administered:

> The Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and the Human Resources Director walk into my office at 8:00 A.M. that Monday morning and said, 'You need to pack up all your things. You're on administrative leave. There's been a complaint filed against you for sexual harassment.' And they took out one of my assistant principals as well…And so we were both placed on paid administrative leave for sexual harassment.

On Tuesday, Barbara and her assistant principal were summoned by central office administrators and questioned over remarks that had allegedly been spoken. "Most of them were not even in the realm of sexual harassment," Barbara explained, "[but] they asked me if I had ever said them, if I had ever heard my assistant principal say them, and, if so, in what *context*." Both were dismissed at the conclusion of the interviews, and each received a phone call that evening to attend another meeting at 7:30 AM the following morning. The phone call indicated that no evidence had been found regarding sexual harassment, and Barbara was mistakenly led to believe that she would be reinstated. She explained the unfortunate events that ultimately

transpired. The assistant principal was told to return to her post while Barbara was asked to remain and later told that another meeting would be held that following Friday at 2:00 PM to review her plan of improvement in hopes of arriving at a determination on it. She continued,

> I went down on Friday, and…even though two of the three people in the room had already told me I'd done everything I needed to do to come off of it, the same guy said to me, 'I've determined that you have *not* met the plan of improvement. Therefore we are going to *not* renew your contract. You have the option to resign.' And I signed off on the papers.

It became apparent that the administration in Barbara's school district exerted every possible effort to conceal the true factors influencing her dismissal. Barbara had the opportunity to review e-mail exchanges between the Superintendent of Schools and the school board members upon their availability to the public. To her surprise, the Superintendent of Schools had just previously advocated her leadership and intended to renew her contract for the upcoming school year. Just the next day, however, Barbara was suddenly charged with sexual harassment. Because of these revelations, she candidly expressed intense frustration attributed to her naiveté and failure to consult legal representation for the duration of the ordeal. "In retrospect, I should have had a lawyer with me right from the very start," she claimed, "but I trust people. I was doing my job. I just *didn't* see this coming." She described the correspondence she witnessed in the e-mails:

> I got e-mails that went back and forth between the superintendent and the board, and the night before I was taken out on sexual harassment he sent the board president an e-mail saying, 'We've looked, we've looked, and we've *looked*. There's *nothing*. There's *no* issues with [Barbara]. I'm going to renew her for the…[upcoming] school year.' And the next day is the day I got pulled out on sexual harassment. That Wednesday, he sent out *another* e-mail saying, 'Well now that we've had the sexual harassment charge' even though it was unfounded—he didn't *say* that, but it *was* unfounded—'I concur with you and so we will not renew her.'

In retrospect, Principal Barbara "absolutely" believed her sexuality influenced the school board's decision not to renew her contract. Recalling her interactions with the vexatious female

school board member and her religious affiliation, Barbara proclaimed, "If you know much about the Mormon religion, *absolutely* [my sexuality] was a driving force, and I *know* that board member was able to use that to leverage it with some of the other people," she continued. It is interesting to note, however, that the issues evolving around Barbara's sexual orientation did not materialize until much later. Barbara explained how it was the school site council member, her ally, who insisted her resignation was attributed to her sexuality and the inappropriate comment made by the Mormon board member. Out of anger and respect for Barbara, this site council member chose to inform the press of the matter. Barbara explained:

> The sexual orientation piece didn't come out until much *later*. I didn't realize that was a factor until [the school site council member] brought it up and went to the press about it. They've *denied* it, but I *know* it's a piece of it…It was like falling down the rabbit hole…It was just *beyond* understanding.

Matters worsened for Barbara as she came to realize that another school board member already had a candidate in mind to fill Barbara's imminent vacancy. She also revealed the sudden betrayal of two additional school board members who had previously been her allies. "There were two individuals on the board, and I thought I had their support," she began, "but it was just such a huge political ball behind the scenes that I ended up with *none* of their support." Essentially, Barbara's sexuality made her an easy target for dismissal.

The trauma of imminent job loss in the face of discrimination equipped each of these respective participants with great levels of resilience. Colin's resilience was evident in his words while reflecting on his termination "because…it was so *obvious* to all the people that I didn't do anything wrong in my work," he explained, "and it was when I came out gay that they decided they didn't like me." His vehemence and passion for the profession were further evident as he reflected on the words of his community members, immediate colleagues, and people from across the world once his story garnered international exposure:

> Thousands of people were telling me that they couldn't believe that I was leaving and that I had to leave because of who I am because they *saw* what it was like in the school. The grandmothers who volunteered, the grandfathers, the people from Boeing, the people from Costco, the people who came into the school and they were going, 'What the hell is going on here?' And yet, that school district got away with what they got away with—saying that I just wasn't a good administrator which was a good whop of shit…I *loved* what I did. And then all of a sudden, the people who I worked for just most recently decided because I was gay, that I was *no good*.

Despite the negative ramifications on his health, Colin's resilience was further evident in his yearning to pursue legal action over his termination to serve as a role model for the gay community. Unfortunately for Colin, although it was blatantly obvious to him, his attorney, and a judge that he was the victim of sexual orientation discrimination, there simply was not enough evidence available to warrant a conviction. "There is no law about being mean," Colin vented, "but just the fact that they settled with me [out of court] says that they did something wrong because why would you settle with someone just because you want to fire them?"

As Barbara reminisced over losing her principalship, she also offered a heartfelt testimonial illuminating her resilience in the face of oppression. She remained adamant that if she even had the ability to turn back time, she would not have done anything differently. "Even knowing the outcome, I *still* would not go back and change things," she insisted. Her resilience was further evident through her commitment to students and her passion for the profession. "The last year and a half of my life has been the most difficult time of my life, and it's been the best time of my life," she affirmed. Her conviction shined through the determination she exhibited to continue following the path of her vocation elsewhere. She explained:

> Education has always been and will only continue to grow as my passion. I truly believe that it's about kids, and it always has to be about what's best for kids, and that's always been my guiding light in any decision that I make. It always comes down to that, 'Is this in the best interest of the kids that I'm serving?'

While her journey hasn't been easy, Barbara continued seeking employment in educational leadership. Her resilience and devotion to students are what continued to guide her through the process. She shared some of her frustration over having to disclose on job applications the circumstances surrounding her recent resignation:

> I *did* apply for a couple of high school jobs, and I was pretty much persona non grata…so there were an awful lot of people that just didn't want to touch me with a ten-foot pole. Plus when you fill out applications, there's always a section of have you ever been dismissed for discipline? Have you ever been non-renewed? Have you ever resigned to avoid dismissal? And so I had to put that into every one of my applications.

Barbara shared with me how she had recently earned herself a second interview for a position in which her recent termination had come up as a topic of conversation. The employers had evidently checked her background, and they invited her to elaborate upon the recent gap in her employment. She explained,

> All they said to me was, 'We appreciate the fact that you've been upfront and honest, and it doesn't matter.' Because I said, 'My last employer is going to tell you that they will *not* rehire me.' And they said, 'We don't care.' So I think it depends on who's doing the interviewing and what their outlook is on things, how progressive, how liberal, how *compassionate*.

Lorraine was also victimized by sexual orientation discrimination in her previous school district where she held the position of Athletic Director. Two months after being hired in 2004, she began a relationship with the then-high school principal of the district. The district was "a tumultuous place for administration," she claimed, and plagued by frequent administrative turnover and heated conflicts with the teachers' union. In an attempt to eradicate the problems, the previous Superintendent of Schools was fired and a new one appointed in his place. In order to smoothen negotiations with the teachers' union and rectify conflicts over the collective bargaining agreement, the newly appointed Superintendent of Schools sought to appoint a new administrative team of her own choosing; each of the previous administrators was dismissed one

at a time. In July 2006, the new superintendent requested the resignation of Lorraine's partner, the then-high school principal. She ultimately refused but was later terminated by the school board on the grounds of poor performance.

According to Lorraine, the two of them became easy targets because of their lesbian relationship. "We were out and open about our relationship," she explained. "People first assume, and then there are rumors, and then someone asks. So by that time we just told the truth." Lorraine alleged that some colleagues frequently ignored her administrative directives to make her appear incompetent while others outwardly joked that "A.D." which is typically understood to be shorthand for "athletic director" actually stood for "another dyke." In another incident, a note was placed on Lorraine's car stating: "You nasty whore athletic director. I know how to stick it down your throat." Lorraine filed an internal complaint and decided to pursue criminal charges after a handwriting analysis revealed the note's writer to be a colleague. The harassment then grew worse, with colleagues more frequently referring to her and her partner as "dykes."

Only a month after her partner was dismissed, the newly appointed Superintendent of Schools terminated Lorraine contending she was ineffective and unfit for the position of Athletic Director. Lorraine remains adamant that her firing was "clearly retaliatory in nature" and alleged that it took place just two months after she was reappointed as Athletic Director and awarded a merit increase. Her experience is also particularly noteworthy because she was victimized by the teachers' union and not by higher-level administrators or parents like the other participants. Furthermore, unlike the other participants, Lorraine took action against the school board by filing a lawsuit for wrongful termination. She ultimately won the case and was awarded $800,000 in damages by the jury. Although Lorraine passionately affirms that her career in education and

school administration has been predominantly positive, she has endured a handful of negative experiences attributed to her sexuality. Unlike the other participants, Lorraine's resilience stems from her optimism, conviction, and the personal integrity displayed by her reluctance to just accept any such negativity. For this reason, I have chosen to classify this data specifically under this theme and not the theme of fear.

The sexual orientations of three of the eight participants adversely affected their employment and corroborated previous research findings regarding fears of job security (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007). Principal Claire actively resisted her central office leaders with her attempts to establish a GSA on her school campus to benefit LGBT youth. Higher-level administrators staunchly opposed the idea believing it to be a bad influence for students and began criticizing her job performance; Claire was suddenly accused of inefficiency and blamed for errors she had no control over. After a period of struggle, her superintendent permitted the organization to be launched so long as Claire agreed to transfer to another school building.

Principal Colin was also victimized by discrimination while conducting the Acceptance Week anti-bullying initiative in his school. An anonymous person believed to be a parent had called the school questioning his decision to have the students wear pink T-shirts; the caller assumed Colin had selected the color pink because he was gay. Furthermore, none of the district level administrators had remotely commended Colin's efforts in planning and executing this taxing project. A mother who had assisted Colin throughout the whole process was so offended over the lack of public acknowledgment that she confronted the superintendent at a board meeting and questioned the lack of administrative support given to Colin as the principal; to everyone's dismay, the superintendent denied having any such knowledge of the project.

Shortly after, the school board voted not to renew Colin's contract. The media had been in attendance at this meeting, and Colin's fate garnered international exposure. An anchorwoman for a news station reportedly asked him if he ever believed coming out would be detrimental to his career, a possibility Colin had never even contemplated; in the end, he realized coming out had "horribly" impacted his career after years of such glowing reviews and effective leadership. He also spoke about a fiery conversation that occurred privately in his immediate supervisor's office in which she blatantly stated, "You know, you really should look for another job. And you need to keep your gay life to yourself," proving that homophobia played a role in his termination. Colin also vehemently revealed how another influential mother made matters worse for him through an offensive e-mail she allegedly sent to central office administrators falsely accusing him of engaging in public displays of affection at school functions with his partner.

Principal Barbara, like Colin, also endured false accusations; she was the victim of false allegations of sexual harassment made against her at school. Prior to her forced resignation, Barbara was falsely led to believe she had successfully been fulfilling all of the requirements to be taken off her plan of improvement. Most surprising of all was the nature of the correspondence between the Superintendent of Schools and the school board members; Barbara had the opportunity to review e-mail exchanges when those messages became public record. At first, the Superintendent of Schools had advocated for the renewal of Barbara's contract. When the allegations of sexual harassment were suddenly made, however, he mysteriously concurred with the school board not to renew her for the following school year.

Politics also hindered Barbara's employment as a second school board member had allegedly been seeking a principalship vacancy for a candidate he already had in mind. Although

the Mormon school board member's remark was not unveiled until much later in the process, Barbara firmly maintains that her sexuality made her an easy target for removal, primarily because of the stringent nature of Mormon beliefs. She regretted her choice not to consult an attorney and attributed that to her naiveté and willingness to trust people.

Colin found comfort in knowing that he had the support of community members, parents, and colleagues from within his school and people from all across the world. His resilience was also evident in his desire to serve as a role model for the LGBT community in a lawsuit against the administrators in his district. Unfortunately, as the judge and his attorney advised him, while it was obvious why he was dismissed, there was simply insufficient evidence to warrant a conviction.

Barbara's passion for education continues inspiring her on her journey toward securing another position in educational leadership. Although disclosing her resignation from the previous position was always a source of discomfort, she remained hopeful a compassionate hiring manager would soon realize her potential and grant her the opportunity to continue leading students and staff in another capacity.

Content Area Supervisor Lorraine fought her own battle against discrimination when she was wrongfully dismissed as Athletic Director in a prior district because of her sexual orientation. Shortly after being hired, Lorraine began a relationship with the then-high school principal. At the time, the district was in turmoil over heated negotiations between administrators and the teachers' union. A new superintendent was appointed who decided to resolve matters by hiring her own team of administrators. Lorraine and her partner were both terminated along with several other administrators in the district. Lorraine sued and ultimately

emerged victorious in the lawsuit with a jury awarding her $800,000 in damages for wrongful termination.

Theme 5: Mutual Respect Between Administrators, Staff Members, and Students

The underlying binding experiences for all of the participants also stemmed from a mutual respect and desire for understanding presented by their colleagues and students alike. For the purposes of this research, the theme of mutual respect will be divided into three additional subsections: 1) First, it will take into account degrees of sensitivity toward diversity and bullying through the administrators' enforcement of discipline; 2) Second, it will encompass how coming out or remaining closeted potentially influenced the relationships between the participating administrators and their staff members; and 3) Third, it will examine the mutual understanding between students and administrators, particularly those administrators who were "out."

Handling Student Discipline

The journey towards a respectful coexistence of diversity inspired the participants' disciplinary styles. Alex's respect for his students and sensitivity toward bullying were evident when he was questioned about the strategies he utilized for disciplining infractions committed against students for their differences. Although he did not issue outlandish or inappropriate consequences for such actions, he remained adamant that bullying was unacceptable in his school. Alex explained:

> I mean…I don't do things that I'm not supposed to do…[or] have disproportionate disciplinary responses to these things. However, I have *no* problem whatsoever calling a parent and saying you need to come in *right now* and we're going to have a conversation about what is or is not okay for…whoever it is to say either to me or to other [students]…I've never had kids say anything bad to *me*, but it's always toward other students.

Alex explained how his disciplinary measures generally consisted of a "stern talking to, [and] if necessary, we called the parents in." He always ensured that his students understood that

the use of gay slurs translated into personal attacks against him as their principal regardless if he was present during their use or not. "You're disrespecting me even though I'm not around," he claimed. "And then a little tear comes down, and they feel guilty."

Paul echoed Alex's sentiment. "I'd like to think that I'm very even in my judgment and in my way of interacting with the students," he said. "Obviously there's consequence to action so I think it's pretty consistent there. We haven't ever, knock on wood, had any serious homophobic thing that's come to light…like kids getting beaten up…or anti gay slurs being used against them in that process. Usually it's been kids calling somebody 'gay' or making fun of somebody who's gay or perceived as gay…" Depending upon severity, consequences ranged from frank discussions with students to suspensions. He shared one account of a troubling female student:

> There was this…girl who was calling [Alex] 'faggot' in Spanish over and over. She wouldn't stop. It was like she was obsessed. And then the parents came in and she did the same thing with the parents there…She had all kinds of issues so I think she was just kind of perpetually suspended for one thing after another. But I would like to think that I would be probably unbiased, and it would kind of follow in the realm of any type of hate crime. We would have a similar reaction if someone is making fun of their religion or whatever.

Whether personal or not, Paul utilized what appeared to be a relatively traditional approach to discipline and problem solving consisting of unraveling the accuracy of facts, collecting information, and analyzing the sequence of events in order to reach the most satisfactory and productive resolution possible. In matters concerning homophobia, however, Paul's predominant concern evolved around deciphering the basis for the students' actions or comments. This often involved determining if the actions or comments evidenced learned behavior with familial roots or from friends and referring the matter to the school social worker.

Unlike Paul and Alex, Edward was adamant that he would "throw the book" at any students who utilized homophobic slurs or otherwise bullied other students on the bases of race, ethnicity, or religion. "I suspend for things here that other people in other high schools would *never* suspend for," he asserted, "because we will *not* have that kind of culture." To set the tone and establish an atmosphere conducive for diversity, Edward began each semester by engaging his students in frank discussions regarding his expectations for their conduct, the importance of tolerance, and mutual respect. He explained:

> This is *not* a school where intolerance is tolerated *at all*. This is a school where their principal calls in every grade, the 9th, the 10th, the 11th, the 12th grade at the start of every term, talks to them about high expectations, talks to them about dignity for self, dignity for school, dignity for others, acceptance of difference, the power of words, not to call people 'retard,' not to call people 'fag,' and goes through with his students *himself*...things like tolerance, pluralism, diversity, [and] to appreciate.

For Edward, student disciplinary infractions were also viewed as opportunities to teach students important life lessons while shaping them into more worldly well-rounded citizens. As leader of his school, he cultivated a universal effort to teach tolerance through a common mission encompassing the support of the entire faculty and student body. "It may be that I have to deal with [behavioral issues] one at a time," he explained, "but it is something that we work on as a faculty, and it is something that I will always drive home and push forward—that there must be tolerance." Edward further elaborated on his approach to student discipline:

> We do *not* attack folks who are different from us, and we do not look down upon those...That's the essence of being a global citizen—appreciating difference. And if you can't do that in your own school, well you're not going to do that in the world, and the world is just going to eat you up because everybody in the world is not white and from [here] and whatever it is that you are. That's just being unrealistic, and if you did these things in the workplace in a professional setting, you'd be gone. So it's also good preparation for life, and I see it *that* way.

As someone who had "always been a bit of a rebel," Principal Barbara prided herself on being a self-professed student advocate. Respecting her students as individuals was an integral

factor of the groundwork for her success as an administrator. "I always have believed there's more different ways to approach education, to approach kids," she explained. "There's more effective ways." Barbara acknowledged that there were times over the course of her nine years in education where colleagues did not agree with her philosophy regarding discipline. Barbara did not believe merely following established protocol in the student handbook would alter students' behavior. Similarly to Alex, she was predominantly concerned with why students behaved the way they did and hoped to "humanize education." She described her approach to discipline:

> We can look at kids as individuals. Everyone comes with something different from their background, and I see it as our job as educators to not only deliver the academic instruction but also to provide those life skills for kids that will allow them to survive when they move on.

Although each participant differed in his or her philosophy toward student discipline, all were unified by a common desire to promote atmospheres tolerant of student diversity, a finding corroborating previous research (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007) involving LG[BT] administrators who, despite fearing disclosure, actively confronted teacher, student, and community homophobia. While Principal Alex never issued his students corrective actions disproportionate in nature to their actual behavioral infractions, he still asserted that bullying was unacceptable and intolerable behavior in his school.

Assistant Principal Paul and Principal Barbara both utilized more traditional approaches to student discipline with primary focuses rooted in understanding the surrounding circumstances behind problematic student behaviors. Their approaches involved the collection of facts and background information behind said behaviors, both of which proved integral toward their successes in reaching through to their students and respecting them as unique individuals.

Principal Edward was authoritative and sternly disciplined students who engaged in any form of bullying on the bases of race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. He viewed discipline as an opportunity to teach students important "life lessons" grounded in good citizenship and humane conduct while helping them evolve into more worldly citizens.

Selective Omission and Respect Between Administrators and Staff

As previous research involving LGBT educators affirmed, the choice to come out or remain closeted to staff members presented both positive and negative ramifications for the participating administrators (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jackson, 2007; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Paul described coming out as "something that's ongoing," a process that essentially "happens over and over" but "never ends." A noteworthy dichotomy emerged from the data; over the course of their careers, the administrators in the study consistently wrestled with two challenges: 1) Deciphering what exactly being "out" personally entailed for each of them respectively, including who should be made aware of their sexuality and why; and 2) Their preconceived notions of just "how much [was] too much to share" with staff members.

Each of the participants perceived the meaning of the "coming out" process differently. Assistant Principal Paul understood being out to imply being "honest about oneself," as well as being "true and proud of who you are most deeply as an individual," while Principal Edward, similarly to Griffin (1992) and Fraynd and Capper (2003), eloquently conceptualized the coming out process as a "three ring circus" lying on a continuum. He elaborated:

> I think…there are different *levels* of being out. There's being out to your family, both nuclear and extended, so that's one level of it. There's being out to your friends, that's a second level. And then there's a third level, being out to those around you on a regular basis, including those who you work with.…being out in *my* mind would mean that

> you're out in all three, or you don't…make any conscience effort to *hide* that from any of those three circles.

Principal Barbara also acknowledged the various "phases of being out" while Principal Colin added that "being out would be people knowing that you have a partner, [and] that it's okay to talk about what you and your partner did last night [in an office setting] like anybody else would, including married heterosexual married couples…"

For several of the participants, both closeted and out alike, selective omission became a routine aspect of their daily lives (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Selective omission may be understood as the voluntarily omission of details from one's personal life while engaged in daily conversation or in specific situational contexts. The extent of selective omission exercised by the participants varied greatly based on individual comfort levels and underlying degrees of mutual respect between the administrators and their staff members. In some instances, selective omission even became synonymous with the use of identity management strategies (Griffin, 1992; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Closeted participants remained vigilant about changing pronouns in casual conversation and often refrained from sharing intimate details about their personal lives.

Edward believed that being out would undermine the necessity for such vigilance. "It would mean you might casually say to *anybody*, 'I was on a date last week, and it was with a guy and I really like him,'" he claimed, "or 'God, I went on a date Saturday night with this dude, and, Jesus, it was terrible.'" Not all out participants, however, agreed with his sentiment. For some of them, being out still necessitated censoring the extent of personal information shared. For example, Colin explained, "I would share [with my colleagues] maybe a little bit about going to a pride event or something, but not much of it because I don't know that people would want to

hear about that unless they were also gay. I don't think they would want to know." Edward also addressed the risks posed by students potentially eavesdropping on their teachers' conversations. "The thing about children is that children listen to their teachers talk," he stated. "As discreetly as one could possibly be, when teachers pass each other in the hall, kids are listening to your conversation." Thus, an administrator who voluntarily shares personal details about his or her life with colleagues but chooses to selectively omit these from interactions with students may still inadvertently endure greater intimate exposure than desired. Edward cited evidence from personal experience:

> Kids listen to *my* conversation all day long and then proceed to repeat them…and I *know* that because other kids will come up to me. If I say something during the third period, I'll see a student at lunch, and *another* student will come up to me and say, 'Were you saying that X, Y, and Z?' because kids talk.

Public displays of affection also emerged in the data as another source of potential discomfort for individuals in the workplace. Even as an openly gay principal, Colin spoke of the necessity for censoring such behaviors in the workplace. Engaging in public displays of affection might have resulted in otherwise supportive staff members feeling uneasy. "I didn't *hide* the fact that I had a partner," he explained, "and I talked about it, and I had pictures of him and myself in my office—not pictures of kissing or anything like that—but pictures that everybody else would have of their wives or their family or boyfriends or children." The school periodically held music programs or fundraising activities at night, and although Colin often brought his partner with him, they would never hold hands or otherwise engage in any public displays of affection.

The participating administrators in the study were not alone in exerting selective omission during their interactions with colleagues. Principal Claire illuminated how even staff members, despite good intent, engaged in their own variations of the practice, most frequently by

circumventing any allusions to sexual orientation to avoid transcending professional boundaries or causing their leaders unnecessary anxiety. Consequently, the closeted participants acknowledged the strong possibility that their staff members had already long suspected their sexual orientation, albeit without verification. Previous research involving the experiences of LG[BT] school administrators yielded similar findings (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Tooms, 2007). For the majority of Claire's life, the only people with genuine verifiable evidence of her sexuality were her close friends. "So is that really coming out?" Claire wondered, "Because, I don't know, if you are out with just a small group of friends, is that coming out? I don't really think it is in a sense." As a closeted principal nearing her retirement, she expressed remorse over several missed opportunities to come out to her staff and establish a "more honest" relationship. Claire reflected,

> I assume that my staff was bright enough to kind of *know* by omission that there's a thing that, okay, either [Claire] just doesn't like human beings, or she never dates anyone in her entire life, or she's gay. So I always *assumed* that they knew, but I just didn't want to get pulled into an issue of, especially since I'm not seeing anybody so what would be the point of coming out?

Claire's single status evolved into a security blanket that she utilized to her advantage. As Paul had mentioned previously, although numerous opportunities to come out were presented over the years, Claire ultimately remained closeted. She recalled a scenario during an end-of-the-year party when she had overlooked an opportunity to come out to her staff:

> At the…end of year party, they were all playing games…And somebody said, 'All right, so who's your movie star crush?' So one would say Brad Pitt and somebody would say so-and-so and somebody would say so-and-so, and then it was my turn and they…kind of looked at me, and I sort of gave this look like, 'Come on. You really think I'm going to answer that one?' And they were like, 'What? You don't want to answer? You don't have to.' I don't know what the heck they expected because if I said Jodie Foster, I don't know if they would have fallen out of their chairs or just been like, 'Oh yeah! I could see that!' and then move on to the next person. I have no idea.

As she recollected the memory, Claire ruminated over her failure to authenticate herself and, thus, embrace a more joyful and honest relationship with her staff. Had she had a partner in her life at the time, she probably would have come out and enjoyed a more balanced lifestyle without so much consummation by her career. Lugg (2003a) attested how many LG[BT] administrators opt to pass as straight by choosing not to date or marry, instead claiming to be "married to their job" (p. 77). "If there was a significant other in my life through the last eight to ten years, I probably would have come out," Claire continued, "but I have just been so caught up in work and a lot of other stuff going on in my life that it's just not happened."

The data did not indicate any joint consensus amongst the participants regarding the benefits from coming out to their staff members. While some appreciated the increased mutual trust and relished opportunities to formulate closer bonds, others reported no substantial benefit aside from greater self-confidence. Paul believed that remaining closeted to one's staff would create a distance that no one would necessarily want. When questioned about how being out had shaped his personal and professional relationships with staff members, he stated, "I think it's just made them that much closer. And I feel like in being open with the staff it creates a certain proximity and a certain trust and a certain openness that otherwise wouldn't exist." Paul also raised an interesting prospect regarding how much should be shared with workplace colleagues; nevertheless, however, he advocated that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks. "I think sometimes when you are working with straight people…[you have to consider] how much you are going to bring them into your world and all the nuances of it. But I've found the more that you do it, the deeper the relationship is, obviously." His feelings echoed the experiences of participants in previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007).

As a high school principal in a "much more provincial and much more conservative" place than the prior school where he had served as a teacher, Edward "would never dream of being open and honest about [his] sexuality" to his staff members. He did, however, reveal that he had once come out to three of his colleagues in his previous school as a teacher and an assistant principal, a revelation suggesting that the surrounding culture and political climate almost certainly played a role in his decision to remain closeted. Moral support was the primary motivator for Edward to confide in these colleagues as they too were gay, and he had still been grieving the end of his relationship shortly after securing his first administrative position. A particularly strong bond developed between Edward and a lesbian who worked closely with him in the administrative offices. "I was going through a breakup, and I had immediately bonded with this woman because she was very nurturing, and I was in a new position and she wanted me to do well," he explained, "but at my last school, there were three people who knew. They were folks who I actually needed and confided in, certainly when my relationship of ten years came to an end under very terrible circumstances."

Although Barbara did not believe that remaining closeted directly impacted her leadership with her staff, she, like Claire, acknowledged that it left her feeling somewhat disconnected from the faculty, primarily in social situations. While some of the staff members inevitably suspected or knew about her sexuality, they also respected her privacy by never making it a topic of discussion. "People would talk about their spouses, they would talk about what they had done," she claimed, "and there was always a little bit of regret, a little bit of longing, wishing that I could do some of those same things—I could talk about the person who I loved, the person who I was spending my life with, and I *didn't*." Although Barbara regretted

the distance that resulted from her self-imposed censorship, she remained adamant it was the best decision at the time. She continued,

> It didn't…serve myself or my partner well. And both of my partners…were educators so they also got it. But when we would do things socially as a faculty, you always did it on your own. I didn't take anybody along, and so…I always kind of felt like I was just a step off from everybody else. And it always felt like I was missing out on something.

Furthermore, the media's exposure of Barbara's sexuality and imminent departure resulted in an outpour of support from her faculty, students, and the community. At the time of her national coverage, Barbara's mother's health was rapidly declining, and Barbara had just flown home on a redeye after visiting her to bid her farewell. She was unprepared for the warm reception that awaited her upon her return to school. "It was the most *amazing* and the most freeing experience for me," Barbara explained. She elaborated:

> I was met by colleagues and by students with absolutely nothing but support. People said they didn't care, it didn't matter to them, and you gotta remember this is…not the most liberal of places to live, but it was just a sense of people didn't really—at least the ones that reached out to me—didn't care. I was still the same person I was before that TV piece aired.

Alex wasn't sure that being out strengthened his relationship with his faculty other than allowing him to feel more like himself and "be the real me." He yielded an interesting connection concerning the boundaries of professionalism and projecting the wrong impression of "playing favorites" to other staff members:

> I feel like it's funny because when I first started this school, I was actually very close with a lot of the teachers, and we used to actually hang out socially quite a bit. And as the school got bigger, I stopped doing that because I realized that as it grew, I didn't necessarily like everyone socially because, of course, every year we hired new people, and I didn't want people to feel like I was playing favorites because I hung out with this group of people and I didn't hang out with them. So I just stopped hanging out with everybody.

Like Alex, Lorraine also wasn't sure that being out had altered her relationships with staff members in any way. Although nothing had ever directly come to her attention, she did elaborate on how some people commented on her workplace interactions or dynamics with other females:

> No one has *ever* brought it to my attention that it was an issue. However, other people *do* throw stones, and if you get close to a female straight person, I've noticed, people talk about you. Like, they don't understand why you're friends. But very *few*. Very few people. And…as far as my personal relationships with people that work for me, again, I don't know what people say behind my back, but to my face and in my everyday dealings, it's never been an issue.

Although no specific incidents had ever occurred while she served as an administrator, Lorraine reflected upon some past incidents that arose over concerns staff members had while she served as a teacher and coach. One particular incident evolved around a notion the female athletes had. "The girls on the team felt they had to be lesbians in order to play for me and be accepted," Lorraine explained. And I never even thought about it." She explained in more detail:

> I have had conversations with people in my *early* career that they were worried about children I coached…Basically I would explain it to anyone who asked or anybody who had a problem with it is, 'Because you're gay doesn't mean you're a pedophile.' And I think I only had two issues in my whole career—not really issues, but two times I was questioned—and I had already been in education for about twelve years so I also explained it like, 'If I *was* a pedophile, I wouldn't be one in year twelve. I would have been one all along.'

The other incident evolved around suspicions of potential sexual activity occurring in Lorraine's office because of concealed windows. A staff member had given her mylar balloons as a gift for her birthday, and she hung them on her windows. Lorraine's principal had asked her to take them down because he allegedly heard staff members spreading rumors and expressing concern over any one-on-one interactions Lorraine potentially engaged in with students inside of her classroom. She elaborated,

> So I took [the balloons] down, and my immediate boss was pissed off. So over the weekend he had shades installed on my windows. He said, 'We all can have shades. She can have shades.' And that was probably the early 90s, and it was probably within the same month. And then Melissa Etheridge came out, and the world changed.

As Lorraine previously stated, she had a prior relationship with the district having previously gone through the school system as a popular and successful student athlete. While discussing these events, Lorraine also shared that the school principal had been one of her own teachers while she was a student. It is worth considering that these prior relationships along with her positive reputation may have contributed to her overall successful experiences and the level of support she received from her superiors.

A noteworthy dichotomy emerged from the administrators' choices to come out or remain closeted in positions of leadership. Each of them wrestled with two challenges: 1) Determining what exactly coming out entailed for each of them personally; and 2) Determining how much was enough or too much to share with workplace colleagues and students.

Assistant Principal Paul felt being out was rooted in a sense of honesty with oneself while Principal Edward conceived the idea as a "three ring circus" consisting of various phases. Principal Barbara agreed with his conceptualization and the existence of various phases inherently based on who one decided to share one's sexual identity with.

Selective omission, a practice involving the censorship and monitoring of the details shared in personal conversations, became a routine part of the participants' lives. The closeted participants were particularly vigilant about engaging in selective omission, always cognizant of changing pronouns or streamlining the details of their personal lives in conversations with staff. The experiences of these participants mirrored those of previous research studies that investigated the experiences of LGBT educators (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck,

1992) While Principal Edward believed coming out would undermine the necessity of selective omission, not all participants shared his sentiment. For example, Principal Colin, although out, would never dream of sharing intimate details about attending pride events or engaging in public displays of affection at school functions with his partner. Edward also cautioned about the inherent risks posed by students' tendencies to eavesdrop on their teachers' conversations.

The administrators themselves were not the only proponents of selective omission; Principal Claire revealed how staff members engaged in their own variations of the practice to avoid transcending professional boundaries or evoking any potential discomfort through invasive questioning. Essentially, these staff members may have suspected their school leader's sexual orientation but never raised it as a topic of conversation.

No consensus was achieved regarding any potential benefits reaped from participants' decisions to come out at school. Principal Claire conceded that remaining closeted left her feeling disconnected from staff members. Although Paul believed that coming out strengthened his relationship with staff members and brought them closer together, Principals Barbara and Alex did not find their skillsets as leaders influenced by their decisions to remain closeted. Content Area Supervisor Lorraine, while out, also reported no observable benefits.

Respect Between Administrators and Students

The importance of respecting students as mature individuals capable of practicing tolerance also emerged as a prominent subtheme in the findings and experiences of the "out" participants. Previous research corroborated the benefits inherent in LGBT educators' abilities to establish a mutual foundational respect for the maturity and tolerance of their students (DeJean, 2007; Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000). Those administrators who reportedly achieved the warmest receptions upon coming out emphasized the importance of having faith in their

students' abilities to respect them as normal individuals. For them, the closet symbolized an obstacle, an uncomfortable void or barrier hindering the development of an underlying mutual respect.

The participants in this study occasionally offered contrasting perspectives on the benefits resulting from coming out to staff members as opposed to coming out to students. Although Alex, for instance, did not experience any benefits from coming out to his colleagues, he still advocated the importance of being out to one's students. When questioned about how his openness related to his efficiency as a leader, Alex remarked:

> I think it adds legitimacy because you're being true to yourself, you're being honest, you're being open, you're *you*. Because of the way society views it, you are…making yourself vulnerable. And I think people respect it when you're not afraid to show vulnerability. I just think it's really important. I think everyone who *is* [gay] should be out. I think it's also nothing to be ashamed of.

The vast majority of participants shared this sentiment. Paul postulated that coming out allowed people to transcend their views about others. He proposed that essentially some people just come to know others as individuals over time and no longer notice or judge others according to individual variances or nuances. His assertion was based on his experiences as both a teacher and assistant principal. Paul stated,

> I would sometimes at the beginning of the year have a group of students, and I'd think, 'Oh, this one seems so gay,' or 'Oh, this one seems so lesbian.' And yet as the school year went by, I couldn't even remember who I thought was gay or lesbian…because I just knew them as an individual and so it wasn't as obvious to me. So I think it happens the same in reverse.

Surprisingly to Paul, little to no backlash resulted from his openness. Although initially hesitant to come out, Paul was soon dumbfounded over how respectful and receptive the students were. "It's interesting because the students who we *most* expected there to be like something really negative from have been actually completely fine," he reported, referring to both his

experiences and Alex's. Many times, the students opened up about having gay relatives or friends themselves and personally related to Paul and Alex. "It's so often like, 'Oh, I have a cousin who's gay, or I have an uncle, I have a whatever.' And then the strongest reactions have been from students who are very religious, especially very Christian religious. So those have been the ones who have been the strongest."

I probed further hoping for a glimpse into what exactly Paul meant by backlash from the Christian students, and he provided me with the following example:

> My favorite one is this one student, very very sweet, from Haiti, really hardworking student, really nice. And so we go through the whole coming out thing and she just looks devastated in our whole process. She just looks crushed like we'd taken the life out of her. So later she comes to us. She comes to me and she's like, 'Oh, you know, I just want to tell you how much I respect you as a person, but I also have to tell you that you're an abomination.' (laughs) I was like, 'Yeah?' She's like, 'Yes.' She was like, 'It's just important that you know you're an abomination, but I still really respect you.' So it's that kind of thing. I was like, 'Okay, well thank you for letting me know,' and it was fine.

Paul cited the findings of a research study conducted in his building as evidence of how coming out had benefitted his students. An organization had contacted Paul's school to conduct a research study on diversity; in return for the school's cooperation, the organization had offered to conduct an additional study on the school climate using the students as participants. The study sought to determine "what's impacted them in the school and what are their deepest concerns," Paul stated, "and several of them brought up that one of the most important things for them was our whole coming out. That was when they felt like we most trusted them, and…they very much appreciated that. And that was from students, again, who we suspended like half a dozen times, we had their parents come in all the time, who we had a lot of problems and conflict with."

Alex echoed Paul's sentiment. Although he didn't believe being out altered the dynamic of his relationship with the faculty, he certainly believed it had positively influenced his students. Alex added:

> I also feel like I've earned the respect of my students. The thing that I find amazing is that after coming out each year…kids who I've had problems with who are troublemakers or kids who I've had [to administer] discipline or we just don't really have a good relationship, will come up to me and say like 'wow…thank you for being honest with us and…thinking that we're mature enough to be able to handle this.' So yeah, that's been amazing.

Like Paul and Alex, Lorraine also offered her own glimpse of just how respectful the students in her diverse school had become over the course of just three years upon her return to the district. After overhearing some of the male athletes discuss the recent breakup of two lesbian athletes, Lorraine was admittedly "amazed" at how sympathetically and respectfully the male students reacted toward their LGBT peers.

> We've had two girls on the basketball team who had a torrid love affair I guess two or three years now. And they broke up, and I overheard boys on the basketball team talking about it and they were like, 'You know, that's just too bad. They were together for so long, and it was so wrong of Sally for getting involved in Sue and Sherry's life.' But they talked about it like it was a guy and a girl. It had *nothing* to do with the fact that they were two girls. It had to do with how the breakup took place, and I was pretty amazed by that.

Although he was not out as an administrator in his school to the same extent he was as a classroom teacher, Fernando also strongly believed that being true to himself in the classroom imparted him with a level of automatic dignity and respect that enabled him to serve as a positive role model for his students. He claimed,

> They know I am a man of my word, that I am true to my conscience, and that I am not afraid to be true to who I am and different. As a leader being out, I feel it also grants me a sense of respect because I am not afraid to show I can swim against the tide, stand on my own two feet, not follow popular culture, and still hopefully effectively positively impact the school's culture by being a school leader…Being a leader means being able to affect change, and I affect change every day.

Fernando's experience was particularly unique because many of his former students actually had the opportunity to meet his partner at school functions. Perhaps most interesting of all, however, is that if his students had not already known he was gay, Fernando would have inadvertently come out to them and his colleagues anyway by allowing his civil union to be publicized in the local newspaper shortly after they became legal in his state. "Many of my students had met my partner because he came with me to events such as the school play, the Gay/Straight Alliance events, coffee houses, and literary magazine events," he said. "I also know many of the students knew because my civil union was publicized on the front page of the…newspaper at the time when they became legal in [my state]." He continued,

> [My partner and I] were asked about doing this article…and we did it [and] many of the students, teachers, and family members…who saw anything about it said nothing but congratulations. In fact, the student body gave me a wedding present. Every teacher knew I was gay. The vast majority of them had never asked me, yet everyone knew, and I was totally fine with that because I didn't want to pretend to be someone I'm not.

Fernando also spoke of having rainbow stickers on his vehicle and rainbow lapels on his briefcase while he was a teacher. "I chose to do that because I wanted other students to realize and feel comfortable knowing I am an adult and I feel okay and comfortable with myself being out," he claimed. "It gives them a sense of immediate safety and connection." In addition, Fernando proudly displayed a picture of himself with his partner on his desk; students would sometimes ask questions regarding his marital status, but Fernando was always respectful of their curiosity. He also believed the majority of his students had the best intentions when it came to questioning him about his sexual orientation; he strongly believed his students were genuinely curious about what it meant to be gay. "And 99% of the time," he explained, "I responded by saying, "I'd love to talk about my personal life, but it's not appropriate right now to what we are studying. But if you want to get to know me as the year goes on, we can have that conversation

at a later time.'" For this reason, I chose to classify this data under the theme of mutual respect as opposed to sensitivity to diversity. He elaborated,

> I believe the students asked because they were honestly curious. It was never with evil intentions or the attempt to embarrass me. Sometimes students, particularly the younger ones, do not fully understand the concept of boundaries, but it was never with malicious intent. But that's why I can allude to being gay without having to directly say it so the student understands.

Colin recalled similarly positive interactions with his elementary school aged students. The students, albeit young, naturally curious, and a bit invasive regarding his personal life, were surprisingly receptive to the pictures Colin displayed of his partner on his desk upon coming out. "The kids would say, 'Is that your partner?'" he explained. "And I'd say, 'Yes.' And they'd say 'Oh, okay. What's his name?' And it was fine. The kids didn't care…"

He also recounted another moving incident involving a troublesome student who reacted very emotionally to the district's decision not to renew his contract. The student had a long history of disciplinary problems, and Colin had evidently succeeded in reaching him by respecting him as an individual in spite of his behavior and having enough confidence in him to grant him extra privileges. On his last day at the school following all the publicity of his imminent departure, Colin explained what happened:

> We have this star called the North Star mascot that was in the assemblies all the time…and every beginning of the year, I always picked someone to be the mascot for the year, and I thought of that kid who was *such* a bully, and I said, "I'm going to ask you to do this this year because I know you can.' I wanted him to see that I saw something good in him…[And on my last day] he came out of the school…and he just stood there and his eyes were just filled with tears. And I said, 'I think I need a hug because I'm not going to see you for a really long time!' And he just burst into tears and then hugged me. And I could *still* see the look on his face, and I thought I touched his life in a way that nobody else could have, and I'm being let go because of stuff like this…

Barbara also described a similarly touching moment mirroring Colin's experience in which a young female student approached her and said, "You know, I just want you to know I'm

not gay, but I don't care that you are." The experience left Barbara contemplating why it took so long for her to conquer her fear of coming out.

The administrators who respected their students as mature individuals ultimately received warmer receptions upon the revelations of their sexual orientation. Their experiences corroborated the findings of earlier LGBT educators who had previously studied their students' responses to their openness (DeJean, 2007; Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000). Although the participants' experiences with coming out to staff vastly differed, they affirmed numerous benefits arising from coming out to students. Principal Alex remarked on the newfound "legitimacy" such honesty provided and the respect he garnered from his resulting vulnerability. Assistant Principal Paul shared his sentiment and affirmed that coming out offered the opportunity to judge individuals based on their character as opposed to their various nuances. A research study conducted in Paul's school corroborated his claims; the researchers yielded results affirming that both his and Alex's coming out had an enormous impact on the students and fostered strong bonds grounded in mutual trust.

Content Area Supervisor Lorraine spoke fondly of the respect the students in her diverse school had for their LGBT peers. She was reportedly pleasantly surprised upon overhearing male athletes speaking sympathetically about the breakup of two lesbian classmates. Content Area Supervisor Fernando also acknowledged having "the most amazing relationship" with his students as a result of being true to himself. Unlike the other participants, Fernando displayed rainbow stickers on his vehicle and briefcase to make himself more visible and accessible as a positive role model for LGBT youth. His students even had the opportunity to meet his partner as they frequently attended school functions together.

Principal Colin was also surprised by the open-mindedness of his elementary school age students who reacted respectfully to pictures of his partner he displayed on his desk. He also recalled one very troublesome student who shed tears upon his departure as principal; Colin had successfully reached the student through his forgiving nature; whereas other teachers had seemingly given up on the student, Colin instead chose to trust him by granting him extra privileges. Principal Barbara also reported a similarly touching experience shortly after the sudden publicity over her resignation; a female student had approached her claiming that the revelation of Barbara sexuality had in no way changed her perception of her.

Summary of the Findings (Continued)

Each of the administrators employed varying degrees of authenticity and resilience in his or her respective position of leadership. Their decisions to either come out or remain closeted remained deeply personal, gleaned from individual assessments of the professional climates wherein they worked. Some of the administrators were galvanized to come out through personal experiences with homophobic bullying while others masked their true identities with identity management strategies to demonstrate professional competence or project convincing gender-conforming images of authority and power (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). As previous research suggested, fears of professional safety and job loss remained primary sources of anxiety for many of the participants (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007). Similarly, some administrators who opted for openness in their positions of leadership or who had otherwise been previously “out” as classroom teachers reported positive experiences of

mutual respect with their colleagues and students (DeJean, 2007; Macgillivray, 2008; Rofes, 2000).

Unfortunately, not all participants were so fortunate. Four reportedly experienced some form of professional retaliation attributed to their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Principal Claire was subsequently transferred to another administrative position in retaliation for her attempts to launch a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) in her school while both Principals Colin and Barbara delineated the series of events that ultimately culminated in prolific media exposure of each of their respective job terminations. Content Area Supervisor Lorraine was also wrongfully dismissed from a previous administrative position; she subsequently sued the school district and was ultimately awarded $800,000 in damages. These findings were critically important because no previous studies had illuminated instances of professional retribution for actual or perceived sexual orientation (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007).

Although all of the participating administrators varied in their approaches toward student discipline, they remained unified by the common underlying mission of ensuring their respective schools remained safe environments tolerant of diversity (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007). The closeted administrators, despite the absence of any indications of overt homophobia, remained fearful of potential exposure yet actively combatted bullying to advocate for the safety and security of their LGBT students (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003). Paul and Barbara utilized more humane approaches toward student discipline while Edward exerted a more traditional zero-tolerance oriented authoritative approach.

The participants' intolerance towards bullying was often made evident in their policies, beliefs, and handling of sensitive infractions regarding socio-economic, race, gender, and sexual orientation differences. Although, in some participants' cases, no course of disciplinary action was ever inappropriate or conveyed as too severe, their anti- bullying approaches shined in their professional codes of conduct and courses of action.

Both the "out" and closeted administrators also employed varying degrees of selective omission in their interactions with colleagues. Occasionally, the administrators themselves streamlined the extent of personal information shared as based on their respective comfort levels (Griffin, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). In other cases, staff members censored their perceivably invasive inquiries to avoid transcending professional boundaries.

Essentially, the openly gay participants were strong proponents of coming out, advocating that creating a climate for embracing and accepting diversity was in the best interest of the students. Remaining closeted would convey the notion that identifying as gay or lesbian is inherently wrong; instead, they believed coming out would prove that gays and lesbians lead normal everyday lives as functional members of society. These same convictions, however, were not mirrored in their notions on the importance of coming out to their administrative colleagues or staff members. The ramifications and importance of these findings will be discussed in greater detail along with conclusions drawn from the data in the following Discussions and Conclusions chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

"In some ways I feel like it's radically different,
but in other ways it feels kind of familiar."
- Assistant Principal Paul

"Hope is never silent."
- Harvey Milk

The final chapter of this study is devoted to a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the data provided by each of the participants. It is crucial to remember, however, that the participation sample was inherently limited in its composition; the findings, thus, are not representative of the entire LGBT population but rather of the small subgroup comprising this particular sample at this moment in time. Understanding any implications the findings may have for practice and additional research necessitates a revisiting of the guiding research questions. The primary research question guiding this study is: How do LG[BT] administrators understand their experiences in leading public schools? Additional questions guiding this study are as follows:

- How do LG[BT] administrators define leadership and their roles in schools?
- How does an LG[BT] administrator's understanding of his or her sexuality influence (the development of) his or her priorities as a leader?
- Why do some LG[BT] administrators choose to come out while others remain closeted?

Revisiting the Research Questions

The answers to each of these guiding research questions as gleaned through the findings will be discussed in detail under each of their respective subheadings. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion on implications for practice and suggestions for future research in the area.

Research Question One: The Meaning of Leadership for LGBT School Administrators

Guiding research question one asked: How do LG[BT} administrators define leadership

and their roles in schools? To understand the themes emerging from the collected data, I invited each of the participants to reflect on the meaning of leadership and, most importantly, their perceptions of leadership as derived through their experiences as LG[BT] school leaders. In doing so, I elicited a broad array of responses from each of the participants. Alex discovered that making the successful transition from teacher to principal was a major obstacle entailing effective adaptation to larger sphere of influence vested in his newfound role. He constantly reminded himself daily of the importance of remaining cognizant of how his words and attitudes were perceived by both his students and subordinates. "People take their cues from you," he explained. "I didn't realize that if I'm in a bad mood and I'm kind of grumpy, and I'm not like smiling and saying 'Hi' to everyone in the morning, that actually has an effect on people." Although he perceived the weight of his words and actions as only a "small part" of his role as a leader, it remained the most shocking aspect of his overall influence.

Alex's new role presented several challenges. Much like any principal, he encountered some resistance toward the implementation of his vision for the building and claimed his biggest hurdle was assuming the role of "the defender of the non-negotiables." According to Alex, the keys to success were rooted in maintaining sight of his school's mission and his reasons for embarking upon a career in education in the first place. Occasionally, it became necessary to exert a zero-tolerance approach toward those staff members who actively resisted his vision. "I see it as my job to sort of like when people start bitching and complaining about that, just being like, 'But this is who we are, this is how we do things, and you signed on to do this," he described, "and if you're really opposed to it, then you need to leave because it's not going to change. This is the way we do things.'"

Paul reflected upon a similar transition he made from teacher to assistant principal. "I think one thing it entails or involves is being an example for others and setting a certain tone," he stated. Drawing upon a brief conversation he recalled with a fellow principal, he corroborated Alex's viewpoint. "He had been a principal for several years," Paul explained, "and he was talking about how when he was generally in a better mood or when he was feeling more optimistic, then the school felt that way."

Character and integrity were the most important fundamentals for effective leadership according to Lorraine. "I think if you lead by example," she explained, "people will see your integrity and your character and, with that, they'll see honesty and then gain respect."

For the majority of her tenure as a closeted principal, Claire was primarily concerned with maximizing the instructional capacity of her school building and working closely with central office administrators to hire the most qualified staff members for her school. As the years went on and times changed, she attested that she began witnessing what appeared to be a sudden resurgence of "out" LGBT students, which ultimately inspired her to champion the establishment of the Gay/Straight Alliance in her school despite the risk of professional retribution for her decision.

Edward provided a more textbook oriented approach toward leadership in which he reflected upon the numerous hats he wore on a daily basis to fulfill his obligations. To him, leadership entailed assuming the role of "problem solver" and being an "idea person." He emphasized the importance of good listening and often found himself feeling like a therapist as he listened to student and staff problems daily. "I have to listen more than I talk," he explained.

Aside from the various roles he assumed, Edward also spoke about the importance of observing teachers, ensuring they were utilizing effective pedagogical practices, and properly

assessing student learning in the classroom. He prided himself on maintaining high standards for high quality teaching in his building. Edward elaborated:

> I have to be the type of person who smacks down stupidity when it happens…Some folks put flawed methodology into the wrapper of brilliance, and an instructional leader must know the difference and must say, 'That's *lazy* teaching, not good teaching,' and have the courage and fortitude to do so.

He described himself as the "instructional leader" of his school and, like Alex, Paul, and Lorraine, spoke about the importance of leading by example. "You have to lead by example," he explained, "let your heart be your guide, and have integrity in all that you do." According to Edward, an effective school leader must also be fearless when faced with pressure to comply with the wishes of parents, politicos, other administrators, and community stakeholders, primarily if their interests are not for the benefit of all children. "You have to be concerned about very high standards," he continued, "and you have to—even when it's hard—uphold the standards and the vision of what it means to be a high performing school that cultivates an *excellent* education for all. And the *all* is the key part."

I was intrigued by the way Edward's tone differed from those of the other participants, particularly over his cognizance and emphasis regarding pressures stemming from external stakeholders such as teachers, parents, politicians, and the surrounding community. Sensing how these factors almost certainly influenced his desire to remain closeted, I pressed for further elaboration and inquired how he exactly scrutinized his teachers and what he looked for while observing a classroom. As I suspected, everything he said evolved around the traditional job description. He continued,

> I challenge everyone. One of the first questions I ask *all* of my teachers is 'How do you know they *all* got it? What are you going to do when they *all* don't get it? Change your methods? Are you going to reteach it? *How* are you going to reteach it? What do you know about that learner?'

As a principal, Barbara's role similarly evolved around doing everything within her power to ensure her teaching staff and support staff members were able to deliver education to her students as smoothly and efficiently as possible. "I always felt that to me it was never about a sense of power or recognition," she explained. "It's not about the people I meet or the prestige about it." Fostering a sense of inclusion was also paramount to Barbara. She emphasized the importance of educating her staff, parents, and students to understand that "everybody counted" upon setting foot on campus whether they were special education students, English language learners, students of minority heritage, or any other persuasion.

Colin spoke of the challenges and conflicting interests which often presented themselves through the administrative hierarchy. "You've got people above you that you have to answer to and then the people you're leading in the building," he explained. At times, the challenge posed by trying to appease conflicting interests of various stakeholders proved overwhelming. Colin elaborated,

> It's a very difficult job because you have things being told to you and asked of you sometimes by people in a district office who haven't been in a school for years and people who haven't taught for years who don't understand that really *the* most important thing in a school is the *kids*. It's not the teachers, it's not the parents, it's the kids who come in that door everyday and they're there to *learn*. And as a leader I need to make sure that that happens in every single classroom the best way that I can.

Fernando maintained that his primary focus as a content area supervisor evolved around ensuring that all teachers under his supervision were utilizing the most effective research-based pedagogical strategies to ensure that all students were achieving at their maximum potential. He passionately advocated the importance of establishing a separation between one's personal and professional identities. "Just because I am gay doesn't mean I'm going to defend or protect the gay students anymore than I would protect any other minority students," he explained. "Sexuality does not determine professionalism." Despite his perspective, however, he reaffirmed

his refusal to knowingly mask his identity over the belief that all students, particularly those who identify as LGBT, should be furnished with senses of safety and connection with an authority figure.

Each participant agreed that modeling appropriate behavior for both students and staff was a primary component of leadership. Essentially, the subtle signs stemming from what might be described as the closeted participants' "quiet leadership" were more influential than originally expected; as the familiar proverb states, actions and nonverbal cues often speak louder than words. Additionally, ensuring that all staff members adopted and were on board with the administrative vision was also of great prominence. Finally, it was imperative to address poor quality teaching to avoid any adverse effects on student learning. Each administrator strived to collaborate with students and staff toward achieving his or her vision; occasionally they endured challenges in the form of conflicting interests stemming from community stakeholders.

Research Question Two: The Priorities of LGBT School Administrators

The second guiding research question asked the following: How does an LG[BT] administrator's understanding of his or her sexuality influence (the development of) his or her priorities as a leader? Assistant Principal Paul actually emphasized the importance of prioritization as a crucial component of effective leadership. The monumental task of managing a school is often subject to a broad spectrum of influences from stakeholders ranging from parents and teachers to politicians and community members. Despite these innumerous spheres of influence, however, several of the "out" administrators cited safety as their top priority; the importance of providing a safe learning environment for all staff and students superseded politics and the decisions to reveal their sexuality. The study also yielded that the closeted administrators, particularly, were predominantly concerned with maximizing teacher efficiency

in the classroom, increasing student academic achievement, and raising student standardized test scores. These findings were not surprising and further corroborated earlier research involving similar populations (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007).

Alex commenced his leadership with a vision rooted in fostering a mutual respect between his students and him as their principal. In a demographically diverse school plagued by tensions amongst various races and ethnicities encompassing approximately fifty-six different countries and twenty-four different languages, the creation of a culture of respect proved imperative for Alex's success and set the stage for both he and Paul to come out to students and staff. "We have Israelis, Palestinians, Dominicans, and Haitians, and different groups who stereotypically aren't supposed to get along or don't get along back in their native countries, or different races," Alex explained, "and they're all thrown in together in the same classroom in my school." Knowing that his own students already face stereotypical judgment and prejudice outside of school further incentivized Alex's determination to combat such occurrences within his school. "Our kids get enough teasing and ribbing, I think, outside of school for being immigrants, for not speaking English perfectly, and for having an accent," he continued. "It's important for them to not do that to each other in the process of learning because I think that only makes it more difficult."

Paul echoed Alex's sentiment regarding the importance of embracing diversity. "One of my values I try to communicate often with our staff and faculty is that we are all responsible for the wellbeing and development, educational, social, and emotional of all our students," he explained, "and that we have to…embrace that role of being the ones who are going to make the difference in their lives." Paul passionately advocated for all students, encouraging his teachers

to never lose sight of their moral and professional obligations or ever give up on any students despite the innumerable frustrations and challenges daily.

Traditional priorities restricted to classroom pedagogy and instructional practices took precedence over issues like mutual respect and diversity for Principal Edward. "As a school administrator, I value most high standards and outstanding methodology in the classroom," he affirmed, "people who engage students and teach them in a way that just is beyond reproach. I value that above all things." Establishing a solid culture of teaching and learning was of the utmost importance; Edward always ensured classrooms remained student-centered. He elaborated,

> I don't want to know about anything that compromises education, anything that compromises instruction. If I see it as interfering with that, it's going to be the type of thing that runs afoul of me, that's going to bring me to the forefront of it, and that's going to make me very unhappy, and I will take action.

"The safety, health, and welfare of students and their educational wellbeing" combined with "the noble cause that we are charged with as educators" remained Edward's utmost priority and the foundation of his vision. "That is *why* we're here," he continued. "That's *why* we're educators, that's *why* we work in a school, that's *why* the whole place exists.

Illuminating her experience in a variety of administrative positions throughout her career, Lorraine explained that her "priorities at this point in [her] career are a lot different than they used to be." As district-wide content area supervisor for health and physical education, Lorraine was predominantly concerned with "fitness and nutrition" and "changing the obesity rates amongst children because they're just increasing and increasing." Lorraine continued,

> I know people will kill me for saying this—but it's more important than Language Arts and Math. And what they don't understand yet is that if you're healthy and fit, you will do better in school. And all the research shows that. So my goal here in this district is to get our health and Phys-Ed program to be a fitness and nutrition program first with the other things and to get the kids and the parents to understand how important it is to eat healthily.

As a Middle School Principal, Lorraine, like Edward, also maintained a more traditionally textbook oriented approach toward leadership. Improving students' test scores was her main priority. "Not that really that was *my* priority," she clarified. "That was a district priority. I believe every child can learn, but I also believe every child learns differently and this whole teaching to the test just doesn't agree with me *at all*."

Barbara's priority as a high school principal evolved around assessing her building culture before commencing any initiatives for change. "I just think that that's a *huge* part that a lot of people don't take the time to do, and I think it gets in the way of educational success," she explained, "and, to me, learning that culture and respecting it and then working within it is *huge* as an educational leader."

As sexual minority administrators, Principals Claire and Colin covertly and overtly combatted bullying respectively within their schools as their priorities. Although she remained closeted and subsequently accepted a transfer at the request of central office administrators for her decision to launch a Gay/Straight Alliance in her school, Principal Claire gracefully accepted her new assignment in good faith knowing she had achieved a monumental milestone by establishing such a student-led organization for sexual minorities in a traditionally conservative school community. As someone who was victimized by bullying in his own youth, Principal Colin passionately sought to combat the issue in his school by teaching tolerance to his students during Acceptance Week. "It's everywhere," he explained, "and people get away with it. People got away with it in the district where I worked."

Fernando was primarily concerned with improving the sense of morale and culture of his department. He sought to implement professional development initiatives to maximize pedagogy in the classroom.

Effective prioritization remains crucial to the success of any school administrator; leadership must commence with a sound vision, and the leader must exercise the proper approach toward establishing his or her priorities and realizing that vision. The vast majority of the study participants cited safety and the creation of a safe learning environment as their top priority; they differed, however, on their approach toward establishing and fostering such an environment. The closeted participants were more interested in maximizing the instructional capacities in their classrooms and ensuring all classes remained student-centered to ensure student achievement. For Alex and Paul, combating homophobia in schools began with embracing the diversity of their student body and nurturing an environment in celebration of people's differences. Additionally, Paul was adamant that teachers not lose focus of their purpose—making a difference in their student's lives. Edward, while echoing Paul's sentiment, took it further by demanding higher levels of accountability for students' learning from teachers along with more effective classroom teaching. Lorraine was concerned with advocating the importance of fitness and nutrition; as a former principal, she was bound to increase student test scores. Both Barbara and Fernando were primarily concerned with gauging their building and department cultures and senses of morale before embarking upon any initiatives for change. Claire and Colin were primarily concerned with combating bullying in their schools.

Research Question Three: The Decision to Come Out or Remain Closeted

As the available body of research on gay and lesbian school administrators continues to grow, so will the number of gay and lesbian educators embarking on careers in administration. These educators, like the eight study participants, will ultimately face the choice to come out or remain closeted in their positions of leadership. The participants of previous studies (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond,

2007; Koschoreck, 2003; Tooms, 2007) were never directly invited to share their reasons for coming out or remaining closeted as school administrators. An important contribution thus provided by this study is my inquiry into why each of the participants chose to come out or remain closeted as an LG[BT] school leader along with the benefits and drawbacks arising from each of their decisions.

The third research question asked: Why do some LG[BT] administrators choose to come out while others remain closeted? The findings yielded that each participant's choice to come out or remain closeted was influenced by the following factors: 1) The political demographics comprising the school community where each participant lived and worked; 2) The racial/ethnic demographics comprising the school community; 3) Support provided by staff members and higher level administrators; and 4) Degrees of gender conforming behavior as measured by one's perceived masculinity or femininity.

The choices gleaned from each of the LG[BT] administrators were, naturally, dependent upon the levels of comfort they exhibited in each of these three areas. For example, Alex's experience had been overwhelmingly positive. He had previously been out as an openly gay teacher and was fortunate to work in a school that traditionally promoted from within. Although he was admittedly more apprehensive about coming out as a principal and waited until his third year to do so, Alex's decision coincided with a district-wide initiative called Respect For All, in which the goal was to ensure that every public school provided an environment in which all students felt safe, valued, and respected. Thus, Alex felt confident he had the support of higher-level administrators to come out and, consequently, believed it was imperative for any LG[BT] administrator to be open in his or her school. "Oh they most definitely have to come out," he emphasized. "You just have to do it to be honest to yourself, to your community, and…to show

it's okay, that gay people have normal lives, we have jobs and apartments and we pay taxes and everything that everyone else does." Of noteworthy importance, however, was Alex's realization that he was also fortunate enough to live and work in a demographically liberal region of the country known for increased acceptance of homosexuality and, thus, highly conducive for coming out. "Would I *want* to do this job if it were in rural Mississippi?" he pondered. "No, no, because I wouldn't live in rural Mississippi."

The enormous sense of relief following Alex's decision also played a pivotal role in his encouragement for others to come out. The respect he attained from his students and staff members validated all of his previous fears. "I feel like if anything I've earned *more* respect," he explained. "In fact, it may be the *only* thing that has given me *any* credibility with students at all—that I'm actually not some huge prick who just sits behind his desk and nets out punishment."

Paul shared Alex's sentiment and also advocated for LG[BT] administrators to come out. He was primarily motivated by the negative messages remaining closeted would send toward his students. "Students are super perceptive, and I think the message they get sent by not being out and not being open is…that it's still not okay, that there's something fundamentally wrong with it," he explained. "My advice would just be to be out and just see what happens."

According to Paul, the biggest challenge entailed remaining truthful to oneself on a daily basis. "It's so easy to compromise that, and it's so easy to let that slip," he continued. He remained adamant, however, that the subsequent rewards reaped were worth the arduous trek of transcending one's comfort zone. "It's just the sense of relaxation, the sense of being one with yourself and being true to yourself and that sense of wellbeing," he elaborated. "I think there's nothing like it. There's no other way to do that. There's no other way to be in that place."

The closeted participants revealed how community politics not only guided their decisions to remain closeted, but also adversely affected future job prospects and career mobility. For example, Edward was adamant that he would never have secured his job as principal of such a high profile competitive school if he had been "out." "Even getting a principalship is subject to politics, subject to the favor of the school leadership team which is comprised of students, parents, teachers, and school aids," he explained. "These people have personal biases. These people…will have a set of beliefs, and they will bring that to the table."

Edward also expressed frustration over the pressure to project an exterior façade of masculinity to ascertain his marketability and skillset as a leader (Griffin, 1992; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). "I have to do a lot of image management that I just fucking wish I didn't have to do sometimes," he said. In addition, he remained cognizant of potential professional retribution for any perceived gender-noncomforming behavior and strongly believed that any prejudiced district level administrators would intentionally set an LG[BT] administrator up for failure by assigning one to a struggling school in an undesirable neighborhood with the likelihood of being shut down. "You want to get a job based on how smart, how visionary, how competent you are," he emphasized, "and you also want *not* to get the job for those *same* reasons."

Edward also carefully selected his wardrobe with his presentation of self in mind (Griffin, 1992; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). "I wear mostly white shirts because I feel like colored shirts are more of a giveaway about flamboyance," he revealed, "and although I *do* wear French collared shirts that require cufflinks, my ties are *always* conservative ties." He proceeded to elaborate that the only wore pinstripe suits and striped ties, and that despite wanting for years to get blonde highlights in his hair, he refrained from doing so

out of fear of self incrimination. "I just felt it would be a giveaway that would scream 'fag' or 'gay,'" he explained, "or it would give an indication."

Claire "always felt that private life was private life." She was absolutely confident that her Superintendent of Schools had transferred her because of her sexuality. "It was *my* opinion that if I didn't keep it very low key," she explained, "there's no question about it, there's no question in my mind, that I wouldn't have been promoted to principal had the current administration been in power." She offered a shocking revelation regarding the comments of a school board member concerning her imminent transfer. "There was a board member who even said to me, 'I don't have a problem with how you are. That's *them!* Don't worry about me!' So I don't know how much discussion went on with the board, but he made that statement to me."

The politics and homogenous demographics of her school community also heavily influenced Claire's decision to remain closeted. "I think that this town, judging from the parents or board members, is behind the times," she affirmed. "I think their level of education and their level of acceptance of diversity is very low because [they] live in such a homogenous society." I invited her to elaborate further on the effects this has on her students. She explained,

> It's just amazing how overall Irish and Italian it is and how you can go blocks and blocks, and they don't see a different color face, they don't see a different culture. And it's just recently that kids coming out has not kind of been a complete newsflash.

Although she had always been out and never experienced any backlash for her openness, Lorraine also acknowledged that geographical location played a role in her confidence and comfort. "I think it depends where you live," she stated, "I'm going to assume it does." Working within a diverse community also played a significant role. "I think because I was here with a diverse community that I never really even thought about it," she continued. The district Lorraine had briefly transferred to, however, was not so diverse, and she elaborated,

> There were hardly any African Americans, but there were a lot of Asians and mostly white rich people. But I think I was 45 so it didn't even enter [my mind]. I went there to do a job. I didn't go there to make friends and have my personal life picked apart. But it *does* matter to some people, but those people, for me, I just don't really need to deal with them.

Barbara's case was particularly unique considering she served as principal of a demographically diverse high school governed by a predominantly Caucasian and very conservative school board. The clash between opposing interests was evident when she reflected upon the positive feedback she received from students after coming out and the events that subsequently resulted in her termination. Barbara was certain politics and religion played a role. "If you know much about the Mormon religion, absolutely it was a driving force" she explained. "And I *know* that that governing board member was able to use that to leverage it with some of the other people." With her zeal for education, Barbara remains optimistic that she will someday find another leadership position, preferably in a diverse community where she can "champion the underdogs, and where it's not a sense of entitlement and people in that environment like you for who you are because you've taken the time to get to know them and the rest just doesn't really matter so much."

Colin's experience was very reminiscent to that of Barbara; he also experienced encouragement and support from staff while facing repercussions from higher-level administrators. Colin attributed his decision to come out to the reassurance he received from one of his guidance counselors that no one would care. According to him, this proved true with the exception of his central office administration. Perhaps most surprising was Colin's revelation that his school community was predominantly comprised of blue-collar Democrats. "These people were pretty not open-minded in the district office although the parents in my community *totally* didn't care," he explained. "So very weird."

Fernando and Edward both ultimately attributed their gender conforming behaviors and masculinity to their career success. As a sports aficionado who played flag football recreationally and utilized numerous identity management strategies (Griffin, 1992), Edward never feared that anyone would question his sexual identity. Fernando also attributed his success to his masculine public demeanor. "I feel very confident being a very straight appearing man," he explained. "I feel I have very many stereotypical straight tendencies that may contribute to me having an easier time in the public eye." He prided himself on maintaining a distinct separation between his personal and professional identities. While he acknowledged the importance of remaining true to oneself, as an educator, he affirmed that he was more concerned with remaining true to his profession by not allowing any fear surrounding his sexuality to hinder him from being the utmost professional and helping every student succeed. He spoke of the necessity of finding, embracing, and dwelling in his comfort zone. "Only be finding your own comfort zone may you find comfort among others in the job that you do," he concluded.

The findings suggested that the following four factors influenced the participants' decisions to come out or remain closeted in their respective positions of leadership: 1) The political demographics comprising the school community where each participant lived and worked; 2) The racial/ethnic demographics comprising the school community; 3) Support provided by staff members and higher level administrators; and 4) Degrees of gender conforming behavior as measured by one's perceived masculinity or femininity. Alex felt comfortable coming out knowing he had the support of higher level administration through the Respect for All initiative; his assistant principal, Paul, took his lead and came out knowing he had his principal's support. Both also spoke of the increased comfort provided by working in demographically diverse school communities. Principals Claire and Edward both attributed their

decisions to remain closeted to community politics; both spoke of the fear that their employment would have been adversely affected by public revelations of their sexuality. Lorraine concurred that she endured more positive experiences working in a diverse community than a homogenous one over the course of her career, while both Barbara and Colin were ousted from their positions despite the support from students and staff respectively. Fernando concurred that his masculine demeanor played a role in his experience and career success.

Further Discussion and Links to Previous Research

With so many studies evidencing the prevalence of homophobia in schools (Blount, 2003, 2005; deLeon & Brunner, 2009; 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Graves, 2009; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Koschoreck, 2003; Lugg, 2003; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007), I formulated my first research question with the intention of understanding how LG[BT] administrators perceived the meaning of leadership. By combining my understanding of their perceptions of leadership with my knowledge of the history of homophobia in education and the experiences of LGBT teachers (DeJean, 2004, 2007; Graves, 2009; Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Khayatt, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Macgillivray, 2008; Olson, 1986, 1987; Rofes, 2000; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), I sought to understand why this stigmatized population opted to pursue careers in educational administration which would, arguably, aggrandize the ensuing fears and losses they had already experienced as teachers. Jones-Redmond (2007) posited that further research into this area was warranted, considering the stereotypes, existing homophobia, and possible discrimination gays and lesbians would encounter on their journeys toward promotion.

The data gleaned from the structured interviews suggested that the LG[BT] administrators shared identical perceptions of leadership and sought promotion into

administration for the same reasons as their heterosexual counterparts. Decades earlier, Kissen (1996) sought to understand why LGBT educators chose careers in a traditionally homophobic profession like education, and the study yielded similar findings. The LG[BT] administrators in this study had several underlying reasons for seeking promotion including a fondness for children, a love for teaching and learning, and the opportunity to induce change of greater proportions and magnitude to positively enhance the overall school community. "I liked that idea of seeing it as an entire entity rather than just my classroom," Assistant Principal Paul stated. The transition proved difficult and although he, like Edward, missed the close relationships he fostered with students as a classroom teacher, he remained zealous to embrace the challenge of affecting change on a building level.

Understanding the reasons why LG[BT] educators embarked upon careers in administration led me to garner a further understanding of their experiences and the dynamics of power and politics evolving around sexuality in schools. As Denton (2009) noted, "education moves in sync with the ebb and flow of social mores" (p. 250). Essentially, schools mirror the values of their surrounding communities and society. However, despite the innumerous political strides made on behalf of the LGBT community, the findings suggested that the public education sector has yet to reflect the same levels of tolerance and acceptance. Because of the potentially dangerous ramifications of homophobia and their increased susceptibility to discrimination in the workplace, the mere survival of LG[BT] school administrators remains largely dependent upon their abilities to strategically negotiate personal and professional identities in predominantly heteronormative environments. Previous research (deLeon & Brunner, 2009, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Hernandez, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007) yielded the conflicts that LG[BT] administrators face daily as they exert efforts to

harmoniously balance organizational expectations, communal pressures, and self-nurturance. Such incongruence in identity negotiation has resulted in personal or professional losses (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009) along with increased job dissatisfaction and incompetent leadership (Jones-Redmond, 2007).

Research also indicates that today's youth, aside from coming out in vastly greater numbers than ever before, are now doing so as young as 16—a drastic shift from the average age of 25 in 1991 (Shilo & Savaya, 2011). An inevitable question thus arises: How can students and staff members feel safe enough to come out in schools while their own leaders do not? After all, students and subordinates might be arguably predisposed to perceive their leaders as fearless, superior, and powerful. Blount (2005) asserted that LG[BT] administrators all too frequently avoided gay-related issues and any consequential homosexual stigmatization at the expense of sacrificing a nurturing and caring environment for all students and staff. Although the findings illuminating the positive professional experiences of the "out" participants have indicated an obvious cultural shift suggesting a greater acceptance of sexual minority educators, Principals Colin and Barbara still lost their positions over actual and perceived sexuality respectively while Principal Claire was implored to transfer as a result establishing a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA). Each of these acts of professional retribution suggests that community stakeholders, boards of education, and district level administrators have yet to follow suit with the surge of societal change in recognizing LG[BT] individuals and their rights as equal to those of heterosexuals.

The participating LG[BT] administrators were also inconsistent in combating homophobia and advocating for LGBT students at school. Each utilized individual discretion in administering corrective administrative actions to students in response to their behavioral infractions; the punishments varied in severity even amongst clusters of administrators who

classified themselves as "out" and "closeted" respectively. This finding was surprising considering I had entered the study with the preliminary supposition that eradicating homophobia through any means possible would be a top priority for the "out" administrators. Instead, however, the finding corroborated previous research (Fraynd & Capper, 2003) and suggested that the extent toward which LG[BT] administrators exerted efforts into these areas was instead attributed to their levels of resilience as opposed to degrees of "outness." For instance, both Principals Claire and Barbara attributed their reluctance to more assertively advocate on behalf of LGBT students to their individual shyness and desire to maintain separate personal and professional personas. In addition, closeted Principal Edward publicly ensured that his priorities remained strictly pedagogical. Despite asserting that his students were a "reflection of his vision and mission," Edward kept this imperative hidden and only described it as a priority in the comfort and safety of his interview. This further suggests an avoidance of gay and lesbian issues attributed to the fear of incriminating oneself as homosexual (Blount, 2003; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Griffin, 1992; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Tooms, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). As Blount (2003) stated, "The role of school administration in perpetuating heteronormativity and even homophobia largely has been unquestioned…because those who have discussed homosexuality either have been on the attack to get rid of lesbian and gay employees, or they themselves have been regarded as sexually suspect, with all of the attendant stigma and threat of job loss" (p. 23).

Even those "out" administrators whose experiences had admittedly been overwhelmingly positive negated the positive influences they could potentially have on fostering an increased tolerance for diversity. For instance, while administrators Alex, Paul, and Colin openly advocated against bullying in favor of teaching tolerance in their buildings, other "out" participants like Lorraine shirked the topic altogether. Furthermore, neither of the high schools

with an "out" administrator reportedly had a student group such as a GSA operating on its campus—a finding which not only undermines the personal integrity these "out" leaders displayed in their interview sessions but also negates their priority to promote tolerance by ensuring the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of all their students. Macgillivray (2009) defines a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) as "a student club where all students can go for social activities and emotional support, but that is especially important for LGBT students, their straight allies, and students with LGBT parents and family members" (p. 26). The GSA is meant to provide a safe haven free from bullying, intimidation, and harassment where LGBT students are free to be themselves. Alex confessed the "embarrassing truth" of the absence of such an organization in his school.

> Well, first I think it's hard just in general with immigrant populations…to deal with that and come to terms with that because of their backgrounds, because of the culture, the religion they come from, but I think on top of it it's also like…how uncool is it to identify yourself with the principal or the assistant principal? (laughs) You know what I mean? Like nobody thinks *they're* cool, and so why would you want to ally yourself with the person whose office people go to when they get in trouble? I don't know if we've actually forced people *underground* because of that. (laughs)

Essentially, as Fraynd and Capper (2003) found, any potentially idiosyncratic agenda that might have manifested itself through the participants' identification as LG[BT] instead became naturally intertwined with the standard job description of a school leader. The power vested in their positions of leadership combined with self-confidence in their abilities to enact their duties provided them with the necessary means for combating heteronormativity and homophobia within their schools regardless of their degrees of "closetedness" or "outness." "In their leadership positions, [the administrators]…were able to define and articulate the sexual agenda away from homosexuality, per se, to one of student and staff safety, that students and staff deserved to be free from harassment, and that they, as school leaders, bore the responsibility to

ensure this happened" (Fraynd & Capper, 2003, p. 117). That is not to say, however, that fear was nonexistent. In fact, as deLeon and Brunner (2013) illustrated in their Cycles of Fear model, fear intricately permeated each of their participants' lives. Alex's nervous laughter in response to my questioning regarding the lack of a GSA in his school indicated that fear still permeated his professional life, albeit to a lesser extent than the closeted participants. I also deemed it inherently contradictory that he professed he allegedly earned far greater respect by coming out yet never took the initiative to establish such a student group on behalf of his LGBT students. Furthermore, Assistant Principal Paul suggested that without Alex's encouragement and support, he most likely would never have come out on his own. "For me, I'm not sure it's something I feel as driven to do as he does," he claimed. This conspicuous contradiction to his plea that all LG[BT] administrators come out illuminated his own apprehensions as an "out" Assistant Principal. He elaborated,

> I like [being out], but at the same time it's just like I don't tell kids that I'm vegetarian, I don't tell kids how I vote, I don't tell kids anything about my life. But at the same time…I think that one of our important roles as educators is to have kids learn to think for themselves and be critical thinkers …because we don't want them to become clones of us, we want them to become thinkers for themselves. But at the same time I think it's important [to come out] so…

Paul's description of his own office further illuminated his fears. Even as an out Assistant Principal, the description yielded similarities to Tooms's (2007) description of a "straightened office" as described in her study. "I only have pictures of hunting on my walls," he explained. "It's very butch… I [also] feel like I…work a bit too much, and I have a feeling that could be traced back to wanting to overcompensate for things or to be perfect…"

Other administrators were evidently more confident than others, a characteristic most certainly attributed to the presence of fear disguised as overcompensation (Tooms, 2007). Closeted participants Edward and Fernando attributed their success in securing careers in

administration to their gender conforming interest in sports and perceivably masculine exteriors and demeanors. Thus, confidence alone in a position of leadership should not be mistakenly interpreted as concrete evidence of the absence of fear.

Not surprisingly, LG[BT] administrators pursue careers in administration for the same reasons as their heterosexual counterparts: caring about children, a love for the educational process including classroom pedagogy, and a desire to induce change on a grander scale outside of the classroom. Such knowledge allows one to garner an enhanced understanding of the dynamics of power and sexual politics as they play out in schools.

Schools essentially mirror the social mores and norms of society. Despite the recent milestones achieved in regards to LGBT rights, however, acts of professional retribution against the participants affirm that schools have yet to attain equal levels of acceptance. LG[BT] school administrators must still master the strategic negotiation of their personal and professional identities in order to effectively assimilate.

Unfortunately, due to fear of self-incrimination, LG[BT] administrators too often shirk any attempts at advocacy or involvement in LGBT-related affairs (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Denton, 2009; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Tooms, 2007); their LGBT students and staff members suffer as a result (Blount, 2005). This realization was illuminated as deLeon and Brunner's (2013) Cycles of Fear permeated the professional experiences of each participant, even those who were "out" and received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Even those "out" participants succumbed to their fears; their apprehensions were visible in their negligence to establish GSAs on their school campuses and their maintenance of "straightened offices" (Tooms, 2007).

Implications for Practice

The study yielded yet another alarming finding. None of the eight participants had

received any training in the areas of social justice or LGBT-related issues in his or her school graduate training in administration (Denton, 2009). With the recent nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage, training in such matters takes on increased significance. Previous research indicates that both teacher-preparation and educational leadership programs too often neglect issues of homophobia and heterosexism despite ostensible dedication to the idea of teaching for social justice (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley, Gonzalez, Cambron-McCabe, & Scheurich, 2008; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2002; Stiegler, 2008). It is worth noting that these findings are not necessarily indicative of aspiring administrators' homophobia. Tooms and Alston (2006) conducted a study designed to assess administrative aspirants' attitudes towards the LGBT community and found that the majority of their respondents (61%) harbored attitudes of tolerance. In addition, Wyatt, Oswalt, White, and Peterson (2008) also investigated the attitudes of pre-service educators toward gay men and lesbians and found that they generally exhibited modest attitudes toward the LGBT community. While these results were encouraging, they nevertheless indicate that further efforts must be undertaken to equip teacher candidates with the necessary tools to understand LGBT issues.

Blackburn (2006) posited that in order to create a more positive context for LGBT students, educators needed to first recognize their own prejudices against LGBT and gender nonconforming students. Furthermore, she emphasized that LGBT educators themselves must recognize that they are not exempt from the need to acknowledge and address their own prejudices, particularly when considering the negative ramifications transphobia and internalized homophobia have on LGBT students. Towards that end, LG[BT] administrators should provide Safe Zone training in their schools as a form of professional development so that staff members may become allies. A Safe Zone Ally is entrusted with creating an atmosphere of acceptance in

his or her surrounding environment through education; providing support, information, and referrals to LGBT individuals who approach him or her by learning the resources for LGBT people in the community; respect LGBT persons' needs for privacy and confidentiality; learn the developmental process of coming out that is unique to LGBT persons' experiences; and joining with LGBT persons to protect their civil rights and constitutional freedoms (Human Rights Campaign, 2016). The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) also designed the Safe Space Campaign, an effort designed to launch a Safe Space in every middle school and high school across the country. Administrators may purchase the *Safe Space Kit* from GLSEN along with the *Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students* which contains strategies that may be used to advocate for change including a Safe Space sticker or poster that may be posted in classrooms or on doors to self-identity oneself as an LGBT ally (GLSEN, 2016).

Administrators should also attend training sessions, workshops, and lectures to begin educating themselves on LGBT-related matters and concerns to begin working against their own prejudices. They may invite teachers and other colleagues to attend these training seminars or collectively arrange educational opportunities for their classes, student bodies, and instructional departments. Local educational opportunities may exist in several locales, however national organizations such as GLSEN offer a training program called the Lunchbox, which is designed to provide educators with the necessary background knowledge, tools, and skillset necessary for combating homophobia to make schools safer for LGBT youth (Blackburn, 2006). Additionally, the National Education Association (NEA), in conjunction with the NEA Health Information Network, American Federation of Teachers union, and the Respect for All Project that encouraged Alex and Paul's openness offers a national training program on safety, bias, and LGBT issues (NEA, 2014-2016). Upon receiving such training in inclusiveness, educators may

then work collaboratively with students to encourage them to become allies and stand up to bias (Schniedewind & Cathers, 2003).

Curriculum remains one of the most neglected areas when considering LGBT inclusion; rarely are LGBT-related matters incorporated into the classroom or fundamental components of the required curriculum (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). Media specialists should, thus, also be encouraged to acquire literature pertaining to LGBT people and adolescents. Any teachers who cite religious beliefs as a foundation for their reluctance should be informed that although they are not being asked to change their beliefs, it remains their responsibility to form a classroom environment that is welcoming and learning conducive to all students regardless of their sexual orientation; teachers are not required to value the same beliefs or persuasions of their students nor are they permitted to impose their beliefs with the expectation that their students' beliefs will align with their own (Blackburn, 2006).

Suggestions for Further Research

The recent political strides for gay rights suggest that full acceptance and assimilation of the LGBT community into mainstream society is inevitable. Paradoxically, however, while the strides may have been made at a perceptibly slow rate for the LGBT community, they may actually have occurred faster than the general population was ready to accept. The increased visibility of gays and lesbians in mainstream society mandates that additional research be conducted into their experiences, particularly in the workplace and in traditionally homophobic sectors such as education (Blount, 2005; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Koschoreck, 2003; Lugg, 2003a; Tooms, 2007). Any recommendations for additional study should then evolve around the limitations of this current study. First, it is noteworthy that the findings of any similar study may vary depending

upon the nature of the sample involved; another researcher's findings may differ with a larger sample or one comprised of a more diverse body of participants (Jones-Redmond, 2007). One limitation of this study involves its sample; only one participant identified himself as Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, each of the study participants identified as gay men or lesbian; none identified as bisexual or transgender. Further research should then be conducted with additional sexual minority administrators of color as well as administrators who identify as bisexual or transgender for similarities and variances in their experiences in comparison with the experiences of the participants in this study.

Second, as deLeon and Brunner (2013) also found, the geographic regions where the participants resided almost certainly played a role in their decisions to come out or remain closeted as leaders. Each of the participants offered commentary on the political climate comprising the attitudes and perceptions of the surrounding communities where their schools were located. None of the participants in deLeon and Brunner's (2013) study were from the southern or northwestern United States. Participants Barbara and Colin, however, were both from these regions respectively, and both were subsequently removed from their positions of leadership upon coming out. Additional research should thus be conducted to elicit the experiences of additional LG[BT] administrators in similarly historically conservative regions.

Third, additional research should also be designed for gauging the perspectives of community members, students, and parents in school districts where out gay and lesbian administrators are currently employed. Fraynd and Capper's (2003) research posited that gay and lesbian administrators may be suffering from unwarranted anxiety and fear over disclosing their sexuality even in accepting and nurturing environments despite a strong lack of evidence indicating otherwise. "This information…could highlight the similarities and differences

between leaders' perceptions of community expectations and the actual expectations as shared by members of the community" (p. 120). Such data may prove invaluable in helping to continue combating homophobia while encouraging other gay and lesbian leaders to come out.

Fourth, further research should also be conducted to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of current board members toward prospectively having a gay man or lesbian serving their district in the capacity of a building leader or central office administrator. This study illuminates the importance of such research; participants Paul and Alex openly cited, on multiple occasions, support stemming from the district level as a motivating factor for their decisions to come out. Furthermore, Edward affirmed how securing any administrative position is strongly subject to politics and the personal biases of individuals with the power to approve or disapprove any prospective administrator's appointment.

Fifth, further research should be conducted with gay and lesbian administrators who have unsuccessfully sought promotion to advance their careers. Such administrators could provide insight into the dynamics of power and politics in schools; their thoughts and feelings may illuminate the possibility that their sexual identities ultimately hindered their job prospects (Jones-Redmond, 2007). Investigators should seek to determine why these particular administrators attribute their failure in climbing the administrative hierarchy to their sexuality, particularly closeted administrators who diligently strive to conceal their sexual identities.

Sixth, follow-up research should be conducted with the participants to assess whether or not attitudes and perceptions of all stakeholders have improved in tandem with political strides for gay rights. For instance, researchers should analyze whether stakeholders are more receptive to having a gay or lesbian school administrator following the nationwide legalization of same-

sex marriage. Such data may illuminate discrepancies over the level of influence politics has over personal biases comprising the attitudes and perceptions of the general population.

Seventh, research should be conducted with the intent of specifically comparing and contrasting the experiences of gay male administrators with those of their lesbian counterparts. Perhaps prospective participants may illuminate that communities are more tolerant of employing a lesbian leader as opposed to a gay man or vice versa; stereotypes have traditionally targeted the efficiency of female leaders (Blount, 1998, 2003). Findings may, thus, suggest that lesbians are more tolerated or accepted than gay males because of their perceived masculinity that may be indicative of increased efficiency as a leader. Gay men, on the other hand, may be perceived as effeminate subjecting them to the preconceived stereotypes that have already historically targeted women (Blount, 1998, 2003).

Finally, research may also be conducted for gauging the distinction between confidence and competence (Fraynd & Capper 2007). Opportunities remain for studying how coming out may impact a LG[BT] leader's confidence in his or her position, perhaps in the form of a survey.

Summary of the Discussions and Conclusions

The most significant findings of the study evolved around expressions of the administrators' identities along a continuum, their identity management as illustrated by their degrees of public disclosure and involvement in LGBT advocacy, and the relationship between sexual identity and public disclosure (Fraynd & Capper, 2003). Of additional prominence were the levels to which "closeted" and "out" administrators sought to outwardly disrupt the preexisting heteronormative cultures within their schools. The "out" administrators were primarily concerned with combatting bullying and homophobia within their schools while the priorities of the closeted participants were strictly pedagogical in nature. Ironically, however,

fear was still evident even amongst the "out" administrators as they neglected to exert the full levels of their influence to create GSAs for the LGBT students within their schools. Additionally, some of the participants ruminated on the region of the country they had chosen to settle in; those living in areas known for their liberal perspectives on politics often reported higher levels of comfort and pride in being out as leaders.

The choice to come out or remain closeted was dependent upon four major criteria: 1) The political demographics comprising the school community where each participant lived and worked; 2) The racial/ethnic demographics comprising the school community; 3) Support provided by staff members and higher level administrators; and 4) Degrees of gender conforming behavior as measured by one's perceived masculinity or femininity. Alex reflected upon his positive experience as an "out" high school principal. "I think it all depends on the example that's being set by the administration," he explained, "it depends where you are geographically, it depends who the student population is, it depends on a lot of things."

Unfortunately, LG[BT] administrators continue to remain closeted out of fear of professional retribution or limiting their career prospects. "When you're outside…higher or above or away from the school level, it is something of a different animal, and I don't know that you can get very far as a gay man," Principal Edward stated. "Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't know that we as a society have changed enough or that society has sort of said, 'Hey, it doesn't matter.'" Even those administrators who were "out" refrained from establishing GSAs in their schools to support LGBT students. These well-intentioned leaders continue succumbing to fears of political backlash and remain afraid of challenging the unrelenting biases of their stakeholders even despite the recent *Obergefell* ruling (Lugg, 2015). The exact extent to which fear dictates career choices and job mobility for potential LG[BT] educators remains unknown; unfortunately,

however, given the courage of these participants, the education field continues suffering a loss of talent and alliance. As Fraynd and Capper (2003) bluntly asserted, "Adult administrators remained closeted while 14-year olds come out" (p. 121). What this study did reveal, however, is that LG[BT] administrators continue to seek jobs in administration for the same reasons as their heterosexual counterparts. If schools want to continue hiring educators who are truly passionate about education and care about the wellbeing of children, then it is necessary to become cognizant enough to address the fears of LG[BT] leaders so that they may continue to recruit the most highly qualified administrators, regardless of their sexual orientation. Their resilience in light of the current situation is certainly commendable. As Principal Claire stated, "I personally think that *anybody*, man or woman, who has lived this life has an internal toughness that straight folks will *never* have."

Jones-Redmond (2007) suggested that as gays and lesbians continue making important strides toward equality in our society, schools, in turn, should then adopt similar policies mirroring those strides made in the outside community to create and foster an environment that is free from hostility and welcoming to all sexual minority members of the school community. She eloquently states, "Not only should schools leave no child left behind, they should also leave no staff behind" (p. 94). Essentially, policies must be implemented enabling school leaders to feel comfortable opening up about their sexuality identity. If school leaders are able to feel safe being authentic to themselves, they can more effectively exert their authority to create safer environments for their LGBT staff members and students as well. "School personnel must work on their inner feelings and attitudes, and show gays and lesbians tangible signs of honest acceptance" (Jones-Redmond, 2007, p. 101). Organizations such as Gay/Straight Alliances should be present on school campuses (Macgillivray, 2009). Educational leadership programs

must take greater initiative in addressing issues of sexuality and social justice (Denton, 2009). School professional development programs should also focus on increasing teachers' awareness and sensitivity to the needs of LGBT students through Safe Zone training while advocating the revision of curricula to include literature concerning LGBT issues and LGBT authors (Blackburn, 2006).

In closing, although much progress has been made on behalf of the fight for LGBT rights, much work remains to be done in our schools. While the experiences of the "out" participants certainly illuminate a cultural shift toward general acceptance of LGBT individuals, their self-imposed censorship over the extent of their advocacy indicates that LGBT persons still have yet to feel fully accepted. In order for change to occur, "the next generation of school-based initiatives must focus on organizational or systemic change principles that address the larger interrelated nature of systems of injustice and oppression" (Griffin & Ouellett, p. 111). As organizational structures, schools remain the epicenter to efforts for changing discriminatory attitudes and behavior (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003). If such matters remain unaddressed, then we may as well acknowledge the fact that even "out" LG[BT] administrators have essentially evolved into "The Right Kind of ['Out'] Queer" (Tooms, 2007). Overall, the participants remained hopeful that matters would continue to improve for future generations. As Content Area Supervisor Lorraine proclaimed, "Hopefully it will get better. Hopefully."

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Appendix A

Interview # 1 Protocol

Title of Research Project: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender School Administrators
Principal Investigator: Michael J. Auciello
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Catherine Lugg

Time of Interview: _____ **Interviewer:** _____

Date: _____ **Interviewee:** _____

Place: _____ **Position of Interviewee:** _____

This research study is designed for exploring the lived personal and professional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender public school administrators. Michael J. Auciello, a doctoral student at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, is conducting this study to learn more about how levels of closetedness or openness regarding one's sexual identity potentially impact one's effectiveness and priorities as a public school leader. Participation in the study involves at least two interviews lasting approximately one hour each that will be audiotaped by the researcher and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. The interviews will be conducted in settings that are mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher. The participants will then have an opportunity to review each transcribed interview for accuracy.

There are no risks or discomforts that are anticipated from your participation in the study. Potential risks or discomforts include fears of self-incrimination and possible emotional feelings of sadness or apprehension when asked questions during the interviews. Some of the interview questions are also of an intensely personal nature and may lead some participants to feel uncomfortable while experiencing potentially painful memories of real world phenomena.

The anticipated benefits of participation are the opportunities to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experiences of being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered public school administrator. Understanding the role that LGBT administrators play in the politics of sexuality and power permeating schools illuminates an additional void on how power and oppression influence the operation of schools and development of district initiatives.

Questions:

Today, I would like to begin by discussing a little bit about yourself and how you came to be aware of your sexual identity

1. When and how in your life did you come to realize you are LGBT?

2. How would you describe the overall "coming out" process you experienced in your life?

3. Now I'd like to hear a little bit about your experiences as a student in school. Can you tell me a bit about what your school life was like, and in particular any kinds of homophobia/discrimination against LGBT individuals you witnessed or experienced against yourself or others?

Now I would like to discuss how you decided upon a career in education and how you came to be in your most recent position.

4. What drew you to a career in education? How did you go about selecting education as a profession?

5. How many years have you been involved in the education profession, and what position(s) have you held?

6 What drew you to a career in educational administration? Why did you decide to become a school administrator?

7. To what extent were LGBT issues addressed in your administrative training?

8. How would you describe your overall experience in the profession as a gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender administrator? (Possible follow up questions) Have you been happy in your field of work? To what extent has your job been rewarding and/or demoralizing?

Appendix A

Interview # 2 Protocol

Title of Research Project: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender School Administrators
Principal Investigator: Michael J. Auciello
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Catherine Lugg

Time of Interview: _____ **Interviewer:** _____

Date: _____ **Interviewee:** _____

Place: _____ **Position of Interviewee:** _____

This research study is designed for exploring the lived personal and professional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender public school administrators. Michael J. Auciello, a doctoral student at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, is conducting this study to learn more about how levels of closetedness or openness regarding one's sexual identity potentially impact one's effectiveness and priorities as a public school leader. Participation in the study involves at least two interviews lasting approximately one hour each that will be audiotaped by the researcher and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. The interviews will be conducted in settings that are mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher. The participants will then have an opportunity to review each transcribed interview for accuracy.

There are no risks or discomforts that are anticipated from your participation in the study. Potential risks or discomforts include fears of self-incrimination and possible emotional feelings of sadness or apprehension when asked questions during the interviews. Some of the interview questions are also of an intensely personal nature and may lead some participants to feel uncomfortable while experiencing potentially painful memories of real world phenomena.

The anticipated benefits of participation are the opportunities to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experiences of being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered public school administrator. Understanding the role that LGBT administrators play in the politics of sexuality and power permeating schools illuminates an additional void on how power and oppression influence the operation of schools and development of district initiatives.

Questions:

In this second session, I would like to begin our discussion by focusing on how you perceive your role as an educational leader.

(Possible follow-up questions)

1. In your own words, could you please describe what being a school leader entails?

2. How would you describe your leadership style?

3. As a school administrator, what did you value most, and what are your most immediate priorities in a school building?

4. To what extent do you feel your sexuality affected your priorities as a public school administrator?

I would now like to shift our discussion toward exploring your views regarding what it means to be out and have honesty and integrity toward yourself as an educational leader.

(Possible follow-up questions)

5. How important are honesty and integrity regarding one's sexual identity to one's efficiency as a leader?

6. In your own words, could you please describe what being "out" or "open" regarding one's identity entails? For an individual to be out in a school as an employee, who would essentially be aware of his or her identity?

7. In what ways or to what degree are you open about your sexuality in your professional life?

8. What factors motivated/influenced your decision to be open regarding your identity?

9. To what extent did you utilize identity management strategies of any sort during your time as a school administrator?

10. What concerns, if any, do you have regarding your sexuality and securing a higher administrative position in the future? What concerns did you have prior to securing your current administrative position? What personal/professional risks were associated with your identity?

I am now interested in hearing how you believe your choice to be open/closeted about your sexual identity as an educational leader impacts your students and staff members.

(Possible follow-up questions)

11. To what extent do you believe being out or closeted impacts your students and the school community?

12. How has being a gay school administrator shaped your personal and professional relationships with staff members and faculty?

13. How would you compare your experiences as a school administrator prior to and after coming out?

I would like to now close the discussion by talking about any suggestions or advice you may have for current or aspiring LGBT educational leaders as well as hearing your personal opinion on to what extent a sexual minority educational leader's gender plays a role in his or her experiences as an LGBT administrator.

(Possible follow-up questions)

14. What advice or suggestions may you offer for current or aspiring LGBT public school administrators?

15. In conclusion, do you believe it is more difficult to be a gay male or lesbian school administrator? Why do you feel this way?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. As a reminder, please be assured that all information collected will remain confidential. Only the researcher and Rutgers University IRB will have access to the study data and your information. There will be no identifying name on the tape, and your names will not be available to anyone. A pseudonym will be used in lieu of your real name, and the tape will be destroyed upon completion of the study. The results of the research will be presented in the form of a written report in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education.

Appendix B

Rutgers University Research Study Advertisement

V O L U N T E E R S N E E D E D

For a research study on the lived personal and professional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) public school administrators

Title of Research Project: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/ Transgender School Administrators
Principal Investigator: Michael J. Auciello
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Catherine Lugg

Criteria for Eligibility

Participants must:

- Identify as a member of a sexual minority group (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc.)
- Be employed or previously employed as an administrator in a public school serving students of any grade level. Individuals holding any of the following positions will be considered eligible to participate:
    - Content Area Supervisor
    - Department Chairperson
    - Assistant Principal/Vice Principal
    - Principal
    - Assistant Superintendent of Schools
    - Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
    - Superintendent of Schools
    - Director of Curriculum
    - Director of Guidance
    - Director of Special Services
    - Director of Personnel
    - Director of Professional Development
    - School Business Administrator
    - Athletic Director
    - Dean of Discipline
    - Dean of Students
- Agree to schedule times with the researcher for two audiotaped interviews lasting approximately one hour each which will be transcribed for data analysis.

Time Commitments/Requirements

Full participation in the study should not require more than two hours of any participant's time. Any individuals wishing to participate will be subjected to at least two audiotaped interview sessions with the researcher lasting approximately one hour each. The researcher will then follow up with each participant to share and ensure the accuracy of each interview transcription.

Rutgers University Research Study Advertisement

V O L U N T E E R S N E E D E D

For a research study on the lived personal and professional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) public school administrators

Title of Research Project: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/ Transgender School Administrators
Principal Investigator: Michael J. Auciello
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Catherine Lugg

Procedures

This research study is designed for exploring the lived personal and professional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender public school administrators. Michael J. Auciello, a doctoral student at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, is conducting this study to learn more about how levels of closetedness or openness regarding one's sexual identity potentially impacts one's effectiveness and priorities as a public school leader. Participation in this study involves at least two interviews lasting approximately one hour each that will be audiotaped by the researcher and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. The interviews will be conducted in settings that are mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used in lieu of participants' actual names. Each participant will then have the opportunity to review the transcriptions of his or her interviews for accuracy and to provide any additions or request any omissions.

Participation Benefits and Purpose of the Research

The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experiences of being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered public school administrator. Understanding the role that LGBT administrators play in the politics of sexuality and power permeating schools illuminates an additional void on how power and oppression influence the operation of schools and development of district initiatives.

Contact Information

Any questions concerning the research project and/or in the case of injury due to the project may be directed to Dr. Catherine Lugg, faculty advisor for this project, at (732) 932-7496 x8220 or catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu. Questions regarding rights as a person in this research project should be directed to Michele Gibel, Rutgers University Institutional Review Board Administrator, at (732) 932-0150 x2104.

Prospective participants may also contact the principal investigator directly by phone at (551) 697-3223 or e-mail at MichaelJAuciello@aol.com with any questions pertaining to the study.

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Title of Research: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender School Administrators
Principal Investigator: Michael J. Auciello
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Catherine Lugg

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Michael J. Auciello, who is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Administration at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. This research study is designed for exploring the lived personal and professional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender public school administrators. The purpose of this study is to garner a better understanding of how power and sexual politics influence the dynamics involved in the leadership of schools and school districts. The researchers seek to learn more about how administrators' levels of closetedness or openness regarding their sexual identities potentially impact their effectiveness and priorities as public school leaders.

Explanation of Procedures

Participation in the study involves at least two interviews lasting approximately one hour each that will be audiotaped by the researcher and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. The interviews will be conducted in settings that are mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher.

Confidentiality

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you, and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes information regarding your experiences with homophobia as an adolescent and in the workplace. Additional information will be collected regarding your personal decision to come out or remain closeted in a position of leadership. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individuals' access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The information collected in this study will remain confidential in a locked safe with a combination lock placed into a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. Pseudonyms will be used in lieu of the participants' real names in the final written report and will be mutually agreed upon by the researcher and participants. If a report of this study is published or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years. At the conclusion of this period, all audiotapes will be destroyed and the study data shredded.

Risks and Discomforts

Some of the questions in the interview deal with challenging issues, such as the coming out process, experiences with homophobia or discrimination as an adolescent and in the workplace, the choice to come out or remain closeted in a position of leadership, and the inherent risks and political ramifications involved in making potentially unpopular decisions directly impacting staff members and students as a sexual minority educational leader.

These questions may lead some participants to feel uncomfortable while experiencing potentially painful memories of such real world phenomena. If you feel upset by any questions presented in the interview, you will have the opportunity to discuss these concerns with the Principal Investigator. Please note that you can withdraw at any time during the study without any penalty to you, or you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. In addition, if any questions evoke feelings of stress or anxiety, a referral can be made to:

New Brunswick Counseling Center
320 Suydam Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Tel: (732) 246-4025

Benefits
You have been told that the benefits of taking part in this study may be the opportunities to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experiences of being a gay or lesbian public school administrator. Understanding the role that gay and lesbian administrators play in the politics of sexuality and power permeating schools illuminates an additional void on how power and oppression influence the operation of schools and development of district initiatives. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Withdrawal Without Prejudice
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

New Findings
Any significant new findings that develop during the course of the study, which may affect a participant's willingness to continue in the research, will be provided to each participant by Michael J. Auciello.

Cost and/or Payment to Subject for Participation in Research
There will be no cost for participation in the research. Also, participants will not be paid to participate in this research project.

Payment for Research Related Injuries
Rutgers University has made no provision for monetary compensation in the event of injury resulting from the research. In the event of such an injury, assistance will be provided to access health care services. The cost of health care services is the responsibility of the participant.

Questions
If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me directly at:

Michael J. Auciello
36 Parkside Lane
Bayonne, NJ 07002

Tel: (551) 697-3223
E-mail: MichaelJAuciello@aol.com

Any questions concerning the research project and/or in the case or injury due to the project may be directed to the faculty advisor for this project:

Dr. Catherine Lugg,
10 Seminary Place
Room 19
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: (732) 932-7496 ext. 8220
E-mail: catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 x2104
E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____
Subject Name (Printed)

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Investigator Date

Appendix D

AUDIOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender School Administrators
Principal Investigator: Michael J. Auciello
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Catherine Lugg

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: In Their Own Voices: The Lived Personal and Professional Experiences of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/ Transgender School Administrators. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape a personal interview with you as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording will be used for allowing the researcher to more efficiently transcribe the interviews for the purpose of data analysis and the emergence of common themes amongst the participants.

The recordings will include the participants' full names, current administrative positions, and full responses to the interview questions throughout the session. Names will only be stated for the convenience of the researcher during the data analysis phase of the project. During the interview sessions, pseudonyms will be mutually selected and agreed upon by the participants and researcher for the identity protection of each participant in the online focus group and formal written research report. Videotaping will not be utilized, so the participants' facial identities will remain masked.

The recordings will be stored in a locked safe with a combination lock in the researcher's home during the data collection and analysis process. Each individual recording will be labeled with the corresponding pseudonym selected for that respective participant. Each recording will be retained for a period of three years upon completion of the study and will be immediately destroyed upon the conclusion of this period.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recordings for any other reason than that stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject Name (Please Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____