A Multiple Case Study of Gay Teacher Identity Development: Negotiating and Enacting Identity to Interrupt Heteronormativity

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A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF GAY TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:
NEGOTIATING AND ENACTING IDENTITY TO
INTERRUPT HETERONORMATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

A Multiple Case Study of Gay Teacher Identity Development: Negotiating and Enacting Identity to Interrupt Heteronormativity

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The purpose of this multiple case study is to examine how the negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity interrupts heteronormativity in school contexts. This study utilizes a conceptual framework that incorporates an understanding of teacher identity negotiation in terms of gay identity development (Cass, 1979) and the Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model (Cross, 2012). This framework also examines a teacher’s perceptions about the school context in terms of identity-based motivation (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) and a relational justice perspective (Poole, 2008).

This study theorizes that the heteronormative nature of schooling is a limiting factor for gay teachers' abilities’ to work and thrive in school contexts. The goal of this study is to answer the question: Does the enactment of gay teacher identity interrupt heteronormativity in schools? as well as two ancillary questions: 1) How do gay teachers negotiate gay teacher identity in schools? and, 2) How do school contexts impact gay teachers' perceptions of identity-based motivation and relational justice?
This study had two phases. In phase one, participants completed an online survey that determined their location along the Homosexual Identity Formation model continuum (Cass, 1979) and garnered information about their teaching history and context. In phase two, participants completed two interviews and related reflective and focused journaling activities. These data were analyzed for themes and patterns using the four perspectives that bound the conceptual framework. The goal of this research was to increase understanding of how negotiation and enactment of a “gay teacher identity” in school contexts interrupts heteronormativity.

Triangulation of data from phase one revealed two major themes first, the participants had varying conceptions and enactments of being “out” and second the participants indicated dissonance and variety in terms of “is ‘out’ appropriate?” In phase two, four individuals were profiled. Cross’s (2012) METM was used to analyze each case to understand their negotiation and enactment of gay identity. Oyserman and Destin’s (2010) theory of IBM and Poole’s (2008) notion of relational justice helped to identify three pervasive themes during the cross case analysis: teacher preparation and professional development, perception/nonperception of administrative support, and activist teaching. Finally, the conceptual framework was revisited and reformatted into a model of gay teacher identity. The discussion identified recommendations for teacher education, educational leadership, and for gay teachers seeking to utilize the model of gay teacher identity to interrupt heteronormativity in schools.
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my

Gidoe Ayyoub

You taught me the value of education and pushed me to keep learning.
I love you.
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Chapter One: Rationale

Introduction

“Tell them about how you’re never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there’s always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don’t speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from inside.”

– Audre Lorde, recalling her daughter’s words of advice

This chapter outlines the rationale for this study of gay teachers, a study that examines the development and enactment of a gay teacher identity that embodies a sense of relational justice (Poole, 2008). In order to situate the need for such a study one must first understand the context of teaching and learning to teach. Why is the context of teaching and learning to teach so pivotal? It is when we question the very nature of schooling that we find normative constructs within the structural and systemic foundations of schooling that can limit teachers and teaching. As a queer educator, I have chosen to examine the context of schooling through the lens of heteronormativity.

“To live in society is to live in heterosexuality . . . Heterosexuality is always already there within all mental categories” (Warner, 1993). In other words, heterosexuality is the assumed normal in all aspects of life. Contrary to heterosexuality, anything queer is therefore seen as not normal, as deviant, and wrong. Coining the term “heteronormativity” in the nineties, Warner explains that heteronormativity includes those punitive rules—social, familial, and legal—that force members of society to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity (1993 & 1999). In today’s
society, Warner argues, it is vital that those who are gay or lesbian act to change heteronormative perspectives and practices in their daily lives:

Every person who comes to a queer self understanding knows in one way or another that his or her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body.

*Being queer means fighting about these issues all the time, locally and piecemeal but always with consequences.* [emphasis added] (Warner, 1993, p. xiii)

Therefore, the implied call to action for those who identify as queer is to interrupt or cease heteronormativity. Within an educational context, heteronormativity has a pervasive effect on curriculum (both formal and informal), extra-curricular activities, and teaching as a profession. Illich (1970) understood this notion, though in a different context, when he wrote *Deschooling Society.* Illich asserts “to understand what it means to deschool society, and not just reform the educational establishment, we must now focus on the hidden curriculum of schooling” (Illich, 1970, p. 32). From a queer perspective, Illich is directly referencing the normative nature of schools as socializers of society in the views of the mainstream, of the hegemonic establishment.

Inevitably, this hidden curriculum of schooling adds prejudice and guilt to the discrimination, which a society practices against some of its members and compounds the privilege of others with a new title to condescend to the majority.
Just as inevitably, this hidden curriculum serves as a ritual of initiation into a growth-oriented [heterosexual] society for rich and poor alike. (Illich, 1970, p. 33)

**Problem Statement**

American society is currently in a socio-politically located renaissance when it comes to public opinion regarding sexual minorities. Issues such as the end of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, the increasing momentum behind marriage equality, advances in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and increased protections for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (GLBTQ) people from employment and other forms of discrimination are all indicators of the growing tide that is changing. These changes in the social and political fabric are not absent in public education; in fact many would argue that in schools the shifting attitudes regarding sexual minorities are manifesting in troubling ways. According to The 2011 National School Climate Survey conducted by the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) GLBTQ students report experiencing hostile school environments that lead to absenteeism and lowered educational expectations and achievement (GLSEN, 2012). Another key finding in the GLSEN study was regarding the necessity for GLBTQ students to be able to identify supportive educators and to have an inclusive curriculum that provides positive representations of LGBTQ people and respect for all as a means of providing the context for a positive school experience (GLSEN, 2012). The goal of this study is to illustrate the implicit need for those who come to a gay realization to be allowed to do so in an environment that is supportive of minority beliefs, livelihoods, and practices by examining the ways in which gay teachers interact with the social context of their schools and enact or do not enact their gay teacher identities.
What is a school, if not a portrait of the society within which it resides? John Dewey (1902; 1916) argues that schools are to reflect the values and beliefs of the local community. This belief is also evident in how government creates and administers schools through separation of powers and local control of schools; I recall the adage, “it takes a village to raise a child”—understanding subliminally that the village is *heteronormative*. For our schools to truly be reflections of democratic society there must be a fundamental shift in society’s attitudes and treatment of those who identify as queer—students and educators alike.

Defining and understanding heteronormativity is simply not enough to impact schools and schooling. Teacher preparation programs and in-service teachers have an obligation to society to interrupt heteronormativity as a social justice imperative; “the bottom line of teaching is enhancing students’ learning and their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society” (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & Mcquillan, 2009). Schools can no longer just socialize students into the so-called mainstream because all senses of “normal” are being questioned; and this is a good thing.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of gay teachers working in schools across the United States. In particular, this study examines identity negotiation experiences of gay teachers in order to determine what they experience, how they develop their gay teacher identity, how the school culture and leadership impacts their motivation at work, and what schools can do to support them. Further, this study examines how these teachers enact their identity through Cross’s (2012) Multicultural
Enactment-Transactional Model, by identifying the strategies used by these teachers when their gay teacher identities are in conflict with the normative nature of a school, and by detailing how their gay teacher identity is socially constructed in the school environment.

This study used surveys, interviews, and teacher journaling, to identify themes that pertain to: 1) how gay identity develops and changes over gay teachers’ careers; 2) how a gay teacher’s perceived relational justice (Poole, 2008) in the school environment impacts their enactment of gay identity at school; 3) the ways in which gay teacher identity enactment at school can interrupt heteronormativity; and, 4) practices and strategies that can be translated to the teacher education and preparation field. Ultimately, this study seeks to answer the question of whether or not the enactment of gay teacher identity can provide an avenue for teachers to interrupt heteronormativity by examining the identity negotiation process and the impact of the context of schooling on identity-based motivation (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) in teaching.

This research is critical and advocacy oriented. I acknowledge, as the author of and researcher in this study, I have ideological and political motivations for conducting this research: I want to interrupt heteronormativity in teaching and teacher education. Cherland and Harper (2007) acknowledge that “advocacy research [is] openly ideological, and [makes] use of change-enhancing advocacy approaches to inquiry, which [are] for the purpose of ‘enabling’ social change and the redistribution of social power” (p. 5). Moreover, advocacy research “stands in solidarity with oppressed peoples and communities” (Cherland & Harper, 2007, p. 6). In this research I posit that gay teachers who are not able to fully negotiate and enact a gay teacher identity in a school that is
relationally just are working in oppressive environments. Understanding this ideological stance and naming it as such at this point is important in this research because of the critiques often found regarding advocacy work as being susceptible to issues of content validity. This study seeks to integrate the personal with the academic, acknowledging the value of the *subjective I* (Peshkin, 1988) in scholarly work.

**Operational Definitions**

**Identity**

The term “identity” in this study refers to how one defines oneself in terms of one’s social context and the groups to which one belongs. Gee (2000) refers to identity as “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person,’ in a given context” (p. 99). While the term “identity” is multi-faceted and has varying meanings across disciplines, two major characteristics of identity are that it is dynamically negotiated and socially constructed (Gee, 2000; Beuchamp & Thomas, 2009). In this study, identity is assumed to be a social construct and as such is something that is dynamic and impactful.

**Teacher Identity**

Teacher identity, teacher professional identity, and professional identity are used synonymously and interchangeably in this study. Teacher professional identity development has emerged as a research paradigm that seeks to understand the emergence and negotiation of professional identities in varying school contexts (e.g., Bullough, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Knowles, 1992; Kompf, Bond, Dworet, & Boak, 1996; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001; Olsen, 2008; Sachs, 2005). According to Pearce and Morrison (2011), “the shaping of a professional identity
takes place during the teachers’ social exchanges and as a result of interactions within other members of the school community such as students and parents” (p. 56).

**Gay Identity**

The term “gay identity” in this study refers to the social construction of a male homosexual identity as one becomes aware of his homosexuality and enacts that identity. One could argue that the modern “gay” identity came about as a reaction to the increased visibility of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) people during the Civil Rights Movement and after the Stonewall Riots. Gay identity models have traditionally been staged models. Most of the staged models (e.g. Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1989; Hencken & O’Dowd, 1977; Lee, 1977; Martin, 1991; Minton & McDonald, 1984; and Troiden, 1989) have four stages that can be commonly described as: “(1) Awareness or Sensitization, (2) Internalization or Acceptance, (3) Disclosing, and, (4) Synthesis or Integration” (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001, p.5). Cass’s (1979) model of Homosexual Identity Formation (HIF) has significant empirical support (Brady & Busse, 1994; Cass, 1984; Levine, 1997) and, thus, is the staged model of gay identity development that I will use as the prototype staged model detailed later in this study. This study will also address the limitations of staged identity models through the implementation of the social constructionist perspective in identity negotiation.

**School Context**

Throughout this study the use of the term “school” and “school context” are meant to describe the workplace of teachers. The interactions of the teacher participants’ in this study in all aspects of their work environment—classrooms, hallways, teachers’ lounges, etc.—will be part of this analysis. Also implicit in the discussion of the school
and school context is the greater school community including students, parents, and leadership.

**Gay/GLBTQI/Queer**

The term “queer” is used as an umbrella term for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. Starting in the 1990s, academics and activists began to use of the word “Queer” to re-appropriate the theretofore negatively connoted word, and to emphasize that queer people are different than heterosexual people. As a result, Queer Theory has emerged as a school of intellectual thought and of identity positionality. While Queer Theory will have an indirect impact on this study, the terms and/or acronyms queer, gay, GLBT, and GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning) are used to describe those who have a negotiated identity related to their sexual orientation that is not heterosexual in nature. Specifically, this study will focus on gay male teachers.

**Topic Rationale**

**Self-Discovery**

As a child I was always taught the immense value of an education. This idea is paramount in my life and my hope is that my life choices indicate the value I have added to education within my contexts. Becoming a teacher was never a question for me; it was what I was born to do. Similarly, something I have always known about myself was that I was not the same as those others around me. I had my gay realization early in life; I can safely say that I knew I was gay at age five. I parallel these two realizations purposely. For many teachers, there is a great deal of cognitive dissonance between these two aspects of their identities: where one’s gay identity intersects hiteacher identity. One
could argue that Piaget’s notion of cognitive equilibration (1970) is at play in looking at the lives of gay and lesbian teachers. In describing the process of equilibration, Fosnot explains, it “is a dynamic process of self-regulated behavior balancing two intrinsic polar behaviors, assimilation and accommodation” (1996, p. 13). Gay teachers are often times trying to assimilate their lives as gays and lesbians with their own logical structure of what it means to be a teacher. At the same time, gay teachers are accommodating their behaviors to fit the preconceived and accepted norms presented within society. This type of cognitive dissonance is unique to gay teachers because of the general heteronormative assumption within society—heterosexual as normal—and their efforts to appear and feel normal in an environment that often times is in contradiction with their home and personal lives (Warner, 1993; 1999).

In my case, I was the exception. I was hired by an openly gay principal to open and develop curriculum in a new magnet program at a new high school. I was a part of a three-teacher team who was charged with creating curriculum in a leadership and law focused magnet program. Both of the other teachers on my team were gay men. The chair of the department was the most experienced teacher having taught at two other schools in the school district and the other teacher that joined us was a new teacher with no teaching experience. The department chair was openly gay, but was fairly guarded about his discourse about being gay and on gay issues. The other teacher was not out of the closet (he did not come out to me until December the first year) and he would evade any personal questions about his sexual orientation. I initially found myself in the middle of my two counterparts, but when confronted with the question “Mr. Haddad, are you gay?” I closeted myself and regretted the decision almost instantaneously. After that experience
I made a conscious choice to answer truthfully the next time I was asked something about my sexual orientation. As I matured in my teaching, there was never a question of my orientation; my students knew I was gay and out in all aspects of my life. In my teaching I implemented rhetorical strategies that included anti-heteronormative examples and explanations. My students were able to see all sides of an issue, not just what was perceived as “right.”

Having my experiences in public K12 education in my past now, I constantly find myself analyzing my experiences through the theoretical lenses I will explain later in this chapter. I believe that my experience is exemplary of what teaching in a relationally just (Poole, 2008) environment can be. It wasn’t until I began researching the plight of gay teachers that I realized just how lucky I was. What was different about my experience? What made my students accept me as I was? What made the teachers at my school respect me despite my marginalized identity? These lingering questions ultimately informed the basis for this study.

Professional Discovery

With the explicit goal of this study being to interrupt heteronormativity, a natural outcome of conducting qualitative research with gay teachers would be to identify teaching strategies and mechanisms in the school context that teachers use to a) teach students in a manner that is anti-heteronormative and b) enact their gay teacher identity in a way that promotes relational justice (Poole, 2008).

Specifically, the role of dialogic instruction (Friere, 1970; Stevens & Bean, 2007) and teacher self-disclosure (Cayanus, 2004) were queried through the interview process. When examining the enactment of gay identities, the Multicultural Enactment-
Transactional Model (Cross, 2012) was applied. In examining data from these (and other) perspectives, teachers and teacher educators will be able to glean actionable information that can transfer to contexts in schools and teacher education classrooms, thus providing a solid practical foundation for this study.

**Summary of Key Topic Literature**

This study will utilize a conceptual framework that is unique in that it explores identity negotiation from a multidimensional perspective that affords the exploration of each participant’s experiences from multiple entry points. Moreover, the school contexts are also analyzed for their perceived relational justice (Poole, 2008) and identity-based motivation (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). A limitation of current research on gay teachers is the lack of an entry point for identity analysis, there is an assumption that teachers who participate in studies have a stable gay identity, this study does not take this for granted and situates participants on the HIF (Cass, 1979) first only as a starting point of analysis. The following sections detail the theoretical basis for the framework then the framework is presented.

**Gay Identity Through a Staged Perspective**

The Cass (1979) HIF model follows in Cross’s Nigrescence (1971) tradition in that the HIF model holds two similar assumptions:

(a) that identity is acquired through a developmental process; and (b) that locus from stability of, and change in, behavior lies in the interaction process that occurs between individuals and their environments. (Cass, 1979, p. 219)

Cass (1979) proposed six stages of identity development that individuals move through in order to fully embrace the “homosexual” identity within the self-concept of each
individual. In the first stage, *Identity Confusion*, information is personalized regarding sexuality. Individuals at this stage recognize thoughts and behaviors as homosexual, usually with feelings of shame or unacceptability. At this point the individual will usually redefine the meanings of these feelings or behaviors to fit into or hide from the societal norm and expectation. Once an individual accepts a possibility that he or she may be homosexual, he/she has moved into stage two, *Identity Comparison*. When in stage two, some individuals tend to accept behaviors as homosexual while rejecting a homosexual identity, while others may accept a homosexual identity in their minds and proceed inhibit their homosexual behaviors to meet societal expectations (e.g. heterosexual marriage). Stage three, *Identity Tolerance*, occurs once an individual accepts the probability of being homosexual, and recognizes sexual, social, and emotional needs of being homosexual. Generally at this stage individuals start to seek out other GLBT people through social groups and activities and start to build a sense of community. Once the individual shifts from tolerating the homosexual identity to acceptance of the homosexual self, the person is in stage four, *“Identity Acceptance. With the greater feeling of self-acceptance the individual at this stage tempers the self-acceptance with increased criticism and anger toward anti-gay society.* Identity Pride, stage five, occurs when the individual becomes immersed in the GLBT culture, starts to confront the heterosexual establishment, and discloses his/her gay identity to family, friends, and coworkers. Cass argues that in stage five, individuals start to see the world as “gay” or “not gay.” The final stage, *Identity Synthesis*, occurs when the gay identity is integrated with other identities and aspects of oneself. Individuals at this stage recognize the support of heterosexual allies and seek to create solid relationships with others.
Limitations of Cass and other staged models of gay identity. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) found that when authors attempt to validate staged models of gay identity, the participants’ experiences tend to be more complex than the models allow, and there is variety in the order and timing of the gay identity formation process. While the staged models are able to caputlate the general experience of coming to a gay realization in life, the linear nature of these models is often too simple and reductive of the complexities of gay identity negotiation (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001). Moreover, Weinberg (1984) asserts that, “the concept of stages unavoidably assumes a straight-line progression . . .” (p. 80).

Another limitation of models like Cass’s (1979) HIF is the assumed constancy of the context. Staged models do take into account the general context of identity negotiation, but they do not account for multiple contexts and the complexities of possibly having to shift identities and identity expressions across varying contexts, Cross (2012) refers to this process as “code-switching.” Salient to my research is the role of context in the negotiation of gay teacher identity at school and the inherent need of these gay teachers to be able to express their gay identity in their teaching in a positive, meaningful way. I use the HIF (Cass, 1979) as an entry point into the examination of gay teachers’ identity negotiation in school contexts, examining how the school context impacts the enactment of the particular HIF stage the teacher is identified to be in via the Gay Identity Questionnaire (GIQ)(Brady & Busse, 1994).

Gay Identity Through a Social Constructionist Perspective

If a staged model of gay identity development, like Cass (1979), is limited, then what is a more suitable perspective for viewing gay identity? Horowitz and Newcomb
(2001) argue for a social constructionist view of identity development stating “social constructionism is principally concerned with explaining how people account for, experience, and describe their world, including themselves...the individual interacts with the environment to construct an identity” (p. 10). Cross (2012), while focusing much of his intellectual efforts into the study of Black identity, acknowledges the role of socially constructed identities across contexts and how “divergent social groups are more alike than different in the way social identity is enacted during critical everyday transactions” (emphasis in original, p. 194). This attention to “everyday transactions” emerged most salient in terms of the goals and objectives of this study.

Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model

Cross (2012) proposes a Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model (METM) that encompasses the development of a stable identity and the transactional, context situated, enactment of that identity. This study investigates the negotiation and expression of gay identities of teachers as a means to interrupt heteronormativity. When examining the enactment of gay identities, the METM (Cross, 2012) will be applied. Cross (2012) describes mechanisms that are used when one interacts in a context with members of other group identities (intergroup enactment)—buffering, code-switching, and bridging—as well as mechanisms used when interacting within the same group (intragroup enactment)—buffering, code-switching, and attachment-bonding. Intergroup and intragroup buffering refers to the process of protecting one’s identity in the face of stigma (Cross, 2012), for example when a gay teacher corrects the use of “gay” as a derogatory term in a classroom. Intergroup and intragroup code-switching occurs when one must enact his/her identity in a way that is consistent with mainstream society (Cross, 2012).
An example of code-switching for a gay-teacher would occur when a gay male teacher actively changes the level and tone of his voice in front of other teachers, making his voice lower and deeper to avoid being stereotyped or cast as a “flamboyant” gay man. Intergroup bridging occurs when a member of a multicultural identity consciously positions him/herself in effectuating friendship and intimacy with a member of the dominant or other cultural group (Cross, 2012). When a gay teacher and a heterosexual teacher work together to create a Gay-Straight Alliance club on campus, those teachers are bridging and transcending social boundaries. Finally, intragroup attachment-bonding occurs within the identity group as a person finds others who share in his/her identity and creates an intimate and positive bond where the person is able to create scaffolds of behaviors, beliefs, and dispositions—“what it is like” to be in the group identity (Cross, 2012).

**Identity Based Motivation**

Oyserman and Destin (2010) define a model for identity-based motivation (IBM) that assumes that identities matter because they “provide a basis for meaning making and action” (p. 1011). Essentially IBM implies that people seek to enact their identities in ways that are “identity-congruent” meaning that it feels natural in the context. The opposite case occurs when behaviors are modified because the context does not all for identity congruence.

The IBM model predicts that what an identity means and, therefore, what is congruent with it is dynamically constructed in the moment and can include both positive and self-undermining or even self-destructive behaviors. It also predicts that when behavior feels identity congruent then the experience of difficulty in
working on the behavior is likely to be interpreted as meaning that the behavior is an important part of the process, not an indication that the behavior is impossible or unnecessary. (Oyserman & Destin, 2010)

**Relational Justice/Identity Oriented Justice**

Focusing on the social psychology of groups, Poole (2008) describes the relational justice perspective as emphasizing the “need for recognition of one’s identity, which is usually defined in terms of membership of an identifiable group” (p. 33). Relational justice is unique because it defines group membership primarily in terms of self-categorization, meaning the perception of the person as being included in the group. Justice then “entails respect for social identities as constructed by individuals who self-identify with certain groups through a process of self-categorization” (Poole, 2008, p. 33). Understandings of what is relationally just in a particular environment is contextually based in the perceptions of those in that particular environment. Particular acts by leaders or colleagues in a particular context can be seen as just or unjust depending on the identity oriented ways in which they are perceived (Poole, 2008).

**Conceptual Framework: Gay Teacher Identity**

The conceptual framework outlined in this study involves the juxtaposition of a gay teacher’s identity negotiation process with the school context. Emergent in the literature regarding gay and lesbian teachers is the theme of living a duplicitous life and the efforts that teachers put forth to keep separate the personal from the professional (DeJean, 2007; Jackson, 2006; Rudoe, 2010). These efforts appear to dissipate as these teachers “come out” at school and in their classrooms. In examining the shared experiences of gay teachers, there is a significant emphasis on the relief, authenticity, and
richness of the teachers’ experiences with the curriculum and with their students as a result of being “out” in the classroom. All of the aforementioned experiences are implicit aspects of one’s identity as a person and more importantly as a teacher. Sachs (2005) asserts that teacher professional identity allows teachers to construct ideas of “‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society” (p. 15). As teachers enter the profession and grow professionally they are constantly negotiating their professional identities within the walls of their classrooms and schools, logically then, an examination of a teacher’s professional identity must also be situated within the school’s affect and climate.

As described earlier, schools are often considered microcosms of the greater society they serve, for gay and lesbian teachers this is a society fraught with heteronormativity (Warner, 1993; 1999). The pervasive effects of heteronormativity are a source of consternation and dissonance for many gay teachers, leading to the conditions for the duplicitous life mentioned above. Figure 1 proposes a conceptual framework that problematizes gay teacher identity negotiation by examining the social construction of identity and the relational justice of a school context.

Graphically, Figure 1 illustrates a juxtaposition of two continua whose intersections change based on the experiences that are being analyzed, recognizing that the intersection of the two continua is wholly dependent on how the person in question views his/her place in a school in relation to his/her gay teacher identity. The goal of such an analysis is to ascertain mechanisms used in identity negotiation and enactment of gay teachers that can be used to interrupt heteronormativity in classrooms and impact teacher
education programs, and to ascertain practices at the school level that gay teachers feel affords them agency and relational justice in the work place.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Gay Teacher Identity**

![Conceptual Framework]

**Conceptual Framework: The School Context**

Figure 1 places the context of a school along the vertical continuum of the diagram. Two opposing school contexts are delineated. First, a school context that is *relationally just* and is open to the enactment of multicultural identities. Opposite is a school environment that is *relationally unjust* and expects and perpetuates the enactment of heteronormative identities. A relationally just workplace is one in which members believe their self-identities are treated with respect and when the groups with which they self-identify are treated with respect leading to increased levels of agency within the workplace. Another analytical lens at play in the contextual continuum is identity-based motivation. A school that functions in a way that is relationally just, offers a greater chance that teachers will have higher IBM because they will be able to act in ways that
are “identity-congruent” meaning that when “behavior feels identity congruent in the context, it feels natural” (Oyserman & Destin, 2010, p. 1011). Being a socially constructed model of motivation, IBM asserts, “cognition and action are not separate from the contexts but rather dynamically shaped by them” (Oyserman & Destin, 2010, p. 1012).

**Conceptual Framework: The Gay Teacher**

The gay teacher is situated along the horizontal continuum of Figure 1. As an initial measure of gay identity, participants in this study were assessed based on the GIQ, which is a validated measure of the Cass’s (1979) HIF model (Brady & Busse, 1994). The developers of the GIQ noted that in essence the HIF could be thought of in terms of two larger identity phases, one taking the first three phases together and one taking the last three together, hence this is why those same clusters are used at each end of the continuum. As was previously noted, a primary limitation of the HIF is the inattention to multiple contexts, to that end the GIQ directions read “circle whether you feel the statements are true or false for you at this point in time” (Brady & Busse, 1994, p. 15). In order to account for this limitation, a social constructionist perspective (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001) and the Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model (Cross, 2012; Cross, Smith, Payne, 2002) informed data collection and analysis. These two perspectives account for the analysis at the intersection of the continuums and thus will determine to what degree each participant develops and enacts a gay teacher identity in a relationally just, identity-motivated school context.
**Brief Review of Case Study Method**

This qualitative study is a multiple case study of gay teachers. Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) base their approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm—that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective. A case study approach is appropriate in this study because the focus of this study is to go beyond simply describing gay teachers, rather seeking to answer the questions that are “why” and “how” in nature—a telltale sign pointing toward case study research. Because of the nature of the case study method, content validity will be ensured through the triangulation of multiple data sources. Participants will be surveyed, interviewed and asked to journal about their teaching. Cases will be analyzed individually and then cross-case looking for emergent themes and findings.

**Scope and Significance**

**Assumptions**

This study is based in several assumptions. First and foremost it is assumed that to be “out” in the school context is a primary means to combat heteronormativity in teaching and learning. Another assumption this study holds is that identity is socially constructed and that we as humans socially construct multiple identities in multiple contexts and that these identities and contexts impact the ways we act and the ways we make meaning of our surroundings. Finally, it is assumed that as social beings we want to find ourselves in “just” environments, and when we find ourselves in environments that are contrary to our expectations, we assimilate or find ways to accommodate our behaviors within the contextual expectations.
Limitations

This study can be seen as limited because it only focuses on the experiences of gay male teachers. While this limitation is evident, this study is valuable because it can be used as the foundation for several future studies that focus on other identity groups. Another possible limitation of this study is in the sample size. Due to the depth of analysis found in case study research, a large-scale study is not feasible given the time constraint and personnel necessary. While this limitation is present, the value of case study research is not lost in the academy because case studies take a detailed look at phenomena using several different data sources and perspectives in order to determine findings.

Significance

This study has great potential to impact teaching practice in public schools in order to interrupt heteronormative structures that are currently in place. The data identify strategies and mechanisms that teachers at all levels can translate to their contexts in order to help more teachers develop a sense of authentic self when teaching and to become role models for GLBTQ students in schools. Furthermore, because of the theory and methodology laden conceptual framework, this study has potential to impact future research in more than one field of study and impacting more identity groups.

Chapter Summary

This chapter served as the rationale for a multiple case study of gay teachers in school contexts. The purpose of this study is to examine the negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity in order to interrupt the heteronormative nature of teaching and learning. This chapter outlined a conceptual framework to be used in the analysis that
incorporates an understanding of gay teacher identity negotiation in terms of gay identity
development and the Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model (Cross, 2012). The
conceptual framework also examines a teacher’s perceptions about the school context in
terms of identity-based motivation (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) and a relational justice
perspective (Poole, 2008).

Chapter two uses empirical and theoretical literature to discuss the historical
underpinnings of modern identity development through the lens racial identity theories;
to provide a thorough discussion of the evolution of teacher professional identity as a
research paradigm, and to discuss the experiences of gay teachers in school contexts.
Chapter three outlines the methodological process involved in planning a study of this
nature. Special attention will be paid to the recruitment of qualified participants, the
informed consent of participants, and study design and details.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

Chapter one provided the theoretical and conceptual grounding for a multiple case study of gay teachers’ negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity in order to interrupt heteronormativity in the school context. In addition, conceptual lenses of analysis were introduced such as the social constructionist perspective (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001), the staged gay identity development perspective (Cass, 1979), the relational justice perspective (Poole, 2008), identity-based motivation (Oyserman & Destin, 2010), and the Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model (Cross, 2012).

The purpose of chapter two is threefold. First, this chapter will use theoretical literature to discuss the historical underpinnings of modern identity development through the lens racial identity theories. Next, a thorough discussion of the evolution of teacher professional identity as a research paradigm will be had in order to show the value of identity study in education and in learning to teach and problematize that study for gay teachers because of heteronormativity in the school context. Finally, this chapter will describe current empirical research about gay teachers and discuss the shared experiences of gay teachers in school contexts. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate the necessity for this study and situate the goals and methods within the current body of research.

Racial Identity Development

In order delve into a specific understanding of racial identity development; it is valuable to orient racial identity in the greater understanding of “identity.” First, examining identity from a psychological perspective, Erikson (1968) focused his understanding of identity through staged maturation of one’s identity in a social context.
Erikson posits a chronological, life-long staged progression of identity and psychological development as a human passes through the social context and faces various stages of cognitive dissonance at each level of development. From a sociological perspective, Mead (1934) argues identity is constructed through social communication; by communicating one is able to define him/herself in terms of the roles attributed to others and the self. Therefore, following Mead’s conception of the self and identity, “who” we are is contingent on the context in which we are at that moment. To further punctuate this perspective, Gee (2001) explains that identity development occurs in an intersubjective field and wherein one seeks to answer a recurring question of “who am I at this moment?” through a process of interpreting one’s role in a variety of discourses in varying contexts.

**Historical Grounding of Racial Identity**

Scholars have further explained identity in terms of specific subgroup membership. To that end, Black identity development will serve as the prototype for identity models of societal groups acknowledging that while there are several other group identity models the essence of their experiences can be understood in this analysis. Also, choosing to examine Black identity is very deliberate in this study namely because of the parallels in the social histories of those with Black identities and those with gay identities. Furthermore, Black identity models arise from a social context wherein Black people have had to cope with being not members of a dominant group in the greater society, and having to cope with “being black;” Cross (1991) cites the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the rise of the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s as the initial entry point for the collective formation of a “Black” identity in the United States.
**Nigrescence.** One of the most researched racial identity models is Cross’s Nigrescence (1971) model. Seeking to explain the “Negro” to “Black” shift in the consciousness of African Americans in the wake of the civil rights movement and the rise of black militancy, Cross proposed a staged model of Nigrescence where undergoes “the process of becoming Black” (Cross, 1991, p. 157). The first stage in the Nigrescence model is the “Pre-encounter” where one is immersed in the world view of the dominant culture, originally seen through the perspective of the “self-hating Negro” (Cross, 1991, p. 158). At this stage one has allowed his/her identity something that he/she accepts from the dominant culture’s normative imposition. Second is the “Encounter” stage where one has a personal experience or series of experiences that “temporarily dislodges someone from his or her old world view and identity, thus making the person receptive (vulnerable) to conversion” (Cross, 1991, p. 159). This period of cognitive dissonance serves as the catalyst that moves one from Encounter to stage three, “Immersion-Emersion.” In this stage the person becomes transfixed on the new identity seeking to distance him/herself from the original identity and fully adopt the new Black identity. Cross explains this stage in two phases:

- While the first phase involves immersion into a total Black frame of reference, the second phase (emersion) represents emergence from the dead-end, racist, oversimplified aspects of Immersion. … the person’s emotions level off, and psychological defensiveness is replaced by affective and cognitive openness, allowing the person to be more critical in his or her analysis. (Cross, 1991, p. 158)

Next, one enters the stage of “Internalization” as the person is firmly rooted in the new Black identity and seeks to make alliances with those in the dominant group as a
consequence of a new-found confidence and positive self concept (Cross, 1991). The final stage in Cross’s Nigrescence model is that of “Internalization-Commitment,” which is characterized by the shift in thinking from “uncontrolled rage toward white people … to controlled anger toward systems of oppression and injustice and racist institutions” (Cross, 1991, p. 159).

A limitation of the original Nigrescence model is that the model is encapsulates the conversion from Negro to Black American and does not take into account the life span of a person. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) then proposed Nigrescence from a life span perspective that identifies three growth patterns that one passes through from infancy to adulthood. Unique to this model is the “recycling” that occurs in adulthood, meaning that once one becomes Black he/she then can refine and further develop a richer, enhanced Black identity through a continuing process of “encounter” and “immersion—emersion” (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). An assumption in Nigrescence is the role of one’s context in his/her identity development. Because every person experiences life in a unique manner—by a matter of birth, circumstance, or chance—the context in which one develops his/her identity is integral in the kinds of “encounters” one will have.

Black Identity Development Model. Similar to Cross’ contextualization of Nigrescence in the shifting society after the Civil Rights Movement, Jackson (2001) developed the Black Identity Development (BID) model in order to explain how “conversion experience was affecting the way black people saw themselves and responded to their world” (p. 11). Unlike Nigrescence, Jackson’s BID model is a life span theory from its inception. The BID model has five stages: naïve, acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization.
The “naïve” stage begins at birth and runs typically through preschool age. Beyond the obvious physical and cultural differences, children in the naïve stage “generally do not feel fearful or hostile, inferior or superior” (Jackson, 2001, p. 19), thus the literal meaning of naïve, naïve to the ways of the world. The second stage, “acceptance,” is characterized by the socialization into American culture of “what it means to be Black in the United States” (2001, p. 19). Thus the child adopts normative construct that places whiteness over blackness and attempts to fit in to the dominant culture and structure of society. During the third stage, “resistance,” black people begin “to understand and recognize racism in its complex and multiple manifestations—at the individual and institutional, conscious and unconscious, intentional and unintentional, attitudinal, behavioral, and policy level” (Jackson, 2001, p.21). At this stage individuals may passively resist the power structures in society, acknowledge the system and still try to manipulate through it, or actively resist the system outright (Jackson, 2001). A person who actively resists is “energized and experiences a sense of personal power” when he is able to make his voice heard on a small scale (Jackson, 2001, p.22). “Redefinition,” is the fourth stage where the individual focuses the resistance internally in order to define “himself in terms that are independent of the perceived strengths and /or weaknesses of White people and the dominant White culture” (Jackson, 2011, p. 23). The individual in the redefinition stage surrounds himself with likeminded black people. Black people who have gone through redefinition begin “to experience their sense of Blackness in a way that engenders pride” (Jackson, 2001, p. 24). Finally, showing the lifespan of the model, Jackson (2001) asserts, “the sensitivity from acceptance, the lessons about power from resistance, and the self-definition from redefinition carry the black person into the stage
of internalization” (p. 25). “Internalization”, represents a realized negotiation of a self-defined racial identity—“the integration of a redefined racial identity into all aspects of one’s self-concept or identity” (Jackson, 2001, p. 16). A key difference between Nigrescence and BID is that in Nigrescence one can “recycle” to a prior stage and experience the identity development process again. BID assumes that once a person has “internalized” her black identity, that identity is fixed.

**Gay Identity Parallels**

Similar to black identity development, one could argue that the modern “gay” identity came about as a reaction to the increased visibility of GLBT people during the civil rights movement and after the Stonewall Riots. Concomitantly with racial identity models, gay identity models have traditionally been staged models. Most of the stage models (e.g. Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1989; Hencken & O’Dowd, 1977; Lee, 1977; Martin, 1991; Minton & McDonald, 1984; and Troiden, 1989) tend to have four general stages that can be described as “(1) Awareness or Sensitization, (2) Internalization or Acceptance, (3) Disclosing, and (4) Synthesis or Integration” (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001, p.5). Cass’s (1979) model of Homosexual Identity Formation (HIF) has a significant amount of empirical support (Brady & Busse, 1994; Cass, 1984; Levine, 1997) and is the staged model of gay identity development that was used in chapter one as a prototype of staged models. For the purposes of this study, the use of Cass’s Homosexual Identity Formation model (1979) and Cross’ Nigrescence model (1971) function well together because of their connection to one another, Cass cites Cross in her work leaving one to assume that the work on Nigrescence influenced the work on Homosexual Identity Formation. Further, the Multicultural Enactment-Transactional
Model (Cross, 2012) does not rely on how an identity is developed (whose model one chooses to examine) but rather how that identity is enacted in a particular context.

**Teacher Professional Identity**

While research has focused on teacher professional identity for some time, the literature points to multiple arguments for the attention to the topic and for various reasons. This section will detail the various conceptions of teacher professional identity into two distinct realms: research about professional identity development and research about teacher identity in practice or as a performance of teaching. Finally, this section will argue that the heteronormative nature of schools and schooling is an impediment for gay teachers as their professional identities can arguably be seen as less authentic than the identities of their heterosexual peers.

**Teacher Identity as Professional Identity Development**

For some, teacher identity is seen as an analytical lens or frame through which to examine teaching and learning (Gee, 2000; Olson, 2008), where the identity is used to examine a certain phenomena or explain a situation. Others (Knowles, 1992; MacLure, 1993) find teacher identity research as a means to use teacher identity as an “organizing element in teachers’ professional lives” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.175), as a meaning making device in justifying how one sees him/herself in relation to others and society. Mitchell & Weber (1999) explored teacher identity in terms of its function in helping teachers to ‘reinvent’ themselves in teaching. Narrative research (e.g. Connelley & Clandinin, 1999; Sfard & Prusak, 2005) examined “the narratives that teachers create to explain themselves and their teaching lives” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.175). Agee (2004) and Alsup (2006) examined teacher identity through the discourses teachers
participate in and create, according to Agee (2004) “teacher identity is a discursive space where an imagined role is negotiated among possible roles” (p. 747). Further, others (e.g., Goodson & Cole, 1994; Hunt, 2006; Leavy, McSorley, & Boté, 2006; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998) have used teacher identity as a means to explore the ways in which teachers understand their roles in schools and society.

Most closely related to this study is the strand of teacher identity research that examines how contextual factors impact teachers’ negotiation of multiple identities to create a professional identity (e.g. Flores & Day, 2006; Pearce & Morrison, 2011; Poole, 2008; Sachs, 2005; Tickle, 2000). Given a solid understanding of teacher professional identity teachers and teacher educators understand the:

- influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people, including broadly accepted images in society about what a teacher should know and do,… [and] also to what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their experiences in practice and their personal backgrounds.

(Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 107)

**Teacher Identity as Identity Performance**

The discussion of teacher self-disclosure in this literature review draws out and explicates the view of self-disclosure as an identity performance. Building on the previous discussion, another conception of teacher identity comes from the narrative or story perspective where a teacher’s identity is performed and implicated in practice. Carter (1993) defines narrative or story research as “represent[ing] a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to explicating the issues with which we deal” (p. 6).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) outline three conceptions of teacher learning. The first
conception, “knowledge-for-practice” is the stuff of methodology and pedagogy coursework so often found in university programs; second, “knowledge-in-practice” refers to what one learns on the job, in the midst of doing the work of teachers; third and most relevant here is the conception of “knowledge-of-practice” which is founded in the reflective apparatus of teaching, when teachers “generate local knowledge of practice by working within the contexts of inquiry communities to theorize and construct their work and to connect the larger social, cultural, political issues” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 250, emphasis in original). Elbaz (1991) argues that narrative, autobiography research:

...is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way. (p. 3)

Stories then, often have foci that range beyond the immediately specific or content-based issues of curriculum and classroom lessons to encompass teachers' personal experiences. Thus, teaching events are framed within a context of a teacher's life history. As a result, the central themes are often moral and philosophical, having more to do with feelings, purposes, images, aspirations, and personal meanings than with teaching method or curriculum structures (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz, 1991). This attention to the life history of the teacher is problematic when the life history of a teacher is outside of the heteronormative nature of schooling.
From story to self-disclosure. Self-disclosure came about as a field of study in the late twentieth century. Simply defined, teacher self-disclosure occurs when a teacher discloses personal information in the classroom formally or informally. When used as a teaching method, teacher self-disclosure can “humanize” (Bartolome, 2004) a teacher in the eyes of students and thus open pathways for critical and dialogic analysis of social justice issues and curriculum wherein a teacher can incorporate parts of his personal and professional identities.

Empirical review of self-disclosure literature. Goldstein and Benassi, (1994) sought to observe whether teachers’ self-disclosure positively influenced classroom participation. Students in their study completed a 21-item questionnaire during the 10th week of the semester that was designed to “assess their perceptions of teacher self-disclosure, amount of participation in class, and the degree to which the instructor made good use of examples and illustrations” (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994, p. 213). Teachers completed an 11 item questionnaire designed to “assess their perception of how much they self-disclosed in the class and how much their students participated during class” (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994, p. 213). The data confirm a positive correlation between teacher self-disclosure and student participation; what the researchers call “the reciprocity effect.” Goldstein and Benassi account for the reciprocity effect by citing the social exchange model, modeling perspective (Thase & Page, 1977) and the trust model (Cozby, 1973; Jourand, 1959).

Building on the observations of Goldstein and Benassi (1994), Cayanus and Martin (2008), introduced a measure of teacher self-disclosure that encompassed three dimensions: amount, relevance, and valence. The study sought to explain the possible
effects of teacher self-disclosure on the teacher, the students, and the overall classroom affect. According to the authors:

The results … support the work of Sorensen (1989) and others who reported that amount of self-disclosure relates to affective learning, the magnitude of the impact involving amount of self-disclosure in the present study was relatively low. It would be difficult to establish at this time that amount of self-disclosure has positive affect, especially without considering the relevance and negativity of the self-disclosure. (Cayanus & Martin, 2008, p. 337)

In addressing variances in student motivation and affect toward the class, the authors state that increased negative disclosure accounted for variances, “when students reported that their teachers self-disclosed more often with less negativity, they reported greater learning and motivation” (Cayanus & Martin, 2008, p. 337). The overarching theme of this study is that teacher self-disclosure, when it is not negative, has a positive impact on student motivation, affect and on teacher credibility.

Zhang, Shi, Tonelson, and Robinson (2009) further explored the concept of teacher self-disclosure by exploring preservice and inservice teachers’ perceptions of appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure. Participants included 180 preservice teachers who enrolled in a required teacher education course in the beginning of the program and 135 inservice teachers who taught within the local school district at varying levels and subjects (Zhang, Shi, Tonelson, & Robinson, 2009).

Researchers use a self-report instrument, Appropriateness of Teacher Self-Disclosure Scale that was given to the preservice teachers during their introductory class at the university. The researchers asked that the preservice teachers deliver the survey to
their cooperating teacher so that the inservice teacher could complete the instrument.

“The scale consisted of three dimensions: topics, purposes and considerations” (Zhang, et. al., 2009, p. 1120).

The results of this study indicate that both preservice and inservice teachers accepted the common topics as appropriate topics of teacher self-disclosure: teachers’ personal experiences/stories, information related to their family, relatives and friends, personal opinions, and personal interests or hobbies. (Zhang, et. al., 2009, p. 1121)

More consideration was given to student age, grade level and maturity. Both preservice and inservice teachers agree that the age, grade level, and subject or context of the disclosure directly influences “appropriate”. The results of this study suggest that preservice and inservice teachers believe it inappropriate for teachers to “self-disclose their political perspectives, religious beliefs, and information about their intimate relationships such as sex, marriage, or even illegal issues” (Zhang, et. al., 2009, p.1123). This finding was amplified in inservice teacher population. The findings seem tenuous, however, because the authors conclude the study with a discussion about teachers being prepared to be able to judge what is appropriate and inappropriate self-disclosure. The teachers in the study “strongly believed that teacher self-disclosure needs to be appropriately related to students’ cultural background, gender, grade level and emotional status” (Zhang, et. al., 2009, p. 1122). One could argue that given the emotional maturity level of some older students, some teachers may choose to disclose information with them that would otherwise be seen as inappropriate. The authors argue classroom context may be the determining factor in deciding what is appropriate teacher self-disclosure. In
terms of this study, I argue that in the right context—classroom or otherwise—any self-disclosure is appropriate.

**Teacher Professional Identity and Heteronormativity**

Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) find that when students know more about their teachers, they often express greater course motivation and view the classroom climate more positively. Cayanus, Martin, and Weber (2003) provide evidence that higher amounts of teacher self-disclosure are positively related to student participation, out-of-class participation, and student motives for communication. For gay teachers, these claims can be problematic. Should the school context be “identity-congruent” (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) then it is likely they will be able to see similar outcomes, however, if the school context is one where the expectations are heteronormative, then identity-congruence will not be possible and for gay teachers the benefits of self-disclosure will not be fully realized.

**The Study of Gay Teachers: Methods, Themes, and Findings**

“I think that there’s a bigger sense of trust. A realness. That what I’m saying is from the heart they can believe it. And I think that goes into what I’m teaching. . . . I think that it helps that they know that I’m going to be truthful with them no matter what I’m talking about.” (DeJean, 2007, p. 65). In examining the shared experiences of gay teachers, there is a significant emphasis on the relief, authenticity, and richness of the teachers’ experiences with the curriculum and with their students as a result of being “out” in the classroom.

Kissen (1993) referred to gay and lesbian teachers as living in a “glass closet,” in a comparative case study of ten self-identified gay and lesbian teachers from Maine,
Louisiana, and Ohio. In completing interviews with her subjects, Kissen identified three emergent themes that she explored throughout her paper:

The first involved the teachers’ self-definition as lesbians or gay men, their self-concept as teachers, and the intersection of those two identities. The second major focus was the damaging effect of homophobia on their daily lives in and out of the classroom. A final theme was the need to develop strategies to avoid being fired and to nurture themselves in the face of tremendous pressure and stress.

(Kissen, 1993, pg. 5)

While the study detailed teachers experiences with navigating the territory between personal and professional lives in a context of homophobia and fear, Kissen notes that for those teachers in her study who had partial or full disclosure of their sexual orientation at school: “though they described self-revelation as dangerous and scary, the few who had taken these risks said that the rewards of self-actualization far outweighed the stresses” (Kissen, 1993, p. 5)

Jackson (2006) sought to explain whether or not “contextual factors promote or prohibit the construction of identities as gay teachers” (Jackson, 2006, p. 31) in a qualitative study of nine gay and lesbian teachers whom already self-identify as gay or lesbian. Jackson asserts that the participants overall view of being a teacher was linked to their sense of being “out” at school and to their students. Jackson also explains that for many of the participants there was a necessity, initially, to lead a dual-life with a “home” identity and one at school. The coming out process—and it is described as a continual, renewable, process for teachers—is what the participants in this study identify as the
source of self-actualization and empowerment, much like the findings from Kissen’s (1993) study.

Jackson identified five “major domains impacting participant’s process of constructing themselves as gay and lesbian teachers: personal characteristics, family status, gender conformity, professional experiences, and community atmosphere.” (Jackson, 2006, p. 33) Explaining that each of these characteristics motivates and informs a teacher’s decision as to when and how much he or she will disclose about his/her sexual orientation and home life. For example, in discussing age as a personal characteristic, Carolyn, referencing marriage and having children as a milestone in a straight life, explains that “as you hit those ages where those happen and it’s not happening, you realize that … you cant deceive yourself into thinking that nobody notices anymore” (Jackson, 2006, p. 35).

Jackson indicates, “studies about openly gay teachers, including this one, found that coming out at school has the potential to enrich teaching.” (Jackson, 2006, p. 29) Jackson explains that teachers who come out at school feel empowered and that in turn they empower their students. Analyzing the literature and responses from the participants, Jackson concludes that the process of coming out at school is redundant, complex, and influenced by many factors. Ultimately, however, Jackson concludes that coming out as gay or lesbian to ones students makes teaching more authentic and enriched (Jackson, 2006, p. 50). Jackson supports this notion by explaining that once a teacher “comes out” she/he is a more authentic version of his/herself. Ultimately, Jackson states that of the teachers surveyed, those who are out at school are the teachers who believed their “outness” enriched their classroom experiences. Jackson clearly agrees with this idea and
believes that this has a potential for transforming teaching, schools and communities (Jackson, 2006, p. 51) Jackson’s study is relevant and meaningful. When discussing personal characteristics, Jackson makes note that none of the participants listed race as factor influencing their decisions to come out. A possible extension of this research would be to identify more participants of various racial backgrounds to truly get a sense of the degree to which one’s race or ethnicity has impacted the degree of “outness” at school.

In a similar styled study, DeJean (2007) studied ten K12 gay and lesbian teachers from across the state of California in hopes of ascertaining the degree to which being out at school contributes to a teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices. “Five themes emerged which helped [the author] address the three main research questions.” (DeJean, 2007, p. 63) The author argues that “‘participating in social justice is part of teaching’ then these teachers’ experiences as well as these five themes offer and important contribution to those working to ensure that schools are locations which model democratic ideals and guarantee social justice for all.” (DeJean, 2007, p. 63) The five themes are outlined below:

- **Being out means a commitment to radical honesty**: “a person who conducts his or her life based on principals of radical honesty ‘prefers language that reveals what is so, whether it’s about someone else, the world, or himself”’ (DeJean, 2007, p. 63)

- **A commitment to radical honesty impacts the teacher and his or her students and their classroom community as a whole.** “Fear was the central emotion the teachers experience while teaching within the educational closet; therefore, making a
commitment to radical honesty impacted them personally by freeing up energy once consumed in hiding.” (DeJean, 2007, p. 65)

- *Identity shapes literacy philosophies and practices:* here the author discussed how the teachers used their own personal experiences and recollections to shape the kinds of “*intra*-personal” and “*inter*-personal” literacies they taught, beyond the scope of the school sanctioned literacies. (DeJean, 2007, pp. 66-67)

- *A school’s leadership and geographic location impacts a gay and lesbian K-12 educator’s quest to participate in radical honesty:* speaking much to the degree to which a building administrator fosters a sense of respect and dignity for all members of the school community, DeJean explains that the schools location and leadership can play a role in a teacher’s disclosure. (DeJean, 2007, pp. 67-68)

- *A teacher’s identity is an important aspect of the creation of a quality teacher:* the assumption here is that there is more to being a teacher than simple content and delivery. There is a need to be “critically conscious” of oneself and that who a teacher is directly informs that way one teaches. (DeJean, 2007, p. 69)

DeJean ends the piece by explaining that teacher education needs to cultivate more than curricular expertise and pedagogical awareness, but also critical self-awareness and self-reflection in teacher candidates. (DeJean, 2007)

Rudoe (2010) conducted a study to examine the ways in which lesbian teachers in London secondary schools negotiate their identity within the public/private boundaries of the school. Rudoe found four major themes in her study. First, the participants all discussed the ways in which they negotiate their sexuality in the school setting. “The extent of the teachers’ openness about their sexual orientation in the school varied
considerably, although overall most were only out to selected members of the staff” (Rudoe, 2010, p. 28). Next, the author discusses issues of identity and power. The interviews definitely point out the impact that a school’s climate and administration can have on the lesbian teacher. Also, the teachers explained that they generally did not face the same kinds of power struggles that “very camp men” (flamboyant) may have. (Rudoe, 2010, p. 30). The participants all agreed that issues of identity and power relied heavily on the degree of respect that the teacher commands in the school building. The author also brings up the notion that GLBT teachers must “prove themselves acceptable in the face of fear of prejudice should their sexual orientation become known” (Rudoe, 2010, p. 30). The author then discussed the theme of homophobia in the school and student’s pejorative use of the word “gay.” Finally, the author delved into the issue of the “cost of silence.” “The teachers in my study all emphasised the importance of representation of sexual diversity in the school, and the personal and psychological costs of being closeted” (Rudoe, 2010, p.32).

Mayo (2008) examined two sets of complex relationships at school: one between gay teachers and their students and another between the same gay teachers and their colleagues at school. The study focused on seven gay male teachers with varied years of experience and expertise. Through a series of interviews, data workshops with the participants and his colleagues, the author found that the gay teachers in this study responded to gay students’ needs and demonstrated support in a variety of ways, despite working in school environments that were often hostile toward the GLBT community (Mayo, 2008). The author also examined an array of relationships found between gay teachers and their heterosexual colleagues at school. While the data pointed to no
particular patterns, the data did reinforce the idea that gay teachers must negotiate each faculty interaction and make decisions about revealing their sexual orientation accordingly (Mayo, 2008). “The energy consumed by the daily negotiations described in this study can be immense and potentially inhibits gay teachers’ primary roles at school: teaching the curriculum and managing student behaviors” (Mayo, 2008, p. 9). Pointing out the heteronormative nature of the school context and the imperative to work toward creating inclusive work environments for all teachers, Mayo (2008) concludes with recommendations for school administrators and teacher educators, and strongly suggests that all faculty members take responsibility for the well being of gay and questioning students.

As evidenced in this representation of literature about openly gay and lesbian teachers, there are very similar themes that emerged through the data collection process. Interestingly, each of the studies addressed the possible negative outcomes that gay and lesbian teachers can face because of heteronormative standards in the educational environment, however, the most striking thematic observation from this body of research is that the benefits in the classroom and of self-actualization (identity synthesis, Cass, 1979) on the part of the teacher being out of the closet far outweigh the possible negative outcomes that can surmount a teacher as a result of staying in the closet.

Furthermore, this representation of research also points to a vacancy in the literature of case study as a methodological approach and orientation; this study aims to study gay teachers in relation to their perceptions of the school context, making the case study methodology more appealing. Jackson (2006) and Rudoe (2011) utilized grounded theory approaches, Dejean (2007) implemented an interpretive, phenomenological
in all the studies is the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups when
geographically possible. This study will triangulate data in the case studies by including
online survey data, interview data, and journal data.

**Filling the Gap: Gay Teacher Identity Negotiation**

Taken together with the historical context and current societal shifts in opinions
regarding the gay experience, this research definitely points to one clear direction in
society: the need to create an environment where teachers can be who they are without
fear of retribution, without having to hide in a “glass closet,” free of heteronormative
constrictions. This is where this study contributes to the knowledge base. Where previous
work has examined *what it is like* to be a gay teacher, this study seeks to explore *how to
become a gay teacher* by identifying mechanisms that gay teachers utilize to interrupt
heteronormativity and by examining the relationship teachers have with their school
contexts in seeking relational justice and identity-oriented justice (Poole, 2008). The
ultimate implication being that “gay teacher identity” is realized when a gay teacher is
able to use his identity as a gay person and as a teacher in concert to interrupt
heteronormativity.

**Chapter Summary**

The heteronormative nature of schooling is a limiting factor for gay teachers to be
able to work and thrive in school contexts. This chapter provided the theoretical and
empirical background necessary to ground this study and help to illustrate the location of
this study in the greater research context. The literature found in this chapter served
several purposes; first a discussion regarding personal identity was necessary. This
discussion utilized the construct of racial identity as a historical prototype and parallel for gay identity. Next this chapter examined the construct of teacher identity and problematized that construct with the notion that schools are heteronormative environments that limit a gay teacher’s ability to perform an authentic identity if there is not identity-congruence (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) in the school context. Finally, this chapter surveyed the methodological approaches and emergent themes and findings of empirical research about gay teachers in order to fully situate this study in the research of the day. This study fills the void left in previous research by implying there is a specific “gay teacher identity” that is developed and based in the school context and the performance of a teacher’s personal identity in that school context.

The next chapter will continue the discussion of methodology and approach found in this chapter. This study is qualitative in nature because it is explanatory and gleans deeper meaning. Furthermore, this is a multiple case study that utilizes various methods to collect data. Data were analyzed case by case as well as cross case.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The previous two chapters outlined the theoretical and empirical foundation for this study. Grounded in research from multiple fields and experiences, this study proposes a conceptual framework that juxtaposes the school context with the identity negotiation and enactment process, taking into consideration the teacher’s perception of heteronormativity and relational justice (Poole, 2008). Research regarding personal and professional identity development as well as research regarding the lives of gay teachers points to the necessity for this study to identify mechanisms for developing a “gay teacher identity” to interrupt heteronormativity and promote identity oriented relational justice (Poole, 2008) in school contexts. This chapter explains the methodological approach, recruitment and consenting of participants, data sources, and data analysis process.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of gay teachers working in schools across the United States. In particular, this study will examine identity negotiation experiences of gay teachers in order to determine what they experience, how they develop their gay teacher identity, how they perceive the school and school leadership in terms of their motivation at work, and what schools can do to support them. The data collection process will look to identify themes that pertain to: 1) how gay identity develops and changes over gay teachers’ careers; 2) how a gay teacher’s perceived relational justice (Poole, 2008) in the school environment impacts the enactment of gay identity at school; 3) the ways in which gay teacher identity enactment
at school can interrupt heteronormativity; and 4) practices and strategies that can be translated to the teacher education and preparation field. Ultimately, this study seeks to answer the question of whether or not the enactment of gay teacher identity can provide an avenue for teachers to interrupt heteronormativity by examining the identity negotiation process and the impact of the context of schooling on identity-based motivation in teaching.

Research Questions

This study answers one major question and two ancillary questions that guided the data collection and analysis process in order to better understand and explain gay teacher identity. This research is explanatory in nature and the questions presented here helped in this endeavor by affording for the possibility of many possible outcomes.

Main Research Question:

Does the enactment of gay teacher identity interrupt heteronormativity in schools?

Ancillary Questions:

a) How do gay teachers negotiate gay teacher identity in schools?

b) How do school contexts impact gay teachers' perceptions of identity-based motivation and relational justice?

By answering these questions, the goal is that teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, and district leaders have actionable, empirically grounded mechanisms and strategies that can be gleaned and translated for their own contexts to interrupt heteronormativity. Furthermore, another goal is that clear lines of additional inquiry will be identified so that further progress can be made to interrupt heteronormativity.
Approach to Study

This study is a multiple case study of gay teachers. Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) base their approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective. This paradigm “recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn’t reject outright some notion of objectivity. Pluralism, not relativism, is stressed with focus on the circular dynamic tension of subject and object” (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 10). Constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001; Searle, 1995). One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants’ actions (Lather, 1992). Moreover, this study utilizes the case study methodology because it allows for the study of individual cases independently and then the evaluation of them against each other to identify themes. Case studies consider a phenomenon [gay teachers] in their context [heteronormative school contexts] (Merriam, 1988).

A case study approach is appropriate because the focus of the study is to go beyond simply describing gay teachers, rather answering questions that are “why” and “how” in nature—a telltale sign pointing toward case study research. Furthermore, because there is no intention to manipulate any behaviors of participants through experimental designs and because the context will be fully incorporated into the
examination of the participants, a multiple case study affords the latitude to answer my
questions. As mentioned in Chapter Two, previous empirical studies regarding the gay
teachers have found their methodology in other traditions. This study seeks to do what
other studies have not in through the use of the case study method—implicitly include the
perception and impact of the school context on the enactment of identity to interrupt
heteronormativity. Studies that have used a grounded theory perspective (Jackson, 2006;
Rudoe, 2011) have only been able to locate their findings in terms of the teacher and the
impact of that teacher’s being “out” in the classroom. Similarly, studies that focus on the
phenomenological (DeJean, 2007) or the narrative inquiry (Kissen, 1993; Mayo, 2008)
are limited to exploratory and descriptive analyses of the lived experiences of the
participants. This study will utilize a multiple case study methodology because it is
explanatory and interpretive in nature. The ability to analyze data intra-case and cross
case is vitally important. Content validity will be ensured through the triangulation of
multiple data sources. Participants in this study completed online surveys, interviews, and
reflective journaling activities. In viewing these various units of analysis and data sources,
I recognize the speculative nature of assessing a gay teacher’s identity negotiation and
enactment. I agree, however, with Merriam’s (1998) assertion that:

…speculation is a key to developing theory in a qualitative study. Speculation
involves ‘playing’ with ideas probabilistically. It permits the investigator to go
beyond the data and make guesses about what will happen in the future, based on
what has been learned in the past about constructs and linkages among them and
on comparisons between that knowledge and what presently is known about the
same phenomena (p. 190).
Also, this study could also be considered a sociological case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), because it queries the institution (the school context) while trying to understand the non-dominant group (gay teachers) within that institution.

While the overall methodological techniques in this study will be case study oriented, there will also be a borrowing of methods from other orientations also. For example, the initial survey will include the Gay Identity Questionnaire (GIQ) (Brady & Busse, 1994) which will allow for certain measures that are more quantitative in nature—namely mean and mode scores to help sort participants and look for trends. Furthermore, acknowledging the constructivist nature of social constructionism, this study will also draw upon the constructivist grounded theory work of Charmaz (2006), “a constructionist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants” (p. 130).

**Role of the Researcher**

I served as the sole researcher on this study. A third party was included in the transcription of interviews, but this third party did not have any bearing on the construction of the interviews nor the analysis thereafter. I created all online surveys (providing appropriate credit for instruments used, the GIQ), interviews questions, and reflective journal prompts. I conducted all interviews and was solely responsible for the analysis and safe storage of all data sources. Special attention was paid to ensuring the anonymity of all participants, as their participation in the study was confidential.
Methodology: The Multiple Case Study Model

Setting

Participants were recruited from the continental United States. All due diligence was made to locate participants from all major geographic areas in the United States—North East, South, Midwest, Northwest and Southwest. Participants who consented and fully participated in the study were geographically located in the Western, Midwest, and Northeastern parts of the United States.

Participants and Rationale for Participant Sample

Initial sampling of participants was completed through professional networking utilizing a convenience sampling procedure (Browne, 2005; Creswell, 2007). Browne (2005) found that convenience or "snowball" sampling provided a way to find, recruit and maintain participants for a study of this nature because the participants are of a marginalized social group and may be difficult to recruit through other means. In my previous experience as a classroom teacher I was able to cultivate relationships with many gay teachers. Another recruitment avenue was through the professional organizations I have joined. All of these organizations have newsletters, list-servs, and meetings where was able to meet prospective participants. I developed an informational flyer that I was able to circulate online through list-servs and websites that provided prospective participants with details regarding the study and my contact information. When a potential participant contacted me, I was then able to enroll and consent the participant in the study. Participants were consented online through the initial online survey.
In total ten gay teachers and two lesbian teachers expressed an interest participating in the study. Because the HIF (Cass, 1979) was developed for gay males, the lesbian respondents were not included in this study. All of the gay male public school teachers were enrolled and given the opportunity to consent, only eight of the ten teachers consented completed the entire survey. Two teachers only completed the GIQ portion and did not complete the open-ended questions and their responses were not included in this analysis.

Participants for phase two of this study were selected from the initial sample. At this phase, I employed “theoretical sampling,” a strategy borrowed from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). “The purpose of theoretical sampling is to obtain data to help explicate categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 100), because of the nature of the conceptual framework introduced in chapter one, this method seemed required, if not logical. Knowing that there would be a likelihood of attrition at phase two because of an increased commitment I chose to invite all eight of the participants from the initial phase to participate in phase two, four chose to continue on in the study—all white. More details regarding the demographic make up and preparation of the participants will be explored in Chapter Four.

**Data Sources, Collection, and Timeline**

By definition, case study research relies on “multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” and pays strict attention to “prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 1994, p. 14). In terms of the theoretical proposition, I make use of my conceptual framework as both a source of theory and as explanatory of the behavior in and potential outcomes of
these cases. The data sources outlined below all were used to address the research questions.

**Online survey.** The online survey served as the consenting device as well as the first phase of the study. After consenting and providing their basic demographic information participants completed Brady and Busse’s (1994) GIQ. The GIQ is useful as a “brief measure… of homosexual identity formation (Brady & Busse, 1994, p. 12) based on Cass’s (1979) HIF model. The final section of the online survey included a series of open-ended questions where participants answered questions about their teacher preparation and current teaching context (see appendix B). Once the online surveys were completed, responses to the GIQ were scored and participants were located on the Homosexual Identity Formation model (Cass, 1979) and qualitative data were coded for themes.

**Interviews.** Each participant in phase two was interviewed (in-person or via telephone) twice; the interviews focused on the following themes: 1) growing up and coming out (See Appendix C), and 2) entrance into teaching and professional life (See Appendix D). Prompts were developed for each interview and were administered as open-ended questions. Participants received copies of the transcribed interviews to check for errors in transcription. The interviews were semi-structured and varied in length for each participant.

**Journal entries.** Participants in phase two were asked to keep a weekly journal focused on a reflection of their practice (See Appendix E). This journaling allowed me to have a glimpse into each teacher’s thinking without having to physically observe a teacher in action. Participants were provided with a suggested format, but were not made
to use only that format, as journaling can be a very personal enterprise. Also, the 
participants were asked to complete focused journal entries (See Appendix F) where they 
were provided with specific prompts. The prompts focused on the participants’ 
perceptions of their school context. These focused journal entries allowed the 
participants to express themselves in writing, affording them a voice beyond just the 
interview process and a chance to reflect on issues brought up throughout the study at 
their own pace.

**Research timeline.** Table 1 provides the basic timeline that was developed to 
guide the completion of this study.

Table 1: Research Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2012</td>
<td>Process IRB approval, develop interview questions, and online survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>Recruit, consent, and orient participants. <em>Phase one:</em> deploy and analyze online survey, choose theoretical sample for phase two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2013 and March 2013</td>
<td><em>Phase two:</em> conduct interviews, deploy weekly participant journals and focused journals, analyze data as it is received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2013 and May 2013</td>
<td>Data analysis and study completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Writing and defense preparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

A primary tool in the data analysis was the conceptual framework outlined in 
Chapter One. Data were examined specifically for instances where the identity was 
enacted and negotiated based in the METM wherein the data will be screened for 
instances of intergroup and intragroup transactions of buffering, code switching, bridging,
and attachment-bonding (Cross, 2012). Data were also analyzed in terms of the participants’ understandings of the school context as just or unjust (Poole, 2008). The themes of identity congruence and incongruence were also examined (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). All of the qualitative data obtained were also screened for emergent themes and patterns; content analysis and domain analysis were utilized to cluster responses into patterns and taxonomies.

**Ethical Considerations**

This is a research study that utilized human participants. In accordance with all laws and regulations regarding such research, the researcher adhered to all protocols intended to protect participants from any potential risks. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university approved this study and all participants were informed of their rights through the informed consenting process. Participants’ identities were protected and pseudonyms and numeric identifiers were attached to each record for use in data collection, analysis, and reporting. Because of risks associated with speaking freely about this topic (being outed at school when a teacher is not out) and because I want to preserve the rich quality of all data, teachers were not asked to obtain principal or supervisory approval to participate. Data that were electronically communicated came from participants’ personal email addresses (another measure to protect participants from unwanted outing at school) and were delivered to my university email address. Access to this email account is extremely limited and was only accessed from the researcher’s personal computer and secure personal network or secure network at the University. Data are stored in a secure office space and will be destroyed after five years.
Limitations and Impact

Acknowledging that this research has a personal connection to my life experiences, I can see that I bring my own bias to the data analysis. While I am clear that I must not allow my experience to cloud my judgment, I am also clear that I do have an ideology and a critical perspective that does impact my study. This connection is also a motivating factor in completing this research because I have a vested interest in interrupting heteronormativity.

The small sample size may be seen as a limiting factor in this study. While this critique may be present, the sample size is not intended to provide generalizations to a larger population. Rather, this study seeks to explain the gay teacher identity negotiation process of its participants with hopes that those who read this study will be able to translate the findings into their own experiences.

While discussions of these topics can be difficult to be had, I will do my best to ensure that participants feel a level of trust, confidence, comfort and respect when sharing their stories and lives. Although I can see many benefits to society and education in general in completing this study, I was pleasantly surprised that the participants in this study came away from the experience feeling a sense of pride and empowerment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the methodological details for this study of gay teachers. The goal of this study is to answer the question “does the enactment of gay teacher identity interrupt heteronormativity in schools?” This question was further analyzed through two ancillary questions: i) how do gay teachers negotiate gay teacher identity in schools? and ii) how do school contexts impact gay teachers' perceptions of identity.
based motivation and relational justice?

This study follows a multiple case study design that consists of two phases. In phase one an online survey was deployed that situated each participant along the HIF model (Cass, 1979) and asked each to describe his teaching history and context. In phase two, participants completed two interviews and wrote reflective and focused journal entries. Data were analyzed through the multiple perspectives outlined in the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter One and for emerging themes and patterns. The goal of this research is to interrupt heteronormativity in schools through the explication of the negotiation and enactment of a “gay teacher identity.”
Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The previous chapters outlined the rationale, theoretical and empirical bases, and methods utilized in this multiple case study. A variety of data were collected and analyzed to address my research question: does the enactment of gay teacher identity interrupt heteronormativity in schools? and ancillary questions i) how do gay teachers negotiate gay teacher identity in schools? ii) how do school contexts impact gay teachers' perceptions of identity based motivation and relational justice? The data analysis was conducted using triangulation of the online instrument, interviews, and journal responses. Each of the research questions was considered in analyzing each data sources. The GIQ was scored based on the scoring guide included with the instrument (Brady & Busse, 1994) and then examined for trends.

When it was determined that all participants scored within the identity acceptance through synthesis (Cass, 1979) stages, individual GIQ statements were examined and trends were observed as congruent or discrepant with qualitative data from other data sources. Data were manually coded using the basic tenets of the METM—attachment-bonding, bridging, code-switching, and buffering—as initial codes (Cross, 2012). Additionally, when participants told stories they were coded as identity congruent, relationally just or identity incongruent, relationally unjust (Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Poole, 2008).

First, this chapter will describe the participants in phase one of the study and identify key themes, ideas, and questions that emerged from that analysis. Next this chapter will provide a profile each of the four participants in phase two of the study.
providing an in-depth discussion of their life histories and teaching contexts. Finally, this chapter will identify persistent themes across cases that prove to be salient and pervasive.

**Phase One**

As discussed in the previous chapter, in phase one, participants completed an online instrument that contained three distinct parts—inform consent, the GIQ (Brady & Busse, 1994), and open-ended questions. Each participant in this phase (See Table 2) chose his own or was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity, this pseudonym will be used in this section when referring to and citing specific participants.

**Table 2: Phase One Data Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Geo Area</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Years Exp</th>
<th>Out to coworkers?</th>
<th>Out to students?</th>
<th>GIQ Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>BA: Secondary Education MA: Special Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Only friends</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BA: Political Science TFA, graduate licensure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>All, actively comes out</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>SW</td>
<td>BA: Elementary Education MA: Literacy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Only implicitly</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4,5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>District ARL program MA: Special Education PHD: in progress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>All, actively out</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>BA: Sec. Music Education MA: in progress</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>All adults and boosters</td>
<td>Implicitly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>BA: Sec. Music Education MA: Music Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Out when needed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>BA: Secondary Education MA: Education Tech. &amp; Educational L-ship PHD: in progress</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Only implicitly</td>
<td>Implicitly</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Dylan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>BA: Elementary Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Only friends</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
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The eight participants who consented and completed all parts of the online survey ranged in age from 26 to 37 and had teaching experience ranging from 5 to 16 years. Within the sample six identified as white, one identified as black, and one identified as Latino. Interestingly the racial distribution in this study tends to mirror that of the general teaching population. Table 2 provides relevant demographic and teacher preparation data regarding each participant as well as the stage on the HIF where they had the highest GIQ.
score. The participants range in grade level and subject expertise; five teachers hold a masters degree in a discipline, two teach special education, and two are music educators.

As indicated, all of the participants in this study scored highest on the GIQ (Brady & Busse, 1994) in stage six with the exception of Will, who had scored equally in stages four through six (See Appendix I for score breakdown by participant). The GIQ is a set of 45 statements where the participant is asked to indicate whether a statement is true or false for that him at that time. Each of the six stages identified in the HIF (Cass, 1979) are assigned seven unique statements designed to be “true” if the participant is at that particular stage. In the first three stages (identity confusion, comparison, and tolerance) all of the participants marked every corresponding statement as false. Therefore, according to their responses on the GIQ, all of the participants located their gay identity in the stages of acceptance, pride, and synthesis. The following section will identify themes based in specific GIQ statements in particular stages and across cases.

**Defining “Out”**

In chapter two the positive and liberating power of being and coming out in schools was discussed through examining empirical research about gay teachers. Being “out” and the complexity of the word “out” is the first theme that emerges in exploring the data. Being out and coming out seem to have different meanings to different people and this is reflected in the data below. According to Cass (1979) gay men who are located at the acceptance stage have internalized their gay identity, are becoming social beings within the gay community, and are restructuring their interpersonal environments to actively seek congruency between context and identity. This internalization and environmental restructuring continues to a greater degree as a gay man goes into the later stages and
realizes a fully actualized gay identity. Additionally, the notion of being “out” becomes more salient as the gay identity develops in the later stages of the HIF (Cass, 1979). Being progressively more “out” essentially then becomes the dividing factor between one being in the first three stages versus the final three stages of the HIF model.

This divide is evidenced in the GIQ by the statements “I live a homosexual lifestyle at home, while at work/school I do not want others to know about my lifestyle” and “I do not want most heterosexuals to know that I am definitely homosexual” and are used to measure stage four (identity acceptance). All eight participants marked both of the aforementioned statements as false, leading some to the assertion that these participants are all out of the closet at work to their colleagues and students, however these responses are contradictory to the open-ended responses provided regarding coming out to coworkers and students and lead to much more complexity and nuance around the word “out.” The extent of the teachers’ openness about their sexual orientation in the school varied considerably, although overall most were only out to selected members of staff. The type of school the teacher worked in had a distinct bearing on his identity negotiation and enactment. The teachers who taught in elementary school had more trepidations regarding being out to students, whereas those in high school tended to be more open to being out, be implicitly out, or be out to students.

When asked about being out at school there is an immediately evident schism (refer to Table 2) between being out to coworkers and to students. Only one of the participants reported actively being out to all coworkers and students, stating:

I am out to administration, fellow teachers, district representatives and students. I am also the advisor for the school's Gay-Straight Alliance and conduct district
Professional Developments on issues pertaining to LGBT Youth and Community.

(JD)

Two of the participants indicated that they are implicitly out to students, meaning that while they may not actively come out to students they feel that it is a given fact that they are gay or if students ask or deduce that the teacher is gay he will not deny it. Don, a high school band director, explains “Some of my older students have ‘figured’ it out, but I do not talk about it to my students … I choose to not make a big deal about my homosexuality, but I don't hide it either” (Don). He goes on to explain that his partner is an active participant in the band’s activities and events. Calvin says, “I consider myself an "obvious gay" and do not formally "come out" to staff or students. I do not believe I need to "come out" to staff or students” explaining that, like Don, he doesn’t consider his sexual orientation a significant part of who he is as a teacher but he also does not “pretend to be heterosexual.” Compared to JD who is out and actively comes out to students and coworkers alike, some would argue that Don and Calvin are not enacting a gay teacher identity. However, I posit that their conscious choice not to deny their sexual identities and to not act heterosexual is, in a sense, a covert enactment of gay identity, one that doesn’t push the contextual envelope within their daily realities at school—the heteronormative structures that keep gay teachers from being out with students and staff.

Although they do not come out to students, Chris and Peter both shared a sense of cognitive dissonance between the positive social justice impact of being out to the students and the political, social, and practical pressures of staying closeted to students. Chris situates his dissonance in the classroom context expressing an uncertainty with what would happen to the classroom dynamic specifically “While I know that many of
them ‘think’ they know I am gay I worry about what impact this would have on me in the classroom if I confirmed it for them.” Peter expressed a desire to be a positive gay role model for the students at his school explaining:

   It would have meant a lot to me as a child to have an adult gay role model to look up to. I struggled a lot in middle school and early in high school with my sexual identity - and often felt ashamed or embarrassed. It was hard to go through and I feel like had there been a role model in my life I would have felt much more comfortable in my own skin. I'd like to be that for the students at my school - but I do worry about how parents and families will take it.

Both of these examples show a level of understanding these gay teachers have regarding the potential positive impact being out to students while also reflecting the contextual pressures that inhibit gay teachers from being open—“It bothers me to some degree that I can't be open with them about who I am but at the same time I do worry about the ramifications of coming out to them” (Chris).

   The remaining three participants explained that they do not come out to students because they either feel that coming out to the students is not needed or as something that would not be well received within the parent community. These three participants are in also the three who had the most variation in the GIQ stages. Interestingly, also, both men of color are included in this section. Will scored equally over stages four through six of the HIF and Trevor and Dylan scored highly in stage six but also had scores in stages four and five indicating that, according to Cass (1979), they were still progressing from acceptance to synthesis. Furthermore, when presented with the GIQ statement “I have not told most of the people at work that I am definitely homosexual” Will and Dylan both
indicated this as a true statement for them, suggesting a level of discomfort or dissonance with disclosure of their sexual identity.

**What’s Appropriate?**

The second major theme that emerges from the data in phase one is centered in the greater context of teaching and what is appropriate in teaching students and in schools. Stemming directly from the discussion above about outness, there appears to be a question of whether being out is appropriate or inappropriate in terms of personal disclosures and teaching. When asked whether or not they felt their schools would be supportive of a decision to come out to students five participants felt they would receive a negative response from school leadership and parents. Don states, “although the school is supportive of me and my lifestyle, I do not think at this time they would be supportive if I openly talked about being gay to my students.” Will and Trevor both expressed concern for how parents and community members would react while Chris expressed concern that his school has not received sensitivity training regarding GLBT issues and this leads him to be hesitant to come out:

I am not sure how they would react to an openly gay teacher, especially one that chose to come out to the students. I would like to think they are open minded enough to deal with it, but I am not sure.

Where Peter expressed his hesitance to come out to students, he did indicate that he felt the school leadership would be supportive of him if he did come out—“My school's leadership team and network administration would be very supportive if I chose to come out.” These data seem to tie back to the literature about self-disclosure discussed in chapter two where teachers felt that some topics were inappropriate for classroom
disclosure (Zhang, Shi, Tonelson, & Robinson, 2009), take for example this statement by Peter:

I doubt many families would consider sexuality an appropriate topic for an elementary age group period. That being said, I also think it's necessary to teach young children about homosexuality so that they can grow into accepting/loving adults.

When analyzing these statements and this notion of appropriateness of being out, one must also take into consideration the pervasive effect that heteronormativity has on the discourse surrounding sexual orientation in schools—being “out” seems often to be conflated with talking about sex and sexual activity, something that is taboo in the halls of a school house. Where a heterosexual teacher can freely and openly speak about what she did with her husband the last weekend, gay teachers constantly have to think about what is considered appropriate for their context—even if the disclosure is identical to their heterosexual counterpart.

**Phase One Summary**

Data in phase one serve as an introductory glimpse into lives and identities of the study participants. Two major themes were discussed that essentially work hand in hand with one another—“what is ‘out’?” and “is “out” appropriate?” These themes are not new and have been studied previously as evidenced in chapter two, however, when analyzed through the lens of IBM (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) this discussion of outness and appropriateness can be explained in terms of the teachers not feeling identity congruence. Thus, the focus is shifted from the teachers’ enactments of identity to an understanding of the contexts that manifest those enactments. Because some teachers do not perceive that
their gay identity is valued at school—not perceiving relational justice (Poole, 2008)—they then see their openness as a liability and something that can lead to retribution. The two themes discussed in phase one are further explored and explicated in phase two as four individual case studies will be presented and examined across cases.

**Phase Two**

Four participants—Chris, Peter, JD, and Dylan—agreed to continue into phase two of this study. Participants in phase two were asked to write weekly reflection journals (see Appendix E) where they were asked to write about the previous week focusing on how their gay identity, gay issues, or gay students impacted their teaching (if at all). Also, the participants were asked to reflect on their weekly curriculum and pedagogical practices and/or the broader school context to see if they could identify instances where they perceived homophobia, bias, or heteronormativity, and, if so, how they did or did not react to those instances.

The participants also wrote about the goings on in their personal lives in their weekly journals. Participants also were asked to complete four focused journals with specific prompts (see Appendix F) that addressed their coming out process and their teaching philosophies. The focused journals were designed to allow participants a venue through which to truly think through their responses and write without constraints. Also, each participant was interviewed twice. The first interview (See Appendix C) happened within the first week of phase two and centered on the participants upbringing, schooling, and gay realization and coming out. The second interview (See Appendix D) happened toward the end of phase two and centered on participants’ teacher education, teaching careers, and I presented them with various hypothetical school and classroom based
situations to ask how they would respond.

In the following sections I will present each participant’s life histories, specifically looking at their gay identity development from childhood to the present and their teacher preparation, providing commentary and analysis based in the theoretical lenses of the study. Data cited in this section are drawn from the interviews, weekly journals, and focused journals. Specifically, I will utilize the METM (Cross, 2012) to identify negotiation and enactment of gay identity as well as IBM (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) and relational justice (Poole, 2008) to describe perceptions of their contexts throughout their histories. In addition to the data presented within each case here, I have included METM based (Cross, 2012) utterance tables for each participant in Appendix H, these utterance tables provide additional data and foreground each participant’s negotiation and enactment of gay identity. Quotations included in the following sections came from interviews, focused journals, and weekly journaling by the participants.

**Participant Profile: Chris Hendricks**

**Background.** Chris Hendricks is a high school social studies and special education teacher at a suburban high school in the Midwestern part of the United States. Chris is 32 years old and is the oldest of four sons, he also notes that his parents have been together his whole life and are still married today. Chris describes his childhood and upbringing as typical, having grown up in the same suburban area in which he currently resides and works.

We had a pretty typical upbringing. My mom worked full time up until my youngest brother was born in 1988 and then she stopped working and stayed at home. She was a stay at home mom from the time I was 8. She worked for my
dad from home, dinner would be ready at 6 o’clock when he got home. We would sit around the table and talk about our days.

Describing life at home, Chris disclosed that his father is a recovering alcoholic and that at times the situation would create serious tensions in his home forcing his father and mother to come close to divorce unless his father sought help for his drinking. Thankfully his father is now sober, Chris explains “It wasn't that dark [at home] when he was drinking, but I could see that there was always tension in the house and that dissipated when he stopped drinking.” Chris’s mother was fairly religious citing that he and his brothers and mother would attend a non-denominational Christian church; his father was less religious and did not attend church with the rest of the family.

**Chris’s gay realization and coming out.** When asked to write his “coming out story” Chris prefices the story with the following statement:

> Coming out of the closet was a very gradual process; one that I suppose has never really stopped. I feel that I continue to come out of the closet each time that I tell someone new that I am gay. There are always times when I meet someone new and have to decide when and if I am going to share that part of my life with him or her. I guess this is probably true for everyone that is gay.

With this understanding, Chris describes being an elementary student and feeling that something was different about him but not being able to understand or specifically name what that difference was. “I didn't really understand what it meant. I do also remember experimenting and exploring with different boys in my neighborhood. I think I knew but I didn't know what it was.” Chris goes on to explain that it wasn’t until he was in middle school that he finally was able to put a name to what he was feeling.
I fully accepted the fact that I was gay somewhere around 8th grade. I always knew that I was different and that I the feelings that I had for other boys was not “normal”, but it was in 8th grade that I realized what it was and for the first time accepted that I was indeed gay. While I accepted it for myself it would take me a few more years before I was able and willing to confide that kind of information to another person. Accepting [being gay] as part of who I am is much different than putting it out there for other people to know and possibly judge me for it.

Chris described the time when he learned that his great uncle had contracted HIV as the turning point for him in 8th grade when “everything clicked” for him, his great uncle was gay, had a partner, and had contracted this disease. After becoming closer and getting to know his great uncle more, Chris began seeing himself through his new role model:

I had been exposed more to my uncle and the relationship that he and his partner had. I realized that that was me, and I could have a partner or boyfriend and I was okay with that.

What Chris is describing in this story is what Cross (2012) would label as an intra-group transaction where attachment-bonding occurred. Chris sought meaning-making for what he was feeling through connecting with the gay male he knew at the time, his great uncle. This attachment-bonding transaction is described as an action that reinforces one’s sense of connection to the multicultural (gay) identity through mutual connection with another group member, Cross (2012) indicates that these connections are vital to developing a positive group identity.

Chris came out to his parents as a result of a series of events that occurred at school. He was being harassed and tormented by a former friend after their friendship
imploded because Chris confided in this friend about having a crush on her younger brother. Recalling the situation that led to his coming out to his parents, Chris describes nearly breaking down under the constant pressure and harassment inflicted upon him from this former friend and her backlash at school. Concerned for his well being Chris’s friends had taken him to see the guidance counselor at school, this is where another instance of attachment-bonding (Cross, 2012) occurred because the counselor was lesbian and was able to help Chris gain perspective regarding the situation. Later that day Chris came out to his mother, he describes the episode here:

My mom came into the office and sat next to me and asked me what was going on. I told her that some stuff was going on with school and [my friend] but that I couldn’t tell her. She kept drilling me and drilling me about why I was crying and so upset. Finally she asked me if I had gotten [my friend] pregnant. At that I lost it and yelled to her “I am gay and [my friend] knows and is spreading it around the school”. She didn’t say much, asked a few “are you sure” questions but that is about all I can remember. I asked her not to tell my dad and that was it. She spent the next few hours vacuuming the house and not saying much to me at all.

The next day Chris’s father came in and confronted him about what he told his mother, apparently Chris’s mother told his father against Chris’s wishes:

He asked me how I could know at such a young age. I asked him how he knew that he liked girls, and he said “fair enough”. That was really the last conversation my dad and I ever really had about my sexuality.

Chris explained that his relationship with his parents has grown stronger and stronger as years have gone on, he also credits his great uncle with being part of the reason his
parents, especially his religious mother, were able to come to terms and accept Chris’s sexuality without much consternation. The great uncle was related to Chris on his mother’s side and she “absolutely adored [her uncle]”, according to Chris. In this instance, the connection Chris has with his great uncle helped to ‘bridge’ the relationship between Chris and his mother essentially helping to find an ally (Cross, 2012). Eventually as Chris started dating and entered into a long-term committed relationship with his former partner, everyone in his family knew he was gay and accepted him and his partner.

**Becoming a teacher.** Chris has always wanted to be a teacher. He recounted the time he asked his parents for a chalkboard for his bedroom and how he would bring extra worksheets home to teach his brothers and stuffed animals. In high school Chris had an influential history teacher who help solidify his desire to teach:

> History came alive in that classroom. It was at that point that it clicked that I wanted to be a history teacher in a high school. From there on out, that’s what I geared myself for. I took every single social studies elective that was possible.

Just as Chris’s great uncle and counselor were intragroup members with whom he could have an attachment, this history teacher served the same purpose for Chris, except in this instance they were members of a different identity, Chris’s nascent teacher identity. After graduating high school Chris enrolled in a state university that he believed had a great teacher education program and majored in history education.

Chris attended a traditional preparation program where he would major in history and minor in education. The university that he attended had partnerships with neighboring school districts and also had a lab school on campus where many of the university faculty were also teachers. The program had many opportunities for
observations practical experiences and culminated with a twelve-week student teaching experience. As Chris progressed in his degree program he also progressed in his personal life having been in a long-term committed relationship with his then partner for three years by the time he entered his senior year at the university. Chris’s sexual identity and teacher identity started to intersect as he started thinking about life as a teacher after graduation.

I began worrying that when I went into the field for “real” that people might have issues accepting the fact that a gay man was teaching their son/daughter. I’m not sure where, when, or why I began to worry about it. I just know that one day it entered my consciousness.

Chris recalled being in classes that were dominated by what he called “guy’s guys” where he felt that he could not be open about who he was and did what he could to hide his secret life as a gay man.

They would talk about sports, their girlfriends, and the various other things that straight college guys talk about. I had a boyfriend and never once did I feel comfortable talking to them about him. I kept that part of my life a secret.

In developing his teacher identity while in these classes Chris was using buffering and code switching his gay identity in order to protect himself from perceived harm, disappointment, and bias (Cross, 2012). When Chris started his student teaching he continued in the same fashion, code-switching and buffering his way through the experience intent upon keeping his personal life secret.

I made it my mission to hide the fact that I was gay from the students, and the other staff that I was working with. I NEVER mentioned anything about my
personal life, my friends, or the partner that I had been living with for 3 years at that point. Nobody in the school was aware of the life that I lead outside of those four walls.

After a disciplinary issue with a student where Chris’s sexual identity was called into question, Chris decided to come out to his mentor teacher. It turns out that in hiding his identity from his mentor he missed an opportunity to open about his identity with her from the beginning of the experience. “She was supportive and actually was more upset that I hadn’t told her sooner. She was upset that I hadn’t trusted her enough to be honest with her.” Arguably then, when a person is focused more in hiding and protecting an identity he can miss vital opportunities to find allies and bridging relationships (Cross, 2012).

Just as Chris felt isolated within his teacher preparation program physically, he also notes that the curriculum and coursework was devoid of GLBT personalities and issues. Thinking back on his coursework he notes that generally when classes and professors discussed “diversity” or “multicultural” they were usually referring to diverse racial, ethnic, and classed populations.

I think that was one of the main things lacking most in teacher preparation programs, there really wasn’t any talk about dealing with diverse populations in that sense, that you would have gay and lesbian students in your classroom and how to identify with and help them through the process.

This is also something that Chris mentions in his responses in phase one, Chris is the only participant to cite the lack of professional development for the staff at his current school.

After graduating with his bachelor’s degree, Chris encountered a highly limited
and extremely competitive job market for social studies teachers. Undeterred, Chris began substitute teaching and found his second passion in teaching special education. After substituting at the same middle school several times, the principal approached Chris about filling a possible vacancy in the special education department. In order to fill the vacancy, Chris would have to go back for a master’s degree in special education. He enrolled in a regional university and was hired to teach middle school history and reading for students with disabilities. As he grew and developed confidence in his teaching Chris explains that he has grown more and more comfortable with his gay identity at school as well.

I am who I am and some people are going to be OK with that and some people won’t, that’s the way that life works. I think that I became much more comfortable with telling people that I work with after I had been in teaching for a couple of years.

Chris eventually started telling his colleagues about his partner and sharing stories from their life together, much like his colleagues would do about lives with their partners as well. When Chris moved from the middle school to the high school he placed a picture of his himself and his partner on his desk. “People would stop and look at it and ask me about it. I told them who he was and never thought twice about it.” This confidence and openness does not extend to Chris’s interactions with students, however.

The theme of appropriateness appears here when asked to think about why he doesn’t actively come out to students.

I have always been worried about what their reactions would be. I have worried about what their parents would think when they inevitably went home and told
them that their teacher was gay. I have worried about whether or not my administration would support me in coming out to my students. This feeling of worry and lack of support is recurring in many of the participant profiles and will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. In his weekly journals Chris told the story about a specific special education student with whom he had been considering coming out to as a means of connecting. The student is from a family where the parents were going through a divorce and Chris felt that, having recently gone through the end of his twelve-year relationship with his partner, he could gain common ground with the young lady who had confiding in Chris and sharing her hurt and troubles. In one of his weekly journals he expressed his trepidation and going back and forth with his decision to out himself or not:

As she cries to me about her family being torn apart, I sit there and think in my head “I know how that feels” but I have not been able to bring myself to tell her that.

Later in the same journal entry Chris decides that he will not share the details of his break up, namely that it was with his male partner, but will share that he too has gone through a troubling heartache and understands his student’s feelings. In the next journal entry Chris detailed the conversation and was taken aback by the student’s response:

I told her that I recently ended a 12-year relationship of my own and that is why I have been a little stressed out this year. It has had an impact on me and some days I bring that to work with me. After a moment the student looked at me and said, “I’m assuming this person was a him.” This took me completely off guard but I was so relieved that she said it. It allowed me to open up to her and really explain
things. She instantly put down her guard and was able to relate to what I have been going through as well.

As positive as the student’s reaction was, Chris was not ready for the reaction he received later that evening from the student’s mother. The student’s mother called him to thank him for opening up to her daughter and that she had the utmost respect for him as a teacher. Chris recalls the feeling “It was so refreshing to know that she didn’t’ think anything differently of me, and in some ways had gained more respect for me.” In this example Chris suddenly felt identity congruence (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) where prior to this he was riddled with trepidation around whether or not to be out with this student. Although this episode is with one student, the interaction with this one student is itself its own context and much can be gleaned from the way in which Chris felt knowing that his gay identity and his identity as a teacher were stronger when used together.

**Participant Profile: Peter Ryan**

**Background.** Peter Ryan is currently an academic dean for a charter elementary school in the Western United States. Peter is 26 years old and is the youngest in his family, having an older brother and sister. Peter’s father passed away four years ago. Peter currently lives with his partner and the two of them have been together for five years. Unlike Chris in the previous case, Peter’s childhood was not as peaceful. Peter was bullied throughout elementary and middle school.

Yeah, when I first moved, I got teased a lot because I was the new kid and was teased a lot about my accent, being from New York, and the way I spoke. As I got older, I got teased by the boys because I was terrible at sports and didn't like
sports, I didn’t do what all the other boys were doing. I was called a sissy and never felt like I fit in except for a small group of friends that I had.

The bullying turned violent in middle school where Peter says he was assaulted many times for no apparent reason, he recalls his father having to constantly go into the school to conference with school officials.

**Peter’s gay realization and coming out.** Peter began having homosexual feelings toward the end of middle school:

I pretty quickly associated the feelings with ‘being gay’—In middle school kids talked about “gay” teachers all the time, mostly to poke fun at them. Beyond the fact that being gay meant boys liking other boys, and that kids made fun of people who were gay, I didn’t understand much more about homosexuality the time.

Already being the target of much of bullying growing up, Peter knew that these feelings he was having about boys would only complicate the situation even more if he disclosed them. So he remained silent throughout middle school and well into high school.

In the tenth grade Peter began coming out to his friends. He started coming out to his casual friends, and not his closest friends, explaining, “I didn’t want to tarnish my closest relationships – the ones that meant the most.” Peter decided to come out to one of his best friends after she came out as lesbian to him. Peter was pleased with her reaction but that pleasure was only short lived because when his friend’s mother found out her daughter was lesbian and that her friend (Peter) was gay they were quickly forbidden from speaking to one another. However fleeting the time was where Peter was out to his best friend, he was still able to find attachment with another member of his group identity
(Cross, 2012). Losing that friendship, however, empowered Peter to come out to more of his friends:

I had just found out what it was like to lose a friendship over my sexual identity. It could have made me more fearful of it occurring again in the future, but it had the opposite effect. If I could go through it once and still feel strong – emotionally unbroken – then surely I could handle telling more people.

The empowerment Peter felt as a result of the strength he gained in this example can be viewed as a type of emotional buffering (Cross, 2012) where he learned the possible feelings of rejection and loss but persevered because the feelings of openness and authenticity were stronger. Peter continued coming out to his friends, eventually everyone (except his family) knew Peter was gay “For the first time, I felt like I could truly be *me*. It was an incredibly liberating experience.”

Coming out to his family was more difficult for Peter, “even when they made it easy.” When Peter was in the tenth grade, his older brother had found some of Peter’s adult materials saved on the family computer one afternoon and confronted him:

‘I found some pictures of men on the computer. Are you gay?’ I remember my heart just about pounding out of my chest and trying to play it off like I had no clue what he was talking about. He wouldn’t let off though, ‘so then you must be bi?’ I eventually snapped at him, flat out denying I was gay and telling him never to bring it up again. So he didn’t. We didn’t talk about it again for 5 years, when I was ready to talk about it.

Five years later, Peter was a senior in his bachelor’s program finding himself alone after his boyfriend of three years unexpectedly ended their relationship.
Emotionally distraught and depressed, Peter described his drives to work and school as full of tears and his time at home as time he spent alone in his room, not speaking with anyone. Like Chris in the case before, Peter’s mother sensed something was wrong with her son and decided to reach out to him.

I told her the truth. That I was in a relationship for 3 years that just ended and that the only reason I didn’t tell her was because I was gay. She hugged me and told me that relationships are hard – not even mentioning the fact that I was gay. She asked me what happened and about who it was with. She was so remarkably supportive.

Peter and his mother had several further conversations about his sexual identity and his mother confessed that she had “figured it out” much earlier. Peter came out to his brother a few days after coming out to his mother. “Since then my brother has become one of my closest family members. Even though my mom has been super supportive, it’s my brother who I feel like I can talk most openly to.” Peter and his mother both decided to keep the information from Peter’s father because they were unsure of his reaction. Unfortunately, Peter’s father passed away shortly thereafter and he died never knowing. Peter reconciles these feelings by recalling what his father always told him. “I think my father may have had a hard time coming to terms with a having a gay son, but he always claimed his love was unconditional – and that was all I ever needed to hear.” Peter’s mother and brother are vital bridges (Cross, 2012) in his life, they served to help validate Peter’s identity as a gay man and to allow his identity to fully develop.

**Becoming a teacher.** Peter recalls wanting to be a teacher early in his life, even shadowing his fifth grade teacher one year for career day. Unfortunately having grown up
on the verge of poverty, Peter knew first hand the importance of a career that was financially rewarding. In high school Peter joined the speech and debate and mock trial teams for his high school and found great success in those endeavors. These experiences led Peter to a career trajectory aimed at law school and a career as an attorney. Peter majored in political science at the state university he attended and was an excellent student. Peter also worked as a legal clerk in the district attorney’s office, it was working there that Peter began to see the negative side of the legal profession:

    Working for the DA’s office was a disenchancing experience for someone who has grown up with Hollywood’s glorification of the legal world. I observed lawyers spending countless hours with deskwork – writing briefs, etc. It wasn’t the type of work I had initially imagined.

    Peter was also an active member of the College Democrats at his university. He recalls a trip he took with the group to Washington D.C. to learn about access to higher education and the barriers that existed for students of low income families—especially racial minorities.

    We spent that trip in DC lobbying congressmen and senators from [our state’s] delegation to vote on some key pieces of legislation to increase student aid funding. Most of the bills didn’t pass – which could have been disheartening, but I think truly lit a spark.

During a meeting of at his college Democrats chapter, a representative from Teach for America (TFA) spoke and Peter became interested in the organization, researching the mission and goals and finding his beliefs and values aligned greatly with the organization’s core values. Eventually Peter applied and was accepted to the TFA Corps.
Peter was assigned to work in a new network of charter schools whose explicit mission was to close the achievement gap by creating the largest network of high performing schools serving low-income students in the country. Prior to the beginning of his first school year as a TFA teacher, he completed the basic training program through TFA which is an intensive month long program where teachers are provided basic pedagogy, classroom simulation, curriculum development, and planning; TFA trainees would also spend time observing teachers in the field. For Peter, teaching felt natural “After just a couple weeks I was doing very well and was really successful at doing it.” Even though he reports being quite successful in his training and first year teaching, Peter admits, “my preparation was very minimal. I had very little support or coaching and was rushed out.”

Whereas Chris had the ability to negotiate his teacher identity through his teacher education program, Peter found himself negotiating his teacher identity and learning how to teach simultaneously. In this instance, creating attachment-bonds (Cross, 2012) with fellow teachers is imperative as they serve as prototypes of behavior and validation of Peter as a professional. “I didn't get that [referring to specific teaching strategies and skills] in my training but got it from the support of other teachers.”

When asked about his preparation and being a gay male Peter described the “affinity groups” that TFA had established for members in different groups—racial, religious, and GLBT—which were intended to serve as a space for people to meet and discuss questions and concerns.

I went to a couple [affinity group meetings], and there was nobody leading them or facilitating them, so we all had all these questions. We wanted someone who
had been in a classroom and had been through all of this, to learn about cultural norms, and to share in our concerns, but there was nobody to share their experience or tell us what it was like to be a gay teacher.

Peter raised his concerns regarding the lack of structure in the affinity groups to a TFA representative and was given a book to read that Peter found not useful. Peter found himself alone and full of questions regarding GLBT issues at school and in dealing with GLBT students and bullying. In this example, Peter is reacting to identity incongruence (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) because he is unable to find space in the context where his identity as a gay man is acknowledged or valued.

Another area where Peter is unable to find identity congruence is in his dealings with families. The charter network that employs Peter requires teachers to conduct home visits with families in order to help bridge the home and school divide. Peter spent his time building relationships based entirely around the student saying, “They are one thing the family and I both had in common.” Peter explained that those “relationships always felt more like business partnerships than authentic bonds or connections.” Whereas other teachers were able to create close bonds with families, Peter put up a wall. He was constantly worried about what would happen if parents found out he was gay. “Would they pull their child out of the school? Would they get other parents to? In someone ways, I felt like my sexuality was a liability for the school.” In this example, the premise that Peter’s gay identity would be perceived as inappropriate also comes into play. Because of this fear of what would happen if parents found out, Peter became incredibly cautious about how to interact with students when issues around homosexuality arose.
Participant Profile: JD O’Malley

Background. JD O’Malley is currently secondary special education teacher in a high school in the Southwestern United States. JD is 28 years old and is the older of two sons in his family; his parents are still married to one another. JD currently lives with his partner and the two of them have been together for three years. JD describes his childhood and upbringing as typical, having grown up in the same city in which he currently resides and works. As a child JD attended very conservative Christian church where he was involved in the church youth group, even holding leadership positions within the group. In school JD recalls being highly involved in after school activities and organizations.

JD’s gay realization and coming out. JD’s story begins much like the previous two cases, being a child who felt different and not knowing necessarily why.

I think that on some level, I have always known that I was gay, but for a very long time I never knew what to call it. I didn’t know what it was, I didn’t know what it meant, and probably never even knew what it was that I was afraid of. What I did know was that I was afraid to be different. I was afraid of rejection, I was afraid of being alone, and I was afraid that I would lose everything, and everyone that I loved and held dear, but mostly I was afraid of losing control.

More than any other participant JD emphasized the need to be in control of his surroundings, emotions, and interactions. This comes into focus more as he continued to reflect on his coming out journey. JD first started to understand his feelings of difference in terms of his sexual awakening in the sixth grade, but he did not name these feelings as “gay” until he was 19 years old and in college. Being in college and working brought
with it financial independence, this independence is what JD cites as his breakthrough to start exploring his sexual identity:

When I had more independence financially and being able to go different places and not worry about, I was always a good kid. I never snuck out or broke curfew, but once I gained financial independence, and could go places without people finding out was probably the key. Nobody knew I was going to bars, nobody knew I was going to places to explore physical sexuality. So at that point I started figuring out what homosexuality was and what it meant for me.

Like Peter in the case prior, at first JD began living a gay life outside of his life with his family. JD was outed to his mother by an ex-boyfriend, and her initial reaction was not supportive, in fact her initial reaction was filled with anger and disappointment:

When my mother confronted me, I did not know what to say. I tried to fight and stand up for myself, but I did not have the strength or knowledge to do so. She was brutal. Saying that she didn’t know if my father would love me anymore, asking how I could do this to her, and why I was punishing her. Telling me that I would die of AIDS, alone and angry at the world. Everything that I ever feared came true, I lost control of everything.

A few months later JD and his mother reconciled, but he described that their relationship was not the same. Although the relationship with his mother was changed, the experience empowered JD, giving him the strength to start figuring out who he was and what that meant. JD started going out and meeting new people, became involved with volunteer work in the local gay and lesbian center, and started learning that he had a heritage and a family outside of his own family within the gay community. JD’s experience with his
mother, although negative, allowed him to find attachment-bonds with others who shared his identity because he was unable to bridge the relationship with his mother (Cross, 2012).

JD also did not have control over how his father learned that he was gay. While his parents were out to dinner one evening, JD’s former girlfriend happened to be their waitress. At one point in the meal the waitress had asked JD’s parents about an event that he had planned on his university campus of several weeks earlier. JD’s father was confused until she clarified “the special conference for gay kids.” JD’s father had figured out that his son was gay and walked out of the restaurant and walked home. JD recalls making a decision that he was done hiding his identity from his father, so he anticipated his father’s arrival at home (JD was living at home while finishing his degree).

I went in the living room, poured a couple shots of whiskey, and waited. When he got home I was waiting and gave him a choice (without any words). I was ready to fight, or we could share a drink and talk. I didn’t know how it would go. My mother’s words still rang in my head from several years earlier. But I stood firm. When he came in the door, I was ready. He looked at me, and he looked at the shots I placed on the table. He chose the shot. From there we were able to really talk for the first time in years.

JD cites this time as a turning point in his relationship with his parents. His parents are supportive and have taken JD’s partner as part of their family. JD explained that “maybe to gain control, I had to lose it.”
Becoming a teacher. JD never wanted to be a teacher while he was growing up; rather JD had childhood aspirations of being in law enforcement. Unfortunately those aspirations were dashed when he injured himself during a martial arts competition. Occasionally, our personal goals for ourselves need to be reevaluated, and that is what I had to do. After a brief stint as a personal security escort, I needed to involve myself in something that actually made a difference. I needed to change the future. JD started substitute teaching and found that he was extremely comfortable working with students and found himself being offered long-term substitute positions at various schools for two years. JD felt most at home working with secondary students with special needs, so he enrolled in a district alternate route to licensure (ARL) program that would fast track him into a full teaching license and a master’s degree in special education. JD had already had his bachelor’s degrees in criminal justice and psychology and found that background—especially his psychology degree—very helpful. Like Peter, JD did not go through a traditional teacher preparation program, rather he was made to have a “trial by fire more than courses through the school district and [university]. That challenge actually taught me how to do the actual profession.” Reflecting on the coursework that he had to take in his ARL program JD echoes Chris in that the course and content where GLBT issues were brought up or could have been brought up were few and far between. “I think that the gay thing was slid over when we did the understanding of cultural acceptance, multicultural education stuff, which of course, was just half a day of half a class.”
Contrary to every other participant in this study, JD is open about his sexual identity at school and has been since he started substitute teaching. “I don’t ‘skirt’ around the issue, I refer to my partner with proper pronouns and have a picture of the two of us on my desk.” JD credits his openness about his sexual identity when he talks about his successes in teaching and finding leadership opportunities in the school district.

I do feel that my openness about being a gay man has made me stand out more than if I was not. “I’m special.” I was unique and memorable. Because I was different, I think that it opened up doors because more attention was paid to me. JD’s gay identity is extremely connected to his teacher identity. “I feel as though I have taken on an extra mantel of responsibility due to my sexual orientation,” he explains as he lists all of the GLBTQ related activities, clubs, organizations, and trainings in which he is involved.

I’m an advisor for the gay-straight alliance, I’m on the board of GLSEN, Gay-Straight-Lesbian Educational Network, I do diversity and professional developments with staff on gay and lesbian youths, and anti-bullying and how to create a safe space in the classrooms.

In this example, JD’s aforementioned need for “control” is evidenced through his ambition and wanting to effectuate change in his educational context in regards to the GLBTQ student experience in his district.

**Participant Profile: Dylan Christopherson**

**Background.** Dylan Christopherson is currently an instructional coach at an at-risk elementary school in a large urban area in the Southwestern United States, where he provides academic support, professional development, and coaching for teachers in
science and mathematics. Prior to being in this position he spent several years teaching kindergarten and first grade in the same school district. Dylan was born in the Upper Midwestern United States just outside of a major metropolitan area. He has one younger sister and both of his parents are still married to one another. Growing up, Dylan describes his family as “fairly typical conservative, fairly religious I’d say we were Catholic, but we were more like just Easter and Christmas Catholics.” Dylan was enrolled in gifted and talented education (GATE) classes throughout his elementary years and was involved in soccer.

When it came to soccer, I was a miserable failure. I played goalie, mostly because I was chubby and asthmatic. I couldn’t be trusted to handle the responsibility of running up and down the field. Despite my lack of athletic prowess, I enjoyed playing soccer because it gave me an excuse to be around other kids outside of school.

As Dylan entered junior high school he became involved in band and was enrolled in accelerated classes. “I found myself surrounded by other smart kids for most of my day.” Having found his niche within the junior high school society, Dylan then discovered theater and found himself with a large role in the fall play in seventh grade. Dylan believes, these experiences coupled with his lack of athleticism and interest in sports gave way to a considerable amount of bulling and taunting in junior and senior high school. “Apparently, involvement in a play and showing a lack of skills with power tools qualified someone to be a ‘faggot.’” Dylan describes the remainder of his high school experience as typical except when he would go to his physical education classes.
In those classes he was no longer surrounded by his fellow “accelerated” students and was forced to comingle with other students.

The homophobic slurs were what I dreaded, they were painful. I found myself wondering if these kids somehow knew more than I did and that in the end I was doomed to be gay. I didn’t know much about being gay at this point in my life, but I knew enough to be aware that it was viewed as undesirable.

**Dylan’s gay realization and coming out.** Of the four participants in phase two, Dylan is the person who most recently came out to his family, waiting until he was 27 years old to tell them. However, like the other three participants Dylan has always had a sense that he was different but not knowing what exactly to label those feelings. Dylan recalls a conversation he had with his sister (whom he described as a tomboy) when he was 7 years old:

She was like, “I’m a tomboy- its a word for a girl that’s more like a boy.” I wondered what the word for a boy who was more like a girl, because that’s how I was identifying, maybe, at that point in time.

Despite having these feelings and consciously thinking about and considering them as possibilities that he may be gay, Dylan went about his school age years living a heterosexual lifestyle, even having a girlfriend during his senior year of high school:

On some level this was a relief to myself. The rare, but powerful, taunts of “faggot” and “queer” could not possibly be correct. I found a member of the opposite sex to be with.

Dylan ended his relationship with his girlfriend before moving to the rural Great Plains to attend a small Christian college where he immersed himself in the college
culture and ministry. “I attended bible study, avoided alcohol, and tried to immerse myself in what my fellow faithful freshmen were doing.” After his freshman year, Dylan joined the college drum corps and credits that experience as being the first time he was around other gay people, although he had still not come out. By this time he had accepted that he was gay and began seeking attachment-bonding (Cross, 2012) experiences with those in his drum corps, “this laid the foundation for my support system as I started coming out a few years later.” Dylan also became close friends with a gay German exchange student during his sophomore year of college who also served as someone whom Dylan could have an attachment-bonding relationship with providing a positive role model for Dylan, answering questions, and exploring physical sexuality.

After graduating college, moving home to his parents house, and starting his teaching career in the suburban area where he grew up, Dylan chose to continue living in the closet with is family while living a secret gay life outside of his family home. His trepidations around coming out revolved around losing the relationships with his family at a time when he was still so dependent upon his parents for support—financially and emotionally. When job prospects became bleak in his hometown, Dylan applied for and was hired to teach in the large urban school district in the Southwestern United states where he is now.

In his mind, moving to the new city was his chance to be “out and proud” without having to worry about losing the support of his family.

I knew I was finally free of dependence from my parents and began coming out to select friends, namely my drum corps friends and my German exchange student companion from college.
Unfortunately, Dylan’s plan to be out upon arrival in his new home was thwarted by a jarring experience during his first week as a kindergarten teacher, when a parent was uncomfortable having her child with a male teacher and had the child removed from Dylan’s class. This event caused Dylan to reassess his decision:

I decided that being a gay, male teacher would be even more problematic. Also, I found myself without any sort of local support system in [the new town] My coming out went on hold.

The lack of a support system underscores the value of attachment-bonding (Cross, 2012) in a person’s gay identity development. Having positive in-group role models change a person’s context, they allow a person to interact with and enact identity differently. Had Dylan had his support system in place in his new environment perhaps his reaction to this situation would have changed.

After a three years of living in secret at work and with his family, Dylan was finally ready to come out. Dylan was dating someone at the time and his boyfriend wanted to meet Dylan’s friends, this served as the precipice for what Dylan referred to as the “process of finally being out.” As Dylan began coming out to friends and coworkers he was relieved and empowered to learn that he was not alone:

I discovered that two of the male teachers assigned to my school were also gay and highly respected. I knew that being gay and being a teacher were no longer incompatible.

The year culminated with Dylan returning home for Christmas and coming out to his family without incident.
**Becoming a teacher.** Dylan had known he wanted to be a teacher since he was in high school, though originally his plan was to be come a high school band director. When Dylan enrolled in his college he was a music education major but toward the end of his freshman year he was counseled to seek a new major because he had not passed his piano class, a requisite for continuation in the major. That same year Dylan was caught with alcohol in his dorm room and was punished through the student judicial board for violating the dry campus rules. His punishment was to complete 15 hours of community service at a local elementary school.

I worked at the local Lutheran elementary school alongside two teachers, one of whom taught kindergarten. I saw what she did and thought that I was totally capable of it, so I declared an elementary education major.

As was described earlier, Dylan graduated and began his teaching career in his hometown and was eventually hired in his current school district. When asked how his gay identity has impacted his teaching Dylan admits

I do not know what has been impacted most in teaching by me being a gay man. I think that is because I have largely kept my “gay” self separate from my “teaching” self.

To a certain extent, Dylan is a discrepant case in that the findings and themes that are present in the other three cases tend not to be present in examining Dylan’s experiences. This discrepancy was also evident in reviewing Dylan’s weekly journaling activities especially when compared with the other participants. While Chris, Peter, and JD were quick to discuss issues of gay identity in their teaching experience, Dylan did not find many avenues to discuss gay identity or issues, his journals were relatively short and
superficial. Taken in combination with Dylan’s responses in phase one where he was one of the participants with scores in acceptance, pride, and synthesis (Cass, 1979) it is possible that while Dylan is “out” and developed in his gay identity he is still uncomfortable with aspects of that identity, thus leading to a resistance to integrate both his gay identity and his teacher identity as seen in the previous three cases.

**Cross Case Analysis**

Phase two included in depth analysis of four cases. In completing the analysis and providing initial profiles of each participant I sought to identify overarching themes that presented unique questions and experiences for all of the participants. The question of whether the participants felt identity-congruence (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) and relational justice (Poole, 2008) guided the analysis of the data. From this perspective the following themes were identified and will be described in more detail in the sections to follow. First, a persistent theme in all of the data was revolves around the need for teacher preparation and professional development regarding GLBTQ issues and being a GLBTQ teacher. Participants, with various teacher preparation backgrounds, shared a concern that they and their colleagues were not prepared to deal with issues that are all too common today in schools. Second, the level of support perceived by administration by the participants was something that fluctuated from instance to instance and between participants. This perception/nonperception of support directly impacts motivation and enactment of identity. Finally, when the participants are empowered, their activism manifests in the interruption of heteronormative structures. The data point to instances where participants were agents of change, activists even, in creating a relationally just
school environment while others had aspirations of activism but were held back because they lacked identity congruence in their contexts.

**The Importance of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development**

Chris and Dylan both attended traditional teacher preparation programs with four-year degrees and field experiences. JD went through an ARL credentialing program through his school district that included a master’s program in special education with field experiences and coursework. Peter was a member of TFA and also went through an ARL credentialing program that included a master’s program in elementary education with field experiences and coursework. While many in the field view two distinct paths to teaching—traditional or ARL—what often happens is that universities and colleges of education often service students in both tracks. Although all four participants consider themselves effective teachers, they acknowledge a lack of preparation in learning to deal with issues regarding GLBTQ inclusive curriculum and students. Dylan recalls taking a diversity course in his teacher education program.

> Here I went to college with a lot of kids from farm country and placed not that diverse, and mostly the reading material dealt more with racial [diversity]. We read books on equalities of races and rich vs. poor equality, but that was where they focused on diversity.

When asked about whether any mention of GLBTQ students or issues happened in that class Dylan quipped, “no, never.” Chris identified the same concerns earlier when he described his teacher preparation and he also brought up the lack of professional development in his school regarding these issues.
I know I’ve dealt with, especially in high school, students who are struggling with their sexuality. I’ve seen them struggle... I feel like as a staff, if all of us had gone through some sort of multicultural training program or if had been offered at the school, that we would have been better equipped to help this particular student to deal with that.

Recurring in this analysis is the notion of appropriateness and not knowing how to handle situations as they arise in the classroom because of a fear of being inappropriate. I asked each participant how he would react if a student came out to him as gay and evident in all but JD’s responses was a fear of being inappropriate or being seen as a pedophile if the teacher disclosed his identity in helping the student cope.

I think my initial reaction would be probably to freak out and not want to address it. I would really want to be supportive, but I feel I would need to talk to someone about it first. I really fear this idea that gay men are pedophiles and try to turn children gay, and that idea of controversy and trouble and could get into engaging that kind of dialogue with that student, I think would probably freak me out enough to not want to talk to that child, but at the same time I want to be role model to students and help them and give them someone to talk to. (Peter)

Whereas Peter’s fear was in being perceived as a pedophile, Chris’s grounded his fear in paranoia that students wanted to publically embarrass him:

A part of me is almost, is irrational, but there’s a fear that, what if they're doing it on purpose to see if I come out, but they're not really gay. And there’s a part of me that feels that fear.
There appears to be a general lack of understanding of what a teacher can say and do to provide support for students, something that both Chris and Peter alluded to being a topic they could envision professional development and training to help combat for all teachers.

Within this theme the participants feel the terms “diversity” and “multicultural” to need to become more inclusive of GLBTQ identities. All of the participants reported a lack of attention to these identities in their preparation stories and when these identities were given attention it was in a superficial and brief manner. Nieto and Bode (2012) offer the following definition of culture that is more inclusive: “the values, traditions, worldview, and social and political relationships created, shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, religion or other shared identity” (p. 158). These data indicated that for the gay teachers in this study, their social history and culture is not one that is valued and included in the preparation of teachers.

Additionally, I would be remiss if I did not address Peter’s mention of the fear of being labeled a pedophile. This is a persistent stigma that is perpetuated by anti-GLBTQ activists and right-wing sycophants. This same idea was promulgated in the flurry of attention surrounding the Boy Scouts of America’s recent controversy and subsequent policy change allowing scouts to identify as gay. The notion that a gay man is more likely or less likely than a straight counterpart to be a pedophile is patently offensive and not true.
The Perception of Support in School

Chris described a time when he had to ask for approval from his principal to take a few days off to care for his partner after his back surgery. He described his anxiety around the issue because he knew that he would have to come out to his principal in the process and until that point he had not been very out at school.

I waited for a her reaction and all she said was “ok, I hope all goes well for him. He seems really young to have back surgery”. I remember a wave or relief washing over me when she said the word “he”… Each year since then I have become more open about who I am.

This simple act on the part of Chris’s principal created a context of identity congruence for Chris at that moment and empowered him to continue being open with the rest of the staff at his school. The perception that “he/she thinks it’s ok that I’m gay” is a very powerful one and one that is evident in the data from all of the participants. JD had a perception of support from his administration, also, and credits his principal’s support with his ability to thrive as an openly gay teacher and participate in creating and delivering GLBTQ focused professional development.

Having my principal understand that I’ll be gone to do the professional developments, and understanding how important that it is to me, and supporting me by giving me freedom, really has opened a lot of opportunities.

Peter also experienced a similar perception of support with his principal. He described his concerns about creating an environment in his school that would be safe for elementary aged children to understand and feel safe regarding GLBTQ issues and identities.
recalling his own elementary school experience and reflecting on the lack of role models and resources available to him.

I am very open with my principal about my sexuality and he is very supportive of LGBT rights (gay marriage, etc.) and making his LGBT staff feel comfortable. I think I need to seek his guidance more on these issues and get a sense of how he wants to address situations like this as a school. But if he feels uncomfortable addressing LGBT issues for similar reasons that I may feel, I’m not quite sure I’d be comfortable enough to push back.

In this instance Peter was able to demonstrate the value he has in the positive relationship with his principal in direct relationship to his gay identity but was also treading cautiously so as not to over step the perceived bounds of support. When teachers perceive levels of administrative support they are also feeling identity congruence (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) and relational justice (Poole, 2008) within their school context.

The converse perception, “he/she doesn’t think it’s ok that I’m gay,” is also evident in the data and can be even more powerful and detrimental in the process of interrupting heteronormativity because it inhibits the enactment of a gay identity in the teaching context. This perception of no support is evident in the previous section where Peter and Chris both held fears regarding how they would react to a student coming out to them—fear of being labeled a pedophile, fear of public humiliation—these fears can be attributed to a feeling of not knowing who will “back me up” in such a scenario. Peter summed up his anxieties well by explaining that his needs as a gay teacher might be pushed aside to please parents who may not always be in the right.
What gets tricky is issues with students that come up, and how comfortable people are dealing with that. I don't know about parents at our school. That’s where issues come up. We have a big urge to please parents because they can pluck their students out at any time.

In these instances the powerful necessity for allies [or bridging, (Cross, 2012)] becomes magnified. In order for identity congruence (Oyserman & Destin (2010) and relational justice (Poole, 2008) to be strong gay teachers in this study needed to perceive and feel support from school leadership. This perception of support led to increased empowerment and enactment of gay identity within the teaching context.

**Activist Teachers Interrupting Heteronormativity and Creating Justice**

Sachs (2003; 2005) describes an “activist identity” that developed in response to increasing standardization of education and managerialism; this identity is one that is based in democratic principles, is negotiated by the teacher collaboratively, is socially critical, and is future-oriented and strategic. Situating the activist identity in a foundation of democratic schools, Sachs (2003) argues that activist teachers are concerned with the reduction or elimination of “exploitation, inequality, and oppression” (p.13). Accordingly, the development of such an identity is deeply rooted in principals of equity and social justices, similar to the underpinnings of this research and conceptual framework. This kind of teaching requires engagement with issues as they relate directly and indirectly to education. Activist teaching as it is being used here means standing up for what Fullan (1993) describes as the moral purpose of teaching. Activist teaching also requires that others be involved individually or collectively as change agents (Sachs, 2003; 2005). Queer scholars have also reflected on the activist teacher. Blackburn, Clark, Kenney, and
Smith (2010) detail their efforts in describing a teacher inquiry group focused on social change that sought to help a group of queer teachers navigate inequitable power dynamics through enacting social change. Kumashiro (2002) explains that activism focuses on “disclosure and the one on one interaction with [the context], they focus on action and intervention in the community, classroom, or situation” (p.15).

In analyzing these data, I have encountered this theme of activism, like that described above, in two of the participants in this study. Although only two participants explicitly exhibited this theme in their data, the stories they shared and the value of what was gleaned is too vital not to include as a major theme of this work. As I will discuss in the final chapter, this kind of activist teaching is necessary in interrupting heteronormativity. At varying levels when a gay teacher enacts his gay identity within the teaching context he is taking a step toward interrupting heteronormativity. Whether the teacher is enacting his identity consciously or subconsciously, overtly or covertly, the enactment is an embodiment of action toward change.

During the course of his participation in this study, Peter received news that his half-sister in New England had leukemia. Naturally this news was extremely upsetting for Peter and he chose to write about it in his journal entries that week. He shared his frustration that he was banned from donating blood and bone marrow to try to help his sister because he is gay.

I am pretty floored/out right offended that rules like this still apply for the donation of blood and that outrage is amplified when I think of that fact that this may prevent me from saving my sister’s life.
As a reader it was astonishing to read the journal entry as Peter funneled his frustration and anguish back to his role as an educator:

In joining the field of education I did so not merely to teach young elementary students how to borrow and carry in second grade math, or improve their writing by adding descriptive details – I joined this field to make a difference. I know I can’t make a difference in this regard if I let my own fears around my sexuality drive my actions (or lack there of). We can’t beat fear, if we ourselves are afraid.

With that he indicated a pause in his journaling and composed an email to his principal where he asked to spend some time in their next one-to-one meeting to discuss how “we as school leaders and teachers, should be approaching LGBT issues with our students and our community.” Peter ended that journal entry with the following statement: “I still felt nervous as I was hitting send – but I knew I had to, and am glad I did.” Peter and his principal were able to have a very detailed and worthwhile conversation that has resulted in changed perceptions by the principal and with Peter being charged to work with other members of the staff to begin thinking about and planning ways to implement GLBTQ resources and issues into the school’s curriculum. Reflecting on the conversation:

Overall, the conversation showed me just how reluctant people are to this [topic], even people who themselves are personally accepting of homosexuality. But I also learned – from my principal’s shifting view during the conversation – that people can be moved to take action. That people are often times just frozen by fear of the unknown or of what “will happen.” Just like before I was nervous to talk to my principal, my principal had been was nervous to address this issue with
the school community...I felt compelled to take action, and by talking to my principal, he felt more compelled to taking action.

JD describes himself as an activist and as someone who does activist work. The fact that he is actively out to staff and students already makes his work as a teacher activist work that interrupts heteronormativity. Throughout his weekly journals JD provided scenarios where he would detail interactions with students that including his gay identity as a major crux of conversation or as a teaching opportunity. As described earlier, JD believes that he has taken on an extra level of responsibility because of his sexual identity and his commitment to social justice.

[I] Lead youth leadership events, coordinate the Gay-Straight Alliances and PRIDE Clubs in town, distribute information, new materials and curriculum... I am not sure why I feel so strongly about this issue, but I do, and I feel as though I need to keep everyone else involved and on task with it.

Another area where JD feels compelled to act is in his involvement with the equity and diversity department in his school district. He is especially proud of the work he does providing professional development for teachers and administrators across the school district specifically focused on GLBTQ students and issues.

But my crowning achievement (so far) has been the program “Understanding and Supporting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth.” I designed this course to introduce people to basic terms beyond just the “GLBT” such as Gender and Gender Identity, this presentation explores social issues that are present in society due to a lack of understanding, as well a specific steps and ideals that can
put in place to support students through the coming out process and their educational career.

What is evidenced in both of these particular cases—Peter’s meeting with his principal and JD’s work outside of the classroom—is a conscious and deliberate action to interrupt heteronormativity on the part of the participants. By being an activist teacher, teachers are enacting their gay identity within the teaching context and are interrupting the heteronormative structures within their schools.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four detailed the results of this multiple case study of gay teacher identity. In phase one eight participants completed the online survey which included the consenting process, the GIQ (Brady & Busse, 1994) that placed participants along the HIF (Cass, 1979), and answered open-ended questions regarding their teaching preparation and context. From phase one two major themes were identified. First, the participants had varying conceptions and enactments of being “out” and second the participants indicated dissonance and variety in terms of “is ‘out’ appropriate?”

In phase two, four individuals were profiled—Chris, Peter, JD, and Dylan—explaining their childhood background, their gay realization and coming out, and how they came into the teaching world. Cross’s (2012) METM was used to analyze each case to understand their negotiation and enactment of gay identity. Oyserman and Destin’s (2010) theory of IBM and Poole’s (2008) notion of relational justice helped to identify three pervasive themes during the cross case analysis: teacher preparation and professional development, perception/nonperception of administrative support, and
activist teaching. These themes were discussed and analyzed using in terms of their impact in interrupting heteronormativity.

Chapter Five will provide a discussion of the implications of this research grounding a set of recommendations in terms of the teachers, administration, and teacher education. Additional areas for new research will also be explored.
Chapter Five: Discussion, Recommendations, Implications, and Conclusion

**Introduction**

The previous chapter reported the results and findings of this study of gay teacher identity. Using a multiple case study design, in concert with the conceptual framework and in response to the research questions both phases of the study were reported. In phase one, in which eight participants completed an online instrument, two major themes emerged. The first theme involved the definition and enactment of being “out” at school—whether to be out to students, staff, or to both. The second theme discussed the appropriateness of being out at school.

In phase two of this study, four individuals were profiled—Chris, Peter, JD, and Dylan. The participants’ childhood backgrounds, gay realizations, coming out stories, and career trajectories were all analyzed. Cross’s (2012) METM was used to analyze each case to understand their negotiation and enactment of gay identity. Oyserman and Destin’s (2010) theory of IBM and Poole’s (2008) notion of relational justice helped to identify three pervasive themes during the cross case analysis: teacher preparation and professional development, perception/nonperception of administrative support, and activist teaching. These themes were discussed and analyzed using in terms of their impact in interrupting heteronormativity.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, a discussion of the findings will be situated in terms of the conceptual framework presented in chapter one. The conceptual framework will be revisited in light of the emergent themes and revisited and revised. Second, using the revised conceptual framework, a series or recommendations for teachers, school leadership, and teacher education will be presented. And finally, avenues
for further research will be explored. This chapter will conclude with personal reflections and acknowledgements.

**Review of Research Questions**

The overarching research question guiding this inquiry was “does the enactment of gay teacher identity interrupt heteronormativity in schools? Secondarily, this inquiry focused on the following two questions: a) how do gay teachers negotiate gay teacher identity in schools? and b) how do school contexts impact gay teachers' perceptions of identity-based motivation and relational justice?

**Discussion**

In completing the GIQ, all of the participants in this study affirmed what Brady and Busse (1994) identified regarding the HIF (Cass, 1979) model, that those who complete the questionnaire are either in the first three stages (none of these participants were) or they are in the latter three stages. This finding is to be expected because of the self-select nature of this study, the teachers who participated all had to first identify as gay teachers themselves. This finding impacts the conceptual framework in that it removes the emphasis from the staged development to an emphasis on whether or not the gay teacher is out at school to staff and students and to which degree. Another impact the findings have on the conceptual framework comes from the analysis of the impact a teacher’s context had on the enactment of identity. In conducting this research, the METM became the primary means of understanding specific enactments of gay identity while the understanding of the social construction (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001) of this identity becomes an assumed part of the process. Figure 2 presents the revised conceptual framework, which I call *The Gay Teacher Identity Model for Interrupting*
Heteronormativity. Each quadrant has been labeled to include what I deduce as possible conditions a teacher may find himself in given the positioning on each axis.

**Figure 2: The Gay Teacher Identity Model for Interrupting Heteronormativity**

In the *ideal quadrant*, the gay teacher is able to negotiate and enact gay teacher identity with full actualization because he is out/comes out to students and staff and enacts in a relationally just context. In this instance, the context and the teacher share identity congruence. The *emergent quadrant* is distinguished from the ideal because the gay teacher is not at a point where he is confident enough to be out/come out to students but does come out in varying degrees to staff, the school context in this quadrant is one that is would be supportive and relationally just—providing the context to help the teacher move from emergent to ideal. In the *stigmatized quadrant*, the gay teacher is has a fully actualized gay identity and enacts a gay teacher identity to interrupt heteronormativity in spite of the context being unjust and incongruent. In this instance, the teacher is enacting identity at great risk of repercussion and liability. Finally, the
negative quadrant, has the same context that is unjust and incongruent and also the teacher does not have a fully actualized gay identity and does not have the confidence to come out at all or to only trusted coworkers. Moreover, just as the context impacts the negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity, the negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity can impact (and change) the context. For example, through collective or individual activist teaching, a context in the stigmatized quadrant could be changed and viewed as ideal or emergent.

When considering the overarching question of this study—does the enactment of gay teacher identity interrupt heteronormativity in schools—the answer among these cases is undoubtedly yes. A broad understanding of gay teacher identity would lead one to assume that in order to have gay teacher identity one must be gay and a teacher, however, when understood through the lens of this research, gay teacher identity means much more. Simply being gay and being a teacher will not interrupt heteronormativity. This distinction is important here, in this study, because of the social justice implications it claims. Gay teachers negotiate their gay teacher identity when they decide to begin coming out at school. The degree to which a gay teacher comes out will determine the degree to which he can be an activist, interrupting heteronormativity through positive enactments of identity. This negotiation is a process and requires the gay teacher to perceive his context as one that provides a relationally just, identity-congruent environment that will foster and manifest positive enactments of identity.

Gay teachers enter a school building with years of identity development in tow, their experiences in teacher preparation, other fields of study, life experience, family upbringing, and sociocultural positionality all situate them to have unique orientations
and entry points for their gay teacher identity to be fully negotiated. Therefore, an understanding that everyone comes into the model based in these experiences is vital. The model is not intended to be a linearly progressive experience, but rather a tool for understanding identity development taking into account the richness and importance of the context and how that context is perceived.

To illustrate the varying entry points and value of context, I have reformatted the model to include four numbered circles (See figure 3). Each numbered represents one of the four participants in phase two of this study, their circles were placed in relation to the data gathered in this research and are not to be taken as fixed. Each person experiences this model in the here and now and wholly dependent on the context.

**Figure 3: Gay Teacher Identity Model, Plot of Study Participants**

Based on his responses in both phases of this study he is the teacher that is enacting the most gay teacher identity (number 1 on the model). Being and actively coming out to students and coworkers immediately places JD along the horizontal axis at
the farthest left position. Beyond being and actively coming out, JD also perceives a great deal of identity-congruence and relational justice in his school context, this was evident in the discussion of his principal’s support for his work in and outside of school as well as in his consideration of himself as an activist educator. JD’s daily interactions with student and coworkers interrupt heteronormativity because of his conscious and active choices in enacting his identity.

Chris was placed on the model as number 2. Chris is out and comes out to his coworkers and has started the process of coming out to students, albeit one student and her mother at this time. Although Chris expressed that he does believe his principal supports him, he still expresses a reluctance when asked why he does not enact more of his gay teacher identity, namely with students.

Peter was placed as number 3. Peter was positioned toward the right on the horizontal axis because he does not come out to students. This can be explained through the appropriateness theme discussed earlier, citing the age of the students he works with and the lack of curricular entry point for his gay identity to be relevant. Although he was placed to the right on the horizontal axis, Peter was placed at a higher level on the vertical axis because of the relationship he has developed with his principal and the work he is now doing to help his charter school revise and develop more inclusive GLBTQ curriculum and resources.

Dylan is the participant with the least experience being out of the closet at work. He reports only being out to coworkers with whom he has a friendly relationship. Dylan also is the only participant to have scored in all three latter stages of the HIF (Cass, 1979)—acceptance, pride, and synthesis. Dylan does not come out to students and does
not perceive that his context—administration and parents—would be supportive of his decision if he were to do so.

**The Power of Respect and Authenticity**

Many of the teachers emphasized confidence in their own teaching identity and ability, and in the respect students and staff had for them in the school. This emphasis on respect may be read as an investment in an identity as ‘good teacher’, or as indicative of the heightened importance of being a good teacher in the context, which can be necessary as a means of buffering against heteronormativity in the school context. Schools present a delicate hierarchy that must be carefully managed on a day-to-day basis by a teacher; relationships with other staff members, support staff, students, and also their parents, must all be taken into consideration and often involve varying strategies and difficult negotiation and enactment.

Retaining power and avoiding loss of control is acutely necessary for a teacher, but it is perhaps more necessary for a gay teacher. Epstein and Johnson (1998) discuss the onus on gay people to prove themselves acceptable in the face of fear of prejudice should their sexual orientation become known. Rasmussen (2006) refers to the figure of the ‘superteacher’ who must compensate for a perceived lack associated with being lesbian or gay, while Blount (2005) also notes that being a popular teacher will mitigate negative attention towards GLBTQ identity. It might be suggested that the more powerful and respected the teacher is in the school, the more likely gay teacher identity to interrupt heteronormativity can be negotiated and enacted.

Embedded in this research is an implicit call for authenticity to be embraced because the role of being an authentic human being and how it plays out in the teaching
and learning setting is ultimately a goal of this research. Authenticity is not a disposition nor a particular value, rather authenticity here is the ability to be one’s fully realized and actualized self and having that self be inherently valued and valuable in the school context. An understanding of gay teacher identity will provide gay teachers, school leaders, and teacher and principal educators with steps to take in order to facilitate the interruption of heteronormativity in the school environment.

**Intersectionality of Sexual Identity and Race**

As indicated in chapter four, all eight participants were invited to participate in phase two. The four who agreed to continue in the study are all white. While I can easily attribute the attrition of the remaining participants to busy schedules and an increased burden in phase two, I cannot help but make a few observations regarding the two men of color who participated in phase one and chose not to continue in phase two. Will, who identifies as Latino, was the participant whose GIQ scores were equally distributed between identity acceptance, pride, and synthesis. Trevor, who identifies as black, scored highest in synthesis, but scored in acceptance and pride also. Trevor also indicated through his response in the GIQ that he is the only participant who is not out to his family. Will and Trevor both have non-dominant racial identities coupled with their non-dominant sexual identities. One cannot help but wonder whether a degree of non-dominant community homophobia has been internalized in each of these men. The Latino and black cultures both have a history of hyper masculinity and gendered norms for behavior that often leave those who identify as GLBTQ more likely to live closeted lives,
especially with family and at work. Conversely, are the other participants more comfortable enacting gay identity because of the white privilege they enjoy? While these concerns are all speculative, current understandings of privilege and intersectionality do seem to lend the notion credence.

**Recommendations**

As discussed previously in the rationale for this study, the social fabric of society is changing, some would argue that it is changing faster than the educational system can adapt. In the months that this research was carried out three states legalized marriage equality, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was rendered gone, and Proposition 8 in California was overturned returning marriage equality to the nation’s most populous state. Moreover, because of the recent Supreme Court decisions, legal pressure is being placed on other states because of possible litigation regarding full faith and credit that would ensue for those who move from equality states to non-equality states, especially for federal and military personnel. These are people with families, often with school-aged children who will be in public school classrooms. Educators at all levels must make a conscious choice to interrupt the heteronormative structures that are embedded in so much of what we do in schools. The assumption of heterosexuality as the normal experience is no longer acceptable and no longer just. In the following sections, I make recommendations influenced by this research and intended to help the identified stakeholders take more responsibility in the process of interrupting heteronormativity.

**Teacher Education**

As one assesses the state of teacher education in this era of increasing accountability and increasing diversity, it is becoming ever more important to teach
preservice and inservice teachers the skills necessary to reach students of color, students in poverty, and students who, as this study emphasizes, are GLBTQ. While some argue that teaching and teacher education is headed in the direction of social justice, the direction of educational policy is riddled with inhibitors and restraints such as those created by *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*, that all too often leave teachers struggling to meet standards and testing benchmarks without being able to feel fully confident in their students abilities to be active members of society—a key tenant of social justice in education. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) acknowledges this dynamic tension between the policy environment and the quest for social justice in education. According to the Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutions, “when the education profession, the public, and policymakers demand that all children be taught by well prepared teachers, then no child will be left behind and social justice will be advanced” (NCATE, 2008, p. 6).

Pederson (2007) and Au (2009) both find that teachers are constrained by the high stakes testing mandated by states and thus cannot focus time to social justice issues, causing a rift between teaching and teacher educator standards and the policy reality. Pederson (2007) found that academic time was increased in tested subjects while those subject areas that were not tested lost a significant amount of academic time and attention. Teacher preparation programs and in-service teachers have an obligation to society to address issues in multicultural education as a social justice imperative. This multiple case study provides examples of gay teachers who are enacting gay teacher identity to interrupt heteronormativity, thus providing prospective and inservice teachers with tools.
intended to bridge the rift between reality and the ideal. By modeling the skills and strategies used by teachers who actively interrupt heteronormativity in the college curriculum and courses, teachers and teacher candidates can have the mental scaffolds necessary to translate these practices to their classrooms in the field. Moreover, curriculum must be multiculturally transformed to be more inclusive and critical of the status quo.

Moreover, teacher education must incorporate the development of professional identity that take into account the other identities that teachers bring with them into their nascent careers. While Cochran-Smith (1995), Fried (1993), and Lehman (1993) have indicated that teacher training designed to examine self-concept, perception, and motivation will generate a more receptive attitude toward more inclusive education, Banks (1995) and Martin (1991) argue that in order for effective transformation to occur and withstand is for preservice teachers to probe into one’s own history and explore its relationship to one’s current beliefs, cross-cultural interactions, and the experiences of others (Brown, 2004). Brown’s (2004) explains that teacher education students must be “motivated through instructional methodologies to raise their cross-cultural cognizance, sensitivity, and commitment to social justice” (p. 327).

Like Brown (2004), I believe the methodological approaches and course work in teacher education need to be chosen and delivered with much care. This research highlights the need for teacher education to embrace a critical and activist orientation in producing teachers. In order for this to be realized, teacher education must provide spaces where preservice teachers and inservice are comfortable reflecting on their personal
biases and prejudices in order to derive their own authentic identity and have developed strategies for enactment of their (in this instance) gay teacher identity.

**Educational Leadership**

This study highlights the immense value found in identity, especially when considered as a means of motivation and relational justice in the workplace. Educational leaders must be able to assess their school environments taking into account the various identities and personalities found therein. The model presented in this study can be utilized by school leadership to assess where their schools would be placed in terms of their teachers’ perceptions of identity congruence (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) leading to increased perceptions of relational justice (Poole, 2008).

Principal (and administration in general) support was identified as an important source of support for the teachers in this study. Educational leaders can lead to increased perceptions of support by GLBTQ teachers (and students) through the following suggestions. School leaders must develop professional development opportunities demonstrate how to infuse GLBTQ identities and issues into curriculum, both explicitly and through implicit means.

Additionally, when planning for professional development, leaders must be cognizant of the difference between planning programming for GLBTQ teachers and students versus planning programming about GLBTQ teachers and students. While both are extremely beneficial and take schools in the direction of interrupting heteronormativity, these two types of functions serve different purposes and must be balanced. Programming about a group allows for all stakeholders to develop an understanding about the group and work toward inclusivity and relational justice.
Programming for is group specific and intended to help group members develop intrapersonal strategies that allow their identity to become more fully actualized leading to an increased level of identity congruence and perception of support.

**Implications for Future Research**

This study opens several additional lines of inquiry. Future research utilizing the gay teacher identity model introduced in this study will further add to the empirical knowledge base and corroborate the findings and recommendations of this study. Additional research is needed addressing the role of teacher education in developing gay teacher identity and the interruption of heteronormativity. Another area of research must include school leadership and their perceptions of identity based motivation and relational justice, identifying enactments of leadership that promotes gay teacher identity and the interruption of heteronormativity. Finally, this study should be replicated and expanded to include teachers who identify at all parts of the queer spectrum so that the findings can be expanded and refined. These future studies will help all those with a stake in public K12 education create and foster environments that are increasingly inclusive of GLBTQ individuals and identities as well as interrupt heteronormative structures and standards.

**Teacher Education Studies**

This research points to the necessity for teacher education to impact the development of gay teacher identity. This study can be designed to assess the program’s ability to promote general professional identity development and identify opportunities for the inclusion of gay teacher identity development in the existing program or suggest new courses, activities, etc. that can be utilized to help develop various multicultural
teacher identities, especially gay teacher identity.

Another possible study would be a multiple case study of gay teacher candidates that focused on the experiences during teacher education coursework, field experiences, student teaching and their first year of teaching. While this kind of study is time intensive, the programmatic and educational implications of such a study would be immensely beneficial and rich.

**Educational Leadership Study**

Evident in the data in this study is the role of the principal (and other school leaders) in helping to foster perceptions identity congruence and relational justice. Another possible study that this research points to is a similarly structured study that takes place in one school with a group of gay teachers and their principal and/or other administrators. Utilizing a multiple case study methodology the impact of the administration can be gleaned and queried to a greater extent. The administrator will also become a source of knowledge, leading to increased insight and data that can inform more specific recommendations and findings for creating and fostering a positive school environment that interrupts heteronormativity.

**Intensive Queer Teacher Studies**

Finally, this study must be replicated outside of the bounds of a dissertation study so that more data can be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Additionally, with the revision to the horizontal axis of the gay teacher identity model, the model can be applied to other queer identities and the replicated study can be expanded. The participants in this study all reported that the experience allowed them to reflect on their pedagogy and histories in ways that were new to them and outside of the typical demands of modern
teaching—standards, testing, interventions, etc.—should this study be replicated, the length of the study should be longer so that these reflections can continue and the teachers will have more opportunities to grow and develop their gay teacher identity. In a replicated study a focus group would be an excellent means of gleaning more information and interpreting data. Unfortunately given the constraints of time and geography a focus group was not possible in this study.

Another valuable study would involve gay teachers who would be considered to be in the stigmatized quadrant. The teachers to be studied in this instance are activist teachers, who are risk takers in their schools because their school environments are ones that do not value, respect, nor accept enactments of GLBTQ identity. A study similar to this one that queries the teachers’ negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity and additionally identifies coping strategies and successes that can be translated to other teachers in similar contexts.

Reflection

I entered this process with own experiences as a gay teacher, knowing that this research would be personal in nature. In conducting the research and collecting data I found myself constantly making attachment-bonds in my mind to the experiences of my participants. Like them, I had a coming out story and I had to traverse my own path in developing my gay identity, my teacher identity, and now my gay teacher identity. I had expected that the teachers would have experiences that reflected what I read about in the literature and that I would be able to make connections to their experiences based on my conceptualization of gay teacher identity.

What I did not expect and became enchanted with was the nuance of gay teacher
identity, the complexity of a simple word like “out,” and the importance of allies and bridges in all stages of identity development. I am coming out (no pun intended) of this process a new person. In completing this endeavor I am finding myself being acutely aware of my own enactment of identity. I am now, more than ever, a queer activist teacher educator who wants to continue my work to interrupt heteronormativity and create spaces that are inclusive of all forms of diversity. Overall, the research process was rewarding and deepened my personal commitment to education and social justice.

**Conclusion**

This study has great potential to impact teaching practice in public schools in order to interrupt heteronormative structures that are currently in place. Teachers, teacher educators, and school leaders can utilize these data to help identify strategies, scenarios, and mechanisms that can be translated to multiple contexts in order to help more teachers develop a sense of authentic self when teaching and to become role models for GLBTQ students in schools.

There is no question in the greater society about evolving views in terms of GLBTQ issues and people; nowhere is this evolution more visible and more important than in our public schools. To that end, what is the role of a school? What is the purpose of school if not to teach tolerance and acceptance in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic? This study aims to answer that call. Incumbent upon researchers and academics is the necessity to disseminate the obligation to end heteronormativity in society with all deliberate speed.

This study is controversial and pushes the boundaries of even the most well-intentioned and progressive minds; to assert that there is a necessity to end
heteronormativity in schools and to do so with deliberate speed can be seen as scandalous and even dangerous. Policy needs to address issues of equality and equity in education. Furthermore, because of the theory and methodology laden conceptual framework, this study has potential to impact future research in more than one field of study and impacting more identity groups.

To that end, as a final question during the second interview with each of the participants I asked them a hypothetical question: “If I had a magic wand and could magically wipe away all homophobia and heteronormativity in society, how would that change your school experience?” Indeed their responses were telling and inspiring. Chris explained that would be amazing because I could be open about who I was, and in my civil right studies I could explain to them how [I was] affected personally and how the people of the past fighting for gay rights has affected me personally. Peter related much of his response to the ways he would be able to relate to parents and students and then reflected on how it would change his life as an educator:

I feel like students could be more comfortable being who they are without homophobia and I could encourage them to be who they are. I don't know if you can really always tell students to be who they are at the moment, because being who you are can be dangerous. I feel like it would change my experience a lot. I feel like there are 2 separates ‘me’ s’ there’s a ‘me’ at work and ‘me’ at home and I have to keep them separate.

In responding to the question, Dylan focused on the way heteronormativity has impacted the ways he is inhibited from enacting his identity:
I feel like I could do things like my coworkers do, like when the husbands come visit their wives at school, one time I noticed a fellow teachers computer background was her and her husband. I wish I could be able to do that freely, and not have to call them my ‘friend’.

Being the activist that he proclaimed to be, JD responded to the question with a resilience to continue fighting against oppression and injustice:

There’s always something that needs to be fought for that’s why I do what I do and teach what I teach the way I do it so that one day I wont have to do it any more. Someday hopefully nobody will have to any more.

I chose to highlight this question and these responses at the end of this study to highlight the path we as gay teachers have still to pave. In understanding gay teacher identity and the positive power the enactment of this identity has in schools to interrupt heteronormativity, these gay teachers will hopefully learn that they are the proverbial “magic wands” necessary to end homophobia and heteronormativity in society. This multiple case study of gay teacher identity presents a model that can be utilized by teacher educators, school leaders, and teacher activists to help negotiate and enact identity in ways that interrupt heteronormativity.
Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review
Approval Notice

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:
Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation, suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: January 28, 2013
TO: Dr. Christine Clark, Teaching & Learning
FROM: Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects
RE: Notification of IRB Action
Protocol Title: A Multiple Case Study of Gay Teacher Identity Development: Negotiating and Enacting Identity to Interrupt Heteronormativity
Protocol #: 1212-4328
Expiration Date: January 27, 2014

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed and approved by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46 and UNLV Human Research Policies and Procedures.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year and expires January 27, 2014. If the above-referenced project has not been completed by this date you must request renewal by submitting a Continuing Review Request form 30 days before the expiration date.

PLEASE NOTE:
Upon approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the protocol most recently reviewed and approved by the IRB, which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent forms and recruitment materials. The official versions of these forms are indicated by footer which contains approval and expiration dates.

Should there be any change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a Modification Form through ORI - Human Subjects. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB. Modified versions of protocol materials must be used upon review and approval. Unanticipated problems, deviations to protocols, and adverse events must be reported to the ORI – HS within 10 days of occurrence.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.
APPENDIX B: ONLINE INSTRUMENT

Gay Identity Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: Please read each of the following statements carefully and then select whether you feel the statements are true or false for you at this point in time. A statement is true if the entire statement is true, otherwise select false. You do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering.

1. I probably am sexually attracted equally to men and women.
2. I live a homosexual lifestyle at home, while at work/school I do not want others to know about my lifestyle.
3. My homosexuality is a valid private identity, that I do not want made public.
4. I have feelings I would label as homosexual.
5. I have little desire to be around most heterosexuals.
6. I doubt that I am homosexual, but still am confused about who I am sexually.
7. I do not want most heterosexuals to know that I am definitely homosexual.
8. I am very proud to be gay and make it known to everyone around me.
9. I don't have much contact with heterosexuals and can't say that I miss it.
10. I generally feel comfortable being the only gay person in a group of heterosexuals.
11. I'm probably homosexual, even though I maintain a heterosexual image in both my personal and public life.
12. I have disclosed to 1 or 2 people (very few) that I have homosexual feelings, although I'm not sure I'm a homosexual.
13. I am not as angry about society's treatment of gays because even though I've told everyone about my gayness, they have responded well.
14. I am definitely homosexual but I do not share that knowledge with most people.
15. I don't mind if homosexuals know that I have homosexual thoughts and feelings, but I don't want others to know.
16. More than likely I'm homosexual, although I'm not positive about it yet.
17. I don't act like most homosexuals do, so I doubt that I'm homosexual.
18. I'm probably homosexual, but I'm not sure yet.
19. I am openly gay and fully integrated into heterosexual society.
20. I don't think I'm homosexual.
21. I don't feel I'm heterosexual or homosexual.
22. I have thoughts I would label as homosexual.
23. I don't want people to know I may be homosexual, although I'm not sure I am homosexual or not.
24. I may be homosexual and I am upset at the thought of it.
25. The topic of homosexuality doesn't relate to me personally.
26. I frequently confront people about their irrational, homophobic feelings.
27. Getting in touch with homosexuals is something I feel I need to do, even though I'm not sure I want to.
28. I have homosexual thoughts and feelings but I doubt I am homosexual.
29. I dread having to deal with the fact that I may be homosexual.
30. I am proud and open with everyone about being gay, but it isn't a major focus in my life.
31. I probably am heterosexual or non-sexual.
32. I am experimenting with my same-sex, because I don't know what my sexual preference is.
33. I feel accepted by homosexual friends and acquaintances, even though I'm not sure I'm homosexual.
34. I frequently express to others, anger over heterosexuals' oppression of me and other gays.
35. I have not told most of the people at work that I am definitely homosexual.
36. I would accept but would not say that I am proud of the fact that I am definitely homosexual.
37. I can't imagine sharing my homosexual feelings with anyone.
38. Most heterosexuals are not credible sources of help for me.
39. I am openly gay around gays and heterosexuals.
40. I engage in sexual behavior I would label as homosexual.
41. I am not about to stay hidden as gay for anyone.
42. I tolerate rather than accept my homosexual thoughts and feelings.
43. My heterosexual friends, family and associates think of me as a person who happens to be gay, rather than a gay person.
44. Even though I am definitely homosexual, I have not told my family.
45. I am openly gay with everyone, but it doesn't make me feel all that different from heterosexuals.

**Lived Experiences**

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the following open-ended questions. Please be as detailed as you are comfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering.

Describe yourself: age, sexual orientation, race, and any other demographic information you would like to share.

Describe your teacher preparation. Where did you go to school? What kind of program did you attend? Etc.

Describe your experience teaching: where you teach, grade level, subject areas, student demographic, etc.

How "out" are you at school?

Do you "come out" to students?

Do you believe your school is/would be accepting of your choice to come out to students and in the classroom?
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW 1: STRUCTURE AND QUESTIONS

**Face-to-Face Interviews:** When meeting in person, the participant will be asked to identify a comfortable setting on campus at UNLV (library, CEB conference room, etc). Interviews will be scheduled for an hour and will be audio recorded using a digital recorder.

**Online Interviews:** When meeting over the Internet, the participant will be asked to locate a safe and secure location with a broadband internet connection. Interviews will be conducted using Skype or Apple FaceTime and will be recorded digitally. Interviews will be scheduled for one hour.

**Interview Protocol:** This first interview will query gay teachers’ background and personal development prior to becoming and teacher. This interview will also query their training to become teachers. Participants will be prompted to not specifically identify their workplace to maintain anonymity. This interview protocol will be semi-structured; a series of guiding, open-ended questions will be used as prompts, but interview exchanges will be flexible to put participants at ease and allow them to focus on what is most important to them relative to the study focus. Below are initial guiding questions to be used in this interview:

1. Describe your childhood. Where did you grow up? How was your family?
2. When did you realize that you were gay?
3. What was it like for you in elementary school? Middle school? High school?
4. Did you come out of the closet at school? To who?
5. When did you come out of the closet to your family?
6. When did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?
7. Describe your teacher preparation. Did you attend an undergraduate preparation program? Graduate program?

8. How did your gay identity or being gay impact your teacher preparation?

9. Do you recall any instances in your teacher preparation when you were taught about GLBTQ issues in schools? How did that make you feel?
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW 2: STRUCTURE AND QUESTIONS

**Face-to-Face Interviews:** When meeting in person, the participant will be asked to identify a comfortable setting on campus at UNLV (library, CEB conference room, etc).

Interviews will be scheduled for an hour and will be audio recorded using a digital recorder.

**Online Interviews:** When meeting over the Internet, the participant will be asked to locate a safe and secure location with a broadband internet connection. Interviews will be conducted using Skype or Apple FaceTime and will be recorded digitally. Interviews will be scheduled for one hour.

**Interview Protocol:** This second interview will query gay teachers’ experiences being a teacher. Participants will be prompted to not specifically identify their workplace to maintain anonymity. This interview will query them about their educational philosophy, what they find most important when teaching, and any instances of coming out in a school context. Their experiences of being out or not out will also be queried. Finally, the participants will be presented with hypothetical scenarios (based on their degree of outness) that relate to the enactment and transaction processes outlined in the Multicultural Enactment-Transactional Model (METM) (Cross, 2012). This interview protocol will be more structured, especially the portion focused on the scenarios, but, again, guiding, open-ended questions will be used to put the participants at ease and allow them to focus the content of their responses in whatever areas have the greatest salience to their experiences.

1. What is your philosophy of teaching?
2. How has your philosophy evolved?
3. How does being gay impact your teaching philosophy, if at all?

4. How has being a gay male impacted your philosophy of education?

5. What do you find as the most important aspect of being a teacher?

6. Describe your school. How long have you been there? How would you describe your school’s climate?

7. Do you come out at school? If so, to whom? Why?

8. Do you think your school is supportive of GLBT students and teachers?

9. If I could magically wipe out homophobia in society, how would that change your school experience?

10. *METM Scenarios:* These scenarios will be drafted individually for each participant based on their responses in phase one of the study and their first interview.
APPENDIX E: WEEKLY JOURNAL FORMAT

Participants will be asked to complete a weekly journaling activity. Activities will include reflecting on how their gay identity, gay issues, or gay students impacted their teaching (if at all). Activities will also include assessing their weekly curriculum and pedagogical practices and/or the broader school context to see if they can identify instances where they perceived heteronormativity and, if so, how they did or did not react to those instances.
APPENDIX F: FOCUSED JOURNAL PROMPTS

Participants will be asked to complete the following focused journal activities.

The focused journal activities are designed to afford participants the opportunity to express themselves in writing and without any of the time pressure to respond, so that they can reflect on and formulate their thoughts differently than in the interviews.

1. Reflecting on your personal history, what is your “coming out story?”

2. Finish the following sentences:
   a. My colleagues see me as...
   b. My administrators see me as...
   c. When my colleagues see me they see...
   d. When my administrators see me they see...
   e. My students see me as...
   f. My students’ parents see me as...
   g. I see myself as...

3. Why did you go into teaching? What about this profession is impacted most by you being a gay man?

4. Draw a map of your journey, this map can include any information you wish and can take any form you wish. The beginning of the map is your birth and the (current) end is where you are today as a person.
Dear Colleague(s):

My name is Zaid Haddad and I am a Ph.D. candidate working under the supervision of Dr. Christine Clark in the Department of Teaching and Learning Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). I am interested in connecting with gay teachers working public K-12 schools to inquire about their interest in voluntarily participating in my doctoral dissertation research study exploring the experiences of gay teachers in these schools.

More specifically, the purpose of my study is to examine how the negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity interrupts heteronormativity in school contexts in order to identify coping mechanisms and patterns of interaction that will inform future teacher education practices.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: complete an initial survey, answer interview questions, and complete journal entries via email. Specifically, in phase one (February 2013) of the study, you will be asked to:

1. Spend approximately 45-60 minutes completing an initial survey online.

If you are asked to continue onto phase two (March & April 2013), you will be asked to:

1. Participate in 2 one-hour individual interviews (interviews will take place at a time and place that is convenient to you in person or via Skype);
2. Participate in weekly (approximately 30 minutes per week) reflective journaling about your teaching and school experiences that will be submitted via email to the researcher;
3. Complete four focused journal entries (45-60 minutes per entry) that will be submitted via email to the researcher.

My study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the UNLV Office of Research Integrity.

If you know anyone who might be interested in participating in my study, please forward this email to him and/or have him contact me, Zaid Haddad, at zaid@unlv.nevada.edu. I will respond to each contact I receive and, if appropriate, arrange for a telephone, Skype, or in-person follow up contact to discuss the study in greater detail, answer additional questions about participation, and, if indicated, complete the participant consenting process.

I appreciated your time and assistance in helping me to identify potential participants for this important study.

If you are interested in participating please reply to this email with your contact information (name, personal e-mail address, and telephone number) and I will follow up with your personal unique identification number and the survey link.

Sincerely,

Zaid M. Haddad, Doctoral Candidate
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Teaching & Learning

Carlson Education Building, Office 399b
zaid@unlv.nevada.edu
702.895.5357 (office)
702.498.7135 (cell)
INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Teaching and Learning

TITLE OF STUDY: A Multiple Case Study of Gay Teacher Identity Development: Negotiating and Enacting Identity to Interrupt Heteronormativity
INVESTIGATOR(S): Christine Clark & Zaid M. Haddad

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Zaid M. Haddad at (702) 498-7135 or zaid@unlv.nevada.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine how the negotiation and enactment of gay teacher identity interrupts heteronormativity in school contexts in order to identify coping mechanisms and patterns of interaction that will inform future teacher education practices.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criterion: you are a gay male public schoolteacher.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: complete an initial survey, answer interview questions, complete journal entries and submit via email.

Specifically, in phase one (February 2013) of the study, you will be asked to:

1. Spend approximately 45-60 minutes completing an initial survey online.

If you are asked to continue onto phase two (March & April 2013), you will be asked to:

1. Participate in 2 one-hour individual interviews (interviews will take place at a time and place that is convenient to you in person or via Skype);

2. Participate in weekly (approximately 30 minutes per week) reflective journaling about your teaching and school experiences that will be submitted via email to the researcher;
TITLE OF STUDY: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF GAY TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: NEGOTIATING AND ENACTING IDENTITY TO INTERRUPT HETERONORMATIVITY

3. Complete four focused journal entries (45-60 minutes per entry) that will be submitted via email to the researcher.

The researcher may take notes and/or record all interviews to document your experiences as a gay public school teacher. This will include your coping strategies and support systems, the development of your gay teacher identity, and other related findings. The researcher’s notes will be transcribed for research purposes only.

Participation in the research project means that all of your contributions (oral, written, and constructed), delineated in the items above, may be included as data in the study. These data will be de-identified and reported under a pseudonym to protect your identity.

Benefits of Participation
While you may not see direct benefits as a participant in this study, this study has potential to impact teaching practice in public schools in order to interrupt heteronormative structures that are currently in place. Teachers and teacher educators can utilize these data to help identify strategies, scenarios, and mechanisms that can be translated to multiple contexts in order to help more teachers develop a sense of authentic self when teaching and to become role models for GLBTQ students in schools.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study involves only minimal risks; you may feel uncomfortable while being interviewed about your personal work related experiences.

Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will be completed over a three-month period of time and will take approximately six hours per month of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for three years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.
**Title of Study:** A Multiple Case Study of Gay Teacher Identity Development: Negotiating and Enacting Identity to Interrupt Heteronormativity

**Participant Consent:**
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

- ☐ Yes, I want to participate in the study.
- ☐ No, I do not want to participate in the study.

**Audio/Video Taping:**
I have read the above information and allow the investigator to audio record my interviews for this study.

- ☐ Yes, I give permission to record interviews for the study.
- ☐ No, I do not give permission to record interviews for the study.
## APPENDIX I: GIQ TABULATION INDICATING HIF PHASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Confusion</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Pride</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
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<td>I don't know if it was necessarily me wanting it to go away, but I just thought they would eventually go away, like, not stick around. I did date girls and call girls my girlfriend and we would play boyfriend and girlfriend and kiss and stuff, but, I guess I just thought the liking of boys would eventually go away, but obviously it didn't.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Buffering</td>
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<td>I had been exposed more to my uncle and the relationship that he and his partner had. I realized that that was me, and I could have a partner or boyfriend and I was okay with that.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Attachment-Bonding</td>
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<td>I came out to my band director because I skipped class for a week when people were messing with my locker by putting pictures in it and stuff. He was on the verge of dropping me, so I told him why I hadn't been coming because other band members had been harassing me, and I was uncomfortable coming.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>The day I found out that it was going around school, I had a mental breakdown and some friends took me to the guidance counselor’s office, and brought me to a different counselor that was not mine, but to one who was a lesbian. We ended up having a group therapy session in her office. From there she told me, she told me that I could speak to her and my own guidance counselor and that he would understand what I was going through.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Attachment-Bonding</td>
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<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>I told him the way that it was though- that I knew who I was, I knew myself, and I knew the feelings and desires that I had. I didn't need to sleep with another woman to know I wasn't, or sleep with a man to know I was. I told him that nobody had to tell him to be straight or that he had to sleep with a woman to know that's what he wanted. And that it was the same for me. He kinda just looked at me and said, &quot;Alright, that's fair enough- I get that.&quot;</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I think that the relationship she had with him is what helped her come to terms with me. It didn't come overnight though, my mom struggled for a long time and read lots of books on how to deal with your teen being gay.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>She also attempted to make me go to counseling to counsel the gay out of me. I refused to go. I told her absolutely not. I would see a counselor, but not a religious one. That's when she tried to tell me that this was wrong and that I could pray it away. That never happened, I refused to go.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I think that seeing me in a solid loving relationship for a long time was what ultimately go her to come to terms with it.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I remember sitting down with my brothers and telling them, “Next weekend when Im coming home, Im bringing Josh with me.” They were all okay, and I told them I wanted to explain that he was more than a friend, but my boyfriend. One of them asked if I loved him, and then said, “Well, thats all that matters.”</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>Later she again asked me about it and I told her I couldn’t go out with this girl because I had a crush on someone else. Shannon asked me who and I told her that I had a crush on her brother David. It was that simple. I told her that I was gay and that I had a crush on her brother and had for some time. She didn’t freak out about it and seemed to be perfectly fine with it.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 1</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>It was in the office of this counselor that I confided in an adult for the first time that I was gay. It was a very painful and hard thing for me to do, but I remember feeling a huge sense of relief once it was done.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 1</td>
<td>Attachment-Bonding</td>
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<td>For the rest of high school I continued to come out to various friends and family members. I was always (with one of two exceptions) pleasantly surprised at how well people handled it. I had always assumed that people would be appalled to find out that I was gay, or stop talking to me.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 1</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>With that being said I still made it my mission to hide the fact that I was gay from the students, and the other staff that I was working with. I NEVER mentioned anything about my personal life, my friends, or the partner that I had been living with for 3 years at that point. Nobody in the school was aware of the life that I lead outside of those four walls.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 3</td>
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<td>It was during this time that I decided to come out to my cooperating teacher as well. She was supportive and actually was more upset that I hadn’t told her sooner. She was upset that I hadn’t trusted her enough to be honest with her. I remember feeling bad that I had kept from her.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 3</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<td>In each job that I have taken and held I have worried about what the rest of the staff would think and say if they knew that I was gay.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 3</td>
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I began to realize that I was NOT the only gay man or woman teaching in my school. I began to realize that the people I worked with were much more open and progressive that I could have imagined.

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<th>Focused Journal 3</th>
<th>Attachment-Bonding Bridging</th>
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When my partner had to have back surgery I walked into the principals office and told her I needed to take 2 days off so that I could take care of him. I waited for a her reaction and all she said was “ok, I hope all goes well for him. He seems really young to have back surgery”. I remember a wave or relief washing over me when she said the word “he”. I had never told her I was gay and yet she not only knew, but also was ok with it.

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<th>Focused Journal 3</th>
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There has been one exception to all of my “coming out” and that has been with students. Up until two weeks ago I had NEVER come out to a single student. I have always been worried about what their reactions would be. I have worried about what their parents would think when they inevitably went home and told them that their teacher was gay. I have worried about whether or not my administration would support me in coming out to my students.

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<th>Buffering Code-Switching</th>
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I have bought a house with the person I love, adopted dogs with the person I love, been on vacations, gotten engaged, and ultimately broke up with the person I loved. All of these life experience that many of my straight colleagues can and do share with their students I have not been able to.

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Over the years I have had students ask me if I’m gay. My responses have ranged from “no, why would you ask me that” to “that’s an inappropriate question and it’s none your business”. I have never had the courage to say “Yes, and I have a partner or 12 years and two dogs and a house we love”.

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<th>Focused Journal 3</th>
<th>Buffering Code-Switching</th>
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I felt that for the first time we had a connection that we never had before. My relationship with this student has forever changed and for the better. She doesn’t look at me any differently (at least not in a bad way). She has more respect for me now because I was honest with her and was able to relate to her on a different level.

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<th>Focused Journal 3</th>
<th>Bridging</th>
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Not only was the student amazingly supportive, but also so was her mother. She called me on my cell that evening and thanked me for talking to her daughter. She was shocked that I was willing to be so honest and forthcoming, but thankful that I was. This experience has definitely made me rethink the way that I will be in the future.

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<th>Focused Journal 3</th>
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<td>When I was 12 or 13 I started to realize that I was not interested in girls, and the other boys would be talking about girls and saying, ‘oh she’s hot’, and I started to realize that I wasn’t interested in girls, I was interested in them.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>I didn’t really try to deal with it as much as I tried not to deal with it. I think I identified that way and knew what I was attracted to, but thought I could make it go away.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>I dated girls for the first few years of high school, and that didn’t actually work out...</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>like closer to my sophomore year I was more comfortable with it and the first 2 people I told were actually excited about it so that was a really positive experience and having positive things to associate with being gay and had less negative things I had identified about being gay. I started to be like, ‘this is who I am.’</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, I started by talking to a person my brother went to high school with that I knew was gay, that was the first person I told, I felt that would be safe.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Then I told a girl in one of my classes and that was very positive too.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>It was nice to finally have an outlet to share things and I started to get a lot more comfortable with it.</td>
<td>Attachment-Bonding</td>
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<td>I started trying to go online, because at school nobody was gay, so I would go online, which was my first avenue. I was comfortable enough with myself to start pursuing there, but I wanted to try physical things first and by senior year I think I was ready to try dating and to have a boyfriend.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>Maybe some degree of embarrassment. I guess maybe knowing that my mom is accepting, but I worry how much she can actually accept, like me sleeping with a boy in the same bed, is that going to cross the line? Me living with someone for 2 years and all the stuff that goes along with that.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I pretty quickly associated the feelings with ‘being gay’—in middle school kids talked about “gay” teachers all the time, mostly to poke fun at them. Beyond the fact that being gay meant boys liking other boys, and that kids made fun of people who were gay, I didn’t understand much more about homosexuality the time.</td>
<td>Focused Journal 1</td>
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I had just found out what it was like to lose a friendship over my sexual identity. It could have made me more fearful of it occurring again in the future, but it had the opposite effect. If I could go through it once and still feel strong – emotionally unbroken – then surely I could handle telling more people.

For the first time, I felt like I could truly be me. It was an incredibly liberating experience.

I told her the truth. That I was in a relationship for 3 years that just ended and that the only reason I didn’t tell her was because I was gay. She hugged me and told me that relationships are hard – not even mentioning the fact that I was gay. She asked me what happened and about who it was with. She was so remarkably supportive.

Since then my brother has become one of my closest family members. Even though my mom has been super supportive, it’s my brother who I feel like I can talk most openly to.

I didn’t get that [referring to specific teaching strategies and skills] in my training but got it from the support of other teachers.

I went to a couple [affinity group meetings], and there was nobody leading them or facilitating them, so we all had all these questions. We wanted someone who had been in a classroom and had been through all of this, to learn about cultural norms, and to share in our concerns, but there was nobody to share their experience or tell us what it was like to be a gay teacher.

Would they pull their child out of the school? Would they get other parents to? In someone ways, I felt like my sexuality was a liability for the school.

I spent my years of teaching building relationships based entirely around the student – the one thing the family and I both had in common. But those relationships always felt more like business partnerships than authentic bonds or connections.

My own thinking allowed me to give into stereotypes – assumptions that all of these families are heavily conservation, likely catholic, and don’t support homosexuality.

Because of that fear of what would happen if parents found out, it also made me incredibly cautious about how to interact with students when issues around homosexuality arose.
When addressing two second grade boys who called each other gay, my palms grew sweaty and heart began to race. Most discipline issues I could take care of, but there was a lot riding on this one.

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Perhaps one way of addressing these issues without directly interacting with one child who may need support is by building “understanding homosexuality” into the cultural curriculum of the school. But even then I fear push back by parents who’s “values” wouldn’t align.

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I am very open with my principal about my sexuality and he is very supportive of LGBT rights (gay marriage, etc.) and making his LGBT staff feel comfortable. I think I need to seek his guidance more on these issues and get a sense of how he wants to address situations like this as a school. But if he feels uncomfortable addressing LGBT issues for similar reasons that I may feel (eg: parents leaving the school) – I’m not quite sure I’d be comfortable enough to push back.

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<td>As far as bullying and teasing and harassing, there was a lot of that, but there was a lot for everybody in some way, shape or form. I don't think that my sexuality or orientation never came to question or was really a major concern for me until 6th grade when I started to identify as gay, but a lot of harassment and bullying and name calling of a sexual orientation nature.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I had a significant other and girlfriend that I had for 4 years in HS and beginning of college</td>
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<td>I started coming to terms with my sexual orientation at 19 or so, at that point I did a lot of exploring, figuring out what it means to be gay and had a difficult time really balancing that with, not necessarily would my parents accept or reject me, but more if I would disappoint them.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I think that I started understanding when the sexual side of my identity was awakening that something wasn't quite the same. Understanding what the other people were talking about isn't the same things that I'm thinking but not understanding at all what that meant.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>I was very involved with a church and youth groups and things like that, so having that other narrative in the back of my head where it was extremely frowned upon and demonized in the church we were attending, definitely had an impact on me as well.</td>
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<td>I didn't even consider I was gay, just that something was different and weird. Late teens I really started to understand what was different, what why I wasn't the same as everyone else.</td>
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<td>but once I gained financial independence, and could go places without people finding out was probably the key. Nobody knew I was going to bars, nobody knew I was going to places to explore physical sexuality. So at that point I started figuring out what homosexuality was and what it meant for me.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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<td>The first person I came out to was a friend that I was very close with at the time. She was about 22 or so, and it was not even coming out, I just said that there was 1 individual I was attracted to, who happened to be another guy. I was trying to justify that maybe it was just this 1 person, and she was really the first one that I came out to, besides that one time, I think everything else kind of came across by happenstance.</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
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we talked about communication issues and feelings for each other, and issues with never being too close since I was a kid. It was a very positive conversation, it was good that it happened. We did good. He told me about gay people that he knew growing up, and about a gay cousin who ran away to San Francisco in the 70’s and was one of the first people who dies from HIV-AIDS back when it was considered gay cancer, so to have that connection in my family was a really good experience.

I think it was my dad, his reaction settled her down and brought her down. Now she understands that it’s okay and now they like my partner more than they like me. They told me that flat out, too. Haha. But, I think it was that interaction with my dad that was very positive for all of us and shaped it.

I think that on some level, I have always known that I was gay, but for a very long time I never knew what to call it. I didn’t know what it was, I didn’t know what it meant, and probably never even knew what it was that I was afraid of. What I did know was that I was afraid to be different. I was afraid of rejection, I was afraid of being alone, and I was afraid that I would lose everything, and everyone that I loved and held dear, but mostly I was afraid of losing control.

I was involved in an ultra-conservative church, extremely conservative and overbearing mother, no exposure to positive queer icons, imagery or people, etc. But in every aspect of my life I was able to maintain control and authority over everything that I did and interacted. I was a leader; I was an influential and respected person ever since I was in my early teens. I held rank and title in church groups, school groups, social development organizations and volunteer organizations.

If I was to be “different,” I could loose control of all that. So, I decided to stay quiet and conform to what was expected of me. I did what I thought was right and kept it all inside.

I was completely devastated. When my mother confronted me, I did not know what to say. I tried to fight and stand up for myself, but I did not have the strength or knowledge to do so. She was brutal. Saying that she didn’t know if my father would love me anymore, asking how I could do this to her, and why I was punishing her. Telling me that I would die of AIDS, alone and agree at the world. Everything that I ever feared came true, I lost control of everything.

But the experience gave me the strength to start figuring out who I was and what that meant. I started going out and meeting new people, I became involved with volunteer work in the LGBT community, and I started learning that I had a heritage and a family outside which I never knew about.

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My mother and I never discussed “the thing that should not be discussed” and for a year and a half my father and I would walk on eggshells around each other.

I was a bit concerned, but decided that the time for hiding was over. I went in the living room, poured a couple shots of whisky, and waited. When he got home I was waiting and gave him a choice (without any words). I was ready to fight, or we could share a drink and talk. I didn’t know how it would go. My mother’s words still rang in my head from several years earlier. But I stood firm. When he came in the door, I was ready. He looked at me, and he looked at the shots I placed on the table. He chose the shot. From there we were able to really talk for the first time in years.

However, I do feel that my openness about being a gay man has made me stand out more than if I was not. “I’m special.” I was unique and memorable. Because I was different, I think that it opened up doors because more attention was paid to me.

But my crowning achievement (so far) has been the program “Understanding and Supporting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth.” I designed this course to introduce people to basic terms beyond just the” LGTB” such as Gender and Gender Identity, this presentation explores social issues that are present in society due to a lack of understanding, as well a specific steps and ideals that can put in place to support students through the coming out process and their educational career.

When I was a student in XXSD, I was on an Individual Education Program (IEP). When I was in school, I did not know or understand what the purpose or need for the IEP was, nor did I ever feel that it impacted my life or education because it really was never discussed or explained to me. Because of this, one of my professional goals is to always discuss and explain the IEP to every student on my caseload. I want them to know what is expected of them and also what they should expect from me as their teacher of record.
### Participant Profile: Dylan Christopherson, METM Analysis

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<td>I remember having this conversation with my sister when I was about 7 years old. My sister was quite a tomboy. She played soccer and softball and all those things. My parents tried to put me in soccer and hockey but it didn't do much for me so I didn't continue with them, and she was like, “I'm a tomboy- its a word for a girl that's more like a boy.” I wondered what the word for a boy who was more like a girl, because that's how I was identifying, maybe, at that point in time.</td>
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<td>My father has a gay brother and has never spoke highly of him. It may be because he's not a great person, not because he's gay. At least that's what I discovered now, but at the time that scared me.</td>
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<td>Really, nothing was said until after I no longer lived with my parents, not until after I moved here to Las Vegas.</td>
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<td>That was when I first experienced being teased with homophobic slurs. Apparently, involvement in a play and showing a lack of skills with power tools qualified someone to be a “faggot.”</td>
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<td>I found myself away from these offenders, but wondered if there was any truth to the teasing. Could I possibly be gay? I dismissed my wonderings and figured it wasn't possible.</td>
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<td>Since I found myself surrounded with like-minded people most of my day, the only time I experienced any problems with other students was during P.E.</td>
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<td>The homophobic slurs were what I dreaded, they only happened a select few times, but were painful. I found myself wondering if these kids somehow knew more than I did and that in the end I was doomed to be gay. I didn’t know much about being gay at this point in my life, but I knew enough to be aware that it was viewed as undesirable.</td>
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<td>My senior year of high school, I found myself with a girlfriend. We were together all of my senior year. On some level this was a relief to myself.</td>
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<td>The rare, but powerful, taunts of “faggot” and “queer” could not possibly be correct. I found a member of the opposite sex to be with.</td>
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I became very active in the campus ministry and considered myself to be very religious my freshman year. I attended bible study, avoided alcohol, and tried to immerse myself in what my fellow faithful freshmen were doing.

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Drum corps was the most liberal environment I had been a part of. It was also the first time I encountered other gay males (even though I was not out at the time) and got to know them on a personal level. This laid the foundation for my support system as I started coming out a few years later.

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I slowly abandoned my feverish religious thinking and by my junior year found myself to be a professed atheist. In many ways, I think rejection of religion was the first thing that paved the way for me to come out.

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My senior year came and I found myself becoming great friends with the gay, German exchange student who lived across the hall from me. He was the first out gay man I encountered on campus in college.

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At this time, I was becoming more aware of my homosexuality and started asking my German exchange student and drum corps friends about their coming out experiences.

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During this time I established my first online accounts on gay.com and Adam4Adam and found myself dating a few different men.

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I had accepted being gay and decided I would start coming out once I was no longer dependent upon my parents for housing.

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However, my first week on the job as a kindergarten teacher in Las Vegas, I had a student removed from my classroom because the mother was uncomfortable with her child having a male teacher. I decided that being a gay, male teacher would be even more problematic.

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Also, I found myself without any sort of local support system in Vegas. My coming out went on hold.

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I had started dating someone I met accidentally, and he was pressuring me to introduce him to my friends. My small network of friends that I had in Las Vegas at that time were more than encouraging and this began my process of finally being totally out.

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During the same time, I discovered that two of the male teachers assigned to my school were also gay and highly respected. I knew that being gay and being a teacher were no longer incompatible.

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I do not know what has been impacted most in teaching by me being a gay man. I think that is because I have largely kept my “gay” self separate from my “teaching” self.

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Cross, Jr., W. E. (2012). The enactment of race and other social identities during everyday transactions. In C. Wijeyesinghe and B. Jackson (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical


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Curriculum Vitae  

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EDUCATION  
2013  Ph.D. Candidate (ABD) in Teacher Education—University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
(Dissertation Chairs: Dr. Christine Clark & Dr. Thomas Bean)  
2007  M.Ed. in Educational Leadership—University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
2003  B.A. in Secondary Social Studies Education—University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
2003  B.A. in Political Science—University of Nevada, Las Vegas  

RESEARCH INTERESTS  
Social Studies Education  
General Teacher Education and Pedagogy  
Critical and Queer Theory  
Teacher Identity  

PROFESSIONAL WORK HISTORY  
2012-Present: University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Visiting Lecturer in Teacher Education:  
Full-time faculty position. Responsible for teaching four undergraduate sections per academic semester. Member of faculty governance committees: Teacher Education & Pedagogy, Secondary Program Committee. Member of the College Committee on Diversity, Equity, & Social Justice.  
2010-May 2012: University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Graduate Assistant: Instructor of Record for two undergraduate sections per academic semester. Served as the student member of the Doctoral Studies Committee within the Department of Teaching and Learning. Responsible to the department chair for any additional and ancillary projects or research that may be assigned.  
2011: Nevada State College, School of Education; Part-time Instructor:  
Instructor of Record for an undergraduate section of a secondary social studies methods class taught online.  
2004-2009: Clark County School District, Canyon Springs High School; Magnet Program Theme Coordinator 2006-2009: Management of the day to day operations of the magnet program office, recruit and retain qualified teachers and students in the program, and serve as the liaison between the school and the district offices. Custodian of the Magnet Schools Assistance Program Grant, a federal grant program that was awarded to Canyon Springs in 2004; responsible for the encumbrance, expenditure, and accountability of grant funds totaling nearly a million dollars over four years.  
Zaid M. Haddad
Curriculum Vitae

Student Council Advisor/Student Activities Director 2004-2009:
Responsible for planning all school-wide events and providing a solid leadership framework to the student council and all afterschool activities. Served as conference chair for the state conference of the Nevada Association of Student Councils with over 900 students and advisors in attendance for 3 days.

Professional Organizations
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- Division G: Social Context of Education
- Division K: Teaching and Teacher Education
- Critical Educators for Social Justice (CES) Special Interest Group (SIG)
- Research in Social Studies Education Special Interest Group (SIG)
- Qualitative Research Special Interest Group (SIG)
- Queer Studies Special Interest Group (SIG)

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)
National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)

Awards and Distinctions
2012  UNLV Golden Key Honour Society—Honorary Member
2012  UNLV GPSA First Place Poster Presentation Award
2011  UNLV CSUN Student Government Faculty Excellence Award
2011  UNLV Graduate Access Grant Recipient
2008  Nevada Association of Student Councils- Student Council Advisor of the Year
2008  Nevada Association of Student Councils- State Conference Chair

Courses Taught
EDU 201: Introduction to Elementary Education, Undergraduate, UNLV
EDU 202: Introduction to Secondary Education, Undergraduate, UNLV
EDU 280: Valuing Cultural Diversity, Undergraduate, UNLV
EDSC 323: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Education, Undergraduate, UNLV
EDEL 453/CIE 543: Elementary Social Studies Methodology, Undergraduate/Graduate, UNLV
EDSC 403: Secondary Social Studies Methodology, Undergraduate, NSC

Scholarly Publications and Activities
Manuscripts Submitted or in Preparation:
Zaid M. Haddad
Curriculum Vitae

Peer-Reviewed International & National Conference Presentations:


Conference Proposal Review

- Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), Graduate Student Reviewer, 2012 Summer Conference
- Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), Graduate Student Reviewer, 2013 Annual Conference
- American Educational Research Association (AERA), Graduate Student Reviewer, 2014 Annual Conference
- American Educational Research Association (AERA), Graduate Student Reviewer, 2013 Annual Conference
- National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), Graduate Student Reviewer, 2012 Annual Conference, 2013 Annual Conference
- National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), Review Chair, 2012 Annual Conference

Invited Keynote Presentations:

- November 2012, UNLV Golden Key Honour Society Induction, “The Power of Service”
Zaid M. Haddad  
*Curriculum Vitae*

**Guest Lectures:**

**Competitive Travel Grants**
- June 2011; UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association; Summer Grant Recipient.
- January 2012; UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association; Spring Grant Recipient.
- January 2013; UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association; Spring Grant Recipient.

**Contributions To The Profession**
- Graduate and Professional Student Association Representative, Department of Teaching & Learning, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, July 2012 to present.
- Graduate and Professional Student Association Member, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, January 2010 to present.
- Coordinator & Facilitator, Doctoral Research and Education Collaboration, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, August 2011 to present
- Founding Member, Doctoral Research and Education Collaboration, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, August 2010 to present.
- Member, Doctoral Studies Committee, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, January 2011 to present.