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Sexual Minority Educators And Public Disclosure: How Identity And Culture Influence The Decisions To Be Out In School Settings

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SEXUAL MINORITY EDUCATORS AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

HOW IDENTITY AND CULTURE INFLUENCE THE

DECISIONS TO BE OUT IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

BreAnna Evans-Santiago

125 Pages

In thirty years, sexual minority educators will have taught at least 65,676,600 children. Several studies have shown that sexual minority teachers exercise the right to refrain from disclosing their sexual identity because they are aware of the possible repercussions when they "come out" in the K-12 educational setting. Choosing whether or not to disclose their sexual identities may result from the juxtaposition of deciding how and with whom to identify. This study specifically analyzes cultural factors and educators' commitments as professionals in educational settings. This study dissects the stories from five K-12 educators that identify as Lesbian or Bisexual. Several researchers believe that educators partake in leadership responsibilities such as role models and mentors and they believe educators' responsibilities in school settings strongly impact students as professional educators. A narrative analysis study was conducted to aggregate lived experiences, including stories and discussions from interviews, thus providing a

voice to underrepresented populations of educators. Because of their impressionable roles in students' lives, the understanding of educators' intersectionalities and the factors behind their choice of disclosure is relevant as a contribution to research on LGBTQ K-12 educators and intersectionality.

SEXUAL MINORITY EDUCATORS AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

HOW IDENTITY AND CULTURE INFLUENCE THE

DECISIONS TO BE OUT IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

BREANNA EVANS-SANTIAGO

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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2015

SEXUAL MINORITY EDUCATORS AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

HOW IDENTITY AND CULTURE INFLUENCE THE

DECISIONS TO BE OUT IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

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<div align="right">B. E. S.</div>

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of adults who identify as sexual minorities is at least 3.4% of U.S. population (Gates & Newport, 2012). That being said, there are at least 10,813,234 sexual minority adults, which equates to the population of the entire state of Michigan (United States Census Bureau, 2014). According to Ed Reform (2012), an estimated 3,219,458 of K-12 educators live in the United States. It is apparent that if 3.4% of the US population is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ), at least 109,461 sexual minority teachers are present within the U.S. educator population. In one year, these 109, 461 teachers will teach, connect or support 2,189,220 students. In thirty years, educators who identify as sexual minority will have taught at least 65,676,600 children in the United States.

Sexual minority educators exist within schools on every level. Some are open regarding sexual orientation, but many are not publicly "out." Several studies have shown that sexual minority teachers exercise the right to refrain from disclosing their sexual identity because they are aware of the possible repercussions when they "come out" in the K-12 educational setting (Acosta, 2010; Berrill & Martino, 2002; DeJean, 2007; Graves, 2007; Gust, 2007Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Whether or not to disclose identities has positive and negative consequences in school settings, which are discussed further in the Literature Review section of this dissertation.

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Choosing whether or not to disclose sexual identities may result from the juxtaposition of deciding how and with whom to identify. According to Chong and Low (2009) and Cook (2009), recognizing one's identity is a complicated process. Phinny (1990) states that as sexual minorities acknowledge their differences they choose whether or not to openly admit their sexual identities. According to Collins (2012), sexual minorities who continue to struggle with their sexual identities may fear accusations of molestation, sin, and perversion from within their communities, such as their place of employment, neighborhoods, and other social settings. The marginalizing of sexual minorities based on stigmas can result in struggle. Sexual minorities not only struggle with identity, but they struggle with acceptance in social settings (Phinny, 1990). An example from a queer theory perspective is a study conducted by Russell (2010), who emphasized that when a female teacher gives a hug to a female student, the scenario becomes riskier when the teacher identifies as a lesbian. In an autoethnography, Hardie (2012) synthesized these feelings of turmoil and confusion by stating "my silence was the way I kept myself safe, although I wanted to be out and proud" (p.278). These examples confirm the complexities associated with sexual minority educators and identity. This study was designed to delineate the personal experiences of K -12 educators and the intersectionalities of identifying as a teacher and a sexual minority. By providing narrative analyses of sexual minority educators, future researchers, administrators and educators will have access to current data that focuses on culture and intersectionality and how those components directly relate to educators who identify as sexual minorities.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is queer theory (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Meyer, 2007) guided by heteronormativity theory (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Fox, 2007; Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012), and teacher identity (Alsup, 2005; Alsup, 2006; Chong & Low, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Cook, 2009; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Nieto, 2003; Nieto, 2012). The construct of culture (Baldwin, Faulkner & Hecht, 2006; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952) and the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) also play a vital role in this study. In general, the theoretical framework acknowledges the marginalization of sexual minority educators and brings the idea of difference to the forefront, providing a voice for an oppressed population within school settings.

Queer Theory

Queer theory derives from feminism (Nagoshi, 2014), but goes beyond gender to oppose ideologies of heteronormative sexuality (Nagoshi, 2014; Rothman, 2012). People who identify as queer have appropriated a word that was once used to identify a group of people as strange, and embraced it. Queer is now referred to as different, but powerful (Hardie, 2012; Nagoshi, 2014; Rothman, 2012). In chapter 2, the discussion of queer theory and the relevance behind the term queer is discussed further.

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is generally described as a social condition when "both normative sexuality and normative gender serve together in the formation of heteronormative discourses" (Heffernan, 2011, p.15). In other words, heterosexual behavior and discourse are considered normal. Fox (2007) defines heteronormativity as the assumption that "all people in the world are straight," (p. 277-278) and the discourse,

or language around us, portrays that assumption. Taking heed of this theory provides clarity of how sexual minorities can be perceived or treated based on heteronormative ideas. Heteronormativity theory will be discussed further in chapter 2.

Identity

Teachers in general construct identities that influence their reasoning for choosing education careers. Coldron and Smith (1999) believe teacher identity is constantly evolving and state that "An individual teacher's professional identity/location is, on the one hand, determined biographically, through his or her own choices, and, on the other, socially 'given'" (p.714). In this definition of identity, location is considered an environment or area in which the person resides or socially interacts. Society stigmatically influences biases by putting people in groups based on characteristics, thus persuading individuals to identify with one of the groups. For instance, people with a darker complexion are considered members of a racial minority group. The individual may choose whether or not to identify as such, but most often, people identify with societally designated groups. Friesen and Besley (2013) add the indication that "life-course experiences both within and outside of education" (p.23) connect and shape individuals' beliefs with regard to their identities. Alsup (2006) states that in order to identify as an educator, and to embark upon one's calling to teach, "only the teacher who has developed a rich, well-rounded identity, or sense of self, is truly successful in the classroom" (p.25). When the emotional, physical, and intellectual components of self are incorporated within the identity, it makes a person whole, thus giving them strength and confidence to execute job expectations to their fullest potential. Teacher identity and how it informed this research is unraveled further in the Literature Review.

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Culture

In order to grasp the concept of identity and intersectionality, the term *culture* must be defined. After elucidating the hundreds of definitions compiled and critiqued by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), the researcher of this study concluded that the word culture is flexible, and the definitions are constantly evolving. Originating in anthropology, the idea of culture expanded from groups of people to various definitions based on ways of thinking, acting, and much more (Baldwin, Faulkner & Hecht, 2006). The word culture is used in business, education, technology, science, history, and many other disciplines that are studied in our world (Baldwin, et al., 2006). For the purposes of this study and as discussed in the Literature Review, the definition of culture focuses on personal culture, school culture, and the culture of communities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is a theory that embraces the struggles connected with culture and identity. When a person experiences conflicts with several aspects of a layered identity, the person must decide which layer to draw forward. Specific contexts require action that situates one or more aspect of identity as primary. For example, a person attending a PRIDE festival may identify more with the LGBTQ identity versus a teacher identity in that social setting. Crenshaw (1989) expands upon previously noted ideas of identity (King, 1988; Lewin, 1948), and states that when parts of our identities intersect, they may collide, causing damage to a person's social status or their self-perception. Damage may occur when a person is rejected by a cultural group or when an individual perceives him or herself as not fitting in with the group.

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(Crenshaw, 1989). The theory of intersectionality and how it pertains to this research is untangled in the Literature Review.

Analyzing personal stories of sexual minority educators allows for the opportunities to represent participants' different points of view, cultural background, and professional journeys in order to better understand factors behind disclosure of sexuality among educators.   The researcher analyzed the data using a narrative analysis framework because it supports understanding the dynamics and enactment of identity and power in school settings for professional educators. Queer theory and heteronormativity theory further illuminate these enactments and decisions surrounding disclosure of sexuality.

Purpose and Questions

The objective of this research is to aggregate lived experiences (Glesne, 2011), including stories and discussions from interviews, while unveiling personal narratives, thus providing a voice to underrepresented populations of educators. As part of the narrative process, participants' discussions provide an avenue that allows honesty and complexities to give meaning to their stories. The personal connections and experiences shared through this data have the power to teach others with the individual narratives.

These narratives are powerful tools for research data (Glesne, 2011; Reissman, 1993). The data becomes curricula, or a form of reference to acquire knowledge. Future researchers can learn from the new information. The reader has the opportunity to learn how to act or what to say based on the personal connections from the narratives of the storyteller and audience (Bruner, 1987). The readers have the opportunity to understand individual struggles and accomplishments as these pertain to experiences with culture and identity, as well as reflect on their own actions relating to the LGBTQ community.

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Sexual minority educators have valuable roles as mentors and leaders in education (Bower & Klecka, 2009; DeJean, 2007; Gust, 2007). The participants' narratives sharing struggles and successes allow educational leaders, as well as future and current educators, the opportunity to understand the cultural influences related to their decision to be out in school settings. Previous literature has been published focusing on LGBTQ K- 12 educators (DeJean, 2007; Griffin, 1992; Hardie, 2012; Hooker, 2010; Lecky, 2009; Russell, 2010), but the studies fail to articulate where identities and cultural backgrounds intersect. The discussions are isolated focusing on identity but lack the connection of how culture may influence or intertwine with how they identify. Cultural factors contribute to how the individual teacher identifies in school settings. Thus this study specifically analyzes cultural factors and educators' commitments as sexual minority professionals in educational settings. This study examined the following questions:

1.) What cultural factors contribute to sexual minority teachers' decisions about disclosing their sexual identity in educational settings?

2.) What are the intersections between sexual minority teachers' sexuality and their commitment as an educational professional?

Significance

This study analyzes the narratives of participants' lived experiences to better understand sexual minority educators' identities in school settings. Sexual minorities are a marginalized group of people within education whose identities are shaped by multiple factors including, significantly, their professional lives in school settings. Several researchers acknowledge the leadership responsibilities that educators take on, such as role models and mentors (DeJean, 2007; Killoran & Jimenez, 2007; Silin, 1999), and they

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believe that educators' responsibilities in those roles school settings strongly impact their students. Students rely on teachers for guidance and validity. Rudoe (2010) states

> …silencing of lesbian and Gay sexuality leads to a lack of role-models for students, which can result in the isolation of lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students and students questioning their own sexual orientation. Some teachers continue to encounter a dilemma in wanting to be able to support lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students, or those questioning their sexuality, and knowing that the risk of being out is too great. (p. 33)

Because of their impressionable roles in students' lives (DeJean, 2007), the understanding of educators' intersectionalities and the factors behind their choice of disclosure is relevant as a contribution to research on sexual minority K-12 educators. Overall, this study informs the literature on sexual minority educators' identity and cultural beliefs that influence disclosure decisions. Bruner (1987) validates the power in storytelling; we learn how to live and we live to share what we have learned. This study provides reference for teachers, administrators, pre-service educators, and academic leaders, thus providing opportunity to reflect and act based on what was learned from the personal narratives in this study.

<div align="center">

Terms

</div>

In order to provide additional support for readers of this dissertation, terms connected to sexual minority communities that are used throughout this manuscript necessitate definitions. It is also important to note that the researcher capitalizes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer throughout the dissertation to emphasize the belief that the words are proper nouns when describing a person's identity. The debate

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whether to capitalize the names of particular groups of people continues, and one choice or the other is not incorrect; it is a personal choice whether to capitalize any identity in the LGBTQ spectrum (my.gayandlesbiannation, 2011; Queer, 2015).

1. Closet- (n.) Symbolizes hiding or covering an identity. Example: *She is in the closet.*

   (v.) Describes the action of a person hiding.   Example: *She is closeted*. (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network, 2012)

2. Hegemony- (n.) "The dominance of one group or state over another" (Castro, Dhawan & Engel, 2011). Example: *Hegemony is present within the country. (adj.)* Describing the actions of dominance of one culture over another. Example: *Their hegemonic ways present a feeling of oppression* (Edelman, 1995).

3. Heteronormativity- (n.) The consideration of heterosexual orientation referred to as normal; those who do not fit the gender roles or orientation are considered abnormal (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Toomey et al., 2012).

4. Homophobia- (n.) "Condemnation, loathing, fear, and proscription of homosexual behavior" (Fone, 2000, p. 3). Accusations and bigotry are commonly connected with homophobic persons (Kantor, 2009).

5. Internalized Homophobia- (n.) LGBTQ individuals acknowledge the negative stereotypes and stigmas from social influences, thus suppressing the homophobic ideology transmitted through society (Herek, Chopp, & Strohl, 2007).

6. Intersectionality- (n.) The theory of people as "hybrid" with different identities that intersect (Collins, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989). An intersection may contain race and sex, race and orientation, religion and orientation, and any other combination

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of identities that one may identify (Collins, 2012). *Example: Her intersectionality intertwines her Blackness and lesbianism.*

7. Masculine of Center - (n.) "A term that recognizes the breadth and depth of identify for lesbian/queer/womyn who tilt toward the masculine side of the gender scale and includes a wide range of identifies such as butch, stud, aggressive/AG, dom, etc." (Brown Boi Project, n.d.).

8. Marginalize- (v.) Keeping a group of people or person down, making them feel unimportant, powerless or not normal (Butler, 2004; Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2014). *Example: Sexual minorities are marginalized in national policies.*

9. Out - (n.) Symbolizes the position of a person when choosing to "publicly declare one's [sexual] identity" (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network, 2012). Example: *He is out at his school site.* (v.) The action of someone other than the individual disclosing the identity (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network, 2012). Example: *He was outed by his brother to his family.*

10. Queer - (n.) Identifying a person that may or may not identify as LGBT thus denying the identity of homosexual attraction and focusing on being different, which Queers believe represent powerful social actions or social justice movements (Bower & Klecka, 2009; . A person that identifies as queer usually self-identifies, and prefers to be addressed by this term (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Tierney, 1997). This term gives a person an identity that sets them apart from what society identifies as normal (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Meyer, 2007). The person identifies as queer to set apart one's identity from heteronormativity. The

person may or may not be LGBT, but he or she will identify as queer. *Example: She is queer.* (adj.) Describing a way of thinking or a theory. Before the use of the word referred to strange or sissy, but presently, the word demonstrates action, movement, and power; ownership of the oppressed word has given a new view on the world (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Meyer, 2007). *Example: Utilizing queer theory to analyze the research.* (v.) Signifying the action of making predominant, everyday norms seem strange through queer theory (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Meyer, 2007). *Example: Authors are working on queering the curriculum.*

11. Sexual Minority- (n.) Those who have a sexual preference that does not match a heteronormative lifestyle (Bishop, Caraway, & Stader, 2010).

12. Sexual Stigma- (n.) The negative ideology or regard to sexual minorities (i.e. sick, sinful, or perverted) in society (Herek, Chopp, & Strohl, 2007).

13. Ze and Zir (pron.) Invented pronouns used to neutralize the gender identity of queer or transgender persons (nonbinary.org, 2013). Example: *Ze is a guest lecturer tonight. Is that zir coat?*

The phrase gender nonconforming (Toomey et al.,2012) and related language is utilized throughout the study to emphasize the resistence to heteronormativity. The terms sexual minority and LGBTQ are used interchangeably throughout this manuscript in order to use broad terms. The term transgender is also be used as "an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and or gender expression differ in important ways from their birth sex" (Sanchez & Villain, 2013, p. 43).

Dissertation Overview

The chapter following this introduction consists of a Literature Review (Chapter 2). The Literature Review focuses on research directly related to sexual minority educators and their connection to the decisions of being out, as well as the roles they have in school settings. The literature also addresses the theories utilized in this study.

Chapter three describes the study's research and methodology and introduces the data used for analysis. The discussion of each analytical theory and the processes of gathering the data from the interviews are discussed. The chapter also outlines the steps used to analyze the data.

Chapter 4 goes in-depth discussing the formats used for dissecting the data and the various ways the information was analyzed. Results and findings are discussed via the responses of the participants described in this chapter. This chapter discusses responses to each research question thoroughly in order to support relevance of the analyses used to form the conclusion.

The final chapter discusses the findings. Chapter 5 presents future implications for school administration and other educators who can utilize this research for further action towards equitable school settings to support all parties involved within education. The conclusion summarizes the previous chapters and the findings of the research, while forming a closing thought in regards to the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature is guided by the notions of queer theory (Bower &

Klecka, 2009; Hardie, 2012; Meyer, 2007; Nagoshi, 2014; Rothman, 2012),

heteronormativity (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Fox, 2007; Toomey et al., 2012), and teacher

identity (Alsup, 2006; Bruner, 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Lewin, 1948; Smuts, 2011).

The definition of culture and how intersectionality (Collins, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989)

connects to the theories then follow. Sexual minority educators have several identities

that may or may not be disclosed in their professions. This review examines the process

of teacher identity, intersectionality, and how these key concepts affect sexual minority

educators.

This chapter provides the framework to examine the effects of being out, reasons

for not being out, and the politics of being a sexual minority, which follow the theoretical

discussion. It is important to note that there are variations of results or consequences to

individuals based on disclosure of sexual minority identities, and those are examined in

the Literature Review as well.

Queer Theory

Queer "encompasses sexual minorities," but there is more meaning behind the

theory (Hardie, 2012). Sexual minorities can be considered queer, but queer does not

necessarily mean sexual minority. The term represents more than Lesbian or Gay; it

represents difference, in a radical and powerful way compared to the meaning of the

word prior to the nineties (Butler, 2003; Zanghellini, 2008). Butler (2003) states that the original purpose of the word *queer* was to declare shame, and to insult difference. Today, queer theory "acknowledges divergent, unique and 'other' identities within existing binaries which are socially constructed within a given historical, cultural and contextual framework" (Rothman, 2012, p.49). Queer theory is an attitude that encompasses contradictions, conflict, and desire while maintaining an allegiance to the theory and those who consider themselves queer (Edelman, 1995).

Bower and Klecka (2009) concur with Meyer (2007) that queer theory makes the everyday behaviors seem different or strange. Edelman (1995) states that queer theory "instruct[s] hegemonic culture in the necessity of a different understanding of difference" (p. 345). The oppressed criticize the oppressor, challenging marginalization and focusing on the power of otherness. Queer theory directly connects to this study because of the power behind the interpretation of the word queer. How one identifies gives that person power, and when he or she identifies as someone outside of the "normal" attributes, it redefines them as queer. The interviews in this study support the participants to personally identify themselves and share their stories, giving their voices power.

Heteronormativity Theory

Heteronormativity is perceived as the everyday way to live (Toomey et al., 2012). In the book *Hegemony and Heteronormativity*, the editors Castro, Dhawan & Engel (2011) thoroughly connect the juxtaposition between queer theory and hegemony. They articulate the historical and political ideals behind hegemony, or cultural dominance, from hundreds of years ago as it connects with today. Hegemony as it relates to queer theory is a newer concept, as before it mostly focused on cultural or political groups

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(Castro, Dhawan & Engel, 2011). Heteronormativity connects with hegemony because oppression may take place when supporting a heteronormative perspective. Toomey, McGuire, and Russell (2012) emphasize that heteronormative practices occur with various school participants, policies, practices, and curriculum. When Vaccaro, August, and Kennedy (2012) analyzed curricula in various school settings across the nation, and they concluded that curricula does not cover nor mention the idea of sexual minorities. Erasure within texts automatically marginalizes a population within the United States. Vaccaro et al. (2012) continue to state that without historical reference and acknowledgment, every person in history is assumed to be straight and gender conforming. In Kissen's (2002) book *Getting Ready for Benjamin*, when discussing the school environment, Rofes recollects staff members' actions and discourse and how they demonstrated the assumption of heterosexual peers. Rofes' peers would encourage dating, or ask about spouses and social events with accompaniment of a companion of the opposite sex, assuming peers are heterosexual. These studies reveal some of the hegemonic ideals within society.

For hundreds of years, "Sexuality, especially heterosexuality, is infused throughout lessons, subject areas, extracurricular activities, and general assumptions about school community" (Mayo, 2013, p.544). War heroes, political figures, and historical figures may not have their relationships discussed in biographies, but it is assumed that they are all straight. Because these hegemonic ideals still exist within society today, this study is relevant to break away from the common heteronormative mentalities of so many. Revealing personal perspectives of educators allow for the audience to respond in some type of way to what is being read-whether positive or

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negative. This study challenges the reader to think about the heteronormative perspective and how the sexual minority educators' voices connect or disconnect with the heteronormativity theory.

<center>**Teacher Identity**</center>

How teachers identify professionally and personally affect his/ her choices of action in educational settings (Alsup, 2006, Friesen & Besley, 2013). When fully recognizing one's self, intersecting identities within one's career becomes part of the professional process. In other words, knowing who you are becomes part of your personal and professional identity. A key component to this research is the idea that "much self-making is from the outside in—based on the apparent esteem of others and on the myriad of expectations that we early, even mindlessly, pick up from the culture in which we are immersed" (Bruner, 2004, p. 210). This means that society plays a large role in determining how one identifies, and individualized identities are created based on lived cultural experiences.

In order to understand individual teacher identities, this section presents literature discussing key components of teacher identity (Alsup, 2005; Alsup, 2006; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Nieto, 2012). Alsup conducted two different studies which analyzed the discourse within participant interviews (2005) and participant autoethnographies (2006). From her research of teacher identities, Alsup concluded that there are binaries, or positive and negative aspects of teacher identity: becoming the "failure or hero, villain or angel."

Nieto (2012) supports the idea from Alsup in that the hero teachers are considered "nurturers or mother figures" (Nieto, 2012)—hard-working, middle class, heterosexual,

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middle-aged, and conservative White women. Alsup (2006) emphasized the societal

expectations of teachers by stating they must be "morally upright and serious" (p. 34).

She then goes on to say "invisibility…is rewarded." This is an implication that silence is

interpreted as good behavior and then rewarded by recognition of a well-behaved and

successful class.   Refraining from stirring up complicated issues is appreciated and keeps

the possibilities of community or parental conflict at a minimal. The silent teachers are

valued for keeping the peace and being an angel. If the teachers veer away from the

normative viewpoints of the hero or angel role, they are considered "failures" or

"villains" by society. The villain teachers are non-conforming teachers who allow their

personal identities to interact with their professional identities. These teachers may

encourage students to think critically or view the world as a whole, incorporating social

issues of justice or equality (Nieto, 2012). Some may view this binary teacher identity as

too harsh or may not agree with the idea that a teacher is one way or the other.   But in

this study, the researcher uses queer and heteronormative theories to support the idea that

a teacher is either playing by the heteronormative rules, or she is not.

     The binary of hero or villain with teacher identities connects with how teachers

identify themselves. There are teachers who suppress components of their identities in

order to maintain the unwritten guidelines within school systems to maintain the hero

identity (Alsup, 2006; Nieto, 2003). Alsup (2006) states that the tension and discomfort

of hiding creates stress-related illnesses such as ulcers or nervous breakdowns because of

identity suppression and living two lives—"one public and one private" (Alsup, 2006,

p.109). The living of two lives to maintain a societal role within educational settings can

become draining, which in turn pushes those villain teachers to go against societal

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expectations to maintain comfort in their own identities. Coldron and Smith (1999) conducted research on the development of teacher identities. They believe society expects teachers to keep their personal ideas and political views out of the classrooms if it does not meet the normative roles of a teacher. There are unwritten, but rigid guidelines that prohibit educators from "complicat[ing] the situation" with decision making and responses to children's needs (Alsup, 2006). The societal created binaries of educators are visible in school settings—teachers are heroes or failures, angels or villains.

While attempting to understand individual and personal character traits, teachers enter the field of education with a developing identity (Cook, 2009; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007). This implies that the teachers are still learning who they are and how they identify within their professions. Several studies of pre-service educators and perceptions of their professional character reveal the complicated process of teacher identification (Chong & Low, 2009; Cook, 2009; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Moran et al., 2001). Throughout these studies, two common themes behind teaching identity appear: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Chong & Low, 2009; Cook, 2009; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Moran et al., 2001).   Teachers pursue academic careers because of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Taking an in-depth look into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to teach, Chong & Low (2009) draw conclusions about each type of motivation. They state that teacher education students who respond to intrinsic motivation seem to have a passion for teaching. They want to make a difference in children's lives and enjoy the idea of being a role model. However, extrinsic motivation is commonly the yearning of success while imitating or reflecting upon teacher role models while instructing (Chong and Low,

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2009). Teachers either instruct because they feel the passion for education (intrinsic), or they teach for the success that comes with being an educator (extrinsic), such as student scores, awards, etc.

Regardless of the reason, there are various educational goals that the pre-service teachers implement, thus limiting or changing their own expectations as an educator. The teacher expectations of student behavior and academic success vary. According to Moran et al. (2001) and Nieto (2012), educators choose their professions because they care about and love children. They want to impart knowledge upon them, guide them, and support children's development. Teachers' intrinsic reasoning behind the desire to teach kids can lead up to a potential let down in regards to original class expectations. When teachers fail to connect with the students, the students' behavior and success have the possibility of influencing change in teacher motivation (Moran et al., 2001), resulting in teacher stress, and more often than not—attrition (Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2010; Nieto, 2003, 2012). The individual educational goals and motivators affect the way a teacher identifies within a school setting as a professional.

Teacher identity develops as one begins to truly understand self. He, she or ze may have intrinsic or extrinsic motivators to uphold a teaching profession. The teachers may also have expectations of class responses or behaviors based on their identities. Teachers are heroes or failures, angels or villains. However an individual identifies, one commonality with all educators is that they are teachers. The motivation behind decisions to educate may vary, no matter how they sexually identify. They all have a common goal, which is to educate children. Recognizing teacher identity connects the audience to this study in order to better understand why the sexual minority educators

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choose their professions. Specific LGBTQ educators' experiences are discussed further in this chapter in the section titled "Varied Effects of Out Teachers."

<div align="center">**Culture**</div>

The definition of culture is complex and varies based on the field of study. It is described as a tool to "study the convergence of power, inequality and history" (Baldwin et al., 2006, p. 3).   Baldwin, Faulkner and Hecht (2006) have generated at least 300 definitions of culture. When determining this list, they follow the six guidelines created by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952). Culture is determined by: enumerative description, history, standard description, psychology, structure, and genetics. The concept of culture can focus on "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society" (p.81). Historical culture focuses on tradition and heritages. Normative culture emphasizes rules or ideals, while psychological culture connects with the way one acts or learns. Structural culture relates to organization, and genetic culture relates to human association.

Combining these various explanations, a broad definition of culture is derived from symbols, behavior, patterns, groups of people, values or beliefs, and actions (Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952).   Baldwin et al. (2006) believe culture is "an empty vessel waiting for people—both academicians and everyday communicators—to fill it with meaning" (p. 4). This suggests that culture is continuously evolving and definitions continue to form based on different fields of study. Culture is created based on various components. How people act and what they believe can change based on their cultural environment and their willingness to embrace it. In this sense, the researcher interprets this definition as the idea that our lived experiences guide our beliefs and actions, which

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in turn become our culture. For instance, a person who is mixed with different races looks Caucasian. He identifies more with his Caucasian culture and therefore acts and identifies more with his White heritage. If he were raised with African-American cultural experiences, he may have embraced his Black identity more and identified as such. This is not the only definition of culture, and the researcher believes that there are some aspects of culture that we may inherit, but more often than not, believes society and experiences provide the base for who we are or how we identify.

For this study, personal culture, school culture, and community culture are discussed. When addressing personal culture for this study, ethnicities, familial interactions and backgrounds, morals, religious beliefs, and any other personal component to the participants' culture were analyzed for connections with disclosure. Personal culture may vary for each participant, or some components of culture may overlap with several participants.

When defining school culture, Banks, McGee Banks, Cortes, Hahn, Merryfield, Moodley, Murphy-Shigematsu, Osler, Park, and Parker (2001) believe that school environment should be a "free and democratic society" (p. 197). The authors suggest that if schools follow the principles indoctrinated with the areas of teacher learning, student learning, intergroup relations, school governance, organization and equity, and assessment, they would have free and democratic schools. Throughout all of the principles, there were specific discussions in regards to embracing all cultures, valuing the community and connecting real world experiences with acquired knowledge. The principle that specifically addresses the setting and culture of the school is: "A school's organizational strategies should ensure that decision making is shared and that members

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of the school community learn collaborative skills and dispositions in order to create a caring learning environment for all students" (p. 201). This statement embraces all participants within the school culture, regardless of racial, gender, sexual orientation, or religious backgrounds. School culture is described by Banks et al. (2001) as equitable and supportive for all parties involved. Because culture is like a vessel, what the children learn in schools can become part of their beliefs or could influence children's identities. Although Banks' (2001) idea behind school culture is supported in this study, the reality is that schools do have a strong impact on what the students believe—whether the school culture is democratic or not.

Community culture is based on personal culture intersecting with school culture (Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). The morals, beliefs and actions within the families of the communities are then transferred into school settings, then the school culture is brought back home to the families. It is a continuous cycle of give and take based on beliefs, policies, and support. Smrekar and Bentley (2011) synthesize communities' culture by stating it entails "social processes and structures in communities impact educational experiences and opportunities of families and children" (p. 418). Churches, neighbors, businesses and the people that make up the community utilize discourse that teaches children how to behave or what to believe. .

Culture directly connects to this study because of the analyses of the individual teachers. The educators interviewed were asked to think about and discuss individual identities and how their cultures have influenced decisions of disclosure. The discussion of culture is also prevalent due to the idea of intersectionality and how it directly

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connects to the three components of culture addressed in this study when analyzing identity.

<div align="center">**Intersectionality**</div>

Intersectionality comes from multiple identity theory. First presented in the 1940's, Lewin (1948) compares the nature of social interactions by analyzing Jews and Germans and their behaviors within social groups. He states that learning to live and act in certain environments varies based on the social and cultural context and backgrounds. Lewin (1948) infers that individuals belong to several cultural groups. There is a forced decision as to which cultural group they would like to maintain their membership–in some cases, either the racial or cultural groups. When minorities have visible differences such as nonconforming gender characteristics or race, the evident traits cannot be neglected. The more minority cultural groups, the more difficult it may be to assimilate (Lewin, 1948).

Crenshaw (1989) expanded upon the social interactions theory (Lewin, 1948)— referring to the idea that social interactions create social identities, and the "double jeopardy" theory (King, 1988)—the idea that various states of oppression continue to create difficulties for marginalized groups of people. Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality states that some people are "hybrid," or made up of various identities, sometimes referred to as not "pure" because the identity can never just be one "pure" factor. She uses the example of a Black woman to explain the difficulties of having more than one identity that represents such a large part of her life. In her discussion, Crenshaw says a Black woman could be oppressed because society sees a woman, or she could be mistreated because society sees a Black person. She is not able to fully identify with

either one, because one identity cannot separate from the other. Crenshaw (1989) describes discrimination of intersectionality with multiple identities like traffic.

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. (p. 149)

This example also connects with the intersection of teacher and sexual minority identities because the educator may identify as a teacher, woman, or person of color, which in turn intersects with her sexual identity.

Smuts' (2011) theory of identity is recognized as a "social, cultural, and political process whereby actors interact with others in the course of constructing their identities" (p. 24). A precise analysis of social inequality, politics, and power (Collins, 2012) is relevant with intersectionality. Smuts (2011) believes multiple identities create conflict with power and agency, thus leaving a person having to balance several identifiers in order to take on the character. Gender, race, sex, language, orientation and ability all contribute to experiences and opportunities for individuals, which are shaped by identity (Grant & Zwier, 2011). These identifiers can be advantageous or disadvantageous, thus revealing the oppressed and marginalized groups because of the intersections (Cole, 2008; 2009). Any social environment such as churches, neighborhoods, internet, schools and markets make up the atmosphere needed to express marginalization of sexual orientation, class, race, ethnicity and any other difference (Collins, 2012).

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According to Collins (2012), politicians have the power to use these inequalities in their favor, emphasizing social positioning which allows power to remain within certain groups of people. Collins (2012) infers that people with various intersecting identities abide in situated environments within certain geographic locations in order to learn only what is made available to learn and act in a particular manner based on the environment. Collins (2012) gives an example of oppression when describing the situation of a lesbian who has gender nonconforming features, working at a minimum wage job that took her over five months to obtain. In the example, she lives in a small apartment in a low-income area and wants a larger place of residence. In order for her to do that, she needs a job that shows debt to ratio income sufficiency, but she cannot seem to get another job anywhere. People often judged her based on looks, and customer service managers did not favor her nonconforming appearance. She remains living in a low income area making low income wages, and continues to be there until someone does not judge her based on her gender nonconforming appearance and appreciates her skills as a hard working woman (Collins, 2012). The intersection of gender and sexual minority identities explained above confirms the complications associated with possessing various minority characteristics.

Scholars debate aspects of intersectionality theory. Davis (2011) synthesizes the debates over the term *intersectionality* used as a theoretical framework stating the idea that social scientists may argue that this concept is too broad, and therefore not sound for a theory. Another critique is that the theory of intersectionality looks solely on the issues of women, thus leaving out various other intersections present (Davis, 2011; Phoenix, 2006). Intersectionality can be seen as a "buzzword," or catch phrase—convenient and

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general for description of the complicated issues at hand (Davis, 2011). Davis (2011) continues to state that because the word can be used as an umbrella term, many believe that the term is too general, thus not giving proper attention to such prolific subjects. She asks, "Should it be deployed primarily for uncovering vulnerabilities or exclusions or should we be examining it as a resource, a source of empowerment?" (p. 49-50).

Once contemplating Davis's question, the argument can be posed that the theory of intersectionality does both uncover vulnerabilities and empower, and therefore fits as a theoretical framework to dissect and analyze scholarship on sexual minority educators. When confronting the process of identity and how to personally identify, experiences differ. These experiences shared in this study reveal the various complications of intersectionality with sexual minorities and their teacher identities.

Intersectionality affects teachers because they may identify in several ways. For example a teacher may identify as an educator, but also as an activist. Deciding how to balance the two identities or how to identify as could become complicated. If the teacher identifies as a sexual minority and teacher, this is also a complicated process. There are several factors within society that influence these decisions. The relevance of intersectionality with this study connects to the idea that the participants have intersections with their identities that may contribute to decisions of public disclosure or lack thereof within school settings.

Varied Effects of "Out" Teachers

When teachers decide to be "out", effects result from publicly and professionally identifying as sexual minorities that impact more people than just themselves. Opportunities to socialize and various supportive, dismissive, or outwardly negative

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responses from others impact a teacher's sense of his, her or zir place in the school community and relationships with colleagues and students.

Robert McGarry (2011), who identifies as a Gay teacher in a small school district, experienced positive effects of being "out." In his autoethnographical study, he focuses on the process of breaking the silence at schools as a result of his exhaustion from hearing verbal slurs targeting the LGBTQ population. As a result of disclosing his identity, the staff in his school participated in reflection groups to support teachers as they broke silence in their own classrooms. In McGarry's discussion, he expresses his amazement with the number of educators who wanted to learn about the appropriate language. What started as a research project turned into intense professional development in which he retained his dignity and used his identity to teach who he called "teachable teachers" (p. 58).

The author Michael Sadowski (2013) reported findings from a longitudinal study that proved students felt safe, comfortable, supported, and proud when they had at least one teacher that made an effort to connect with them. One of his participants emphasized the relief and comfort felt because a staff member at her school was out and open. The adolescent lesbian was inflicting bodily harm upon herself by cutting due to depression. When she became aware of the out staff member at her school, she had someone to confide in, and stopped the self-abusive behavior. Sadowski found that the teen joined the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), and began teaching others about her experiences. This student gives credit to the out lesbian school staff member who made herself available for student support.

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Not all teachers who disclose sexual identities experience positive effects. The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) nationwide survey (Kosciw et al., 2012) revealed that 56% of the student participants said that they hear their teachers say homophobic or negative gender expression remarks. This supports the assumption that sexual minority educators may feel isolated and uncomfortable when lacking LGBTQ social support.

A longitudinal case study of four sexual minority teachers in England conducted by Gray (2013) analyzes the dichotomy of private versus professional lives. A particular finding from one of her participants demonstrates the lack of comfort and support in schools: "She did not discuss her private life at all at school; most of her colleagues did not know that she had a daughter or where she lived. She felt 'unable to talk about her sexual orientation at work'" (p. 708). Gray (2013) found that many of the teachers felt they were not allowed or forced to be invisible and that they were silenced, and therefore could not be themselves with staff due to the lack of personal connections. One of the participants in Gray's study revealed that she receives therapy for support with the difficulties of not being "out" at school.

William DeJean (2007) explained positive and negative results from his research on out sexual minority California educators in grades K-12. He interviewed ten teachers and had focus groups to add depth to conversations. He refers to coming out as "radical honesty" (p. 63) because LGBTQ educators' revelations go against the heteronormative expectations in schools. One of the participants claimed disclosure keeps her class authentic and valuable. The study claims that the participant discusses what she did on the weekend just like her students, and they have a great respect for her honesty. In his

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conclusion, DeJean (2007) emphasized the empowerment and radical movement in the disclosure of sexual identities.

The study also addresses instances when the educators were being radically honest resulting in negative consequences (DeJean, 2007). Teachers sometimes received greetings of negative slurs painted on doors when entering the school buildings. Others have experienced administration meetings to discuss the assumptions of recruiting children to a Gay lifestyle. On the contrary, DeJean (2007) found that every out teacher in his study believed that the radical revelations allows for authenticity and support for all children, and therefore they do not regret their decisions to publicly identify as a sexual minority.

McCarthy (2003) is an educator that identifies as transgender. McCarthy reflected upon the experiences encountered while slowly transitioning and altering zir appearance. Once McCarthy obtained a professional teacher status, the transition of female to male took place. Ze felt a sense of relief from many of the students in the teacher's class. McCarthy's students appreciated the transition and said, "You know what, Miss, you don't have to feel uncomfortable, because it's so good for us to have a Gay teacher'' (p. 175).

McCarthy (2003) experienced positive and negative encounters because of this identity decision. Even though some students were supportive, others reacted by urinating, spitting and throwing food on McCarthy's car. The negative experiences ze encountered included large amounts of urine, food, and saliva covering McCarthy's car one day after work. Ze also stated that there was a significant amount of

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uncomfortableness from the staff. Ze states that out of "a hundred teachers…75 of them are pretty uncomfortable with how I look or dress" (p. 178).

McCarthy felt that familial support gave strength that was needed in order to deal with the negative environment. McCarthy continues in zir profession, acknowledging the importance of teaching children. Ze wanted the children to see that they were cared for. McCarthy (2003) valued education and providing comfortable environments for all children, which contributed to the strength needed to endure the negativity.

How a teacher identifies sexually is the result of several identity factors (Alsup, 2006; Bruner, 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Lewin, 1948; Smuts, 2011) and the intersection of each component (Crenshaw, 1989). As individual sexual minority educators make the decision to hide or disclose their sexual identities in school settings relies heavily on these factors. Positive or negative consequences may arise from decisions, and the experiences described within the Literature Review (DeJean, 2007; McCarthy, 2001; McGarry, 2011; McLaren et al., 2008) are indicators that the results can vary. Further research about Gay males in K-12 educational settings would contribute greatly to this scholarly review. The insight of Gay men and Lesbians of color, Bisexual and Transgender individuals are also underrepresented in data (Berrill & Martino, 2002; DeJean, 2007; Ganzevoort, Van de Laan, & Olsman, 2011; Graves, 2007; Griffin, 1992; Gust, 2007; Hardie, 2012; Lecky, 2009).

Why Hide?

DeJean (2007), McCarthy (2003) and Sadowski's (2013) studies present data in which teachers accepted their identities and were out to their students; whereas some educators in other studies were not out (Hooker, 2010; Lecky, 2009). DeJean (2007)

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analyzed qualitative responses from several out teachers. He wanted to understand their experiences and their beliefs as out teachers.

A thesis conducted by Lecky (2009) and a dissertation by Hooker (2010) conducted interview studies of various teachers to gather data about out K–12 educators. Lecky (2010), indicated that every teacher interviewed believed in the authenticity of being out. They believed it benefitted students to see true identities and role models of healthy families. Although every teacher believed in authenticity, not every teacher in this study is out due to the fear of repercussions by administration or parents of the children they teach (Lecky, 2009).

Hooker (2010) conducted research on public and Catholic school Lesbian and Gay educators and administrators in a Midwestern metropolitan area. He wanted to understand how identities are negotiated in school settings and how that affects their roles as educators. The study focused heavily on analyzing the school settings and how community settings affect decisions of being out.   Hooker (2010) concluded that most of the educators were discouraged from disclosure by their administration, and some were out to colleagues and staff, but not to children, families and the communities. Hooker suggested that a future study with participants of color or other ethnicities should be conducted and that the participants should vary in identities versus just identifying as Gay or Lesbian.

Research suggests that several factors within school climates may hinder disclosure of sexual identity in educational settings (Bishop, Caraway, & Stader, 2010; Hardie, 2012): policy discrimination, fear of harassment or violence and misconceptions, as well as false accusations.

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The researchers Bishop, Caraway, and Stader (2010) emphasize in their study of sexual minority educators that the Fourteenth Amendment is written to protect all people against "unjust discrimination." They also believe the lack of sexual minorities being involved in these clauses makes the policies for sexual minorities equivocal when it comes to federal laws. School districts across the United States have public legal documents and twelve cases have been evaluated by them. Kosciw, et al., (2012) conducted a nationwide school study to gather data about inclusion and discrimination policies. They found that these policies vary state to state and many do not mention sexual orientation or gender expression in harassment or employment documents (Bishop, Caraway & Stader, 2010; Kosciw et al., 2012). According to the American Civil Liberties Union (2015), 24 states do not have explicit laws that prohibit sexual orientation discrimination. The Employee Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) was passed in the Senate on November 7, 2013 and has not been introduced into congress as of March 2015 (HRC, 2015). This bill includes sexual orientation in employment policies (HRC, 2015). ENDA does not protect small private companies with fewer than sixteen employees or religious companies (HRC, 2013), which could impact sexual minority educators in small or religious schools. There is not equal protection for all employees under the Fourteenth Amendment.

Fear of prejudicial actions and misperceptions from others are a constant threat when educators choose to disclose their sexual identities (Hardie, 2012). Bishop, Caraway, and Stader (2010) referred to a Gallup poll in 2005 that revealed "thirty-six percent of respondents did not believe sexual minorities should be allowed to teach high school, and 43 percent felt that sexual minority teachers should not be allowed to teach at the elementary level" (p. 84-85). According to more recent Gallup polls, although

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specific questions about educators have not been surveyed again, inquiries about same sex marriage, adoption and acceptance have been given (Gallup, 2015). In order to connect this poll with this study, the responses specifically connected to acceptance are reviewed. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed believe that same-sex marriages should be valid and legal with the same rights as traditional marriages. Of those 45% that oppose legalizing gay marriage, 83% of the responses give three reasons for opposition: religion, traditional beliefs, or morals (Gallup, 2015). The three reasons given may influence educators to remain closeted in fear of offending or creating social conflicts. When analyzing policies and court hearings, Bishop, Caraway and Stader (2010) concluded that many educators have made the decision to keep sexual identities hidden because of negative comments from administrators or other staff members, the risk of not being hired, being ridiculed, fear of accusations of advocating certain beliefs or morals (McGarry, 2011), or termination (Bishop, Caraway, & Stader, 2010; Graves, 2007; Nixon & Givens, 2004).

Berrill and Martino (2002) provide supportive examples of fears of accusations. They interviewed male teacher candidates about experiences with discussing their sexual identity. Their findings included a teacher education student who discussed the idea of being Gay as a scene or trend. The participant said, "People are scared of Gays…and people are scared of pedophilia" (p. 51). Hardie (2012) concurs with the participant in Berrill and Martino's (2002) study: parents fear Gays connect to pedophiles and would endanger their children. While there is the understanding that in 2002 there were particular perceptions of the LGBTQ population, ten years later in Hardie's (2012) study there are still concerns. For example, presently, Republicans in Texas signed a warning

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that same sex marriage is connected to pedophilia (UPI Top News, 2014). Accusations and misconceptions contribute to reasons why educators hide sexual identities.

Sociological Judgments

Assumed cultural identities are formed by "typical behaviors and life prospects of groups are created and presupposed in all communities" (Wortham et al., 2011, p. E57). These assumptions automatically place individuals in a social group. Once individuals are associated with a particular group, assumptions and biases are formal. The impactful theory of surplus visibility continues to be an issue for sexual minorities (Patai, 1992; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009).

Two components make up surplus visibility. The first factor is the idea that a community of powerless groups of people is expected to be silent or invisible in society. Therefore, when people within these communities begin to speak up, their responses seem very "loud and offensive." The second factor is that one member of a minority population represents the whole group (Patai, 1992). Either way, if someone fits into either factor, most likely he or she will be judged as a representative for a whole group based on surplus visibility.

Judgments toward sexual minorities are usually based upon the actions of an individual or a few members of the LGBTQ population, but because members of a silenced group speak out, their actions seem very loud. The media helps bring the group to the forefront in a negative perspective (Chasnoff et al., 2008). Patai (1992) emphasizes that a middle ground for minorities does not exist with surplus visibility. The minorities either seem to live day to day invisible, or they seem to make excessive noise. DePalma and Atkinson (2009) support Patai's (1992) theory as it continues to say that if

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the sexual minority population does not speak out, then they are considered marginalized or silent. If a small group from the marginalized population promotes change, it is assumed that the whole community or population promotes a surplus visibility, or an influx of noise pollution (Patai, 1992, DePalma & Atkinson, 2009). This theory directly discusses minorities, and DePalma and Atkinson (2009) directly relate it to the LGBTQ community. For example, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is an organization that supports the LGBTQ population, but they are not the only voice. Because of HRC's actions, society may judge the whole LGBTQ population based on the actions or statements made by this one organization. The final point in this theory states that if a sexual minority educator is not portrayed as an outstanding citizen, that person is just "one of them," but does not mean that he or she is "all of them" (Patai, 1992, p. 36). DePalma and Atkinson's (2009) research founded by this theory strongly supports this study and reasons for practitioners to hide: "They are forced to either disappear or appear larger than life, to keep silent or scream" (p. 876). Surplus visibility can create a risk to being out as an educator because of pre-judgmental assumptions made about *all* sexual minority teachers versus an individual or small group.

Political Influences

Besides the fears of accusations of deviance, state or federal laws and policies either help or hurt sexual minorities. A purge of educators occurred in Florida in the mid 1900's. The dismissal of many teachers based on orientation rumors without concrete evidence resulted in many jobless educators. Graves (2007) brought awareness to the large influx of terminations of teachers in Florida due to homophobic assumptions. Individuals who worked in the Florida sheriffs' department revealed information of

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suspected individuals, and the Hillsborough County superintendent administered an investigation. This led to the dismissal of almost thirty Lesbian and Gay educators and interrogation of at least a dozen more. The purge of LGBT educators in Florida continued for almost five years, 1959-1964, as the district terminated positions and confiscated credentials in grades K-higher education for suspicions of homosexuality (Graves, 2007). Bishop et al. (2010) also discussed a few court cases in the seventies where the courts ruled in favor for terminations based on unjust discrimination (Acanfora v. Board of Education, 1973; Burton v. Cascade School District, 1975; Gaylord v. Tacoma, 1977). This purge and legal support for discrimination may influence sexual minorities to keep their sexual identity a secret.

In 2008, Senator Robert Smith of New Hampshire was filmed while discussing a bill to allow federal funding to support LGBTQ curriculum in schools. In Senate hearings he described the proposal of "funding homosexuals" as "trash." He also stated that "homosexuality is a problem for home, not schools," and if he would have come home and discussed this "trash talk," he would have been punished at that age (Chasnoff, et al., 2008). His reference to a community of people being referred to as trash influences his followers to agree. The Senate chamber erupted into applause after he spoke. (Chasnoff, et al., 2008). When public figures make homophobic statements, one has to wonder if other Senators are swayed by this opinion, and of course citizens hearing strongly worded statements can also be influenced out of fear or lack of knowledge about homophobia. When political figures discuss the issue of sexual minorities in a negative sense on national television, identity disclosure becomes more complicated.

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Although purging of teachers may not happen in masses like it did three decades ago, sexual minority teachers still risk being terminated if enough administrators or board members believe their sexual orientation interferes with daily school routines or activities (Alexander & Alexander, 2009). In December of 2013, an educator was dismissed for obtaining a marriage license for him and his male partner in a state that allows marriage equality (USA Today, 2013). ENDA, the new bill awaiting House approval prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in large businesses and public schools, but there are teachers that do not have protection in private religious or small schools with less than 13 employees (HRC, 2015). Surplus visibility also puts sexual minorities in the public eye, which is influenced by media. All of these factors contribute to sexual minorities' fear of public disclosure. Birden (2005) says,

> And herein lies the rub: to choose to be out opens one to potential harassment, discrimination, denigration and violence; to choose to be closeted stunts the development of friendships, support networks, and emotional and mental development needed for healthy living (p. 21).

As educators, the decision to disclose identities is not simple. In fact this study proves that the decision can be rather complicated.

When evaluating the motives contributing to hiding, it is important to look at the great strides that have been made in the past five years. The Freedom to Marry movement recognizes same sex marriage within individual states in the country. In 2010, there were 6 states including the District of Columbia that allow same sex marriage. In 2014, there were 17 states, including Washington, D.C. that allow same sex marriage, and 33 states banned same sex marriage (Freedom to Marry, 2014). As the researcher

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continued to write throughout the years, in 2015, 37 states allowed Gay marriage, 3 states banned Gay marriage, and the other 10 had court cases were awaiting decisions (Freedom to Marry, 2015). Currently, all 50 states have the right to marry (Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015). There are more celebrities disclosing their sexual identities openly, and there are at least 50 television and cable shows portraying sexual minority characters/relationships (GLAAD, 2014). There are national organizations (GLSEN, Teaching Tolerance) that are developing inclusive curriculum as well. Another great stride that occurred during the development of this dissertation is the achievement of the very first woman Army Ranger. Two women, Griest and Haver, have accomplished a great task in a male dominated career field (Thompson, 2015). These great strides are demonstrating the power individuals possess to contribute to a changing society.

Conclusion

Varied effects of teachers who have made the decision to disclose their sexual identities, teacher identity, historical events, policies, and the idea of surplus visibility have influenced some teachers' decisions to be out in school settings. Queer theory and heteronormative theory influence this research as it connects with culture and intersectionality.

Referring back to the literature, educators identify in some way –they are either considered heroes or villains by society based on teaching styles. There are political influences as well as positive and negative consequences from teachers coming out in school settings. The political influences of politicians, laws, and district policies are expected to be followed and respected. If a teacher demonstrates opposing beliefs of these socially accepted political influences, they could be considered villain teachers. At

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times villain teachers may really be considered as caring and authentic, but other times they can be considered a hindrance to the educational environment. Because of the policies, mentioned events, and the idea behind over representing a particular minority group, teachers may be influenced in several different ways that could hinder or promote decisions of being open in educational environments.

There is more literature about negative sexual minority educator experiences (Berrill & Martino, 2002; Bishop, Caraway, & Stader, 2010; Gray, 2013; Gust, 2007; Hardie, 2012; Kosciw, et al., 2012; McCarthy, 2003; McLaren, Jude & McLachlan, 2008; Nixon & Givens, 2004; Rofes, 2002; Rudoe, 2010; Russell, 2010; Silin, 1999; Smuts, 2011) than positive (DeJean, DeJean, 2007; McCarthy, 2003; Sadowski, 2013) experiences. Within this review, there is a balance of studies that focus on negative, positive, and both negative and positive experiences of identifying as a sexual minority in educational workplaces. When identifying as a teacher and a sexual minority, the intersections of these identities can create a conflict because of heteronormativity and teacher identity. One's cultural background may also have a direct connection with the decision to be out on campus.

Although the methods and interests for my study are very similar to the two by Hooker (2010) and Lecky (2009), this study's research focuses more on intersectionality and culture, and the influence of disclosure. The researcher for this study anticipated that she would be able to compare all three to see what has and has not been covered for future implications.   This qualitative study focused more on self-identity and cultural connections with disclosure. Each individual teacher discussed their upbringings, relationships, religious experiences, and decisions of disclosure. The data presented more

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positive findings than data from previous research dating back as little as five years ago because of the rapid developments in celebrity and curriculum recognition as well as changes in state and federal laws. With the visibility of sexual minorities becoming more prevalent, this study can contribute to sexual minority research. .

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research analyzes relationships, perspectives, and experience with space for explanation, in-depth analysis and the development of phenomena (Glesne, 2011). There are various ways to conduct a qualitative study: case studies, testimonios, focus groups, written responses or artifacts, participant research, narrative analysis, and observations (Glesne, 2011). Narrative inquiry, or the study of personal stories and experiences, (Glesne, 2011) was utilized as the methodological instrument for this research in order to thoroughly analyze individuals' lives and experiences.

Narrative inquiry can take place in several ways: phenomenology, ethnography, case study, grounded theory, or narrative analysis (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology is combining lived experiences or stories into a common theme. The narratives are analyzed to show their common themes, or phenomena throughout the data. This approach focuses on the overall big picture (Creswell, 2013). There are challenges to this method because it can form an overlying theme but leaves pertinent individualized experiences or data out of the big picture.

Ethnographies focus on a particular individual or group that shares the same culture (Creswell, 2013). This research focuses on studying the cultural group over time, looking for behaviors, patterns, languages, and beliefs. Utilizing ethnographic research allows for in-depth observations of people and their cultures. This study is valuable for

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the in-depth observations, but the challenge is the time allotment needed with the cultural group in order to gather enough data for a strong study.

Case study research involves a particular group of people that are observed and possibly interviewed over a course of time. During these observations, the researcher is honing in on a particular idea, or case. The research is specific in regards to a particular "bounded system" or systems that are observed over time (Creswell, 2013, p.97). Case studies allow for in-depth data about a particular subject or idea. They can be challenging because of the length of time needed for this research and the commitment needed from the participants.

Grounded theory is used to analyze individual narratives. This method of research is generated from the ground up instead of from previous works. Creswell (2013) calls this method of data gathering a "zigzag" approach (p.86) because data is obtained, analyzed and then the researcher goes out to the field again to obtain more data, which is then analyzed. The process can continue for as long as the researcher or participants permit, or when the researcher believes the data is sufficient to formulate a theory. The participants are theoretically chosen and interviews are formulated to support the researcher's questions or ideas. Grounded theory's challenges entail gathering enough data to support a theory, and following specific steps required to analyze the data (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative research is the gathering of data given through stories and life events explained by the participants. Few participants are needed for this method because individual stories shared through written or spoken text result in data (Creswell, 2013). Narratives are the stories shared in order to promote an understanding and provide insight

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about individuals. The challenge of narrative analysis is ensuring that the story remains whole and authentic; thus minimizing the researcher's personal input within the data. Another challenge may also be that the time allotted or given from the participants may not seem sufficient once the data begins to form because the researcher may want the participant to answer more questions to clarify or delve deeper (Creswell, 2013).

The data obtained for research with this study was guided by narrative analysis and the findings extrapolated from the data are supported by grounded theory, which will be utilized to develop themes based on the narratives. This dissertation focuses specifically on data derived from a few individuals' stories. The theory or idea was not determined ahead of time. The study does not observe particular people within their settings, and the participants share their stories through an open-ended interview process. These methods allow for the researcher to analyze personal stories while also evaluating them for deeper meaning or findings developed from the ground up in order to purposefully draw conclusions (Glesne, 2011).

Listening to and analyzing the narratives of sexual minority teachers allow opportunities for educational leaders, faculty and pre-service teachers to gain insight and better understand the cultural connections with identity and how these influences affect disclosure decisions of sexual minority educators. Narratives influence our thoughts and actions (Bruner 1987), and the personal stories from this marginalized population provide insight into advocacy and social acceptance while minimizing stigmas of sexual minorities within educational settings. In research that relies on participants' narratives, the role of the participants is storytellers, and the role of the researcher is an audience member (Wortham, 2000). When conducting interviews designed to elicit narratives, the

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researcher must listen attentively and refrain from leading the participants' responses in a biased direction.

Interviews have a different approach when the purpose is for narrative data. When "hearers" or the audience listen to the words being spoken to tell a story, they look for cues to mediate the conversation (Wortham, 2001). Goffman (1976), a conversation analyst, implies that conversations are guided with reason behind their answers. If an interviewer asks a question, a conversation is made when the reply is more than just a "yes" or "no" response. Giving reason to their responses opens the door for deeper meanings behind the conversations. As an interviewer, the researcher will follow the approaches presented by Wortham and Goffman, allowing for minimally intrusive conversations and explanations while guiding the participants through the interview questions.

In this study, although the participants are guided by specific interview questions, they are responsible for telling their own stories, and personal experiences and ideals. Each narrative in this study represents individuals' interpretations of their identities (Wortham, Allard, Lee & Mortimer, 2011) and must be analyzed carefully to ensure credibility. Therefore, the interview questions in this study are open, and allow for reasoning by utilizing words such as "how" or "why" versus "is" or "Do you?"

The research methodology of this study is developed around a framework of narrative analysis. Bruner (1987), a pioneer to this approach, proclaimed "Narrative imitates life. Life imitates narrative" (p.13). Bruner (1987), and others who utilize narrative analysis (eg. Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Wortham, 2000), agree that narratives have power to change directions of lives because of the words that are spoken and shared.

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Wortham, Allard, Lee and Mortimer (2011) add that "Narratives are one powerful means of communicating models of identity" (p.57). Relying on narrative inquiry gives participants in this study, sexual minority educators, an opportunity to tell their stories and share their experiences of identifying as sexual minorities and educators (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glesne, 2011; Wortham, 2000; Wortham, 2001), providing opportunities for acquiring knowledge and changes of action.

Narrative analysis involves gathering data from interviews and conversations (Glesne, 2011; Wolcott, 1994, 2000; Wortham, 2000; Wortham, 2001), while positioning one's self to interpret meaning from autobiographical narratives (Wortham, 2000). Glesne (2011) reiterates Bruner's (1987) ideas that narratives bring the personal connection to the life history that recollects important moments in one's life, which may in turn draw upon deeper meaning and encourage self-reflection for the participants. Bruner (1987) states "eventually the cultural and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' in life" (p. 15).

In this study, the researcher was the audience or hearer; it was her responsibility to listen attentively and refrain from discussing her own opinions. Cues provided by the participants during the interviews were the focus, and attentive listening essential in order to maintain an awareness of the cues or narrative expression (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) offered by the participants. These cues included inflection of voice, body language, silence or pauses, and tone of voice (Wortham, 2001). Tone of voice can change during a conversation based on emotion. The pitch, exaggeration of syllables, or speed when articulating words or phrases demonstrates emotion behind the discourse. Particular

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word uses and tone of voice can directly relate to how one identifies or positions themselves in the social realm. During data analysis the researcher paid particular attention to the words said, as well as the particular ways words were expressed. The discourse, or words used can show how the individual interprets the world around them (Wortham, 2001). The questions of this study were:

1.) Through the perspective of the participant, what cultural factors contribute to sexual minority teachers' decisions about disclosing their sexual identity in educational settings?

2.) What are the intersections between sexual minority teachers' narratives about their sexual identities and their commitment to the educational profession?

Narratives do not always have a beginning and ending (Reissman, 1993); the participants could be living the experience at that moment. The life stories shared through narratives are very powerful for research because they are current information, allowing the data to present today's issues (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Reissman (1993). In order to thoroughly explain one's story, narratives occur with a listener and a storyteller in the conversation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glesne, 2011; Reissman, 1993, Wortham, 2001); a dialogue depending on the details and recollections of the individuals. The researcher utilized narrative analysis for this study because oftentimes the marginalized and oppressed stories are told from a hegemonic perspective, thus leaving out the depictions from those who actually experienced the events (Lincoln & Guba, 1987; Reissman, 1993). Giving a voice is not asking the reader to choose sides, but it is giving insights from the individuals who have experience. Therefore, the analysis of narratives for this particular study "allows for systematic study of personal experience

and meaning;" it brings "critical flavors to the fore that otherwise get lost" (Reissman, 1993, p. 70).

This study is immersed in social justice and equity issues in education because various events or activities are silenced through politics, and therefore create difficulty in expression or discussion of taboo topics (Reissman, 1993) such as sexual minority educators in K-12 classrooms. Reissman (1993) states "The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from awareness" (p. 3). These K-12 sexual minority educators have the opportunity to speak out against erasure about identity and disclosure about sexuality, describing the issues that they may have faced while developing sexual minority identities.

Recognizing that immersion of one's culture can have a profound impact upon how one identifies (Bruner, 2004; Smuts, 2011), allowing the space for participants to share their personal experiences gives insight as to who or what has influenced decisions of their self-proclaimed identities. For instance, if teachers are publicly out, they may say that their pride or strength has developed from familial culture and upbringing. On the contrary, teachers might attribute the nondisclosure of sexual identity to their religious culture. Because each person's story is different, it is valuable to find trends or juxtapositions within each participants' narratives.

Research Methods

Participants and Data Collection

Unveiling personal narratives provide a voice to underrepresented populations of educators. Proving insight into the struggles of an underrepresented marginalized segment of society is not only important, but a necessity. This study's narratives provide

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a necessary connection and resource to those who are not aware of the internal struggles of the education field as an LGBTQ person. Because of the profound impact marginalized voices can have (Bruner, 1987; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glesne, 2011, Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Wortham, 2000), a narrative analysis study of sexual minorities' in K-12 was conducted. Lincoln and Guba (1986) emphasize naturalistic inquiry through narratives and personal stories as credible data. Naturalistic, or raw data, involves interviews, case studies, and discussions from persons (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). When comparing the more positivist approach of research to the scientific formulated approach, Lincoln and Guba (1986) state a "more open view of research would allow all inquirers the freedom to operate on either traditional or emergent philosophical grounds" (p. 549).

In this study, narratives behind sexual minority educators' choices of disclosing their identities were told, recorded, analyzed and reported. In order to gather data, the target population for this study was sexual minority educators from various regions of the United States in different educational and social settings. Educators with at least two years' experience teaching Kindergarten to high school (K-12) and as the lead teacher in the classroom were interviewed. Knowing that there are sexual minorities who fear being out, the targeted population was broad.

The participants were recruited from national sexual minority friendly locations such as Unitarian Universalist churches, Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG) locations, Gay Lesbian Education Network (GLSEN), and university LGBTQ resource groups, and student organizations throughout the United States (See Appendix B). A recruitment flier was either emailed to individuals in groups or posted in various resource group settings. The flier was emailed to a main contact for each of the resource

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organizations, and teacher organizations, such as National Association of Education for

Young Children (NAEYC), Kappa Delta Pi, and the National Association of

Multicultural Education (NAME). The person who assisted with recruitment for this

study from each organization was identified through websites or phone calls to the

organization. The contacts were asked to forward the flier via email to participants

within the organizations and to post the flier in the resource space. Once the recruitment

fliers were viewed, five willing participants contacted the researcher via email to

schedule interviews.   The participants are introduced in chapter 4 because their identities

are considered data with this research and therefore are shared with the findings. In

general, the participants are:

Sam	Sonia	Chloe	Jasmine	Carrie
• From New York • Has significant other • Female/Identifies as Lesbian • Ukrainian • AmeriCorp teacher • Works in main office • Middle School Setting	• From California • Married to Chloe • White • Female/Identifies as Bisexual • Special Education Teacher • Elementary School Setting	• From California • Married to Sonia • White • Female/Identifies as Lesbian • Special Education Teacher • Elementary School Setting	• From Washington, DC • Has significant other • Black • Female/Identifies as a Lesbian and Masculine of Center • Special Education Co-Teacher and Resource Teacher • High School Setting	• From Illinois • Married • White • Female/Identifies as a Lesbian • Current Head Librarian after teaching for 12 years • High School Setting

Figure 1. Participants Summary

The research goal for the interviews was to be able to provide opportunities for

open-ended responses from the questions and conversations; thus allowing space for

participants to share personal stories of cultural backgrounds, teaching, and identity.

Interviews provided insight into general connections between culture and identity as well

as individual teacher's experiences regarding the decision of whether or not to disclose

each teacher's own sexual identity. The autobiographical narratives provided personal

perspectives and experiences from sexual minority educators in order for the researcher

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to gain a deeper understanding of intersecting identities and the influence disclosure can have on perceptions of their selves (Wortham 2000; 2001).

The methods of data collection for the autobiographical narratives consist of: 1) An open-ended question interview, and 2) A follow-up interview thereafter. These interviews had the following characteristics:

- Conducted face-to-face in person or with online teleconferencing software

- Lasted approximately 45 minutes

- Included open-ended questions, allowing for discussion (Clandin & Connelly, 2000)

- Focused on "getting to know you" questions and in-depth questions about culture and identity for the first interview

- Focused on getting a deeper understanding of the participants for the second interview

See Appendix A for the interview scripts.

The initial interview was transcribed within two weeks and the follow-up interview was conducted within the month. The follow-up interviews allowed participants to add any details that they may not have mentioned in the first interview that probed or reconnected with previously mentioned ideas from the initial interviews. Because of the reality that settings do have an effect on interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), steps were taken to avoid coercion and maximize privacy: All interviews, whether in person or via online teleconferencing software were audio recorded; each interview was conducted in a private, comfortable setting of the

interviewees' choice. They were asked to be interviewed alone and in a secluded area to ensure the best audio quality and privacy.

If the interview took place via teleconferencing the voice conversation was recorded through a digital audio device and also transcribed. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized the importance of audio recording with narrative inquiry. In order to grasp the complexity of the participants' stories, the researcher must view "the stories [as] the target," and conserving the originality without altering the participants' words while audio recording (p. 77-78).

The researcher analyzed the five face-to-face interviews looking for facial expressions and any other visual cues to support the analysis. Because of the idea that research is fluid and may conclude in a different direction than what was expected (Clandidnin & Connelly, 2000), the analysis of the narrative expressions or body cues were very important as well. The reactions, body movements, and expressions show a different perspective than what was taken from the narratives. Although the interviews were not recorded, the researcher took notes on expressions, tone of voice, and body cues.

All five participants identify as female and prefer the pronoun she. Each teacher has been given a pseudonym, thus maintaining a confidential identity for this study. The five participants teach in various states across the country: two in California, and one each in Illinois, New York, and Washington, D.C. The years of experience vary up to fourteen years, but all of them have taught or interacted with children in classroom settings for at least two years. All participants are in their late twenties to late thirties. Because of the limited amount of volunteers for the participant pool, the criteria for the

participants changed slightly. Originally sample criteria expected each participant to be the lead teacher in a classroom. Two of the participants are not considered lead teachers in a classroom (Jasmine and Sam). Jasmine is working as a co-teacher, and Sam worked as an after-school teacher and now directly works with the school's administration helping students and their families with financial needs.   Two teachers (Sonia and Chloe) are currently in their own classrooms while Carrie now works in the library after fourteen years of teaching in the classroom. Sam and Carrie are still referred to as teachers in this study because of their instructor experiences.

Initial interviews lasted at least 60 minutes per teacher because it focused on individual backgrounds and identity development. See Appendix A for the interview questions. For the follow-up interview, the teachers were each asked six standard questions, and were then prompted to elaborate on specific discussions from the previous interview. The individual questions for the follow-up interviews were formed based on the analysis of the data using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding steps in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some of the initial codes that derived from the interviews were relationships, religion, level of outness, and school environment. If the specific comments connecting to the research questions were not elaborate enough, they were asked to elaborate further. The predominant follow-up questions that every participant answered are in Appendix A. Between these questions, the researcher focused on various points made, or unclear statements to ensure that the participant answered all the parts of each question. More time was spent on question number 3, which states, "When looking over our last conversation, I noticed…" This question may have ended up being more than one question depending on the interviewee and the clarity needed for

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the narrative. For example, if a teacher said, "Be safe." The researcher prompted the educator by asking, "What do you mean by safe?" Therefore, the follow-up interviews varied in time, ranging from 25 minutes to 65 minutes.

Researcher Identity and Positionality

Positionality is what one identifies with in order to disclose the appropriate position based on the research (Chiseri-Strater, 1996). As researchers, we "are positioned by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation, historical-personal circumstance, and intellectual predisposition (Chiseri-Strater, 1996, p.115). Because of these connections, it is the researcher's responsibility to inform the reader that she is connected to this study based on her own subjectivity. As a researcher who identifies as a sexual minority educator, my positionality connects to this research based on my personal circumstance, gender, and occupation affiliation. I have personal experience with and opinions about the issues being investigated in this study. This is a potential strength and weakness for the validity of the study (Peshkin, 1988). As a strength, my positionality provides personal subjectivities and background knowledge, which can be helpful. I have greater personal connection with compassion for the participants than other researchers might. My background as an educator, my identity as a sexual minority, and my experiences within school settings may connect and contribute to openness in personal conversations with participants. They also influenced the design of the study and the epistemologies I brought to the analysis. On the other hand, my subjectivities may skew, misconstrue or distort the data (Glesne, 2006). In order to minimize the possibilities of negatively affecting the data, an interview protocol as well as prepared probing and encouraging questions supported a genuine narrative storytelling

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on the part of the participants and guided the researcher in maintaining a focus on the participant stories. I did not volunteer personal opinions, discussions, or experiences and, if asked by the participants, I gently steered the participants back to her own narratives, minimizing the researcher's story (eg. "Let's go back and talk about….," or, "how has your culture contributed to your identity?").

In order to build trustworthiness into this study, use of various methods were used to contribute to its validity, including peer review and discussion, and clarification of researcher bias (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Peer review, or "external reflection and input" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49) took place within the dissertation committee. The researcher shared ideas and requested support for accurate and adequate information that supports the study. The committee gave input to acknowledge researcher bias. Biases were clarified by monitoring and reflecting upon the researcher's own subjectivities. The data was presented to give a voice to, not to exploit or expose the participants. Trustworthiness adds strength to this project's validity and accuracy.

Figure 2 demonstrates a frame that encompasses several components to the study. Because narrative analysis is the foundation or base of the frame, the questions and interviews guide the research, frame the study, and hold it together. The inside of the frame contains four perspectives that guide the analyses and findings of disclosure decisions. The small box labeled *culture* is connected to teacher identity and intersectionality demonstrating that these two perspectives are heavily influenced by this component which is also used as a lens with data analysis. Each perspective is analyzed through grounded theory, thus showing the importance of the personal, school, and community cultures when deciding whether to be out in school settings. See Figure 2.

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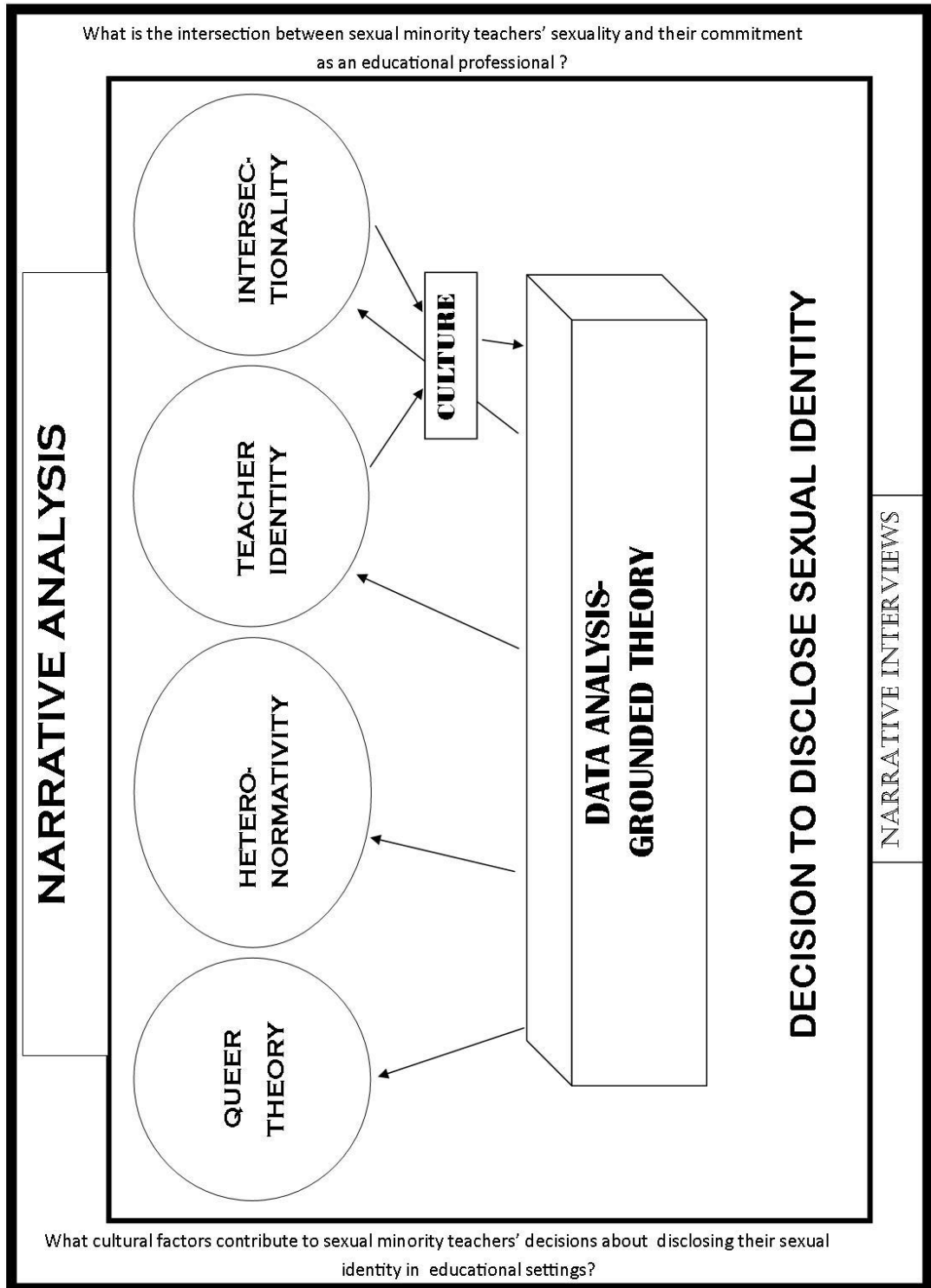
Figure 2. Framework

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Overall, the methodology was framed by narrative analysis (Bruner 1987; Glesne, 2011; Reissman, 1993; Wolcott, 1994; Wortham, 2001) with lenses provided by queer theory (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Meyer, 2007), heteronormativity theory (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Fox, 2007; Toomey et al., 2012) intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and teacher identity (Alsup, 2005; Alsup, 2006; Chong & Low, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Cook, 2009; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Nieto, 2003; Nieto, 2012). Data collection was in-depth interviews which were analyzed through grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008, Leedy & Omrod, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to reveal intersecting cultural and identity factors that influenced disclosure decisions. This study contributes to the research on sexual minority educators for administrators, teachers, pre-service educators, and the LGBTQ community, providing a component to the foundation of LGBTQ issues in education that could someday provide sexual minorities with a stronger voice in academic settings in the United States.

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CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANTS, DATA, AND ANALYSIS

This chapter dissects the intersections of culture and their commitment as

educators for each participant. The data analysis is broken down based on grounded

theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008; Strauss &

Corbin, 1990) with queer theory (Bower& Klecka, 2009; Hardie, 2012; Meyer, 2007;

Nagoshi, 2014; Rothman, 2012) and heteronormative theory (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Fox,

2007; Toomey et al., 2012) perspectives.   In this chapter, the discussion of data and

analyses are shared. Thereafter, each participant will be introduced as individuals based

on the data from the interviews. The findings are then followed by a conclusion.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory analysis allows for flexibility, yet it still has particular steps

necessary for analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008,

Leedy & Omrod, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In order to fully understand the format

of analysis used by the researcher, in this chapter, the steps to coding are broken down

and how they were utilized to analyze data is discussed. Steps to constructing and

analyzing the data are: 1.) Open-coding, 2.) Axial coding, 3.) Selective coding, and 4.)

Development of a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding divides the data into

common themes. Thereafter, the data is placed into subcategories connecting specific

ideas or themes. In this study, the open-coding took place after initial interviews were

conducted and transcribed. A table was created with pseudonyms in the far left rows, and

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the interview questions labeling the columns at the top. The interview questions were used as categories because each person was asked the same questions. Quotes were pasted, phrases or words in the appropriate cells to input the data that supports the questions. The themes were created to emphasize the data dissected from the personal narratives. Once the themes were created, specific examples or dialogues were placed with each theme to support its relevance.   Themes or trends were extrapolated focusing on, for example, a specific community, race or professional focus.

Axial coding takes the subcategories a step further. The researcher takes the information, analyzes, goes back and reviews other areas, then goes back again, refining the categories (Leedy & Omrod, 2010). In this study, the cells within the table were reviewed and analyzed, looking for common themes and trends. Data that needed probing or more detail was then identified. Follow-up interviews were conducted thereafter.

After the second interviews, open-coding was approached to ensure all key words were accounted for. Thereafter, axial coding was used to find common themes or trends. Repeated words or phrases show commonalities that required further analyzing in order to see how data intertwines with the study. The various data components were revisited to find more relationships and connections several times. Each time the focus was on different concepts such as how often a word is used, or the inflection of voices. Finding words or phrases that describe feelings or actions that directly connect back to the two guiding questions for this study are valuable and demand attention as well.

Thereafter, interrelationships are formed in order to find an overarching theme or theory in the selective coding stage. Interrelationships were identified based on the

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common themes and to see how culture and disclosure were connected. After the researcher analyzed the data and interrelationships were discovered, a visual was created to explain the theory or conclusions revealed through the narrative data because, "a theory in the form of a verbal statement, visual model, or series of hypotheses, is offered to explain the phenomenon in question" (Leedy & Omrod, 2010, p. 143). Grounded theory is powerful for this study because it allows the data from the voices to determine the conclusions, acknowledging the fluidity of the research, but allowing for a strong analysis. Although there are set steps, because grounded theory is fluid, it may be necessary to go back and forth between various steps before finding a conclusion. See Figure 3 for a visual representation of grounded theory for this study.

The figure specifically shows each step of grounded theory and how it intertwines with the purpose of the study. The steps are sequential, but once axial and selective coding take place, follow-up interviews are then coded using the second step.   These steps repeat as many times as necessary until there is enough data to support a conclusion. Thereafter, selective coding followed, and the remaining steps of grounded theory continued with the analysis process forming a conclusion.

Grounded Theory

(Corbin & Strauss, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008, Leedy & Omrod, 2010; Strauss &

Open Coding
Divides data into com-

Initial interviews take place

Create a table with initial interview questions in columns and pseudonyms on the left in rows

Input quotes, phrases and words that answer each question per partici- pant

Axial Coding
Analyzing, going back,

Find common themes from interviews

Trends may arise which will encourage further questioning for follow-up interviews

Selective Coding
Interrelationships

Follow-up interviews re- visiting questions and new questions for further analysis

More axial coding

Find connections based on the common themes

Connect questions: How are culture and disclosure connected?

Development of a Theory
Visual model or statement explaining analyses results

Look at questions and analyses results

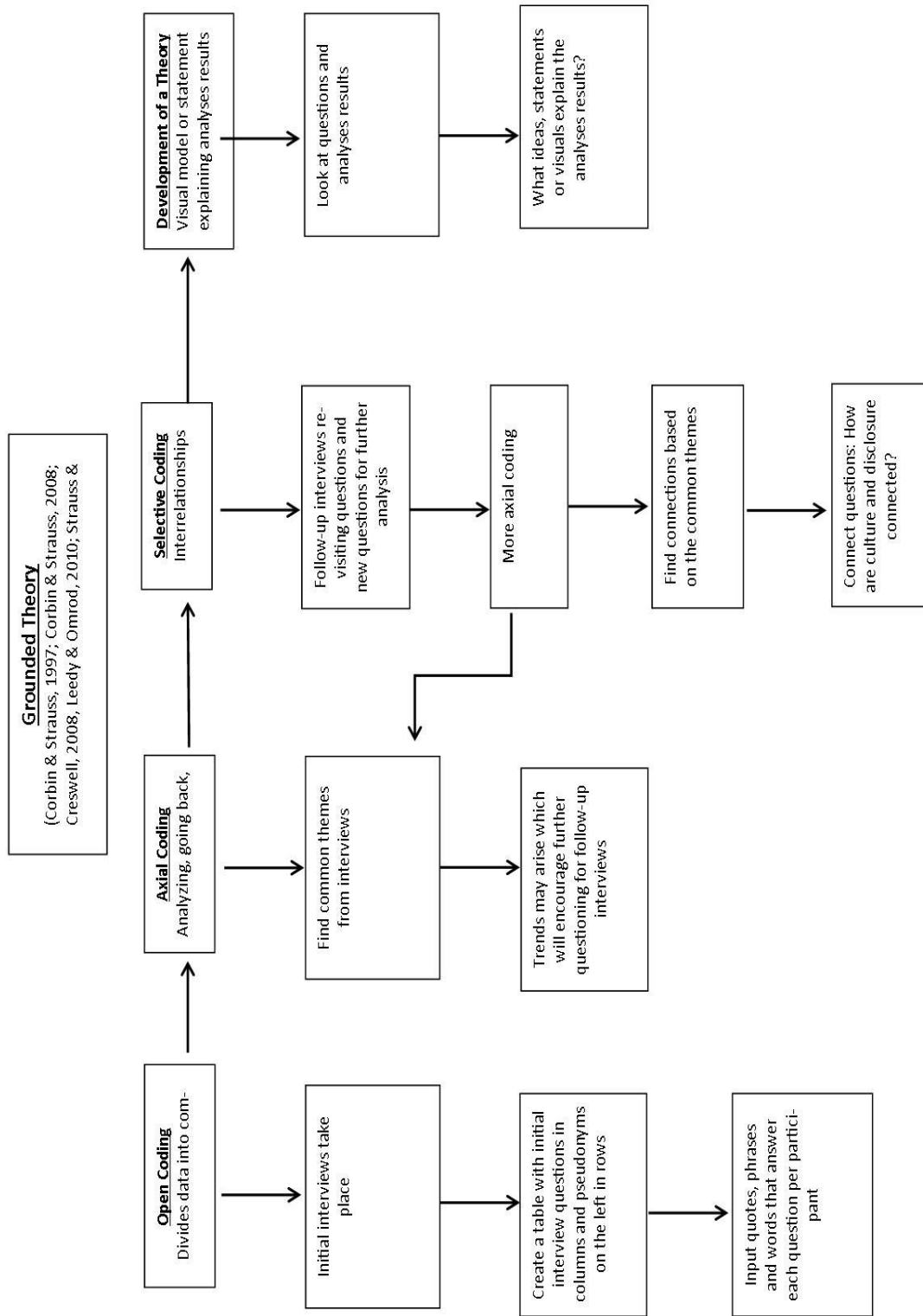What ideas, statements or visuals explain the analyses results?

Figure 3. Grounded Theory

The goal of the study was to gain insights into sexual minority educators' cultural and teaching experiences contributing to disclosure decisions directly from the individual teacher's perspective.   A conclusion was made with a constructed theory based on the narrative data collected from the interviews. Analysis utilizing grounded theory supported individuality with a connectedness relating back to common themes based on the participants' experiences. The connections with culture and identity were revealed through narratives.

Meet the Participants

The participants are introduced in this chapter as a part of the data. The information retrieved from the narratives was organized into introductions here instead of with methods to clarify various characteristics of the individuals. The five teachers' interviews revealed components of their narratives that provided deep insight into the lives of LGBTQ educators in K-12 settings. Some cried while reflecting back on monumental events in their lives. Others spoke for long periods of time about a particular topic that came up during the interview, and they all took time to reflect upon themselves and intersections as an educator. For instance, the first question that was asked during the second interview was, "After our first interview, was there anything you thought about but did not mention?" They each had responses for this question, which shows they continued to think about the interview thereafter. Valuing the narrative positioning process (Wortham, 2000) and the importance of narrative discourse (Wortham, 2001), the method of analysis chosen to conduct this study is grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This theory suggests that instead of relying upon one method, the researcher began from the bottom,

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constructing theoretical themes or frameworks based on the data presented. Grounded theory is rooted in sociology, but it is also commonly used for education research (Leedy & Omrod, 2010). In order to maintain consistency with format and structure of interviews, utilizing grounded theory, the researcher was able to find common themes that the teachers discussed when interviewed—religion, relationships, level of outness, interaction at school, and advice. Each participant is introduced individually using the same four categories discovered from the data: school climate, identity development, current identity practices, and intersectionality.

Sam

School climate. Sam currently works for a school administration team at a private school in New York. Eighty percent of the students attending the school where Sam works are in need of financial assistance to pay tuition to attend the school. Sam's current position is to help the administration find money through grants, scholarships and other financial resources for these students. She interacts with students daily, and works diligently to support families with proper resources.

Prior to working at the private school, Sam worked as an after-school program teacher and a tutor while participating in AmeriCorps. AmeriCorp provides service to America's schools, organizations, etc. that have specific financial needs that can be met through the program. Members of AmeriCorp provide services such as tutoring, environmental support, health office researchers or assistants, and much more. The students provide service hours and then are given grants and other tuition support for college (Corporation for national and community service, 2015). She spent numerous

hours on a daily basis meeting, planning and working with children as an after school teacher for three years while in the program in Washington, D.C.

Identity development. Sam emigrated from Ukraine as a pre-teenager with her mother, father, and sister. Her parents supported her idea of moving to the United States. She wanted to attend high school and college in a different country, and her parents were chosen out of a lottery to obtain legal permission to travel to a different country for academic or economic purposes. They pursued better economic opportunities and wanted Sam to pursue her dreams, so they moved to a southern city in California. Her parents still reside in California because of the large Ukrainian community and opportunities provided by a diverse city. Her family is very close knit and follows Ukrainian cultural practices, such as attending weekly functions, attending church together, and participating in Ukrainian holidays and celebrations.

Sam's religious upbringing includes attending Catholic services weekly, but her family members "were not crazy religious." As a child in Ukraine, Sam went through a period where she was very active in her church. As an adult, she again is very active in her Ukrainian church in New York. She mentioned that she is aware of a few ideologies in the Catholic religion that go against her personal beliefs, but she is not out at church and is "at peace with that."

Current identity. Sam identifies as a Ukrainian first and foremost. She identifies as Lesbian, and also identifies as a woman and as White. She discussed her "tricky" racial identity:

> I'm White and that's how people perceive me in this country. But, you know, having grown up and spending most of my life in a different country, you know,

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sort of – I mean I have a culture and ethnicity that doesn't fit into the sort of mainstream.

She values her Ukrainian identity and knows that she is different than most of the White population in the United States, but she also made a key point in regards to her visual identity in terms of White privilege: "Cabs will stop for me, which is not necessarily true for many other people." She also identifies as a child advocate and a basketball player.

As far as her Lesbian identity, she is out with her partner in her community, but not at school, with her immediate family, or at her church. She believes that "there are different models for living your life." This statement refers to her idea that there are identities that people may reveal, or that they may hide based on the setting or circumstance. Something that she fears yet thinks is empowering is being out amongst people who may not approve of her identity. She admires those who are out in public because they are vulnerable to ridicule and banishment, but they are making a statement and teaching those around them by living an out life.

Intersectionality. Sam identifies most with her Ukrainian identity, but also quietly identifies as a Lesbian at school. This means that although she may not say it, the environment around her may affect her in a positive or negative way because she internally identifies as a Lesbian. Sam says, "Any role at school is secondary because there are lines that I can see being crossed at my place of employment, and no matter how much I really care and no matter how much I work, I would leave if I felt unaccepted." She believes that at work, if they do not support her partner or Ukrainian family, then that is not the place for her. Sam says that when she is at work and attends work functions, she wants to be able to say, "Here is my amazing girlfriend" if she chooses to do so. If

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the environment feels negative towards same sex partners, she would not feel comfortable, and therefore would not work in that setting. At this point in her career, although she is not verbally identifying as a lesbian at her school, she feels as if the environment supports anti-bias ideologies. When she feels confident to open up, she says she will do so.

Sam also believes that her church community and family do not need to acknowledge or confront her Lesbian identity. Sam does not want to create conflict. She fears the unknown of continued acceptance from her community and family, and would rather keep her Lesbian identity on the "back burner" in the family and church environments. Not knowing if they will shun her or continue to embrace her influences her decision to remain hidden. She said that this is where she is for now and she is "not unhappy;" she believes that the choices and processes that individuals go through are on a "case by case" basis, and she continues to put an identity in the forefront based on her social or environmental settings.

Chloe

School climate. Chloe has taught in the same school district in an in southern California for 8 years. She currently works as a Special Education teacher for students in grades 1-3. She describes her students as having severe intellectual abilities and are learning basic life skills. She spends most of her time supporting her students with learning social skills and providing support for other teachers at recess or with other interactions on campus. Although she is not an administrator, she is known as the teacher that can handle difficult behaviors, so she mostly disciplines or supervises other students during her free time at school.

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Ninety percent of the children at the school receive free and reduced lunch, and they are mostly Latino. She knows of a few staff members at work who are out in the community, but they are not out at work. She has two children and they come with her to school at times. She uses her boys as examples for stories with her class, and keeps a picture of them on her desk.

When asked what motivates her as a teacher, she said, "I like to see the progress." Because she works with students who are learning basic life skills, it is important for her to see kids get to the next step. Chloe said it is always something she wanted to do.

Identity development. Chloe started playing "school" at home by the age of four. While growing up, she was drawn to the people who needed more assistance in class; she enjoyed helping others. She began her teaching career as a substitute, and then went back to school for her Master's degree to pursue a Special Education career. She says she took "the long route," because she focused on one subject for secondary and realized she needed to work toward her first passion, which is helping students who have severe to mild learning disabilities.

During the interview, she discussed the uncomfortable relationship she has with her mother. Chloe's mother chose not to attend her wedding; she said that her mother "would not attend something that she could not agree with." Now that Chloe has two children, her mother is becoming more accepting to Chloe's family that includes her partner. Chloe gave her mother an ultimatum, "This is my family. You can choose to accept my entire family, but you will not get to pick and choose what you will accept." They now visit with each other more often, and her mother is learning to embrace her whole family, including her wife. Something she said during the interview that

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specifically exemplifies her feelings of her mother was, "I'm really glad I am 1,888 miles away from my mother," referring to her mother's idea that her Lesbian identity is "a phase." She was raised Catholic, but said they were the "non-practicing Catholics" because they only celebrated the holidays. For herself today, she believes in the idea of learning how to be a good human, not a particular religion.

Current identity. Chloe says, "I just am," when referring to identifying as a particular "type" of Lesbian. Chloe identifies as a "White liberal raised by a conservative." She does not identify as Lesbian as much as she identifies as a parent. Her spouse is Sonia, another participant. She says her friends and her social community may identify her as a lesbian parent, and she believes she is the "token Lesbian" for her staff colleagues in regards to information about Gay parenting. She likes to keep her family identity separate from her teacher identity in the classroom. She believes that her two sons connect her with staff and friends because of the commonalities with their children. They share stories of struggle and accomplishments which connects them in a different aspect. They are able to agree with each other, therefore putting the Lesbian identity below the mother identity. She says that her sons' teachers allow them to make two Mother's Day gifts for her and her wife; she has not encountered any negative reactions from her neighborhood community or her children's teachers.

Intersectionality. When asked how her Lesbian identity intersects with her teacher identity, Chloe replied, "for the most part, they are pretty separate." When referring back to her open houses at the beginning of the year, she said that many of the teachers show family slides that include significant others. Chloe chooses to "leave that slide out." She is uncomfortable with having her colleagues see photos of her family.

She says, "I don't need to let you know what goes on in my house." She does wonder if her being out would support her students as they get older, but for the time being, she works with very young children and believes it should not be discussed.

Occasionally Chloe feels intersections between her Lesbian and teacher identities. When a proposition for declaring marriage unconstitutional in California was on the forefront, she felt very passionately about the subject. There was a teacher that sent out an email blast to all teachers at her site encouraging them to vote for the proposition against Gay marriage. Chloe took action against this. She spoke to her union representative and her administrator, and the person who wrote the political statement on their work email had to send out an apology, and the administrator changed email policies that are sent out to the whole staff. She felt proud of that moment because she stood up for rights for herself and the LGBTQ community. She also used her teacher union for support, therefore, her teacher and Lesbian identities intersected.

Sonia

School climate. Sonia has been teaching for over ten years. She began her career as an elementary teacher. She obtained her master's degree in special education and then started teaching in a resource room. Today she is a Special Education teacher for moderate disabilities in a combined class of grades 1-3. Sonia works in a large school district in California, and the majority of her students are Latino. Her students receive free lunch, and have a disability.

Sonia partners with the upper grade special education teacher. They share lesson plans, and any and everything else about their students. Sonia says, "We are kind of like our own wing and so unless it's a staff meeting or something like that, I don't really interact [with the staff] much." She stays in her building with her teacher because they

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have their own standards, timelines and expectations which are separate from the general student population. She says, "I'm really not a face on campus you would recognize. I stick with the Special Ed kids. I know who all the Special Ed kids are."

When asked what motivates her as a teacher, Sonia responded, "seeing a kid's progress." She enjoys seeing that light come on and seeing them move forward even if it is at a slower rate. She prides herself in preparing her students for the next grade level. She says, "I can't imagine myself doing anything else."

Identity development. Sonia was raised by her mother who was never married. She is an only child and is very close to her mother. When she was a child, she played school often. Her mother believed in "anti-organized religion". She explains that her mother believed in God, but not in the idea that everyone must act or behave in a particular way based on an organization or church affiliation. Although Sonia's mother did not practice a particular religion, Sonia still attempted to become Catholic and have a first communion as a young child. Her mother supported her decision, and allowed Sonia to go through the process. Eventually Sonia decided not to go through with it because of all of the requirements and ideologies. She realized that her beliefs and ideals such as pro-choice did not connect with the Catholic religion, and she also abandoned organized religion. Her mother supported that decision as well.

Current identity. Sonia identifies as a "White liberal." She is married to a woman. She emphasized that she does not identify as Lesbian. She believes if she has to put a label on her sexual orientation, it would be Bisexual because she says, "I don't know who I'd be married to." Her current marital partner is Chloe. Sonia believes in loving someone for who they are, not what gender they are. Sonia is out to her staff, but

does not discuss it often. She says, "If they know me, then yeah…It's not like its hidden."

She does not openly identify to her students as a person in the LGBTQ community. She believes that if the parents do not agree with her orientation, they could pull a child out of the class or get a lawyer and file a case against her. She says she doesn't want that headache; she says she just wants to teach. An incident that caused her to really think about her identity occurred when she was drawing an example of her family for her students to see. She drew herself, her boys, and then stopped.   When asked why she chose to stop drawing her wife, she said she has a slight uncomfortable feeling about sharing that she is married to a woman. She fears that because of her students' developmental challenges, there could be some issues that go along with her identity. She believes that her students see the world as "black and white," and revealing this information to them may create more harm than good. She says, "Do I wanna go there? Are they gonna understand? Is it gonna lead to something? I just don't want to deal with it." She is an advocate for students, but she believes in keeping her personal life discussing her wife outside of the classroom, and at the same time allows space for conversation about her children to relate with her students.

Above all identities, she is proudest of her identity as a mother of two boys. She believes her parenting defines who she is. She thinks that socially she is likely seen as a Lesbian mom instead of just a mom. Although the label is there, she believes that once you have a child, the lesbian "idea" is not as important. Sonia says, "You are so worried about changing diapers and handling diarrhea, you know, and all of the doing homework and other things that you worry about as a mom, not as a Lesbian." She attends her boys'

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sports games and is very active in their academics. She makes fun treats and supports

social interactions with her kids and friends.   Overall, she believes she does what any

other mom would do-whether they are Lesbian or not.

Intersectionality. When asked how her identities intersect, Sonia reflected for a

bit and then gave examples of how one identity may take precedence over another based

on the situation. For instance, when attending a staff meeting, her administrator

discussed a concern. A transgender student was being bullied by another student in the

school.   She stood up for the transgender person and made statements to help the staff

understand the transgender perspective versus the heteronormative perspective. Her main

point was that if the child is being bullied, then the bully's parents should be getting

phone calls to change their child's behavior. The transgender person's family should not

be receiving phone calls for changing their child's behavior. There are times when the

LGBTQ community is left out of the conversation; Sonia believes it is just as important.

She states, "I feel like it is my obligation to put it out there and say, 'Hey, are you aware

that you are supposed to be talking about this too?'" She does not believe her teaching

changes, but she does believe she is an advocate for LGBTQ issues at her school with the

staff members.

Jasmine

School climate. Jasmine teaches at a high school in Washington, D.C. as she

finishes up pursuing her special education degree. She is employed at a school that is

supported by a major charter school corporation throughout the United States and has

varied programs for collegial support. She works with predominantly Black students

who come from low-income families. The students that she works with may also have

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special academic or behavioral needs. Her role in the morning is a special education teacher that supports individual students on a "push-in or pull-out" basis for two history courses. In the afternoon, she works side by side with a teacher as a co-teacher for three periods of history. When asked about collaboration with teachers, Jasmine said, "There is an incredible amount of interaction and collaboration at the school." She meets with various teams of teachers throughout the month—some weekly, while others are monthly. Wearing the two educator hats, Jasmine still continues to make time to connect with her students as well. She is a listening ear in the halls and checks in with struggling students often.

Jasmine has been directly involved with education for over 5 years. She wants to pursue her special education teaching career because of the strong influence from her sister's personal educational and behavioral struggles as a student receiving special education services. She also has an interest in academic success for students of color, including better preparing them for college.

Identity development. Jasmine was born and raised in Washington, D.C. Her grandparents co-parented with her mother while her mother finished high school. Jasmine was taught early that education is important and college is expected. She experienced her mother advocating for her and her siblings throughout her childhood to ensure that they all received the best education possible. This involved transferring to different schools, paying for private education, or attending charter institutions. She stated that she encountered various trials and tribulations, such as homelessness, but college "was never negotiable."

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Jasmine's mother was raised Catholic because of the support of Catholic churches and education; therefore, her mother attended private Catholic schools. Jasmine says because of her mother's negative experiences while growing up, her mother did not want Jasmine to experience Catholic churches or schools, so her mother was open to religion while raising her children. Jasmine did not attend church as a child unless she was with her friends or grandparents. She does however believe that "the intersection of religion and education were linked for her [mother]. She goes on to say, "it impacted how she created opportunities for me to go to school." As of now, Jasmine and her mother believe there is a higher power, but do not belong to a particular organized religion. Her mother gave her "the license" to develop her own beliefs growing up. .

Current identity. Jasmine says she identified in the past as an African-American woman who also identifies as Lesbian and masculine of center. Presently, Jasmine says, "I'm gonna pull a Raven Symone. I identify as being human." Here she was referring to the famous actress Raven Symone who, during television interviews, identified as human (www.oprah.com, 2015) When Jasmine described herself, she also identified her roles as a human,"I am an organizer, a youth advocate, an older sister, a partner, a lover, and a friend…somebody who is able." Jasmine says, "I am all of those things all of the time." She believes that she should not have to negotiate her identity for anyone or any circumstance. Jasmine says she appreciates young people because they do not question who she is and accepts all of her "without negotiation".

Intersectionality. Jasmine recognizes intersectionality and how aspects of her life intertwine. Not only does education and politics intersect for her, the various hats she wears and her ethnic, sexual, and gender identities intersect as well. Jasmine refers to a

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famous quote from Anna Julia Cooper (1892), and in her own words says, "When and where I enter, I believe that all of who I am enters with me." Jasmine continues on to say, "I am not just a race person, but I am also a gender person, and a class person. I try to bring it all with me."

Jasmine combines and intersects both identities of a person of color and a person in the LGBTQ community. She says she has to be mindful of racial profiling and harassment because she is masculine of center and a person of color. Men tend to mistreat her because she looks masculine. She says they at times seem jealous of how she looks or they sexually harass her to remind her that she is not a male. As far as racial profiling is concerned, she wonders how many White LGBTQ people are pulled over for distinct looks or harassed on the streets. She says she has to be mindful of the company she keeps and when and where she is walking or driving to avoid racial profiling or police brutality because brutality has happened to people she knows and she has been racially profiled while driving. She believes that there are racial issues that target her as an individual. She says that she is unsure of the experiences that White LGBTQ people face, but she wonders if they face as much physical, verbal, and police brutality that people of color face.

Jasmine emphasizes the idea that despite identification with various roles and characteristics, society likely still sees her color first. She has been pulled over by police officers just to be checked out. Once they saw she was a woman, they apologized and told her she can go. She has been avoided on the streets by White people; they would purposely walk around her. She says she worries more about the killings of Black people and Black LGBTQ people than if she can get married in the United States. She also

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believes that because she is masculine of center, there are situations that she encounters that others may not—her masculinity is not always respected and she frequently experiences some form of verbal harassment. As mentioned before, she has been sexually harassed while out in public places. When referring to experiences as a person of color and intersectionality she says, "The issues just aren't the same."

Carrie

School climate. Carrie has taught at the same high school in central Illinois for thirteen years. The school's population is predominantly White, and most of the students are from middle class families. Carrie is the advisor for the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) at the high school. She stated that the school environment has changed drastically in the past ten years. When they first started the GSA, it was almost like a secret similar to "the underground railroad." Today, the GSA has events that positively support the school LGBTQ population. She says that in the past 8 years, the school has really become more open and accepting. She believes that there are only two of 140 staff members, including herself, who identify as LGBTQ and are out. She interacts with the staff and students at her high school openly and on a daily basis at school functions, staff meetings, or in the break room.

Identity development. Carrie grew up in a small town. She is the oldest of three kids, and was raised by two parents who are presently still married. She says that her family practiced Catholicism while she and her siblings grew up, and that her family has always been "a little progressive" for their town. Carrie says her parents were trusting but strict. They allowed her to experiment and learn to be responsible while growing up. Carrie says, "We were able to kind of have a little bit of autonomy and make some

mistakes, and at the same time, we knew we had a really good safety net and really kind of strong boundaries."

As an adult, Carrie has struggled with her identity as well as her religious upbringing. She was married to a man until her late twenties. Thereafter, she fell in love with a woman and realized that her sexual identity was changing.   Because of their Catholic beliefs, her parents were upset that she divorced, but they do accept her relationship and love her partner of thirteen years. Carrie grew up Catholic, but feels that Catholicism still sees those who are LGBTQ as sinners. Although Carrie has grown apart from the Catholic organization, she said she believes in a lot of the Catholic teachings, such as caring for others like it is a part of your life responsibilities, not just caring for people when it is convenient.

Current identity. Carrie first identifies as a wife. She also identifies as a teacher and a mother. When addressing her sexual identity, she says, "Technically I identify as a Lesbian, but it's something that, I know this might be a bad thing to say, but sometimes I don't really think about it a lot." She says she has a loving relationship with her wife, almost as if she forgets that there is a label. She also feels she identifies as a Christian, but worries about that label because of the controversies with LGBTQ people and Christianity. She also identifies as a member of her community as she participates in community organizations and groups. Interestingly, Carrie did not identify with a race or ethnicity during the first interview. When asked if there is a particular reason why she did not mention her race, she said, "Because I am spacey." But thereafter, a discussion of White privilege emerged. She says she identifies as Caucasian and at times it is taken for granted. Carrie says she lives in a White community and is surrounded often by White

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people, and therefore, her own race is not a topic of discussion. But, she recalls her friend sharing experiences of racial profiling as a Black woman. After this discussion during the interview, Carrie said, "I take that for granted, and I don't want to take that for granted."

Intersectionality. When Carrie first began teaching, she did not reveal her sexual identity. She says, "I was scared. I was terrified." Two or three years after she began teaching and was tenured, she felt more comfortable with her identity. She said policies were in place that specifically mentioned sexual orientation and gender identity. Some people began to find out, and she came out to the staff before the students, but she felt it was important to be out at her school. She said, "Kids need a connection to each other, but they also need adult role models." She does not mind being the "go-to" for LGBTQ questions on her campus because she believes that her way of living has been a great example. Her identities of a wife, parent, teacher, advisor, and community advocate intersect with each other. She believes that she represents a positive role model for her students and the larger LGBTQ community. Although she does not verbally or visually "advertise" her sexual identity, her wife and children are active in her community. Carrie allows her identities to intersect openly, and says, "If anybody has anything negative they think about, they sure haven't told me. And you know, I'm fine with that."

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Coding

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The researcher analyzed data from selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) looking for individualized and group themes, and statements that directly connect to the questions: What cultural factors contribute to sexual minority teachers' decisions about disclosing their sexual identity in educational settings? The intersection between sexual

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minority teachers' sexual identities and their commitment as an educational professional was revisited in order to find trends and parallels among the participants with additional data from the second interview. The codes that were revealed through analyzing and re-analyzing the data are: religion, parental and personal relationships (partners, siblings, etc.), level of "outness," staff and student interaction, advice to sexual minority educators, identity, and how as teachers they are motivated as professionals.

With pages of narrative data, it was necessary to find commonalities to guide the research analysis. The themes mentioned above stood out to the researcher because each participant discussed something in her narrative that connected directly to these categories. In order to keep the data organized and clear, the themes are somewhat broad, yet they hone in specifically on ideas or reasons that connect directly to intersectionality, culture and disclosure.

When analyzing religion, the data showed a trend toward childhood religious thoughts and practices, adult religious practices, morals or beliefs. These occasionally connected with particular religious teachings. While coding for parental relationships, the researcher looked specifically at the text from the interviews— the connections and relations with their mother, father, both parents, and grandparents. Parental relationships are separated from personal relationships because the participants specifically talk about particular people in their lives that are important to them or that have helped them with their coming out processes that were not part of the parental relationships. The friends and siblings in personal relationships play a different role from the parental roles. Friends played a supportive role versus parents' guidance focused more with approval or disapproval during identity discovery. The word "outness" is created here to describe

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how much one may be out in school settings. Participants discussed how much, to whom, and the reasons behind their levels of outness. The levels scaled from not out at all at school to completely out at school. One teacher is not out at all at school or in specific communities or to her family, and the scale continues to the opposite where there are two teachers that are out at school and in their communities as well as with their families. See Figure 4 for the Level of Outness Scale.

Level of Outness

Carrie

Completely Out

Jasmine

Is out at school, in the community, and with family

Both are out at school partially. They are out with friends, but not as open in community

Sonia

Chloe

Sam is out to her friends and some family members

Sam

Not Out At All

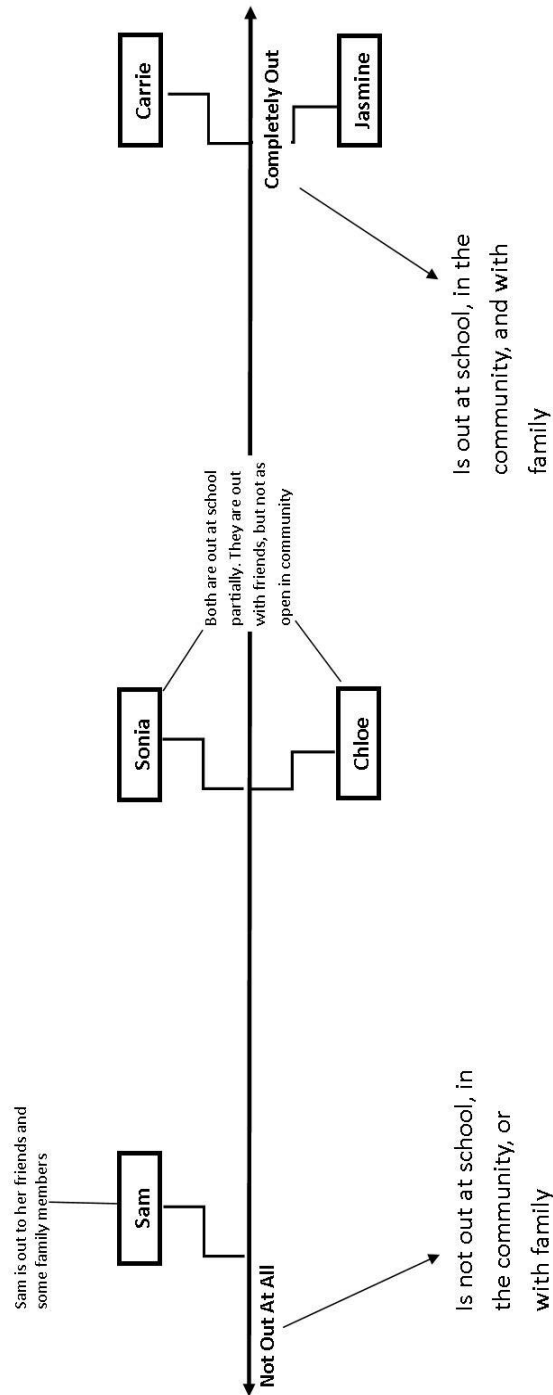Is not out at school, in the community, or with family

Figure 4. Level of Outness Scale

Staff interaction was analyzed because of the significance the people at schools may have on the five teachers interviewed. The teachers discuss administration and staff interaction and how that affects their decisions of disclosure. Student interaction varied based on disclosure or level of outness. The interaction was analyzed looking for thoughts and ideas from the participants of what students should know, as well as how the participants perceive student-teacher relationships. The coding for advice was chosen while selective coding was taking place. As other data was being analyzed, the advice to others seemed to emerge because the words used connected back to reasons why she was or was not out on campus. The advice also provides ideas for future implications and research. The identity code was chosen because the participants identify in different ways. The discussion of intersectionality and how each identifies is discussed here. Lastly, the motivation behind choosing a teaching profession was analyzed. The influences that encourage a teaching career were extrapolated to find the motivation behind choosing a profession regardless of the possible challenges with disclosure. The coding of identity and motivation is included in the participant introductions and the other codes are discussed in detail below.

There were connections with participants from different parts of the country: Three teachers have children, four identify as White, and three teachers choose not to disclose their identity with their students. There were some findings that were unique: One teacher identifies as Black, one teacher is not out at all at school or in parts of her community, and only one teacher teaches in a middle school.

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Religion

All five participants have had experience with religious beliefs and practices. Three of them grew up with Catholic morals and upbringings, and two did not. The religious background seemed to be very important in Carrie and Sam's life. They regularly attended church and participated in the church community.

Sam is very active in her Ukrainian Catholic church, but remains closeted in that setting. She does not want to risk losing that part of her life and chooses to keep her Lesbian identity hidden in church. Chloe says that she and her mother just practiced religion on Christian holidays. Sonia was allowed to explore her own religious journey, and realized Catholicism is not for her. Sonia and Chloe do not attend church regularly and are still seeking out a spiritual community for them and their children. Jasmine lives a spiritual life but does not have a church home. Jasmine was told by her mother, "I appreciate that experience, but Catholic school was fucked up for me." As mentioned in her introduction, her mother allowed Jasmine to find her own spiritual journey. Carrie attends an inclusive and supportive Christian church with her wife and her children regularly. She loves her church and believes it is a big part of her character.

Each participant experienced religious practices and beliefs. Although they practiced in different ways, they all specifically addressed Catholicism in their interviews. . Two out of the five participants still attend church today and are heavily involved in their church community. The other three educators are still on spiritual journeys seeking some sort of spiritual or religious community.

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Parental and Personal Relationships

Parental relationships were similar and different in many ways. Out of the five women, Carrie and Sam were the only participants who grew up with both parents. The other three women were raised by their mothers. All five women are partnered and Carrie, Chloe, and Sonia are legally joined with a partner and each of them have children. Sonia and Chloe are only children.

Sam's parents are still together today. With her parents' sacrifices, Sam has fulfilled her educational dream by attending two top private Jesuit universities in the United States as well as AmeriCorps, the service organization for organizations in need. She is not open about her sexuality with her parents. They know, but it is not discussed. Sam has been asked by her mother not to discuss or include video or images of her relationship on social media or talk about it with the family. She says that her immediate family fears being ostracized from Ukrainian family members. LGBTQ identities are not acceptable and therefore should not be discussed. She respects her family and suppresses her identity to keep peace with her father and grandmother. Currently, she only connects with and discusses her partner with her sister. Sam believes it is a "fundamental issue." She is more comfortable with her mother and sister in regards to her identity, but she refuses to discuss her Lesbian identity with her father or grandmother. She says, "I know that my grandmother will never come to my wedding."

Chloe said that her mother would brag about her being a teacher. But, as mentioned in her introduction, the relationship between Chloe and her mother has been distant for over ten years. Her mother accepts parts of her intersected identity, such as her mother and teacher identities, but not her wife, thus creating a tension between them.

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Sonia did not have complications with coming out to her mother. Sonia says, "I am happy that my mother lives 7 miles from me!" Sonia's mother recently moved to California to be closer to Sonia and her kids from the Midwest. She has complete support for her religious and familial journeys from her mother.

Jasmine's mother and grandparents made sacrifices to ensure that Jasmine and her siblings received a good education. Her mother is a successful oncological nurse and raised six children while going to school. She tells her children that they do not have excuses for failure.

When each participant's Lesbian identity was revealed to her parent(s), Jasmine seemed to take the response from her mother the hardest. Jasmine is very close to her mother, and when she was 16, she decided to tell her mother. She assumed it would be fine considering her mother was very liberal and involved with protests, activism, and so forth, but she was wrong. Jasmine recalls the conversation while riding in the car with her mother,

> She kind of swerved. She got upset. It was not the reaction I was expecting. It was kind of a tough conversation. She was silent the whole time and silent the whole way back. And then eventually she said some choice words. And I just deflated.

Jasmine remained closeted for four more years after that. As an adult, Jasmine's mother's ideas of her daughter loving a woman have evolved. Jasmine's extended family has accepted her and almost expected it based on the behaviors and mannerisms at such a young age, "I think by the time I was seven, things were pretty clear." When asked about

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the parental relationship today, she said that her mother has evolved because she is able to see her humanity and not just sexuality; she loves Jasmine's partner.

Carrie's relationship with her parents is very open and honest. Because Carrie came out in her late twenties, she believes her parents were able to accept it better. Carrie's family says they love her wife so much that Carrie jokingly worries if they ever break up they would want her instead of their own daughter.

When summarizing the various relationships with the participants, a few findings are worth mentioning. All five women have connections to birthparents. Three of the five only connect with their mothers, and two women have both parents still together at home. An interesting dynamic is that two women, Carrie and Sam, were raised by two parents, and identify as White, but Sam is not out. This seems interesting to the researcher because their societal identities of being white and their familial cultural experience of having two parents, who are presently still married, in the household are the same. Yet, their levels of outness are on opposite sides of the Outness scale. See Figure 4. Sam dreads the conversation with her family. Carrie on the other hand is out with her family. The two participants do have different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Carrie has lived in the United States her whole life, and broadly identifies as Caucasian. In retrospective, Sam identifies strongly with her Ukrainian culture and ethnicity, and has lived in the United States for less than twenty years. The cultural differences with these two participants influence their comfort with disclosure.

The various relationships with siblings and friends seemed to have supported all participants in a positive way. They have someone to talk to, and they value the positive

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relationship that does not include judgment. All five women seem to enjoy the connectedness of a significant other.

Level of Outness

The level of outness ended up being on a spectrum from one extreme to the other. One participant is absolutely closeted in her school, church and familial environment, while another participant is completely out and open in her school, familial environment and church; the other participants fall in-between. See Figure 4 for the Level of Outness scale.

Sam started coming out to herself during her pre-teen years. As mentioned in Sam's introduction, she persuaded her family to move to the United States for academic reasons, but Sam knew that if she were to stay in the Ukraine and identify as Lesbian, "it would be a difficult life to lead." Her family values the social connections and rapport of the family, and therefore Sam remains closeted in most settings.

At school, Sam is not out to anyone. Her administration, staff and students do not know that she identifies as Lesbian. She has had at least two opportunities to come out to the students, but she decided to not disclose her sexual identity. When the children ask her personal questions about her relationships, she says it is "inappropriate" for school. She does not want to lose relationships by coming out. She feels like she judges herself for not coming out,

> Am I being selfish by wanting to force my family to accept me for who I am?
> And then I judge myself for what if I don't? I hurt my family if I do one thing,
> and I hurt myself and people like me if I do the other.

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Chloe came out in college. Although Chloe is out to her principal and to the staff, she does not talk about it much at school unless she needs to address LGBTQ issues with education. Chloe believes she is out as much as she is because of her own children. She strongly believes in keeping her home life separate from work. She and her wife attend school functions, sporting events and other events for their sons together. When asked if she did not have kids would her disclosure change, she quickly replied, "Yes!" When asked how, she said, "I think not as many would know. Only the people closest to me would know."

Sonia came out in college. She is out on campus to the staff and administration. She is open about her children, but does not mention her wife to her students. She does not have display pictures of her family at school, nor does she discuss her family to the parents. Sonia says that she does not want to "wear it out there for everyone." When asked if she would be out if she did not have children, Sonia said, "When you go to a new school, you go right back into the closet. You can just let people believe whatever."

Because of the emotional process coming out to her mother, Jasmine's romantic and platonic relationships with women were not discussed until she was a senior in college and came out to her friends. She said that she still dated women throughout the years before coming out again, but she did not want to talk about it because it upset her mother.

Jasmine is very open at her school site. She feels very comfortable because her principal also identifies as a Lesbian and masculine of center. She wants students to feel safe and comfortable with her, so she said,

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Within the first week of school with the students I rattled off this list of

descriptions. And one of them was that I am Lesbian and that I identify as

masculine of center. And I did that because what I explain to the students is that

there is sanctuary in identity. There is sanctuary in having conversations with me.

Jasmine believes the students appreciate her openness, and this encourages her to be out

at school. She is also out in her community but not completely to her family. Some

people in her family are still getting used to her identity but are coming around to

accepting all of her humanity, and appreciating her as a whole person.

Carrie was the oldest to come out in her late twenties. Her colleagues at her

school site accepted her quickly. She came out to the staff at school first and then slowly

the students began to find out. She never specifically announced it, but she has pictures

of her family up in her classroom, and she does not deny it when students ask her. She

feels that her openness at school has helped people understand that LGBTQ people are

just as human as heterosexual people. She is proud of herself and her family, and is an

advocate and active community member for LGBTQ issues.

Looking back at Figure 4, the participants vary in outness. There are participants

on the extremes of the spectrum and two planted in the middle. Two participants share

with everyone in and out of school, two only share with particular people in a school

setting, and one opens up on a case by case basis. The two high school teachers are

completely out. The elementary school teachers are only out to staff at school, and the

middle school teacher is not out at all.

Staff and Student Interaction

The data here closely connected to not just how the participants interacted with the staff and students, but also what they felt would change about their interactions. Four said they would be out more if it were a school wide decision to share families and if policies were written in handbooks for protection. Two teachers said if they could go back and hide their identities they would do it.

Sam believes if there were more policies or wording that specified gender or sexual expression or orientation she would be out more on campus. She said that if it were general, then she knows she could be herself and not worry about it. She gets along well with the students, but she does feel as though she is not being genuine with them and it bothers her at times. But, she would rather not disclose her identity and keep a good relationship with the kids than risk losing the connections with them.

Chloe interacts mostly with her students. She supports them and helps them with social interaction. She does not communicate with the other staff members often. She refuses to discuss her wife or too much of her personal life with the kids. She does refer to her two boys often to show connections, but she does not discuss her family as a whole. Her wife is known as her "best friend" in her classroom and she wants to keep it that way to avoid conflict with parents.

Sonia's position of being a special education teacher hardly provides time for her to get away from her classroom. She spends most of her time planning, preparing, and interacting with her students. She sees teachers at staff meetings, but does not really interact with them outside of that. She would like to share more about her family, but worries about her relationship not being fully understood by parents and students

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Jasmine is out to the staff and students at her site. She loves to integrate her identity in her teaching. . She believes, "We're just human and express our sexuality in a variety of ways; and that's okay." At a staff retreat, her principal required the teachers to discuss their identities and how they could be used in classrooms with content delivery. Jasmine felt that this was not only comfortable for her, but very empowering for the staff. She is a minority on her site because she is a Black teacher. Her students really appreciate and relate to her and her identities. They spend extra time in her classroom and chat with her on a personal level. They rely on Jasmine as a mentor and leader for them. Jasmine values her position as a teacher, and the students know it. She says, "As much as I love our students, I think having strong healthy relationships with the students, with the families, with my professional peers means more to me than even teaching."

Carrie gets along with everyone at her school site. She has been there for 15 years. She has a few close friends at the school, and she also is the "go-to" LGBTQ person on campus. Carrie has always maintained a very private life, but she is willing to be open enough to help others or to just be an example of a Lesbian in her community. The students go to her for support. She is the advisor for the Gay Straight Alliance at her site. She believes in living with integrity and being proud of who she is.

The middle and high school teachers in this study believe their disclosure supports students and the two high school teachers take pride in being role models for students. Sam is not out, but she believes if there are teachers that feel strong enough to be out at school and confront the issues that may arise, they should be out because she believes the kids need that. The elementary teachers in this study do not feel that their students are

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old enough to understand or appreciate difference with relationships. They believe it would create chaos before it would create a positive accepting environment.

As far as staff and administration goes, four teachers are out to staff members and believe in the importance of having support from the administration. Sam and Sonia believe that it would not be as big of a deal if it is part of the school culture.

Advice

Each participant provided insight to further research on LGBTQ issues and education. The experiences of these women demonstrate an understanding as to what the participants did or what they should have done to further positive sexual identity intersections on school campuses. Sam says that as teachers, it is important to concentrate on their jobs. If people are not capable of giving their all because of the stress of the environment based on feeling uncomfortable with how they identity, then that job may not be for them.

Chloe says to "be safe and aware." She says that it is important to find at least one person to connect with where the teacher can feel safe. She also says that if a person lives in one city and works in another to feel comfortable, then so be it. Sonia says to make sure the teacher knows the school environment. She also suggests that disclosing the teacher's sexual identity to the administration may avoid surprises if any allegations or confusion comes up later. She says if "you are open and honest, that's great—and stick to it. Be ready for it." She said this with emphasis on the idea that the intersection of teaching and disclosure may be difficult to handle. Jasmine suggests becoming a part of Brown Boi Project (Brown Boi Project, n.d.) if someone identifies as a person of color and masculine of center. Brown Boi project is an organization that supports people who

identify as masculine of center. She also says that it is good to build relationships with other people. Lastly, Jasmine says that "It's okay to grieve. It's okay to reflect on whether or not somebody said or did something that was painful." She uses examples of questioning biased statements or uncomfortable actions that may have only happened because the person identifies differently. An example of an uncomfortable action would be approaching someone and asking "Are you the guy in your relationship?"

When Carrie gave advice, she said Carrie says,

First and foremost, do your job. Put your nose to the grindstone and keep your head down…Especially when you are first starting out, because you are all in the same boat and that is going to speak way more loudly about you than anything that you do or say… You are going to have to work a little harder than the majority [of] people out there.

She emphasized this piece of advice because she believes that people should get to know a person based on talents, skills and character, not personal identities. She believes that the identities will unfold as time is spent in a setting. She also agrees that it is important to find allies.

When summing up advice given by the participants, all five believed in the importance of finding support on campus. They believed it was important to be safe and to have someone to confide in. Some said it is important to work in a comfortable environment, while the majority said to just do your work and find ways to adjust to be okay. A common word used during the advice discussions was the word "safe," which will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Chapter Summary

Utilizing grounded theory to analyze the narratives provided five main themes that were utilized for coding throughout data analysis: religion, parental and personal relationships, level of outness, staff and student interaction, and advice. Recognizing key words, repetitive phrases, and various commonalities or differences guided the development of coding from the ground up for this study. Referring back to the framework, the researcher analyzed codes through four perspectives: queer theory, heteronormativity theory, teacher identity, and intersectionality. The codes dissect the narratives to allow interpretation of reasons behind disclosure and provide insight of each practitioner's culture and intersectionalites.

Overall, the five participants believe they are advocates for students. They identify as teachers, and most said they are community members as well. Two teachers specifically mentioned White privilege and understanding their access to education and politics versus people of color in school settings. Jasmine, the only teacher of color, had similar ideas about her identity and characteristics, but she does not like to be labeled as a minority. She also brought up racial issues that relate with LGBTQ people of color such as profiling and brutality.

Motivation behind working with children was mentioned at the end of school climate in each of the participants' introductions. Each teacher had a particular reason for working in the education field. Some grew up wanting to be a teacher (Sonia, Chloe and Carrie), while others had specific life experiences that encouraged decisions for a teaching career (Jasmine and Sam). Another commonality was that each of them emphasized the pride in involvement and success with their students.

Whether or not the teacher is out on campus, they all strongly believe in finding someone to talk with who supports them at their school. It was frequently mentioned that it is difficult to remain mentally healthy without allies and friends that are unbiased and supportive. Whether the teachers choose to be out or not on campus, their cultures and relationships strongly connect with their identities. The Lesbian and Bisexual educators interviewed are happily involved in relationships and are proud of their careers as educators. Whether or not they disclose personal identities on campus, the participants believe teaching is the career path for their lives. Sonia says, "I couldn't see myself doing anything else."

The narrative data provided ample information to understand each teacher's background and cultural intersections with school interactions. Five narratives were shared, analyzed, and coded using grounded theory to find common and uncommon connections between them. But the question to answer next is so what? Why are these narratives valuable data? The following chapter will provide a discussion to tie these components together and discuss the relevance of this study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The findings that connect to this study's initial research questions are initially

discussed. Referring back to this study's questions, intersections of culture and being a

Bisexual or Lesbian teacher are discussed here with a narrative analysis perspective.

Valuable points that were not specifically the focus for the study but were too interesting

to leave behind are then discussed. The relevance of the literature review and the study is

thereafter, and the limitations with ideas for future research follow. Recommendations

based on the study's findings followed by a personal reflection from the researcher

conclude this dissertation.

Cultural Factors Contributing to Disclosure Decisions

The first research question was "What cultural factors contribute to sexual

minority teachers' decisions about disclosing their sexual identity in educational

settings?" This question was carefully analyzed because race was not as big of a factor in

the study. Culture developed into a larger meaning than the color of the participants'

skin. Four of the five participants identified as White, therefore, their cultural

background was not specifically based on race, but more on familial upbringing, religious

beliefs, and if mentioned, ethnicity. One participant, Jasmine, was analyzed in these

cultural categories like the other participants, but her race was taken into consideration as

an important factor because she identifies as African-American.

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Sam's identity was analyzed even closer because of her cultural identities. Sam identifies first and foremost as a Ukrainian. She says that her race is White, and that is what people see, but as mentioned in chapter 4, she believes she is different from other people who identify as White. Ukraine is a small country that shares a border with Russia on Russia's western side. This being the case, Ukraine's strong influence comes directly from Russia, considering they have only been independent from the Soviet Union since 1991 (Shulman, 1998). Recently, there have been extreme controversial acts in Russia based on the country's new Federal Law of Russian Federation no. 436-FZ of 2010-12-23 "On Protection of Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development" (President of Russia, 2011), prohibiting propaganda or any visual support for the LGBTQ community. This law is a hot topic because Russia hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics and Gay athletes participated. Protests, heated discussions and influential persons became involved with the controversy. The Olympics continued and finished in Russia while the five openly Gay athletes from around the world competed with pride and six other Gay international competitors received recognition (Dougherty, 2014). This law continues to be a major debate today and could also influence Ukraine's beliefs on homosexuality. A qualitative and interactive study on the subject of homosexuality took place in Ukraine by Martsenyuk in 2010. After observations, experiences, and evaluations of surveys, Martsenyuk concluded that "Ukraine society remains rather homophobic" (Martsenyuk, 2012, p.53). Martsenyuk (2102) goes on to say that many political leaders and activist groups emphasize that homosexuality is perverse and demoralizes the meaning of family.

Sam's family and church community still strongly believe in Ukraine's laws and morals. Those morals include protecting children and living as traditional families. These beliefs shun the LGBTQ community, thus providing reason for Sam to keep her sexual identity hidden. She does not want to offend or create turmoil in her Ukrainian community, and therefore, she keeps her identity quiet from all settings where she fears there could be a shift in acceptance of her because of her Lesbian identity.

Chloe's responses indicated a lack of acceptance from her mother. Her mother is not very religious, but she does believe that heterosexual families are normal. Chloe's mother has strongly displayed her disapproval in the past by not attending Chloe's ceremony and distancing herself from Chloe's partner. Because of her mother's actions, Chloe has become stronger with her pride and self-acceptance yet still seems to believe that her lesbian identity is personal and should be hidden from children and parents at school.

In Sonia's home, she was taught by her mother to stand up for what she believes in. She does not, however believe in "flaunting" her sexuality. At the beginning of her second interview, Sonia discussed the idea that she has gone through phases with her sexuality. She went from being a participant in Pride parades to no longer attending big Pride events. When asked about disclosure and policies in school, she said that she would be more willing to share her family if it is a universal action at school. If everyone is sharing, then she would do so, but if it is a choice, and some share while others do not, she believes that her married life is private. She feels as if her disclosure could create unnecessary controversy or accusations that steer away from academic purpose. This is her personal choice, which she was taught while growing up.

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Because of Jasmine's upbringing of personal choice and fighting for her beliefs, she has confidence in her identities. As mentioned in her introduction, her journey of identity development was not easy, but through it all, she is a human. She believes she is not a minority or a menace to society. She is who she is and is very proud of that. Jasmine believed in being an advocate for students and she did not hide who she was to ensure she provides an example of someone who may identify as LGBTQ. Jasmine uses her culture to connect with students that may relate to her identities. She values her role as a mentor and utilizes opportunities to connect with her students, thus encouraging and promoting academic success with them.

Carrie's Christian background has helped and hindered her identity development. She learned to care and love unconditionally, while also learning that who she romantically loved is shunned in her religion. Her parents have demonstrated love for their daughter by leaving the Catholic religion because of the conflicting beliefs behind homosexuality. Jung (2001) states that a "heterocentric" ideology is advocated by Roman Catholics. The author continues to state that Catholic teachings emphasize the morality behind heterosexual relationships and marriage. Bishop Gumbleton (2001) shared that many Catholics thought that if a person was homosexual, he or she would go to hell. For these reasons, Carrie disconnected herself with the Catholic religion and Carrie and her wife have found a church that supports her family. Her community and religious support has given her pride and confidence which allows her to advocate for students at her school, mentor them, and be an adviser for their GSA group. Carrie's familial and religious culture has helped develop her into the person she is today. She

does not hide who she is, and she is happy that the influence she exemplifies for students and staff has been positive.

The three main commonalities with all five participants as it directly relates to culture are religion, social environment and familial upbringing. Each participant's cultural factors influenced actions for each person. Sam chose to hide because of her cultural background. Chloe would rather hide, having hurtful emotions from her mother's actions, but is willing to be open with staff because of her children. Sonia has been raised to have choices and live as she would choose. She would not mind sharing her wife with her class if it was a policy that each staff member did so. Jasmine had a supportive upbringing from more than just her mother, so her strength from her grandparents and mother's educational advocacy persuaded her to accept and share all of her identities in all settings. Carrie's upbringing of caring for others influenced her disclosure because she wanted to be there for the LGBTQ youth at her school.

Intersections of Sexuality and Commitment as Education Professionals

The second question in this study is "What is the intersection between sexual minority teachers' sexuality and their commitment as an educational professional?" The intersection of each individual's sexual identity and teacher identity was interesting. Sam felt as if each setting influences the identity she chooses to bring to the forefront. If she is in school, church or home with family, her Lesbian identity is hidden. When she is with her friends and partner, her Lesbian identity is exposed. She believes that circumstances or situations allow for flexibility in one's identities, but what was interesting is in all of her settings she still identifies as a teacher, advocate, or Ukrainian; therefore, the Lesbian identity seems to be the one identity that is hidden on occasions.

Chloe believes there is intersection with her identities, but she prefers to keep them separate. She is out to her staff, but does not discuss her sexuality often. She talks more about her children. She has on an occasion stood up for Gay rights during a controversial time of legalizing or banning Gay marriage, but it was because someone else said something that offended her. Outside of work she still identifies more as a mother. If her other identities come into play then she will acknowledge and identify as such, but if it is not noticed or mentioned, she does not discuss or mention it either. Chloe seems to separate her identities to keep the peace at her work environment.

Sonia verbally advocates for LGBTQ issues at her school with the staff and administration. As mentioned before, she believes it is important to inform the administration just in case problems arise at some point in her career. She has witnessed a teacher almost lose his job for accusations connected with his sexuality and she worries about dealing with the community and school board so she would rather keep her identity quiet. She believes the parents and community have a lot of power in the schools and could influence the decision to discharge her as an employee. If there were stronger policies in place and every teacher was discussing their families and spouses, she would too. But for now, she would rather keep her sexual identity and wife separate from her students. She said they can assume what they want, and she lets them assume.

Jasmine believes that all of her intersections make her one person. She opens herself up to allow the students opportunities to relate or appreciate her in a more vulnerable way. She believes the students connect with her and respect her for being authentic and real with them. Outside of work, Jasmine continues to identify fully with all of her intersectionalities and does not hide or change any of them.

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Carrie is completely out, thus allowing her identities to intersect. She does not verbally mention her Lesbian identity to her students, but she has pictures of her family up and does not deny her identity when asked. She intertwines her teacher and Lesbian identities at her school site and advocates for students that may not always feel confident or that just need a safe place to go and be themselves.

Not all of the teachers allow for the intersections to consistently be a part of their identities; in fact only two identify as Lesbians and teachers at their school sites with everyone. Chloe, Sonia and Sam feel more comfortable keeping the identities separate, but Chloe and Sonia will utilize their Lesbian and Bisexual identities to advocate for equal rights with the staff and administration. Sam has not exposed her Lesbian identity in her school at all. Because these five women put themselves in the forefront to advocate for children in different aspects, it was surprising to see that they do not all advocate for their own identities as much as they do for children. All participants are committed to the education of students. Each participant chose to utilize their identities and intersectionalities in different ways. Their choices of publically identifying as part of the LGBTQ community place them in various positions on the Level of Outness scale.

Valuable Points for Further Discussion

While coding, the narrative data brought some interesting points to the forefront: 1) Each teacher's race is a majority in their own communities, 2) All five teachers grew up experiencing middle class status at some point of their childhood, 3) All five women were raised with a Christian influence, 4) They all believed in advocating for children, and 5) Each participant values particular relationships in their lives. When looking at the first point for discussion, four out of five teachers identify as White. They all teach in

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communities where a majority of the population is White: Illinois' population is 77.7%, California's population is 73.5%, and New York's population is 65% (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Sam still feels as if she is a minority in her community because her ethnicity and culture is different. She acknowledges her White privilege, but is a minority in the White race because of her Ukrainian background. Only 39% of the Ukrainian population covers the whole northeast (United States Census Bureau, 2014), which could be spread out throughout several states; thus making her feel as if she is a minority in the White race.

Jasmine identifies as human, but recognizes that society identifies her as Black. She lives in a city where the majority of the population is Black (United States Census Bureau, 2014), and is comfortable being open around people she visually identifies with. Jasmine did mention that if she were to move to Michigan with her partner, she would not feel as comfortable. When asked to discuss further, she said that she will be looked at differently for two reasons—she is masculine of center and she is Black. Michigan's Black population is 14%, and currently the District of Columbia's Black population is 49.5%. The amount of same sex households in D.C. is as much as 4.01%, the most populated same sex community in the United States; while in Michigan the amount of same sex households is 0.67% (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

An interesting point from the participants is that they are currently comfortable with their race living where they are. It is surprising to see Carrie out and open considering the entire state of Illinois only had 0.67% same sex couples as of 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2010), and she lives in a small conservative college town in Illinois. But she did mention that she is fully aware of her White privilege, which may

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at times give her an upper hand in her small community, thus providing her with more confidence to be out.

The second interesting fact is that the participants grew up economically comfortable in their households. Sam did relocate with her family to California, which then changed their economic status to lower income, but her family does live well and has valued education for her children. Jasmine also had some moments in her childhood where she went from living middle class to living with little to no income for increments of time while growing up. She and her siblings were also raised to value education. All participants have master degrees and live comfortably in either a house or apartment. The teachers' education and financial stability may contribute to advocacy for children.

The next point to discuss is that the teachers are advocates. They are willing to stand up for children's rights and intervene to support their successes. Every teacher interviewed identified as a person who supports children. Three of the five teachers seem to view the intervention for children more important than revealing their own identities.

Lastly, each teacher mentioned she had significant relationships. They all have a partner, or wife. They have all introduced that important person to their parents (in Sam's case, it is her "best friend" at home). Sam, Jasmine and Carrie also have siblings that are very important to them. These siblings have been understanding to the coming out process and have been caring and nurturing people. These significant relationships were mentioned throughout the five narratives on more than one occasion. Their faces lit up or tone of voice changed when talking about the important people in their lives. These relationships support each individual in various ways. This is proven when every

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participant was asked advice and each one mentioned finding someone that supports you because they believe it is impossible to be LGBTQ and live each day alone.

<center>**Findings Connected to the Literature**</center>

The revelations from this study connected back to the Literature Review in chapter 2. Jasmine challenged the idea of heteronormativity (Toomey et al., 2012) when stating that she does not like to be considered a sexual minority, and at the same time utilized Edelman's (1995) perspective of queer theory by identifying as Lesbian and a teacher, which "instruct[s] hegemonic culture in the necessity of a different understanding of difference" (p. 345). Carrie, Chloe and Sonia challenge hegemony (Castro, Dhawan & Engel, 2011) because they have children with their partners, thus opposing the heteronormative view that men and women have children together. These participants' narratives are valuable because their lives connect directly with the theories and perspectives used for this study. The narratives challenge the assumption of normalcy and yet expose the reader to the idea that as a part of the LGBTQ community, they are still successful educational professionals.

When looking at the motivation behind teaching and teacher identity, all five interviewees believed they teach for the success and enjoyment of being an influence in children's lives. Alsup's (2006) research provides the idea of teachers either being a hero or a villain based on actions in their classrooms. Jasmine and Carrie would be considered as villains. Their identities intersect in the classroom and they utilize that for teachable moments with students and peers. They go outside of societal expectations and speak up for LGBTQ rights and issues. These actions can be considered as too much for school environments and therefore the teachers may be looked at as rebels. Chloe and Sonia

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might be seen as villains with the staff because they do utilize their intersected identities to stand up for LGBTQ issues in education with them, but then would be considered more like angels in the classrooms because they remain silent about personal identities and issues that may create controversy. Remaining peaceful in school environments by sticking to the assigned curriculum and keeping the classroom environment calm without conflict is considered angelic. Sonia and Chloe would rather keep the peace in their classrooms and therefore are considered heroes. Sam completely keeps her identity out of the school setting and is a heroic educational professional. She does not bring attention to herself and remains silent about LGBTQ issues unless they are brought up by other staff members. To reiterate, the idea behind hero or villain does not specifically refer to the LGBTQ population, but with a heteronormative lens, the idea of being open and out in schools could be seen as disruptive in classroom environments. Also, valuing the idea behind intersectionality and teacher identity, the researcher believes that there is a gray space, and not always the binary of one or the other. Some teachers do take on various identities once in a while and therefore, they are not one or the other. Society seems to play a large role in the determination of identifying teachers as either heroes or villains. Regardless of what type of teacher the interviewees may be, they all teach because they care about children's successes and enjoy being positive influences for them.

Based on the interviews from each teacher, personal cultures, school cultures and community cultures were revealed. Each participant had different interactions with the three cultures. In their personal lives, participants are open and comfortable in their own home or community with close friends. When familial culture is added, there are more circumstances that influence disclosure. In school, two are immersed and involved in the

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school culture, two are somewhat involved when working with staff, and one completely keeps her personal life separate from the school culture. The schools' policies and staff interaction also influenced disclosure decisions for each participant. Community culture varied for each participant as well. Carrie and Jasmine are out and open, Sonia and Chloe identify more as a mother in the community, and Sam hides her Lesbian identity in her neighborhood and church communities.

Referring back to the experiences of teachers discussed in chapter two, it is understandable to want to separate the LGBTQ identities from school settings. The experiences could be positive and liberating, or as Sam has mentioned, not knowing if people in school settings would accept a person's sexual identity gives permission for remaining silent to keep the peace as well. All of them felt as though their identity could be impactful, but Sam, Chloe and Sonia did fear the idea of surplus visibility (Patai, 1992; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009) and the repercussions that may occur with being completely out (Birden, 2005). The fear of allegations or controversy because of sexual identities was mentioned throughout their narratives, while Jasmine and Carrie embraced it and used their identity to mentor and support people in school settings.

Each teacher had their own story to share, yet there were connections between all five of the participants. Their experiences provided reasons for decisions of disclosure. The teachers' experiences were relatable to the literature researched for this study. For example, some teachers are considered heroes while others are considered villains. Another example is that Sonia fears surplus visibility. Although they specifically did not mention these terms or theory, after analysis and connections to the literature, the conclusions can be made. Although the experiences are different, their actions and

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beliefs directly connect to what other teachers have experienced before. For instance, Carrie's experience can connect with McGarry's (2011) experience because they experienced positive results from being out in their schools.

This study provides current and in-depth data deriving from narratives. The narratives give meaning to the research because they are personal and real experiences. This study projects their stories and experiences, which gives readers relatable material to read or research. The data and findings obtained from this study will now provide another in-depth resource for future research on LGBTQ educators.

<div align="center">

Limitations and Future Research

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The five teachers interviewed shared at least 100 minutes of narratives each. Looking back at data, more interviews could take place to further understand each individual. Allowing more time and more opportunities to share could have made the narratives richer. The researcher found herself wanting to ask them more questions about their experiences, but the initial timeline and approved Internal Revenue Board proposal specifically mentioned two interviews, and therefore more interviews did not take place. This study could have lasted well over two years while continuously interviewing the participants. Also, Chloe and Sonia interviewed together for the first interview. Realizing many similarities with answers, the researcher requested for individual interviews for the second encounter. Their answers may have been influenced by each other.

A case study of Jasmine's intersections and her experiences as a Black woman would be valuable. A question for her study might be how will her life progress throughout the years? California is considered a liberal state, yet two teachers who live

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in Southern California are not comfortable being out at all times. Central Illinois is considered more conservative, but Carrie is out and proud in all of her environments. New York is liberal, yet Sam hides. It would be interesting to have at least three participants from these states and several more states considering the change from 37 states allowing Gay marriage (Freedom to Marry, 2015) to the national legislation allowing all 50 states to marry (Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015).   It would also be interesting to document changes of comfort if the participants ever relocated to particular states where they are no longer the majority. A question for consideration might be would their disclosure status remain the same?

There are other questions to contemplate—Does it matter that each teacher was a woman? Does the age or years of teaching matter with disclosure? Does being financially stable with graduate degrees give the teachers more confidence to disclose their identities? According to Alsup (2006), the average teacher in our nation is White, middle-aged, married and heterosexual. How would the data change if more teachers that are outside of this norm are interviewed for future research?

This study had two significant people outside of the majority of most studies on LGBTQ communities—a Ukrainian immigrant and a Black woman that identifies as masculine of center. For future research, a study of LGBTQ people that immigrated to the United States and a study of LGBTQ people of color and masculine of center deem important to further understand the struggles and successes of more people like Sam and Jasmine. Purposeful research seeking out particular population groups may contribute to future research stemming from this study.

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Lastly, a purposeful analysis of policy in school districts deems worthy to assess. Some of the participants stated that they would feel more comfortable if sexual orientation discrimination policies were visibly written in their schools' policies. Jasmine and Carrie stated that their schools specifically mention sexual orientation in their schools' policies. The confidence needed to fully identify may underlie with the visible written agreement that discrimination against all people is not allowed at the school site. A purposeful assessment of various school districts and private schools' policies would open up administrators' eyes to the impact that a written agreement may have on the visible value of all educators.

Recommendations

After completing this study, the researcher has the following recommendations for the readers:

- Take heed to the discourse used in school settings. Are there opportunities to use words that are gender neutral or non-assuming? For example, use the word "partner" instead of husband or wife. *Sonia stated that she allowed people to assume, but others could be offended by assumptions, as in Gust's (2007) study.*

- Analyze the school policies. Are gender and sexual orientation included in the non-discrimination clauses? *Sam said she would have been more comfortable with being out at school if it is written in a legal document that every staff member has and is responsible for reading. Jasmine and Carrie have policies at their sites that specifically mention sexual orientation in the non-discrimination policies.*

- Provide opportunities for growth and development on LGBTQ issues. Are safe zones or professional development courses offered at your school?

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- If you are unsure about the correct terms to use or if what you are thinking or saying may be offensive, ask someone for assistance. Will your words hurt others? *Chloe encountered an issue with her staff. If people would have understood how their actions affect others, the issue encountered may have been different.*

Personal Reflection

When I first began to recruit participants with fliers and emails, I thought it would be relatively easy to recruit large numbers of LGBTQ teachers. I emailed national organizations, small community organizations, and even went to various groups and posted fliers. Lack of response at first was discouraging, but I continued to try to get the word out to find willing participants. One can assume that the lack of response to participate may stem from nondisclosure.

Being a person who identifies as a Black Lesbian, I was hoping to discuss the cultural influence from people of color because I have personally witnessed an impactful difference of cultural upbringing and how it impacts disclosure; my original goal was to provide research for others to discuss the phenomena of being LGBTQ of color in our country. The minimal amount of volunteers to participate in the study challenged my goal and forced me to dive deeper into my research. I had to think about what research I was bringing to the forefront and how it would be valuable for future researchers' reference. I believe the narrative data I received from the willing participants opened my eyes to the diversity in just the lesbian community alone. Although four of my participants are White, they each had their own story. Their cultures are not the same. Identity developments and intersectionalities are not the same. Each participant is

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powerful in her own way. They shared their voices to contribute to LGBTQ research, and that is valuable. I met three amazing mothers and two women with minority cultures in our country. I am honored to have listened to each story of struggles and triumphs while teaching as a person who identifies as LGBTQ. I may have begun this study with one particular goal, but I finished with my eyes opened even more. The five women who participated in this study are greatly appreciated for their advocacy and willingness to share their personal lives so that we as researchers can better understand the intersections of LGBTQ educators.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why and/or how you become a teacher?

2. Describe a typical day at school for you.

3. How do you interact with the staff at your school site? How do you interact with the children?

4. What motivates you as a teacher?

5. Describe your upbringing (religion, morals, family interaction, etc.).

6. How would you describe yourself (race, culture, orientation)?

7. Could you describe incidences of LGBTQ issues at your school? How do you feel about the outcomes of these events?

8. If you are out to anyone, when did you openly identify to _____? Could you describe this event in your life?

9. What do you think about LGBTQ educators being open about their sexual identity on campus?

10. Do you think there is an appropriate age to begin the conversations in regards to LGBTQ issues?

11. How do you personally feel about disclosing (or hiding) your sexual identity at your school or previous schools?

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At any time if you feel as if you need to speak with someone in regards to the feelings that have surfaced, confidentiality has been breached, or your social standing has been compromised because of the interview, please contact the GLBT National Help Center at http://www.glnh.org/ or call 1-888-843-4564.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. After our first interview, was there anything you thought about but did not mention?

2. How do you feel about being an educator?

3. When looking over our last two conversations, I noticed _____. Could you tell me more about that?

4. How has your _____ identity intersected with your teacher identity?

5. Is there anything you would like to share?

6. Is there any advice you would give to other sexual minority educators?

At any time if you feel as if you need to speak with someone in regards to the feelings that have surfaced, your confidentiality has been breached, or your social standing has been compromised because of the interview, please contact the GLBT National Help Center at: http://www.glnh.org/ or call 1-888-843-4564.

EMAIL SCRIPT AND FLIER

E-MAIL SCRIPT

Hello (National or Local Organization Representative),

My name is BreAnna Evans-Santiago, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University. I am conducting research about sexual minority educators for my dissertation under the guidance of Dr. Barbara Meyer. I know that your organization is very supportive to the LGBTQ community, so I am asking for your help.

I would like to interview sexual minority educators who teach in grades Pre-K to 12. I would like to personally speak with them in a conversational interview format to gain a better understanding of sexual minorities' professional experiences as educators. Participation in this study is voluntary. If participants choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The participants have to be 18-100 to participate in this study. There is a risk that interviews may cause emotional discomfort. While every effort will be made to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants and secure the content of the interviews, there is a risk of compromise of confidentiality, or change in social standing. A national GLBT counseling service is available for assistance: http://www.glnh.org/ or 1-888-843-4564.

Attached is the recruiting flier. Please display this in your community space and/or listserve. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or my advisor Dr. Barbara Meyer.

Thank you for your support and your time!

BreAnna Evans-Santiago, EdD Candidate, ISU

Sexual Minority Educators are Needed for Research!

Are you a Pre-K-12 educator? Do you identify as a sexual minority?

If you answered yes to these questions, I would love to hear from you! I am conducting research for my dissertation, and would like to hear your stories about your teaching experiences.   This research is strictly confidential and all participants will be identified by pseudonyms. The researcher has ethics training, and the study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Illinois State University.

What do I need from you? YOUR VOICE. Participation in the study involves two conversational interviews during which you share your stories about your professional life as a sexual minority educator. Interviews will be conducted in person or via Skype. All of the information you share will be kept confidential and secured.

What do you get out of this? You are having the chance to share your story as a sexual minority to administrators, students, teachers, and the LGBTQ community; thus promoting the conversation of educational differences for future implications in school settings. Your voice can help make a difference!

Interested? If so, please contact BreAnna Evans-Santiago