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A Phenomenological Study of Lesbian and Gay People in Leadership Roles: How Perspectives and Priorities Shift in the Workplace as Sexual Orientation Evolves Through Social Constructs

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The University of San Francisco

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE IN
LEADERSHIP ROLES: HOW PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES SHIFT
IN THE WORKPLACE AS SEXUAL ORIENTATION EVOLVES
THROUGH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS

A Dissertation Presented

to

The Faculty of the School of Education

Department of Leadership Studies

Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Justin W. Moore

San Francisco

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Dissertation Abstract

The queer community's presence continues to increase in the United States, while more individuals become visible throughout workplaces. An increasingly diverse workforce leaves organizations struggling to leverage the knowledge and experience lesbian and gay leaders bring to discussions. Limited research informs organizations of the strategies lesbian and gay people in leadership roles use to navigate their ascension into their positions, while managing the disclosure of their sexual orientation and professional identity. This qualitative, phenomenological study involved recruiting 15 participants through purposeful, homogeneous sampling processes and snowball sampling, identifying cisgender lesbian or gay people in leadership or managerial roles, with a minimum of 5 years of experience, who are 50 years of age and older.

Data analysis revealed seven key findings: (a) coming out involves disclosure and concealment strategies, (b) identity includes self-care and integrating personal and professional life, (c) social change establishes new norms that cultures adapt, (d) discrimination occurs most frequently through the "lavender ceiling" and microaggression, (e) the workplace culture is most affected by leaders and policies, (f) activism is critical to the advancement of equity, and (g) Supportive leadership involves mentoring and building a professional network.

Through social constructionism theory and queer theory, this dissertation aimed to understand the key findings from the data-collection phase. The conclusions from this study highlight the impact the gay-rights movement of the 1970s and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s had on creating a generation of activist leaders. Further, workplace climate plays a significant role in disclosure decisions. Leaders of the lesbian, gay, bisexual,

transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community aged 50 years and older tend to follow a passive-disclosure process and use a mask of professionalism to conceal their sexual orientation. Organizations have several recommended approaches to create an inclusive and open workplace for the LGBTQ community.

SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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December 13, 2017

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December 13, 2017

Dr. Danfeng Koon

December 13, 2017

DEDICATION

From the Compton's Cafeteria Riot in 1966 to today, the fight for equality continues for *all* members of the U.S. queer community. To plot a course for the future, it is critical people understand where they have been in their past. This dissertation is dedicated to the lesbian women and gay men who shared their stories, insights, and experiences as leaders in their fields, over the decades. Without their participation, none of this work would be possible. Together the community remembers the champions in who have gone before and guide those who come after.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was a labor of love by the people in my community—supporting my efforts to pursue my doctorate degree, achieve this life goal, follow my passion for education, and learn about myself through reflection and interaction with others.

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Chi Vang, it is because of you that I am here today. You have stood by my side through every phase of this research journey, learning with me about the research and writing process, serving as a thought partner, and working as my right hand at key points in the process. When the nights were late (or all-night), interviews and edits were demanding after a long day at work and on the weekends, and when I was in desperate need of encouragement, you pulled me up, and sometimes dragged me up, but were always there no matter the circumstances. Thank you seems inadequate and I’ll spend a lifetime expressing my gratitude.

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inner warrior to fight the fight of my community. As my dissertation chair, you gave me space to learn and grow as a researcher and pushed me to new limits—more than I thought I could accomplish. Thank you for calm encouragement, incredible edits and guidance, and for being instrumental in shaping who I am today.

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Justin A. Moore, cousin, thank you for providing me with superb marketing materials that I was able to use in the recruitment of study participants. You worked quickly to produce high-quality materials that became an integral part of my study's success.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Over the past several decades, the lesbian and gay community gained legal protection through various legislative actions in limited areas around the world, creating freedom for people to publicly express their sexual orientation in personal and professional environments. However, social attitudes continue to reinforce heteronormative structures throughout society, including the workplace.

When looking at heteronormative structures in the U.S. workplace, numerous characteristics are evident: issues related to workplace discrimination, factors that shape the decision to disclose sexual orientation, and how sexual identities are formed and managed. Woods and Lucas (1993) highlight that:

A gay man faces a decision every time he sets foot in a work environment, whenever he is in the presence of a boss, client, secretary, customer. ... At all times, he must balance a whole host of considerations—worries that are largely unknown to his heterosexual peers. (p. 4)

Considering that most colleagues in the workplace are unable to identify with a lesbian or gay colleague's experience with sexual orientation, it becomes apparent that the onus of a lesbian or gay individual to manage their identity is of paramount importance. These individuals represent a sizable portion of the U.S. workforce, with estimates ranging from a 4 to 17 % (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991, as cited in Ragins & Cornwell, 2001, p. 1244). "The variance ... reflects the fact that accurate estimates are difficult to obtain, as many individuals fear the repercussions of and/or simply avoid revealing their sexual

orientations in the workplace” (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001, as cited in Martinez, Ruggs, Sabat, Hebl, & Binggeli, 2013, p. 456). Figure 1 illustrates an international study of ~96,000 participants asking whether they knew someone who identifies as homosexual: 46% of participants responded yes, 34% no, and 20% unsure.

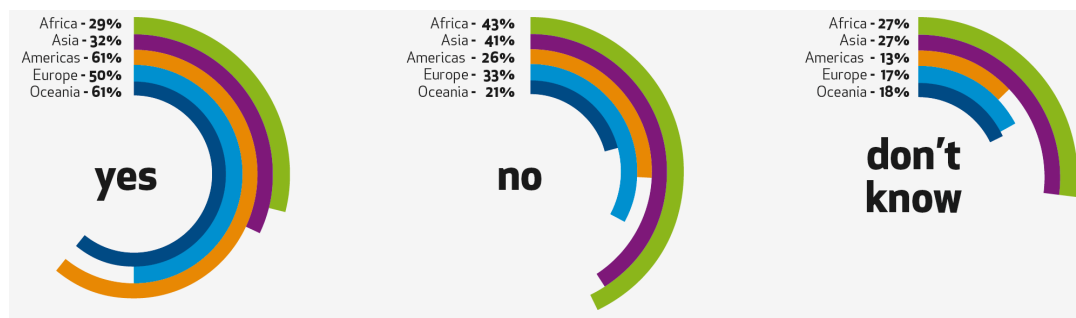


Figure 1. Knowledge of someone's sexual identity.

Note. From *The Personal and the Political: Attitudes to LGBTI People Around the World*, by International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, 2016b, retrieved from http://ilga.org/downloads/Ilga_Riwi_Attitudes_LGBTI_survey_Logo_personal_political.pdf. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

Further analysis of the report indicated that, of U.S. study participants, 65% responded yes, 18% no, and 17% not sure. These percentages are well above the international average (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association [ILGA] 2016b). The difference in perceptions of participants surveyed around the world, as compared to those in the United States, illustrates that regardless of a participant's continent or country of origin, lesbian and gay individuals have a lagging visibility in their community and workplace. Societies continue to fail to provide an environment where lesbian and gay individuals are safe, supported, free of discrimination, and free to disclose their sexual orientation.

In the United States, 35% of respondents are uncertain whether they know or work with a lesbian, gay, or bisexual individual. Therefore, it seems extremely likely that

many individuals in the United States are working alongside a lesbian, gay, or bisexual colleague, whose sexual orientation they do not know (ILGA, 2016b). This presents an enormous challenge because “up to one third [of lesbian and gay people] choose not to disclose their identity to anyone at work” (Croteau, 1996 as cited in Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007, p. 1103). Due to limited disclosure in the workplace and nearly one third of people who are unaware of sexual orientation, lesbian and gay individuals often face uncomfortable work environments that cause a host of problems. Revealing one’s sexuality in the workplace is a significant event, equating to more than simply making others aware of a person’s sexual orientation or disclosing the invisible stigma. Dubbed *coming out*, personally and professionally, accompanies costs and risks based on cultural heteronormativity, and challenges legislated, or lack thereof, antigay discrimination.

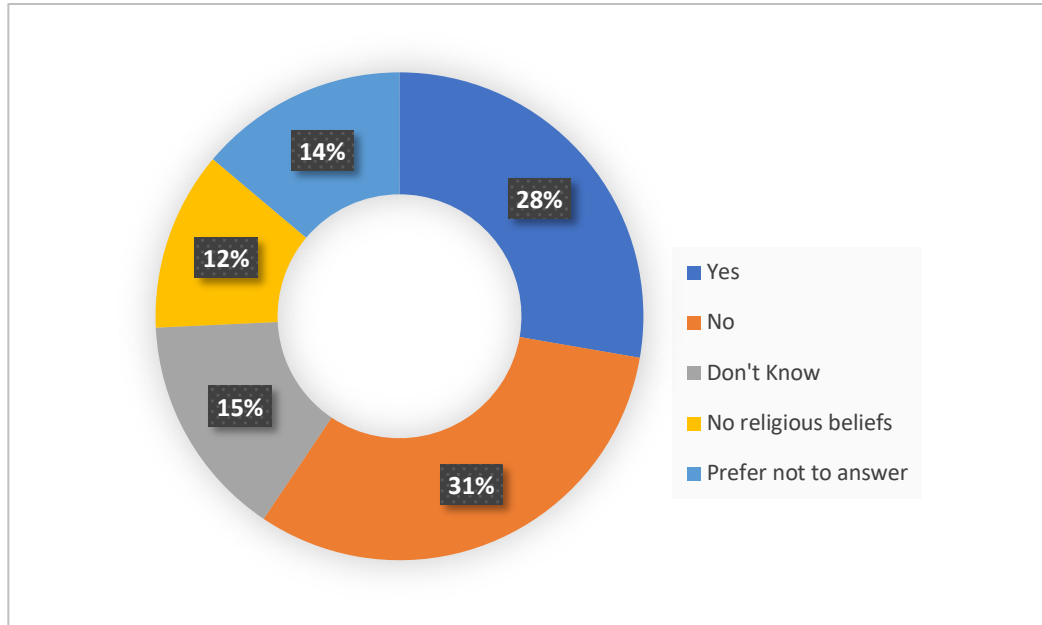
When analyzing the current literature and comparing it to the current state of perceptions and beliefs around the globe, clearly many factors influence lesbian and gay employees throughout their sexual and professional identity formation. Lesbian or gay people practicing leadership roles in the workplace are a narrow subset of the population studied for their mentorship and advocacy activities. However, the shifting perspectives and priorities leaders hold throughout their careers related to their sexual orientation remains largely unstudied.

The problem lies in that lesbian and gay leaders maintain and advance their careers in every organization, yet little research studied how the impact of factors such as discrimination, identity formation and maintenance, disclosure dilemmas, and the workplace environment converge in an individual’s career development.

Background and Need for Study

Lesbian and gay communities around the world are impacted by regional social norms and political climates, leading to shifts in legislation on sexual orientation at federal, state, and local levels. The United States provides no stable federal protections to these communities at this time. The continual flux of protections in the United States demonstrates that factors and decisions driving the implementation and sustainability of such protections are driven by political forces and interests, and, in some cases, religion and tradition. Interestingly, as states proposed new legislation or rescinded others protecting lesbian and gay individuals from a myriad of discriminations, such as housing or employment, citizens expressed an increasingly favorable view of lesbian or gay individuals.

Understanding the current social and political context of the treatment and perceptions of the lesbian and gay community provides the background for this study. In a 2016b study produced by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association that surveyed 96,331 respondents from 54 countries with a minimum response rate of 700 respondents per country, researchers inquired about views regarding the lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) community. First, considering the foundation of many cultures is rooted in deep religious tradition or remnants of colonialism, it is important to understand lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals' views related to religion. The ILGA (2016b) found that a third of participants in the United States have a conflict between if a same-sex desire and their religious beliefs, while a third do not, indicating that there is a large gap in the views of sexual orientation and religion (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2. Conflict between religious views and same-sex desires in the United States. Note. From *The Personal and the Political: Attitudes to LGBTI People Around the World*, by International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, 2016b, retrieved from http://ilga.org/downloads/Ilga_Riwi_Attitudes_LGBTI_survey_Logo_personal_political.pdf. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.*

The split in responses indicated large variances between religious views and same-sex desires. The ILGA commented, “the forces of media, state and religion combine to portray particular populations as ‘undesirable,’ and public dialogues on issues of sexual and gender diversity are severely curtailed” (2016b, p. 20).

To enhance understanding of the impact of religion on the views of individuals in the United States, researchers asked respondents if human rights should be applied to everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation (ILGA, 2016b). Figure 3 highlights that respondents in the United States overwhelmingly believed lesbian and gay individuals should receive human rights, despite conflict with personal religious beliefs (ILGA, 2016d).

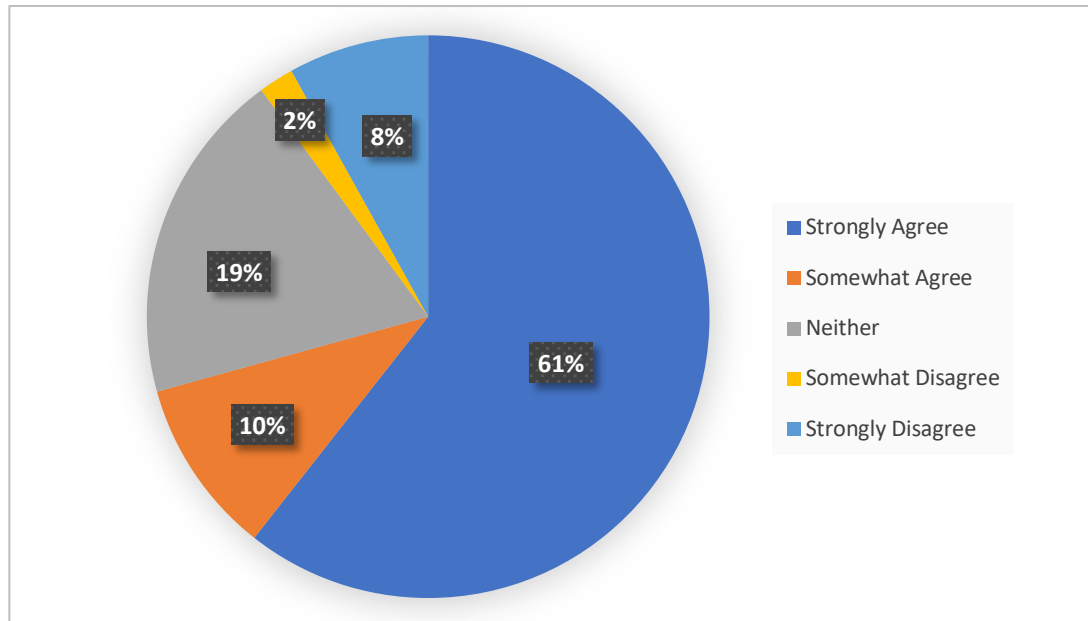


Figure 3. Respondents in the United States state if human rights should be applied to everyone.

Note. From *The Personal and the Political: Attitudes to LGBTI People Around the World*, by International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, 2016b, retrieved from http://ilga.org/downloads/Ilga_Riwi_Attitudes_LGBTI_survey_Logo_personal_political.pdf. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

These responses are encouraging and demonstrate that despite conflicts with some religions, substantial and increasing support persists for equal human rights.

In the absence of legal protections, abundant opportunity exists for discrimination to occur. The ILGA (2016d) reported that antidiscrimination in employment laws are in place, to varying extents, in 71 countries. Figure 4 highlights the countries offering antidiscrimination protections, although protections may only be available in states or provinces in each country.

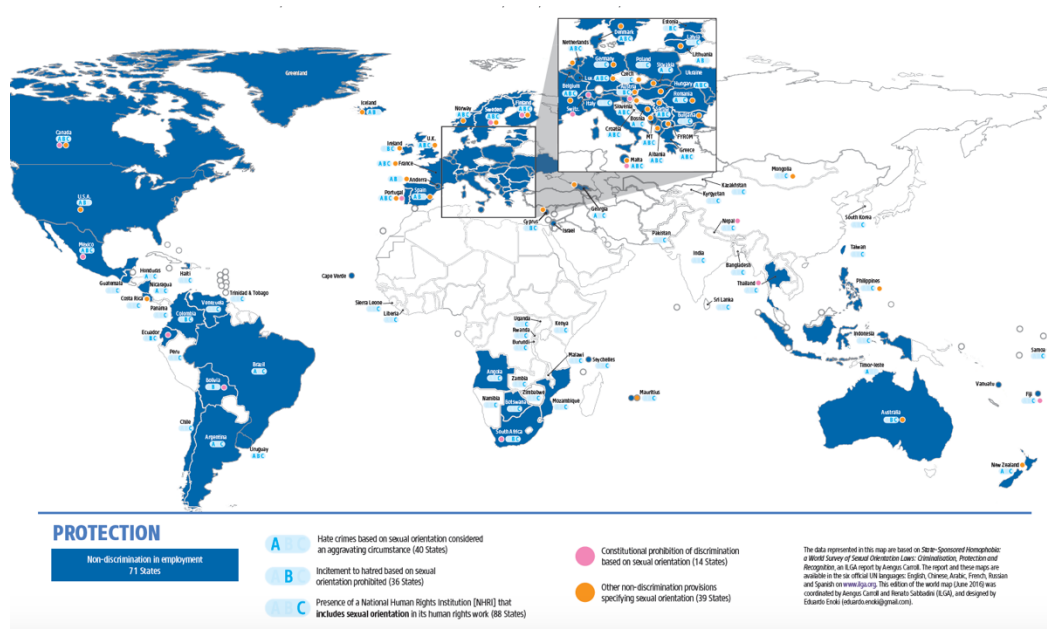


Figure 4. Antidiscrimination employment laws by country and type.

Note. Retrieved from *Sexual Orientation Laws in the World—Protection*, by International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and intersex Association, 2016c, retrieved from http://ilga.org/downloads/05_ILGA_WorldMap_ENGLISH_Protection_May2016.pdf. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

The United Nations Human Rights Council and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011) urged:

State [country] parties to “guarantee equal rights to all individuals ... regardless of their sexual orientation.” [Further] states [countries] have a “legal obligation ... to ensure to everyone the rights recognized by the Covenant ... without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.” (p. 16)

Even with such strong language and clear direction, the United States has a dearth of antidiscrimination protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender citizens.

Figure 5 presents a breakdown of each U.S. state currently enforcing antidiscrimination

laws encompassing sexual orientation and gender identity, or in some cases, only sexual orientation.

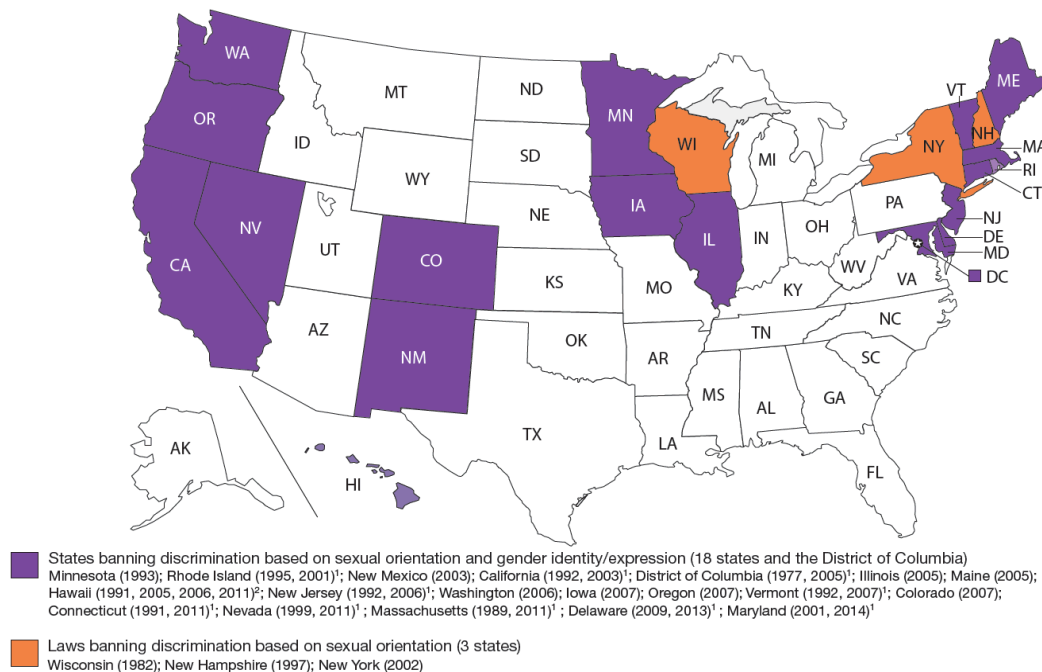


Figure 5. Breakdown of antidiscrimination laws for sexual orientation and gender identity by state.

Note. Retrieved from *State Nondiscrimination Laws in the U.S.*, by National LGBTQ Task Force, 2014, retrieved from http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/issue_maps/non_discrimination_5_14_color_new.pdf. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

Although the United Nations Human Rights Council encourages countries to provide adequate protections for lesbian and gay individuals in the workplace, the United States failed to do so federally. Understanding the current views of citizens in the United States on their perceptions of lesbian and gay individuals is a critical step in contextualizing the political issues of antigay discrimination. Researchers reported on the social views of citizens in the United States illustrating the rift between the views of large portions of the population and their lack of action, or malicious action, depriving lesbian and gay individuals from legal protections (United Nations High Commissioner for

Human Rights, 2011). The failure of the government to adequately protect lesbian and gay individuals from discriminatory acts, including in the workplace, forces these individuals to navigate and manage their sexual orientation in dangerous workplace environments, where the cost of disclosure may include termination, lack of career advancement, lower incomes, and psychosocial stress.

About 1% of the U.S. population identifies as lesbian or gay; however, the population measures of sexual orientation are difficult to measure because of several factors, including fear of self-identification, denial, or failure to report (Catalyst, 2015). Researchers stated, “an estimated 8.8 million gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals live in the United States” (Erens, McManus, Prescott, & Field, 2003, Gates, 2006, as cited in Bell, Özbilgin, Beauregard, & Sürgevil, 2011, p. 133). The difference in population estimates reflects inconsistencies established in identifying members of the LGB community.

With no federal protections in place for LGB employees, those who express their sexual orientation in the workplace are at high risk for termination, demotion, lack of career advancement, and retaliation by employers. As of 2015, 29 of the 50 U.S. states offered no legal protections for LBG employees, indicating significant risk for employees who are out in the workplace (Catalyst, 2015). In 2015, more than 50% of LGB employees hid their sexual orientation in the workplace and 33% lied about their personal lives while at work (Catalyst, 2015). Even more recently, “one in four [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] employees report experiencing employment discrimination in the last five years” (Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, n.d., p. 1).

The dismal accounts of unsafe workplaces indicate the high risk many lesbian and gay professionals experience on a daily basis. Further, lesbian or gay individuals in leadership roles experience increased pressure when faced with disclosing their sexual orientation in the workplace to their managers and supervisees. These types of disclosure can positively and negatively affect lesbian and gay leaders' experiences in the workplace, particularly with regard to career advancement. The barriers to career advancement have been dubbed the lavender ceiling. King et al. described the power the lavender ceiling can have over lesbian and gay employees:

Because fears of demotion or job loss partially motivate concealing an LGB orientation (Ragins, 2004; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007), it stands to reason that LGB people may be particularly hesitant to disclose their sexual identities with people who have the power to affect their job status. (King et al., 2014, pp. 5–6)

Additionally, the heteronormative structures in which U.S. cultures operate maintain a bearing on every facet of the traditional workplace. Magee and Galinsky (2008, as cited in King et al., 2014, pp. 4–5) described that heteronormative structures “typically involve hierarchies that reflect implicit power dynamics wherein managers generally have both status and power over their subordinates.” That power dynamic significantly impacts the likelihood that a person will disclose their sexual orientation.

In addition to the major role that the threat and occurrences of discrimination in the workplace play in the decision to disclose one's sexual orientation, personal factors and experiences heavily guide a person's intention to disclose their orientation. Ragins et al. (2007) reflected on the intersectionality of personal factors and environmental factors,

noting, “the disclosure is driven by anticipated consequences that are balanced by the internal psychological processes driving disclosure on the one hand and the environmental factors that support or punish disclosure on the other” (p. 1105). It is clear that many factors impact decisions to disclose one’s sexual orientation in the workplace, internal and external, through a process that is unique to each individual who experiences the disclosure process over the course of their career.

Further compounding the challenges and benefits of the disclosure process, each person’s sexual orientation is an ongoing formation, frequently referenced as a “career” in and of itself because it is an unending process requiring maintenance and cultivation to fully understand and manage in the workplace (Guittar & Rayburn, 2016). Creed (2006, as cited in Marrs & Staton, 2016), found that because sexual orientation is essentially invisible, lesbian and gay people “are always in the position of having to determine whether to disclose their orientation when they encounter new colleagues” (p. 42). The ongoing decision to disclose one’s sexual orientation requires continual assessment of the workplace environment. Members of the gay community struggle to develop a lasting identity because of professional and personal pressures (Hirsch, 2000, as cited by Tindall & Waters, 2012, p. 463). Hill (2009) opined that “those in authority must provide a safe environment for people to risk transformation” (p. 40). Ultimately, an inclusive workplace environment, governed by antidiscrimination policies, will provide a workspace for all employees to grow and flourish because they are able to focus on their career development without the fear of negative consequences from their peers and the organization as a result of their sexual orientation.

As the number of lesbian and gay persons in leadership positions continue to increase in the workplace, workplaces must understand the ways discrimination, disclosure, sexual-orientation formation and management, and the environment impact a person's career. Researchers have predominately focused on the strategies lesbian and gay people employed to manage their sexual orientation in the workplace (Button, 2004; Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2001; Collins, 2016; Croteau, Anderson, & VanderWal, 2008; DeJordy, 2008; Guittar, 2013; Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, & King, 2008; King, Reilly, & Hebl, 2008; Madera, King, & Hebl, 2012; McFadden, 2015; Oakleaf, 2013; Orne, 2011; Reed & Leuty, 2016, Rumens, 2011; Rust, 1993; Tindall & Waters, 2012). Griffith and Hebl (2002, p. 1191), citing works by Bohan (1996), Ellis & Riggle (1996), Franke & Leary (1991), Goffman (1963), Kronenberger (1991), and Wells and Kline (1987) stated that "disclosing one's sexual orientation is one of the toughest issues that gay men and lesbians face because it involves considerable emotional turmoil and a fear of retaliation and rejection." Likewise, the disclosure of sexual orientation, besides being wrought with emotional and psychological stress, is not limited to a single occurrence. In other words, "the recursive nature of coming out, since meeting a new colleague, for example, or changing jobs, necessitate a repetition of the disclosure (Benozzo et al., 2015, p. 292).

The ongoing process of managing sexual orientation in the workplace directly impacts how experiences and perceptions impact the workplace environment. McFadden (2015, p. 136) identified five major areas of current research in the literature:

- Discrimination and identity management strategies impact career development and decisions of LGBT workers;

- Participants experienced decreased job satisfaction in heterosexist organizations (Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Parnell, Lease, & Green, 2012);
- LGBT executives were acutely aware of their position as advocate and role model for other LGBT employees (Heintz, 2012);
- LGBT employees attempt to bring together their LGBT identity with other workplace identities (O’Ryan & McFarland, 2010; Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009);
- Sexual and gender identity are central to many LGBT employees’ lives, and in some cases the career may be of secondary importance compared with being authentic to oneself (Heintz, 2012).

McFadden (2015) also noted, “interplay with identity development and how perspectives and priorities may change over time is needed” for lesbian and gay employees (p. 149). This study derived its research position from the application of McFadden’s identification of a gap in the literature and applies the topic more narrowly to how lesbian and gay people in leadership roles shift their perspectives and priorities throughout their careers as a result of their ongoing sexual-orientation formation and their professional-identity management.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify how priorities and perspectives shift for lesbian and gay people in leadership positions throughout their career, impacted by their sexual-orientation formation and professional-identity maintenance. Throughout this study, the researcher investigated priorities, perspectives, and career development in the workplace of lesbian and gay leaders, and the factors that caused them to refocus, or shift their priorities and perspectives in their work over time. With considerable factors

contributing to shifts in perspectives and priorities through a career, the researcher analyzed how these factors came together to impact the decision-making process for each individual. To gather this information, the researcher employed a phenomenological approach to collect and analyze data to explore the lived experiences of this sample.

In the literature review, the researcher encapsulated the current body of research on workplace discrimination, the disclosure of a person's sexual orientation, sexual-orientation formation and management, and workplace environment. Through exploration of the aforementioned areas of literature, the researcher used the context to understand the experiences, from a phenomenological standpoint, of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles. Further, the researcher analyzed the experiences participants in this study shared through two theoretical frameworks: queer theory and social constructionism. Through the analysis process, the researcher explored how lesbian and gay leaders managed their sexual orientation in the workplace (queer theory) by determining when to disclose their sexual orientation and how other factors impacted the decision to disclose, including the stigmatization of their sexual orientation. Further, the researcher viewed the experiences collected through this study through the lens of social constructionism, considering how societal and political norms, beliefs, and practices shaped how participants view themselves in relation to society.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher analyzed how perspectives and priorities shifted through the careers of lesbian and gay people in leadership positions as a result of their sexual-orientation formation and professional-identity management through two theoretical lenses: queer theory and social constructionism. The use of theoretical perspectives

allows for an analysis that provides clarity and understanding to the phenomenon that participants in this study experienced throughout their careers and shared during this process.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism, as defined by Burr (2015), “insists that we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves” (p. 2). Further, this challenge to our view of the world rests in the notion that one should “be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be” (Burr, 2015, p. 3). That is, individuals following social-constructionist theory should look at the world and challenge those assumptions made about their seemingly definitive perceptions, such as gender, that are often divided into unclassified categories as society evolves new gender descriptions for people who existed all along, but did not receive the space to exist in society. This is the core of social constructionism.

Four key assumptions comprise social constructionism that guide the use of this theory: (a) a critical stance toward assumed knowledge, (b) historical and cultural specificity, (c) knowledge sustained by social processes, and (d) knowledge and social action go together (Burr, 2015). Drawing from these assumptions, Burr (2014) challenged that “the ways in which we commonly understand the world, [and] the categories and concepts we use,” lead some to, in one culture and context, “impose” their ways of thinking on others, resulting in an attempt to override systems and practices that are “specific to particular culture and period of history” that are “dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture” (p. 4). The implication is that when someone or something is viewed through a personal perspective,

the perspective fails to account for the culture and history of the person/group, changing the way society views or relates to them.

Through the lens of social constructionism, society is challenged to consider that knowledge is created and shared through interactions between people in their everyday lives, yielding a “product that is of the social process and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with one another” (Burr, 2015, p. 5). The implication of social constructionism for this study brings to light that sexual orientation is a social construct that evolved in society, throughout history, and positions that lesbian and gay individuals existed in the same manner throughout history. How society understands and relates to lesbian and gay sexual orientation is what changes. To this point, Brower (2013) cited Clarke and Turner (2007) and Blackwood and Weiringa (1999), stating “identity differs with social, community, and workplace cultures” (p. 493), implying that the cultural and historic context of social groups and, in this study, organizations, view identities in a way established through the people in the organization and society that surround it. Rust (1992) found, “social constructs that provides language for the description of social location change over time. Historical changes in the conceptualization of sexuality change the meaning of constructs and generate new constructs” (p. 68). This theory enabled the researcher to understand how workplace priorities and perspectives have shifted for lesbian and gay leaders in the workplace over time, due to the influence of the change associated with society’s shifting knowledge and understandings of itself.

During the planning phase of this study, the researcher noted a potential conflict with the use of social constructionism and a phenomenological approach due to the thought, at the essentialist level, that in social constructionism “there are no essences, but

rather only interpretations and discourses” (Stein, 2014, para 1). This notion ultimately undoes the underpinnings of this study. However, upon further analysis, the researcher successfully reconciled the two by approaching the theory and qualitative research method in a more general sense, allowing for the discovery of an experience. As Stein stated, what “we uncover [through the inquiry process] is contingent and constrained by various discourses” (2014, para 22). That is, in the quest to uncover the experience of each participant, the external factors that played a part in their lived experiences and their understanding of the phenomenon received consideration.

Queer Theory

The emergence of queer theory in the 1990s struggled to gain academic acceptance from management and organization studies due to the “hetero-/cisnormativity of business and management schools” (Rumens, 2016, as cited in Rumens, 2017, p. 231), where “regimes of heteronormativity not only regulate the homosexual, but control heterosexual practices by creating a moral hierarchy of good and bad sexual citizens” (Seidman, 2001, p. 354 as cited in Lee et al., 2008, p. 152). However, scholars increasingly advance queer theory into organization contexts to challenge what has been considered long-standing normal behaviors and structures.

Queer, by definition, “is whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant”, which Lugg and Tooms (2010) noted is also a term that implies “fluid sexual and gender identities, and the term is radically inclusive by design” (p. 78). Parker frankly stated “queer theory is about ‘fucking things up’ ... and offering alternative explanations of social life that appear radical and strange because they push the boundaries of what is considered to be unquestionable common knowledge” (2001, as

cited in J. McDonald, 2016, p. 24). Additionally, “historically ‘queer’ has been the most vicious of slurs—literally fighting words, in some areas”, but received reclamation for positive intentions as a term to encompass the community (Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 78). Further, Jagose remarked, “there is no generally acceptable definition of queer and the boundaries between what is queer and what is not are ambiguous” (1996, as cited in J. McDonald, 2016, p. 24). In this study, the researcher employed queer theory to analyze and challenge the heteronormative assumptions and binary experiences that participants experienced over the span of their careers, translated through their interviews.

Research Questions

The current literature related to lesbian and gay persons in leadership positions encompasses many fields of study covering a significant set of variables that are continuing to build the body of knowledge to better understand the situation of the lesbian and gay communities in the United States and throughout the world. The researcher of this study focused on a sample of lesbian and gay persons in leadership positions to explore how their priorities and perspectives shifted throughout their careers, impacted by their sexual-orientation formation and the management of their professional identity. To guide this study, the researcher employed six research questions:

1. How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?
2. How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?

3. Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?
4. What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?
5. What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?
6. How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study anchored on advancing organization and leadership research because it directly focused on the intersectionality of career advancement, sexual-orientation formation, and professional-identity management as each shifted the priorities and perspectives of the gay and lesbian individuals in leadership roles. As managers advanced their careers and navigated the political landscape of a heteronormative workplace, understanding how societal and political factors shaped their experiences as a lesbian or gay leader is critical for their future success and for that of others in similar positions.

A second key significance is the exploration of how various factors impact lesbian or gay leaders' priorities and perspectives while accounting for potential discrimination, workplace environment—including culture and climate—the management of their sexual orientation, and the disclosure process. The disclosure of one's sexual orientation dramatically impacts career advancement and comes with consequences for the duration

of time in a company. As a result, providing leaders in the field with insight into how societal and political factors influence their sexual-orientation formation, which then impacts their career development, can provide them with information to determine the best actions to take in their workplace.

In addition, the researcher built on the existing body of research, encompassing several aspects that are the underpinnings of this study: (a) understanding the coming out (disclosure) process for complexities and implications (Anastas, 1998; Benozzo, Pizzorno, Bell, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2015; Guittar & Rayburn, 2016; King, Mohr, Peddie, Jones, & Kendra, 2014; McLean, 2007; Orne, 2011; Williams & Giuffre, 2011; Woods & Lucas, 1993), (b) the process of disclosing one's identity (Brower, 2013; Einarsdóttir, Hoel, & Lewis, 2016; Marrs & Staton, 2016; Ragins et al., 2007), and (c) how individuals proceeded in managing their sexual orientation (Huffman et al., 2008; Madera, 2010; Oakleaf, 2013; Orne, 2011; Reed & Leuty, 2016; Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Tindall & Waters, 2012). Through this study, the researcher also advanced the research of the workplace environment as a factor influencing a leaders' perspectives and priorities, which can positively impact the individuals and the organization as a whole (Cunningham, 2015; Hill, 2009; King et al., 2008; Trau, 2015).

Further, the researcher contributed to the expansion and understanding of the moral bearing that law and policy hold in the workplace regarding the development of an inclusive and safe work environment that enables employees, in particular lesbian and gay individuals, to flourish and connect with their colleagues (Bell et al., 2011; Cunningham, 2015; Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Martinez et al., 2013; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Stemming from the concepts of an inclusive workplace environment, the

researcher also integrated and advanced understanding of how discrimination in the workplace factors into the priorities and perspectives of lesbian and gay leaders through noninclusive practices in the absence of policy protections (Anastas, 1998; Bell et al., 2011; Chavan, 2015; Cunningham, 2015) and heteronormative structures (Boso, 2016; Drydakis, 2015; King et al., 2014; Oswald, 1999; Priola, Lasio, Simone, & Serri. 2014; Williams & Giuffre 2011). Last, the researcher sought to advance the concept of the lavender ceiling, a term marginally discussed in the literature (Anastas, 1998; Smith, 2013).

Definitions of Key Terms

The list below is not considered exhaustive of terms used in this study; however, these are the most pertinent terms to the current research. The definitions provided below are the most relevant to the intention with which each word is used in this study, but is not the definitive, global meaning.

Bisexual: “A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender” (UC Davis Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Asexual, Queer, Intersex [LGBTAIQ] Resource Center, 2016, para. 19)

Cisgender: A gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person’s assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis means “on this side of” or “not across.” A term used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not transgender (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 21).

Closeted: “Individuals who engage in passing behaviors in the hope of remaining invisible” (Kaplan, 2014, p. 121).

Coming out: “Voluntarily making public one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 25).

Concealable stigma: Some stigmatized identities may be observable and difficult to conceal, such as race, other identities may be invisible as is the case of attitudes, values, or past experiences that may be stigmatized. Possessing a concealable stigmatized identity allows individuals more latitude in deciding, how, when, and to whom to expose this identity” (Reed & Leuty, 2016, p. 985).

Concealing: “Involves changing behavior and managing clues to explicitly and directly restrict access to their sexual identity” (Orne, 2011, p. 690).

Culture: “A learned set of values, beliefs, customs, norms, and perceptions shared by a group of people that provide a general design for living and a pattern for interpreting life” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 33).

Disclosure: See also coming out.

Gay: “A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 43).

Gender identity: “A sense of one’s self as transgender, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 57).

Glass ceiling: “Symbolizes invisible barriers through which women can see elite positions but cannot reach them because of gender inequities in the workplace” (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005, p. 77, as cited in Smith, 2013, p. 2).

Heteronormativity: A set of lifestyle norms, practices, and institutions that promote binary alignment of biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles; assume

heterosexuality as a fundamental and natural norm; and privilege monogamous, committed relationships and reproductive sex above all other sexual practices. (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 42)

Identity management: “The ways in which people control access to and type of information about their identities” (Orne, 2011, p. 682).

Intersex: People who naturally (that is, without any medical intervention) develop primary or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into society’s definitions of male or female. Many visibly Intersex people are mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors to make the individual’s sex characteristics conform to society’s idea of what normal bodies should look like. Intersex people are relatively common, although the society’s denial of their existence has allowed very little room for intersex issues to be discussed publicly. Hermaphrodite is an outdated and inaccurate term that has been used to describe intersex people in the past. (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 89).

Invisible identity: See also concealable stigma.

Lavender ceiling: Derived from the commonly used “glass ceiling” metaphor. “The lavender ceiling describes similar issues for LGB employees, specifically the unofficial barriers they may face in moving up the career ladder” (Smith, 2013, p. 2).

Leader: A person who is in a position of influence and power that may or may not be granted by job title or function.

Lesbian: “A woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 99).

LGBT: “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and [transgender] community refers to the shared social and political identity of LGB[T] persons” (Gates, 2015, pp. 75–76).

Manager: “A person responsible for making significant decisions on what the unit does: its purpose, functions and role, and for making commitments and decisions that require the expenditure of significant unit resources” (UC Berkeley Human Resources, n.d., para. 1).

Orientation: Includes the following aspects: “sexual attraction and sexual behavior—as well as sexual identity, romantic attractions and behaviors, membership in sexual communities (e.g., lesbian, bisexual, gay, kink, Bondage and Discipline, Sadism and Masochism [BDSM]), sexual fantasies” (Grollman, 2010, para. 3).

Out: “Individuals who self-disclose their sexual orientation, and hence give visibility to this aspect of their identity, are referred to as being out, as in out of the closet” (Kaplan, 2014, p. 121).

Passing: “An active concealment technique, wherein the person behaves in ways to appear heterosexual (e.g., uses heterosexual pronouns when referring to same-sex romantic partner)” (Reed & Leuty, 2016, p. 988).

Professional identity: The image a worker portrays to their colleagues in the work environment.

Queer: An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTIQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning] people. Also, a political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. (UC Berkeley Centers for Educational Justice & Community Engagement, 2013, para. 125)

Sexual identity (orientation): “enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction or non-attraction to other people. Sexual orientation is fluid and people use a variety of labels to describe their sexual orientation” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 131).

Sexual minority: “Refers to members of sexual orientations or who engage in sexual activities that are not part of the mainstream” (UC Berkeley Centers for Educational Justice & Community Engagement, 2013, para. 135).

Stigma: “Socially undesirable, deviant, or repulsive characteristics that discredit or spoil an individual’s social identity” (Ragins et al., 2007, p. 1,104).

Stigmatization: “A pervasive process of devaluation that permeates social interactions involving both targets and perceivers” (Ragins et al., 2007, p. 1,104).

Strategic outness: “Strategic outness is the contextual and continual management of identity in which people are never fully ‘out’ or ‘closeted’” (Orne, 2011, p. 698).

Transgender: “Adjective used most often as an umbrella term. It describes a wide range of identities and experiences of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned sex at birth” (UC Davis LGBTAIQ Resource Center, 2016, para. 147).

Worker: “An individual who performs services for wages on a part- time or full-time basis. Finding rewarding and meaningful work is a fundamental human need” (Gates, 2015, p. 76).

Workplace climate: “Collective atmosphere of a workplace: the attitudes, perceptions and dynamics that affect how people perform on a daily basis” (Lewis Associates, n.d., para. 1).

Workplace culture: See also culture.

Summary

The shift in priorities and perspectives for lesbian and gay people in a leadership role throughout the course of their ongoing sexual-orientation formation and management of their professional identity is an area of research yet to be explored in the scholarly community. The researcher sought to understand how discrimination, sexual orientation, disclosure of orientation, and the workplace environment influenced participants' shift throughout their careers. The U.S. workplace has a considerable lack of antidiscrimination protections for LGB workers. Shifting political and social climates significantly influence the way individuals perceive themselves and their position in society, which is a concept rooted in social constructionism. Further, the researcher used queer theory as a lens to understand why participants made certain decisions regarding their sexual orientation, which may be explained when understanding their orientation from a stigmatized position in society. In the following chapter, the researcher explored the existing body of research to build a context to understand participants' lived experiences.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Restatement of the Problem

LGBT identity development and its role in the career development process has been [minimally] explored. Given the overlap between one's identity and career... how one's self-identity changes over time ... their feelings and thoughts regarding it, may have an important effect on a number of issues throughout their career. (McFadden, 2015, p. 149)

The current problem, reflected in the focus of this study, pertains to the notion that the queer community is gaining greater mainstream visibility in the United States, from marriage rights to state workplace-discrimination policies, creating the opportunity for lesbian and gay people to come out of the closet and embrace their sexual orientation. Over the past several decades, scholarly research focused on the development of models to explain the coming-out process; identity strategies that lesbian and gay people use to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation; and how workplace climate, culture, and policies impact a person's performance, job satisfaction, and mental state.

In some areas of the international community, lesbian and gay people are gaining more favorable societal opinions as a demographic minority. However, major disconnections persist between society's progression toward a more favorable view of lesbian and gay people. For example, the United States and other countries fail to take any significant action to ensure protections and equal rights are enshrined at the federal level. With little legal protection for lesbian and gay individuals uniformly applied throughout the United States, a tension remains between an individual's desire to express

their sexual orientation to their peers and the threat of rejection and negative consequences. According to Out & Equal Workplace Advocates (n.d.), “in 28 states, you can get fired just for being lesbian, bisexual, or gay” (p. 1). Considering the high stakes of being out in the workplace, many areas of unexplored gaps exist in the current research.

The researcher focused this study on how lesbian and gay people in leadership roles respond to the workplace environment and societal factors, using identity-management strategies to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation throughout the course of their careers. In particular, the researcher aimed to reveal how individual workplace priorities and perspectives shift as a lesbian or gay employees’ sexual orientation continues to form. Although researchers considered specific aspects of identity-formation and identity-management strategies in the workplace, an exploration of the intersectionality of sexual-orientation formation, workplace environment and discrimination, and sexual-orientation disclosure affects lesbian or gay leaders’ priorities in the workplace needs to be formally conducted. This gap in literature is a problem because, with increasing numbers of lesbian and gay individuals disclosing their identities in the workplace, researchers need to reflect their experiences to inform practitioners in the field.

This study is grounded in six research questions:

Research Questions

1. How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?

2. How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?
3. Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?
4. What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?
5. What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?
6. How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Overview of Review of Literature

“Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) employees have been neglected in much of the academic research... partly due to their invisibility, overt discrimination, and lack of widespread protective legislation, GLBT employees are at high risk of silencing at work” (Bell et al, 2011, p. 132). The researcher selected 15 participants who identify as cisgender lesbian or gay persons in leadership positions to explore the impacts society and sexual orientation impose on their career perspectives and priorities. The researcher grounded this study in the work of McFadden (2015, p. 144) who noted:

The intersection between career development and LGBT orientation development has not been studied in any great detail in the management literature, with only a small number of the reviewed articles (e.g., Boatwright et al., 1996; Lyons,

Brenner, & Lipman, 2010; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003) dealing specifically with the topic.

With shifting political and social landscapes in the United States and around the world, the presence of lesbian and gay workers may rise due, in part, to increasing protections at the local level that provide a safe, inclusive, nondiscriminatory environment. Through this chapter, the researcher developed a foundation and context for viewing the factors that contribute directly to an individual's career growth, position in society, and relation to organizations. The content contained in this chapter is not an exhaustive search of the literature, but has met saturation with content and database searches that the researcher deemed appropriate to support this study. Due to the niche of this study, the thematic sections of the literature review broadly encompass the various aspects needed to understand this study. The literature in this review is intended to provide context to the factors and situations that may cause lesbian and gay leaders to shift their perspectives and priorities in the workplace.

This review assessed four major themes in the literature:

- Discrimination
- Disclosure of Sexual Orientation
- Sexual-Orientation Management
- Workplace Factors

In this chapter, the literature review explored pertinent studies, theorists, and concepts that inform this body of work. The chapter opens with an examination of two theoretical frameworks: social-constructionism theory and queer theory, that later inform the analytical methods of the data collected during this study. The chapter continues with

an exploration of the literature, beginning with discrimination in the workplace with a focus on the prevalence and impact of discrimination, the effects of the lavender ceiling, factors related to career impediment, and the heteronormative structures of the workplace.

In the following section of this chapter, the researcher explored the concept of disclosing sexual orientation through strategic outness, factors that lead to disclosing sexual orientation, and the positive and negative impacts that occur as a result of disclosure. The subsequent section includes a literature review of the formation and management of sexual orientation. The chapter concludes with the last theme in the literature-review section, addressing the organizational structures where individuals work, and in particular, how diversity factors into an inclusive workplace, the environmental impacts on lesbian and gay employees, and the role of workplace policies.

Theoretical Frameworks

Social-Construction Theory

Social-construction theory applies a contemporary lens to understanding sexual-orientation formation. Adeagbo (2016) stated, “unlike the essentialist, the social constructionist worldview induces each person to be energetic in creating sexual identity. This view is contrary to the essentialists’ view that people’s sexual identity is static and fixed” (p. 7194). Berger and Luckmann argued that “sexuality is channeled in specific directions socially rather than biologically, a channeling that not only imposes limits on these activities, but directly affects organismic functions” (1966, as cited in Adeagbo, 2016, p. 7194). This implies that sexuality is socially constructed socially. However,

social construction theory provides the latitude to understand sexual orientation from the standpoint of fluidity and, thus, nonbinding.

Foucault (1978) argued, “human sexuality is a social and cultural construct” and challenged the claims made by “essentialists [that] stress universal forms of mate selection [while] social constructionists argue that mating characteristics, such as age and physical attractiveness, are valuable and changeable depending on the society, social settings or diverse preferences” (Hatfield & Rapson, 1996 as cited by Adeagbo, 2016, p. 7194). Similar to the argument that values and norms change over time, Rust (1993) advocated, “the sociopolitical landscape upon which one locates oneself can change. As new political movements emerge, develop, and change, social and political institutions are built, and new social and political positions are created” (p. 70). Further, Rust (1993) pointed out:

Unlike individual essences, social contexts are constantly changing. In the developmental model of coming out, changes in self-identity are considered indicative of immaturity, that is, signs that one is still in the process of development. The achievement of homosexual identity the achievement of maturity, and, once achieved, this identity is expected to be permanent. In contrast, in the social constructionist model of identity formation, changes in self-identity may in fact be necessary to maintain an accurate description of one’s social location in a changing social context; hence changes in self-identity are to be expected of psychologically and socially mature individuals. (p. 68)

Burr (2015) continued the argument from the standpoint of social constructionism, suggesting “that our identity originates not from inside the person but

from the social realm. Socialisation takes place through significant others who mediate the objective reality of society, render it meaningful and in this way, it is internalised by individuals” (Andrews, 2012, para. 9). Thus, a significant importance rests on the role of society in shaping the individual and how they experience social and political changes (Andrews, 2012). Rust (1993) also pointed out that “social constructs vary cross–(sub)culturally [and] reflects the fact that historical changes occur more quickly in some cultural pockets than others, and some reflects racial-ethnic, class, generational, geographic, and political differences in the social construction of sexuality” (p. 69). Considering that local, state, and federal governments are slow to respond to shifting cultural perspectives, the literature explains how sexual orientation may be gaining acceptance and some organizations are responding through the creation of policy and protections.

Social constructionism:

Plays an important role in illuminating gay and lesbian intimate relationships in family sociology. It brings to life different forms of familial arrangements, particularly gay and lesbian families, which have been silenced by institutions in societies where traditional forms are celebrated. (Adeagbo, 2016, p. 7194)

The importance of understanding and giving voice to the function of this theory in examining family structures and arrangements can inform organizational development in an effort to increase inclusion in the workplace.

Rust (1993) reported another benefit of this theory: “changes in the conceptualization of sexuality must accompany parallel changes in models of sexual identity formation”, which, as explained earlier, means that models change from linear to

more fluid descriptions of formation (p. 74). Further, “outdated developmental models can be replaced by an understanding of sexual orientation formation as an ongoing dynamic process of describing one’s social identity in a changing social context” (Rust, 1993, p. 74). As this theory is applied to the data collected in this study, it is important to consider that the participants lived through a shifting social and political landscape that directly impacted their social world and workplaces. Understanding the lived experiences of the participants provided great insight into how the changing social context of their world shifted their priorities and perspectives of their workplaces.

Queer Theory

The origins of queer theory stem from the poststructuralism/postmodernism and specifically focus on the “constructors of sexualities, genders, and identifies” (Plummer, 2005 as cited in Goodrich, Luke, & Smith, 2016, p. 614). This theory can bring to light the “behaviours and activities formerly seen as unproblematic and well understood” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 149). Lee et al. (2008) pointed out that queer theory challenges norms and widely accepted beliefs, and also explains that “heteronormative culture renders queer lives unliveable” (p. 153). Further, Love et al. (2012, as cited in Brim & Ghaziani, 2016, p. 18) added that queer theory “makes space for what is” as it illuminates the messy and chaotic interstices across theory, lived experiences, and practice. This theory focuses on challenging and analyzing the “foundational assumptions about difference in order to expose meanings that are hidden by binary categories” (Seidman, 1997 as cited in J. McDonald, 2016, p. 24).

Plummer identified a core group of themes that spans the queer-theory literature:

1. Homosexual/heterosexual and sex/gender binaries are challenged;
2. Identity is decentered;
3. All sexual and gender categories are open, fluid, and nonfixed;
4. Mainstream “corporate homosexuality is critiqued”;
5. Power is embedded in discourse;
6. Normality and normalization strategies are challenged;
7. Academic work can be ironic;
8. The deviance paradigm is eliminated and insider/outsider positions are explored and analyzed;
9. Most common course of study is textual;
10. Interest in fringe sexualities. (2005, as cited in Goodrich, Luke, & Smith, 2016, p. 614)

These themes are what Carroll and Gilroy (as cited by Goodrich et al., 2016, p. 614) noted as thematic areas used to deconstruct the:

Binary societal understandings of sex, gender and identity ... [that]...challenges the social norms and expectations by providing individuals a unique vantage point, and arguably broadens ones’ perspectives on notions such as biological sex, gender, and identity throughout the exploration of power, politics, and activism. (Hodges, 2008 as cited by Goodrich, et al., 2016, p. 614)

The translation of queer theory into practice requires “that we recognize and then challenge norms, discourses and practices that serve to subjugate some to the benefit of others” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 150). To challenge the norms and upend the script on the

status quo, queer theory provides reflective questions to consider about the everyday assumptions one makes:

1. What is the ontological status of “things” that we might otherwise take for granted?
2. What is the “ideal” or normative shadow of the object lurking behind that being discussed?
3. Which implicit presumptions of homogeneity of identity are at work in our thinking?
4. What presumptions and generalizations embedded in terms are being used to categorize?
5. Am I using those of whom I write to construct my own (superior, albeit fragile) identity? (Lee et al., 2008, pp. 153–154)

Through these reflective questions, one can analyze situations and people in a way that challenges the “normal” and expected set of experiences in life. Brim and Ghaziani (2016) noted that this “mandate of queer method is to clarify, but not to over determine, the conditions that make life livable” (p. 19).

Queering of Leadership and Management

The notion of queering leadership and management is in the earliest stages of research. Parker (2010, as cited in J. McDonald 2016, p. 27) claimed “the notion of gender performativity ... is a normative process by which managers become constitutes and likens ‘doing manager’ to ‘doing drag.’” Parker (2001, as cited in J. McDonald, 2016, p. 27) found “that it is the acting of calling a particular practice ‘management’ that constitutes it as management—nothing else.” Thus, the notion of management is

considered binary between two identities: manager and employee. Further, Harding et al. (2011, as cited in J. McDonald, 2016, p. 27) argued, “queering the notion of leadership as it has been developed in mainstream management and organizational theory exposes both the omnipresence of sexuality and concealed homoeroticism in ways in which leadership is most often discussed.” Additionally, queer theory reasons that organizations need to be free of “categorical binaries, such as masculinity/femininity and rationality/emotionality, as these binaries are disciplinary in that they imply normative scripts of how to go about the process of organizing” (J. McDonald, 2016, p. 27). Finally, Gedro and Mizzi (2014, as cited in Rumens, 2017, p. 231) noted:

Instances of heteronormativity in HRD [human resource development] research and practice, but also the “spaces where categories are at play in an organization where they reify classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, or any other ‘ism’ that is inevitably limiting.”

Understanding the application of queer theory in the context of organization and leadership is a critical underpinning of this study.

Queer Theory and Phenomenology

This study was designed using the phenomenological approach, which Coviello (2013, as cited in Brim & Ghaziani, 2016, p. 18) described as a need “for long exposure to texts” because they are “better served by a practice invested in detail, particularity, and unsystematizable variousness,” promoting “thin description,” a practice of “exhaustive, fine-grained attention to phenomena.” The alignment of queer theory to phenomenological-study methods provides a connection that brings together the ability to

challenge norms through developing an understanding of individuals' essence and experience, moving beyond that of generalizations and broad assumptions.

Conflict Between Queer Theory and Social Construction Theory.

Some scholars consider queer theory and social-construction theory to sit at odds because the conventional ideas of social constructionism are contrived ideas “that are constructed [as] regulatory fictions which not only order and organize but all make such ordering and organizing appear natural and right” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 151). The regulatory fictions that arbitrarily organize objects imply that to exist as an individual person, people must conform to the norms of the society they are born into; norms that preexist them. To refuse or to be unable to conform indicates the only individual person that can exist is one that is unrecognizable and therefore strange, subordinate, inferior, and “queer” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 151). The tension that exists between queer theory and social construction is a paradigm the researcher challenged and explored through the experiences of the study participants.

Thematic Review of Literature

Discrimination

The Lavender Ceiling

Significant risks align with the disclosure of a lesbian or gay person's sexual orientation in the workplace that can bring about negative repercussions that may not be valued as worth the cost. Anastas (1998, p. 87) noted, “lesbians and bisexual women thus are likely to encounter gender discrimination on the job-in hiring, compensation, benefits, and advancement” (Badgett, 1996; Elliott, 1993; Fassinger, 1995; Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995; Schneider, 1987). Discrimination throughout the workplace extends well beyond

that of lesbians to gay men as well. Amongst the various forms of discrimination accounted for in the literature, one in particular is understudied: the barrier to career advancement for queer employees, referred to as the “lavender ceiling.”

To understand the concept of the lavender ceiling, one must understand the context from which it derived. Hymowitz & Schellhardt (1986, as cited in Mitchell 2013, p. xi) noted that, in 1986 the *Wall Street Journal* first used the phrase “glass ceiling” to describe the “barriers faced by women who attempt to aspire to acting senior positions (as well as higher salary levels),” in all organizations and industries. As research emerged regarding discrimination and career advancement in the queer community, a trend in the data found that lesbian and gay professionals struggled to advance into senior leadership positions or attain equal income levels when compared to their heterosexual peers in the workplace. Researchers dubbed the barriers experienced by lesbian and gay professionals as the lavender ceiling. “Thus, even those gay, lesbian, and bisexual people who are employed worry about a ‘lavender ceiling’ that may prevent them from reaching their full potential on the job” (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995 as cited in Anastas, 1998, p. 85).

More recently, Unger (2008, as cited in Smith, 2013, p. 2) articulated, “the lavender ceiling describes similar issues for LGB employees [as the glass ceiling does for women], specifically the unofficial barriers they may face in moving up the career ladder. This unwritten policy continues to be unbreakable.” The unbreakable nature of the lavender ceiling often curtails lesbian and gay individuals’ advancement into leadership roles because:

Organizations do not promote those in the sexual minority to positions of increased authority, power, prestige, and formal responsibility (Anastas, 1998;

Hill, 2009; Second USDA Task Force, 2000). Discrimination against openly gay practitioners surfaces in their exclusion from pay raises, promotions, and increased workplace responsibility but also in termination. (Noknoi & Wutthirong 2007, as cited in Tindall & Waters, 2012, p. 467)

With limited opportunities for advancement, “scholars have long noted the existence of gay and lesbian occupational ‘ghettos’ and distinctively ‘queer work’” (Bérubé, 2011, as cited in Tilcsik, Anteby, & Knight, p. 449) and the differences between gay-male opportunities and those of their heterosexual counterparts are nearly as different as those between heterosexual women and men. This incredible divide between opportunity and advancement is of critical importance to understand and use the information discovered to assist in helping sexual minorities advance their careers and move beyond the occupational “ghettos” relegated to them throughout modern history.

Beyond the descriptions of occurrences of the lavender ceiling in the workplace, little research focused directly on how lesbian and gay people in leadership positions achieved advancement in their careers after disclosing their sexual orientation. This study explored how lesbian and gay leaders shifted their priorities and perspectives in the workplace over the course of their careers, providing additional insight into how they successfully shattered the lavender ceiling in their workplaces.

Discrimination in the Workplace

Numerous well-documented accounts of workplace discrimination, as they pertain to sexual minorities, received attention over the last 2 decades. Bell et al. (2011, p. 134) clarified:

Discrimination consists of firing or not hiring someone on the basis of his or her sexual orientation [see Cracker Barrel in Bell, 2007, p. 435], being passed over for promotions and raises, and being excluded from benefits such as insurance and family leave.

Informal discrimination against GLBT employees includes harassment, loss of credibility and lack of acceptance and respect from coworkers and supervisors (Roberts, 2013). The fact that discrimination can impact so many aspects of employment for gay and lesbian employees, to which heterosexuals are not subjected demonstrates vulnerability and is likely to occur repeatedly throughout a person's career.

The first research in the field focusing on the discrimination of sexual minorities identified two forms of discrimination: formal and informal (Croteau, 1996, as cited in Roberts, 2013). Formal discrimination is tangible and easily identified, such as denied job-advancement opportunities, whereas, informal may include verbal harassment (Roberts, 2013). This early research in discrimination of sexual minorities encouraged sexual-harassment research, a topic that continues to be of interest to researchers. This initial research helped frame the field of sexual-minority-discrimination research, giving greater context to understanding the experiences of lesbian and gay workers.

Anastas (1998) noted:

Gay men are still associated in many peoples' minds with HIV and AIDS; thus, gay men at work may encounter irrational fears and even harassment based on their assumed HIV status (Poverty & Finch, 1988; McNaught, 1988), a problem much less likely to be encountered by lesbians. (p. 88)

This misconception is one factor leading to workplace discrimination, pointing to the importance of considering that:

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is legal in most workplaces in the United States (Herrschaft & Mills, 2002); existing research has indicated that between 25% and 66% of LGB employees report experiencing sexual orientation discrimination at work (cf. review by Croteau, 1996). (Ragins et al., 2007, p. 1,103)

Discrimination against a person perceived as gay is still legal in most workplaces throughout the United States (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001, p. 1244).

Currently, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates (n.d.) concluded, in their 2017 report, that employees in 28 states may be fired for being gay or lesbian and no federal laws offer protections based on sexual orientation or identity. However, Bell et al. (2011) highlighted that in states with no current workplace protections for sexual orientation, employees may be offered protection through trade unions. Everly and Schwarz (2015) analyzed data from Fortune 1,000 companies regarding their equality scores from 2003 to 2010. They found few policies in place at the state or national level that protect lesbian and gay employees from the negative effects of sexual-minority discrimination in the workplace (Everly & Schwarz, 2015). “Discrimination against gay, lesbian and bisexual people in employment is a form of violence that denies them full participation in essential social and economic activities and institutions, perpetuates economic injustice, and reduces their opportunities for fulfilling human potential” (Anastas, 1998, p. 84). In a study of college athletics departments, Cunningham (2015) found that many workplaces maintain cultures of heterosexism that cause them not to extend their protections to

lesbian or gay employees, further supported by the lack of federal protections that prevent a sexual minority from being fired or denied a position.

Despite the overwhelming consensus from scholars in the field regarding the lack of antidiscrimination laws, consequences beyond termination must be understood to more fully understand how discrimination manifests and impacts the workplace. A quantitative study of 2,919 members of national gay-rights groups, found, “GLBT employees who perceived high levels of sexual orientation discrimination in their workplace had more negative job attitudes, felt lower satisfaction, and thought that they had fewer opportunities for promotion” (Bell et al., 2011, p. 134). The psychological impacts of perceived discrimination are so pervasive that colleagues who are not directly targeted suffer, due to the poor workplace environment. Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, and Magley (2008, as cited in Bell et al., 2011, p. 134), further supported the notion that “research indicates that everyone (regardless of sexual orientation) working in a heterosexist climate, in which behaviors such as anti-gay jokes are accepted as common practice, can experience reduced psychological well-being.” Further, a study of 1,460 LGB employees in Italy, conducted by Prati and Pietrantoni (2014), found “the expectation of being discriminated against may exacerbate the impact of workplace heterosexist climate on job satisfaction because LGB employees can form their opinion of discrimination based on multiple sources of information” (p. 359). This indicates that employees experiencing discrimination, even when it may appear minor, see it as emphasizing the heterosexual climate—one in which they are outsiders.

With the impact of discrimination in the workplace against sexual minorities, particularly lesbian and gay individuals, causing psychological stress, individuals actually

anticipate discrimination because they are able to observe how other lesbian and gay workers are treated by their heterosexual peers (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Prati & Pietrantoni, 2014). For lesbian and gay employees to function and avoid discrimination in the workplace, they may adopt strategies to conceal sexual orientation while at work. Schacter (1997, as cited in Brower, 2013, p. 496) noted that “although functional, passing or covering one’s sexuality by aping conventional appearances is not a solution to anti-gay discrimination, forced invisibility is a form of anti-gay inequality” and these passing struggles have their own consequences for everyone in the workplace. To resolve discrimination in the workplace, reduce psychological consequences, and provide an inclusive environment for lesbian and gay individuals to express their sexual orientation, nondiscrimination policies need to be implemented. Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found “gay employees were less likely to report either experiencing or observing sexual orientation discrimination in organizations that had written policies forbidding sexual orientation discrimination, included sexual orientation in their definition of diversity, and offered same-sex domestic partner benefits” (p. 1255). The well-documented effects and impact of discrimination in the workplace are perpetuated by the lack of federal and state protections for lesbian and gay workers. The impact of discrimination and the threat of retaliation play a significant role in the experiences of the lesbian and gay leaders targeted in this study.

Discrimination Through Career Impediment

Further describing discrimination in the workplace against sexual minorities, in particular lesbian and gay workers, Tindall and Waters (2012, p. 461) found in their qualitative studies, one targeting 11 gay men and another targeting 19 gay men, that

participants experienced lack of career-advancement opportunities. “queer theorists have found that openly gay men and lesbians are often discriminated against in the workforce in terms of promotions and raises because their openness challenges traditional societal norms,” bringing to light that discrimination impedes career advancement for lesbian and gay employees. The Tindall and Waters study focused on how priorities and perspectives shift over the course of a career for lesbian and gay leaders, indicating that the study participants likely experienced career impediment during their work history.

Kaplan (2014) remarked, “someone who is out and identifiably GLB can easily become the target of harassment or victim of discrimination. Consequently, out GLB workers need to be choosier about employment opportunities” (p. 123). As a result of the increased likelihood for discrimination, lesbian and gay employees must be mindful and selective of their places of employment in order to join companies that support and foster their career advancement. Further, as individuals gain career experiences and their sexual orientation becomes a part of who they are, it is increasingly important that individuals select organizations that best align with who they are as a person (Kaplan, 2014). Kira and Balkin (2014, p. 131) concluded:

Employees tacitly and explicitly assess whether their work aligns with their identities, and an appraised misalignment between the two has negative psychological consequences, such as devaluation of one’s orientation (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006) and the emergence of negative emotions (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

Kaplan (2014) highlighted the importance of selecting employment that extends beyond the salary and considers other factors such as the presence of nondiscrimination policies

that enable an employee to grow and develop in an organization without fear of termination.

Tindall and Waters (2012) concluded that participants typically viewed their career experiences as positive; however, when they reflected more carefully they realized that often, their “experiences overwhelmingly revealed internal struggles of being an openly gay man in an overtly heterosexist culture,” which strained their career-advancement opportunities as an out individual (p. 465). Kaplan (2014) stated:

Whether someone is out or closeted has important implications for his or her career. It impacts the way GLB employees behave in an organization and with colleagues and how they assess needs and evaluate opportunities. The combination of professional and personal factors is expected to ... [impact] subsequent career paths that they pursue. (p. 122)

The decision to disclose sexual orientation in the workplace may be greatly impacted by:

Unchecked heterosexism, homophobia, and the fear of repercussions if they did reveal their orientation forced some participants to lie and deny their sexual orientation, [or] downplay their sexuality and conform to behaviors prescribed to them by those in power. (Tindall & Waters, 2012, p. 462)

With the threat of heteronormative structures in the workplace, coupled with the lack of inclusive, nondiscrimination policies, lesbian and gay leaders “are required to fit into heteronormative work cultures if they wish to pursue managerial careers” (Rumens, 2011, p. 457).

The researcher built this study on the assumption that lesbian and gay leaders advanced their careers into managerial positions in spite of potential workplace discriminations. A significant body of research in the field indicated “workplace friendships were an important resource for developing managerial careers and identities ... Friendships and networks with other minority employees cultivate resources such as coaching,” advice sharing, and bonding over identity proved to be significant methods to overcome the barriers of career advancement for lesbian and gay leaders (Rumens, 2011, p. 450). Further, Tindall and Waters (2012) claimed, “these networks—whether association-based or informal groupings—are particularly beneficial for developing professional relationships that can assist in workplace issues” (p. 460).

Rumens (2011) highlighted that gay and lesbian managers are active agents in how they construct workplace friendships with specific individuals, and to what end” as these friendships “may be valued by gay and lesbian managers [in particular] for helping them to integrate into work environments, including those that privilege idealised forms of heterosexuality (p. 456).

Thus, researchers demonstrated that the persistence of discrimination in the workplace can serve as a career impediment to aspiring lesbian and gay managers; however:

While gay and lesbian sexualities might be considered a hindrance to the development of managerial careers and identities, given their susceptibility to negative stereotyping (Burnett, 2010; Humphrey, 1999; Ward and Winstanley, 2003), they can be understood as a valuable resource. (Rumens, 2011, p. 456)

Heteronormativity as Discrimination

Heteronormativity “is the taken-for-granted assumption that heterosexuality is natural, normal, and superior to all other forms of sexual expression”, and is often the foundation on which organizations are constructed (Williams & Giuffre, 2011, p. 552).

Further, Williams and Giuffre (2011) reported:

That heteronormativity is institutionalized in the workplace in the following ways: (1) through benefits policies that recognize and privilege nuclear family arrangements with clearly demarcated gender roles; (2) through the ritualized celebration of heterosexual norms (dating, engagements, marriages); (3) through informal joking, gossip, and flirtations among co-workers and clients that assume heterosexuality and disparage alternative sexual expressions; and (4) through the division of labor that reinforces stereotypes about gender and sexuality. (p. 552)

The tenets of heteronormativity described above by Williams and Giuffre are the unspoken rules and actions that govern an organization and are often invisible to heterosexual employees. To expose heteronormativity and work to create more inclusive work environments, researchers sought to study and explain the impact of heteronormative practices on lesbian and gay workers. Boso (2016) found, “implicit and explicit messaging [that] heteronormativity is a powerful, normative force” and, beyond creating a lesbian or gay identity as abnormal, significantly influences whether lesbian and gay individuals disclose their sexual orientation, and the extent they decided to do so, due to the “risk of exclusion and isolation, violence, and tangible economic harms” (p. 616). Further, the normalizing of a heteronormative environment, as argued by Drydakis (2015, p. 1,772), “creates, nurtures, maintains and perpetuates daily acts of

violence and bias against employees and groups who are outside of the domain of natural sexuality.” These daily acts of violence are factors that influence a lesbian or gay workers’ need to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation in the workplace.

Further research indicated, “Heteronormative organizations and practices block access to full participation to the workplace and undermine the development of an individual’s work identity which fully encompasses his/her sexual identity” (Priola et al., 2014, p. 491). This research finding reinforced the notion that identities beyond the norm are rejected and unable to flourish in these environments. Drydakis (2015, p. 1,772) noted, “heterosexual employees are privileged by their normalized status in organizations ... and the dominant discourse of heterosexuality in organizations tends to silence the dominated discourse of homosexuality.” The fact that heteronormative environments silence those who are not members of the dominant sexual orientation only further exacerbate the structures of the workplace. King et al. (2014) sampled 61 full-time LGB employees to assess their choices to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation in heteronormative organizations. King et al. (2014) concluded:

The structure of organizations typically involves hierarchies that reflect implicit power dynamics wherein supervisors generally have both status and power over their subordinates (see Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Because fears of demotion or job loss partially motivate concealing an LGB identity (see Ragins, 2004; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007), it stands to reason that LGB people may be particularly hesitant to disclose their sexual identities with people who have the power to affect their job status. (pp. 5–6)

The power dynamic expected by people in positions of power with heteronormative workplaces brings up the threat of career impediment for aspiring leaders in the workplace.

Further, “the heteronormative discourse acts as a mechanism of control that limits the ability of sexual orientation minority employees to discuss and construct their own identities” (Drydakis, 2015, p. 1,772). In these heteronormative environments, lesbian and gay workers are discriminated against on a daily basis which, with time, “leads these men down paths that diverge from those taken by straight peers” (Woods & Lucas, 1993, p. 12) in an effort to avoid organizations that prevent their social development in the workplace and enable them to share stories of their lives without censoring their personal self out of the office (Tindall & Waters, 2012). Woods and Lucas (1993) found that the men in their study drew “away from large companies, from jobs that require extensive socializing with clients or peers, from companies with traditional, family-oriented cultures, from vaguely defined managerial roles that emphasize social skills, and from environments that they consider homophobic” that would otherwise allow them the opportunity to flourish and develop as professional and gay individuals (p. 12).

The literature clearly demonstrated the oppressive silence that the structures of organizations impose on minorities—particularly sexual minorities. Understanding the impacts of a heteronormative workplace on lesbian and gay individuals provides a foundation for this study to explore how lesbian and gay managers successfully navigate these structures and maintain their sense of self.

Disclosure of Sexual Orientation

Coming Out Strategically

In the literature based on lesbian and gay orientation, the process, implications, and decisions surrounding coming out are some of the most well studied and documented aspects of the queer community. The imagery of coming out evokes many experiences and consequences regardless of the person, because of the stigmatization of sexual orientation. Collins (2016) clarified, “disclosure occurs when one person reveals guarded personal information to others (Derlega and Grzelak, 1979). Commonly known as coming out of the closet or simply coming out among gay men ... disclosure is laced with intricacies” (p. 26). Rust (1993) presented coming out differently: “Coming out is a process of discovery in which the individual sheds a false heterosexual identity and comes to correctly identify and label her own essence, which is homosexual” (p. 53). Regardless of how one chooses to define coming out, the nature of disclosing ones’ sexual orientation in the workplace brings about layers of challenges and situations that need continual attention to manage. When the researcher first conceived this study, the researcher approached coming out as an event in the workplace such that the worker comes out in the moment and then returns to his work task; however, substantial research argues otherwise.

Oswald (1999) conducted a study examining six college-age bisexual and lesbian women and 25 of their family members to explore how the students and family members experienced the coming-out process. Oswald found, “coming out is a process of significant change for women who accept and disclose bisexual or lesbian identities, and for those to whom they come out” (p. 66). The significant change that occurs is echoed

by the findings from Woods and Lucas (1993): “Gay men often speak of coming out as if it were the final frontier, the destination of a long and arduous journey. Yet in many ways coming out is less an arrival than a change in direction” (p. 172). When considering that the concept of coming out is more about a change of direction in one’s journey, the concept of coming out begins to appear as a process. Guittar and Rayburn (2016) reported that participants in their study used the retrospective phrase “when I first came out, to showcase the recognition of both a point-in-time event and the beginning of a long-term trajectory—and they all went on to speak of successive experiences with coming out” (p. 344). The implication of this retrospective phrase in their stories only further confirms the notion that coming out is an ongoing activity in the daily lives of lesbian and gay individuals.

Butler (1993) and Benozzo et al. (2015) found that the notion of coming out means that, at some point, a person also goes back in the closet, only to result in coming out again, perpetuating a cycle of continually making the decision to disclose their sexual orientation. Moreover, Anastas (1998, p. 91) stated, “coming out is never a one-time event; as clients ... co-workers and supervisors change over time, the decision about what to say or not say about a lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation must be continually made and remade.”

Considering that coming out is never a one-time occurrence, individuals are constantly faced with the choice of if, when, and how to disclose their sexual orientation and to what extent. Kaufman and Johnson remarked, few people are “out to everyone regardless of circumstances or location” and present the concept of strategic outness, as a “‘revolving door’ that gay men ... on a daily basis ... manage not only who knows, but

how and why others learn it” (2004, as cited in Orne, 2011, pp. 688). Einarsdóttir et al. (2016) completed a qualitative study of 50 LGB employees spanning many sections of business to explore their coming out experiences. The participants of the study found “the coming out process at work seemed less planned ... and revealed that colleagues played a significant part in the coming out process, primarily by initiating it, but also by reaching their own conclusions about sexual identities,” contradicting most of the existing literature on identity disclosure in heteronormative workplaces (Einarsdóttir et al., 2016, p. 494).

Building further on the notion that heteronormative workplaces are inherently discriminatory toward lesbian and gay workers, “Strategic outness is strategic not because of two different motivations for coming out, but because gay men sense a variety of reasons to come out and ‘stay in’ that must be considered simultaneously and in conjunction with social context,” allowing the individual to discern the most appropriate response to the situation and move forward accordingly (Orne, 2011, p. 696). “As bearers of a stigmatized identity that can be concealed, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB), individuals must navigate an ongoing process of deciding whether, when, and how to reveal their sexual orientation identity to others” (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998 as cited in King et al., 2014, p. 2). The ongoing decision of how and when to disclose sexual orientation in the workplace draws on the existing body of research that indicates identity management strategies are an integral part of strategic outness, and individuals are continually navigating the work environment, determining if, when, and how to disclose their sexual orientation (Chung, Chang, & Rose, 2015).

King et al. (2014, p. 2) commented that sexual orientation is concealable, meaning that lesbian and gay individuals possess the decision-making power “of deciding whether, when, and how to reveal their sexual orientation identity to others.” Through the cover of a concealable identity, negative connotations may arise between members of the lesbian and gay community who choose not to disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace. Benozzo et al. (2015) found:

In organizational settings which support the rhetoric of out and proud, those who successfully come out become role models for the promotion of tolerance and inclusiveness. Against this, those who do not succeed or do not want to come out may feel cowardly, failures, dishonest or not transparent. (p. 293)

The implications for the workplace, based on this body of knowledge, highlighted the notion that coming out is a continual, strategic process that requires lesbian and gay individuals to assess the organization’s climate and culture in order to avoid discrimination and protect their career interests. This study drew on the understanding of coming out as a factor of how participants’ priorities and perspectives may shift throughout their careers, based on their sexual orientation disclosure choices.

Factors of Sexual Orientation Disclosure

Researchers indicated that discrimination in the workplace significantly impacts employees’ physical and psychological wellness as well as their career advancement and pay. When considering the factors that lead to a lesbian or gay individuals’ choice to disclose their sexual orientation, their assessment overlaps with overt discrimination concerns; however, this section examines the literature specific to the personal factors that drive individuals to disclose their sexual orientation. Creed (2006, as cited in Croteau

et al. (2008, p. 551) stated, “Disclosure decisions are conceptualized as balancing ‘the tensions between wanting the benefits of disclosure ... and fearing its possible costs’” which itself is the central drive to disclosure.

Despite positive drivers that push lesbians and gay men to disclose their sexual orientation, Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) found that in the workplace gay men “appear to be selective in terms of those to whom they disclose by taking into account the recipient’s trustworthiness” (p. 773). Continuing this line of thinking, Appleby (2001) conducted an ethnographic study of 39 working-class gay men to:

Understand their resilience in light of homophobia” and concluded that “most men were cautious about to whom, other than family and friends, they would come-out or share their private lives. They did not refer to this as a form of passing but as survival. (p. 52)

Although researchers indicated that individuals are more likely to be selective about with whom they share their sexual orientation, some factors that increase the likelihood of disclosure in the workplace.

To begin, “those who have not disclosed their sexual identity at work, the very presence of a LGB supervisor or coworker may precipitate a social identity process that facilitates disclosure,” because researchers showed that being around people similar to yourself increases the likelihood that a person feels more at ease in their environment and may disclose their sexual orientation (Ragins et al., 2007, p. 1,106). Further, Ragins, 2004, as cited in Ragins et al., 2007, p. 1106) found, “the disclosure of a stigmatized identity may be influenced not only by the support received from those who share the stigma, but also from coworkers and supervisors who do not have the stigma but support

those who do,” demonstrating that when heterosexual colleagues support lesbian or gay workers, the inclusive environment makes disclosing sexual orientation an easier process.

Additionally, Anastas (1998, p. 92) reported, “workers who lived in the city with civil rights protection were more likely to report that their employers had anti-discrimination policies that protected lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers than those who did not.” This thought indicates that areas and organizations where antidiscrimination policies are in place have a greater likelihood an individual will disclose their orientation due to the safe environment. Marrs and Staton (2016) examined the importance of understanding how geographic location plays a role in determining sexual-orientation disclosure:

Geographic area can also influence LGB individuals’ decisions to come out or pass. Urban areas are more likely to offer people who are LGB with access to resources and avenues of support than more rural locations, and therefore LGB individuals in urban settings may be more out at work than those who live in more rural areas. (p. 45)

Beyond the factors associated with the needs to create alignment between their sexual orientation and their workplace, other factors lead to disclosure, such as openness. “Openness is considered the tendency to be creative, curious, and intellectual and to explore inner feelings ... and it is positively related to increased willingness to share dissenting opinions,” leading to the willingness to stand out in the workplace environment in opposition with the heteronormative climate (as cited in Reed & Leuty, 2016, p. 993). Further, Shackelford and Besser found that

“those with higher levels of openness had more positive attitudes toward homosexuality. Additionally, those higher in openness report increased exploration and solidification of their identity The desire for openness and the willingness to express oneself in the workplace indicates the potential for positive social interactions due to the extraversion personality that “could also lead to an increased desire for those higher in extraversion to share more about themselves with their coworkers, including one’s non-heterosexual identity. (2007, as cited in Reed & Leuty, 2016, p. 993)

Clair et al. discussed “that individuals’ propensity toward taking risks, tendency to self-monitor one’s behavior to fit social norms, identity developmental stage, and motives for revealing a stigmatized identity affect the likelihood of using concealing or revealing strategies” (2005, as cited in Reed & Leuty, 2016, 989). Further, Gusmano found that “LGB persons possibly come out at work due to: (a) honesty and integrity, (b) desire for closer relationships with co-workers, or (c) to educate or advocate for LGB issues” (2008, as cited in Chung et al., 2015, p. 214). The importance of understanding the role of personality in disclosure decisions provides varying perspectives on factors that contribute to a person’s disclosure.

“Demographic factors, such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and religion may also affect whether people choose to come out or pass in the workplace” (Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 45). In addition to demographic factors, relationships with social networks play a role in the disclosure decision. Griffith and Hebl revealed, “LGB individuals who are more out to their heterosexual friends and to their own family members were found to exhibit significantly more disclosure at work” (2002, as cited in

Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 45). After considering that coming out is a process encumbered with consequences, it is important to understand the personal factors that contribute to the decisions to come out in the workplace that not only inform this study, but also provide insight for practitioners in the field.

Impacts of Disclosure

The consequences of disclosing sexual orientation for lesbian and gay workers echoes similar themes related to workplace discrimination; this section explores the positive and negative impacts of sexual-orientation disclosure. This section also explores current research publications related to the decision process that weighs the impacts of coming out on an individual's mental state, relationships, and workplace success.

DeJordy (2008, as cited in Marrs and Staton, 2016, p. 43) commented, "The ongoing need to choose [to disclose sexual orientation] adds a level of personal stress that can exacerbate work-related concerns, lead to disengagement, and contribute to fatigue"

Further, Ragins et al. (2007, p. 1,103) cited:

Up to one third [of lesbian women and gay men] choose not to disclose their identity to anyone at work. ... In fact, the fear of negative consequences of 'being out at work' may have a greater impact on employees than the actual act of disclosure.

When considering the fear and stress associated with the consideration of disclosing sexual orientation in the workplace, it is important to consider that "people are often not fully prepared for the consequences they face when disclosing their sexual identity"

Chung (2001, p. 36).

Jones et al. (1984) summarized the decision to come out in the workplace, stating, “aside from the more obvious effects of hiding it [sexual orientation], guilt and shame may be engendered. ... These feelings may be debilitating and the marked person may also fear discovery” (p. 30). The challenge facing an individual on whether to disclose sexual orientation, was described by Marrs and Staton (2016, p. 43) “as one of the most difficult challenges faced by LGB adults” Understanding the context of the decision to disclose sexual orientation gives justification for strategic outness in the workplace.

Positive Impacts

Researchers documented the positive impacts associated with disclosing sexual orientation in the workplace, providing context to why some lesbian and gay workers choose to come out of the closet. “Proponents of coming out argue that disclosure is necessary in order to live one’s life as ‘fully’ gay, lesbian or bisexual, and to live this life openly and honestly” (Vargo, 1998, p. 45, as cited in McLean, 2007, p. 153); however, this notion is not reflective of all situations, considering the potential for discrimination. Overwhelming evidence shows that when an individual discloses their sexual orientation in the workplace they benefit from a positive self-identity (Archer & Grey, 2009; Creed, 2006, as cited in Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 43) and are able to create a more “coherent sense of themselves and their integrity” (Ragins, 2004, as cited in Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 43). The authentic self gives way to a person developing a positive identity that influences their overall job performance.

Further, sexual-orientation disclosure in the workplace provides a community or “presence of similar others” that Ragins et al. (2007) found, “lifted the self-esteem and mood of students with invisible stigmas involving bulimia, minority sexual orientation,

and low socioeconomic status” (p. 1106). Becoming part of the group gives people a sense of belonging, of being involved with an “in group” that accepts the individual for who they are as a person. Ragins et al. further commented, “with the endorsement of others having the same identity, a person can affirm the value of group membership rather than incorporate the negative views of those who stigmatize” (2007, p. 1,106). The connectedness with peers in the workplace fulfills the need for validation from others (Cunningham, 2015).

Beyond the sense of connectedness and belonging to a group of peers in the workplace, another positive impact of disclosing sexual orientation in the workplace is the feeling of high job satisfaction (Anastas, 1998; Marrs & Staton, 2016; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2014). Further, Marrs and Staton (2016) found participants in their studies “feel more integrated into their work, [as well as] lower levels of anxiety” (p. 43); whereas Prati and Pietrantonio (2014) found their participants anticipated less discrimination in the workplace.

Of note, Griffith and Hebl (2002, p. 1196) found “disclosure was also related to job anxiety. Our [Griffith and Hebl] results are congruent with other research (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998)” and “those who acknowledge and receive favorable and supportive reactions from others feel happier and less stressed in the workplace.” Essentially, anxiety aligns with the fear of disclosing sexual orientation, but is mitigated by finding a supportive network of colleagues in the workplace.

Negative Impacts

A review of the literature also indicated that negative impacts occur upon disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace, making the case for individuals who choose to conceal their sexual orientation as a means of survival in the workplace. Chrobot-Mason et al. (2001, p. 322) conducted a study with 255 lesbian and gay employees from a variety of work backgrounds and found that:

Revealing one's sexual identity can have serious negative consequences at work, such as increased stress due to minority status (Waldo, 1999), discrimination, such as being fired, loss of credibility and respect (Croteau, 1996), and lower pay (Badgett, 1995; Ellis & Riggle, 1995).

These findings echoed throughout research studying the negative impacts of disclosure of sexual orientation. Reed and Leuty (2016, p. 986) showed that the effects of disclosure in the workplace have far-reaching consequences: "lesbian and gay employees may face either overt workplace bullying or more subtle instances of social exclusion, which can lead to lowered confidence and the inability to work efficiently ... which could ultimately lead to termination." The extent that discrimination occurred as a part of disclosure impacted "one third of ut workers" (Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 43).

Beyond the direct and explicit impacts of disclosure summarized above, Hebl et al. (2002, as cited in Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 44) indicated that a portion of their study participants reported "perceptions that heterosexuals talk with them less than with straight workers ... and feel they are afforded less respect." The subtlety of this negative impact challenges lesbian and gay workers because they may find it difficult to gather physical proof of such actions, which are discernible by the person impacted, and

ultimately leads to “psychological strain ... and street related symptoms, work-related depression, and irritation” that impacts their job performance and success in the position” (Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 44). Understanding that the workplace can become a toxic environment for a lesbian or gay employee who disclosed their sexual orientation can impact the decision of other lesbian or gay employees as to whether or not to disclose. This context is important to this study because it frames the consequences that lesbian and gay leaders hold and continue to assess and combat as they develop their careers.

Sexual Orientation Management

Identity Formation

As with coming out, sexual orientation formation is a continual, ongoing process studied over the past several decades. Viewing this study in light of historical and current research theories regarding identity formation provides a frame for understanding how lesbian and gay leaders face a circumstance where their sexual orientation is continually evolving and responding to the context of society. In the early 1970s, Cass proposed a model that sequenced identity formation for homosexuals, now known as the Cass model of homosexual identity formation. Cass (1979) presented a model based on the assumption that “(a) identity is acquired through a developmental process; and (b) that [the] locus for stability of, and change in, behavior lies in the interaction process that occurs between individuals and their environments” (p. 219). This model “proposed that there are six stages of development all individuals move through in order to acquire an identity of ‘homosexual’ fully integrated in the individual’s overall concept of self-leading to a state of balance of self-satisfaction,” (Cass, 1979, p. 220). An individual may terminate his or her development at any point of the process, thereby stopping their

identity formation (Rust, 1993). A critique of this model highlighted the assumption that men and women progress through identity formation at similar rates and ages, and that Cass's model failed to account for the impact of racial or ethnic diversity (Kenneady & Oswald, 2014).

The Cass model of homosexual identity formation gave rise to several other linear-based identity-formation models including those by Fassinger and Troiden. Fassinger's model focused on identity formation for lesbians, employing the use of four phases rather than stages, to indicate fluidity in the identity-development process and did not benchmark the phases based on disclosure (Gervacio, 2015). Most distinguishable, the model accounts for identity formation for the individual and in a group context, regardless of ethnic or racial background. Although this model's scope of applicability reached beyond solely lesbians to gay and bisexual individuals, the nature of a process-driven model does not account to everyone's experiences, limiting its applicability (Gervacio, 2015).

Becoming Homosexual: A Model of Gay Identity Acquisition, constructed by Troiden in the late 1970s, focused on a four-stage model that built on the "assumption that identities are not viewed as being acquired in an absolute, fixed, or final sense... and [are] never fully complete" (Troiden, 1979, p. 372). The stages start in early adolescence, as one begins sensing a difference in one's identity, and ends when a person enters a stable homosexual relationship. Troiden (1979) reported, "each stage is viewed as making the acquisition of a gay identity more probable" and some people may choose to leave the process altogether (p. 372). Most notable, "the process is tenuous ... [and] the route to gay identity is fraught with ambiguity, confusion, and uncertainty" (Troiden,

1979, pp. 372–373). Although the model is no longer used often, it does provide a foundation for contextualizing the experiences of lesbian and gay individuals. As society continues the development and understanding of sexual, and now gender, identities, linear models and phases are unable to capture the same process as adequately as before.

Elliott and Rich critiqued the linear progressive models of identity development noting:

The extent to which our socialization enforces a ‘compulsive heterosexuality’ ... it would seem apparent that homosexual identity formation ... cannot emerge in an orderly, stage-sequential fashion—a developmental pattern reflected in traditional models of heterosexual identity (i.e., Erikson, Freud, Jung). (as cited in McDonald, 1982, p. 58).

G. J. McDonald’s (1982) observation about the nearly impossible nature of a linear identity formation led to the more contemporary approach to formation. Current research on identity formation highlighted that, “identities are seen as emerging and developing in the tensions of individuals’ identity work and socio-organizational identity regulation that is exercised through discourses (e.g., Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Knights & Willmott, 1989; Kuhn, 2006; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003),” drawing on the notion that tensions are always interacting on an individual, based on the social and political context (Kira & Balkin, 2014, p. 133).

The tensions that pull and shape individuals’ sexual identities led Kira and Balkin (2014) to see “individuals as active shapers of their identities. Individuals combine life experiences or insights from the prevailing discourses in their identities that undergo transformations,” including the basis that people create identities that are appropriate for

their social context and workplaces (p. 133). The theme of social context runs through the literature on identity formation. G. J. McDonald (1982, p. 57) noted, “the social context in which individuals arrived at homosexual self-definitions as well as the significance of individual choice in the coming out process are crucial to our understanding of homosexual identity formation.” The interplay between the individual and society is what forges one’s identity and determines if, when, and how sexual identities are disclosed in personal and professional networks. Understanding how identities form has applicability to the workplace, in that lesbian and gay individuals are caught in the tension between their sexual orientation in a heteronormative structure, significantly impacting how a person develops their professional identity.

Sexual-Orientation Management

“Identity management refers to the ways in which people control access to and type of information about their identities (Goffman, 1963),” which includes a wide variety of well-documented strategies used to disclose or conceal aspects of identity (Orne, 2011, p. 682). Despite several researchers who produced and confirmed the strategies employed most, a few common approaches are of note. Understanding the strategies that lesbian and gay individuals employ to manage their sexual orientation provides insight into the behaviors exhibited in the workplace, deemed necessary by the context of the organization and political landscape. Halford and Leonard stated, “negotiating and managing identity is an everyday process, one that requires continual vigilance and adjustments to behaviour, clothing, appearance and language in order to maintain a viable sense of self at work” (2006, as cited in Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009,

p. 454), leading to the notion that identity management comprises physical actions and appearance.

Managing identity takes considerable effort and requires adaptation to different situations and social or professional networks. In a study conducted by King et al. (2014), “the same person will make different identity management decisions depending on the specific people with whom he or she is interacting,” supporting claims that strategic outness is an ongoing approach employed by lesbian and gay individuals (p. 20). Button and Chrobot-Mason et al. noted, it “cannot be simplified as a one-time decision about whether to come out of the closet” (as cited in King et al. (2014, p. 20).

The situational context that drives an individual to select from a variety of disclosure-management options indicates that “disclosure decisions should be conceptualized as part of an ongoing stigma management process of attending to situational cues and specific behavioral responses rather than as an ‘out’ or ‘not out’ characteristic of a person” (King et al., 2014, p. 20). Interestingly, research regarding identity management extended beyond identification of various strategies to the way lesbian or gay leaders interact with subordinates. “Even those gay men who occupied positions of authority, as managers and directors, still insisted that gay male subordinates be discrete about their sexuality in the workplace” (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009, p. 769). Individuals are not only forced to continually manage their sexual orientation, but are also advised of the strategies that should be employed in the workplace to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation. The experiences lived by lesbian and gay workers comprise situations where the organization, including management, forces employees to decide on disclosure versus concealment, creating significant stress and dissatisfaction.

Button remarked, it is “likely that many gay and lesbian employees rely on a combination of identity management strategies rather than a single strategy” (2004, p. 473). The sections below further discuss the various strategies used to conceal or disclose sexual orientation.

Strategies for Concealing Sexual Orientation

Over the years, various studies identified a core set of strategies used when concealing sexual orientation. Chrobot-Mason et al. (2001, p. 324) listed these strategies as the “three-factor model (i.e., counterfeiting, avoiding, integrating)”, which more accurately accounted for the strategies “than a two-factor model (i.e., passing, integrating).” Understanding the strategies used to conceal sexual orientation provides context to the different experiences lesbian and gay individuals have in the workplace when relating to their colleagues on a personal level. Croteau et al. (2008, pp. 533–534) explained, “counterfeiting involves actively fashioning a false heterosexual identity such as changing the gender when referring to one’s same-sex partner and communicating to others an attraction for the opposite sex” to deter any speculation regarding sexual orientation. Further, Croteau (2008, pp. 533–534) noted, “avoidance involves actively eluding any references to personal information and maintaining strong boundaries between personal and business lives”, not as a means to avoid actively lying about sexual orientation, but rather to preclude details that expose sexual orientation. These two strategies in the three-factor model address the effort to conceal sexual orientation, with the third strategy, integration, focusing on how to disclose orientation. Each strategy provides a better understanding of the options individuals actively use to conceal their sexual orientation, with applicability to personal and professional networks.

Recalling the two-factor model of disclosure strategies, DeJordy (2008) noted that the concealment strategy of passing:

Is a form of strategic identity deployment [that] has two... characteristics: (a) It produces a dissonance response because the identity presented through passing is not consistent with the identity actually experienced by the self, and (b) its goal is to project one's conformity with specific characteristics that are dominant or expected in the particular social context. (p. 511)

The notion of passing parallels the strategy of counterfeiting, as both seek to deceive people in direct relation to oneself to prohibit the revelation of sexual orientation. In addition to the strategies discussed, Skidmore (1999, as cited in Rumens & Kerfoot (2009, p. 779) noted that "LGB workers use clothing to convey or conceal their presence to employers and colleagues" as a means of passing their sexual orientation in the workplace.

Strategies for Disclosing Sexual Orientation

Recalling the three-factor model, the third factor pertains to disclosing sexual orientation in the form of integration. Croteau (2008, pp. 533–534) described this as "revealing one's minority sexual identity in such actions as openly contradicting heterosexist assumptions about oneself", whereas Reed and Leuty (2016, p. 998) referred to it as "explicitly out ... where information about individuals' sexual identity is actively and freely shared with others." Parallel to integration, the two-factor model presents revealing as a means to disclosing sexual orientation, based on a cost–benefit analysis of the decision to disclose in the workplace (DeJordy, 2008).

Beyond actively disclosing sexual orientation, Orne (2011, p. 690) stated:

Alternatively, disclosure can occur subtly and implicitly through ‘clues’. Clues hint at homosexuality without expressing the words directly (Evans and Broido, 1999). Some clues rely on stereotypes of gay men (e.g. Williams et al., 2009), while others suggest homosexual relationships or group associations (e.g. LaSala et al., 2008).

These alternate disclosure approaches allow people to deduce the sexual orientation of their peers, rather than through direct conversation or action by the lesbian or gay individual. Following an indirect approach to disclosing sexual orientation, researchers indicated that the use of speculation, which is “in essence, [when study participants] remove their agency in others finding out” (Orne, 2011, p. 691). The use of speculation is a passive approach that places responsibility on members of social and professional networks to deduce a person’s sexual orientation.

The various methods used to conceal or disclose sexual orientation require extensive effort to be employed and are necessary to the success of individuals in the workplace. Success is defined as avoiding discrimination and career impediment, as well as increased job satisfaction and improved psychological state. Lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles participating in this study actively used several, if not all, of these strategies at some point in their careers, simultaneously at times. Understanding the use of these strategies in the workplace provides context to how priorities and perspectives may shift throughout participants’ careers.

Workplace Factors

Diversity in the Workplace

Understanding the role of diversity in the workplace provides context to the experiences of lesbian and gay workers. Although this study does not specifically focus on the role of diversity in the workplace, the researcher provided evidence-based support for the implications that diversity plays in the workplace. Hill (2009) remarked, “employees must face the reality that there is an ongoing change in demographics in the United States today” (p. 44). Hill continued:

Gone are the times when workplaces are homogeneous in regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, and other characteristics. Both the nation and the world of work are more diverse than ever in our history—and they continue to diversify. (p. 44)

With the rapidly shifting workplace environment, the traditional majority group in the workplace finds their position of power changing. “Majority group members (e.g. White, male, straight, Christian, upper middle- and upper-class people) often have an unarticulated sense of entitlement” that leads to the desire to maintain the heteronormative structures of the workplace (Hill, 2009, p. 43).

Woods and Lucas (1993, as cited in Hill & Lucas, 1993, p. 244) highlighted the need for “recognizing that white males represent a shrinking proportion of the available talent, employers are working harder to attract and retain top-quality women and ethnic minorities;” however, the focus must shift to call on talent that is a break from tradition. Hill and Lucas (1993) continued, “Until recently, however, the principle [of seeking top

talent] has not been applied to sexuality—a task that is seriously impeded by our inability to ‘see’ organizational sexuality in the first place” (p. 244).

With shifts in demographics, political, and social constructs, the importance of incorporating diversity and inclusion efforts into organizations becomes paramount. Bowen and Blackmon suggested, “managing ‘invisible diversity’ may be just as crucial as (managing) ‘visible diversity’ ... but provides additional challenges since individuals may choose to conceal or evade, rather than speak up about their differences” (2003, as cited in Bell et al., 2011, p.133). Working to overcome the struggles of managing invisible diversity extends beyond sexual orientation and includes certain disabilities and personal experiences that colleagues in the workplace are unable to visualize. Hill (2009) stated:

Successful diversity efforts are built on moving beyond tolerance to celebration, based on the realization that everyone has sexual orientation and gender identity (gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, and queer), while also recognizing that everyone has race, gender, and so on. (p. 47)

As this study undertook an analysis of lesbian and gay leaders in the workplace, understanding how shifts in diversity impacted their sexual-orientation disclosure was of importance to the findings.

Workplace Environment and Inclusion

The workplace environment is a combination of culture and climate where the events that people experience in the workplace and how individuals influence the environment directly impact each individual in the organization. The workplace environment is the heart of the organization. John Dewey “remind[ed] us that changing

long-established habits of people is a slow, difficult, and complicated process; however, to change long-established institutions is even slower, more difficult, and more complicated” (1916, as cited in Hill, 2009, p. 42). As society is changing, so must organizations; this need for change presents a unique problem in that the speed an organization changes may not match the speed of changes in society. The disconnection between organizations and social impacts may take time to align, but the benefit is worth the effort. Cunningham (2015) noted, “inclusiveness is the right way to do things. It is the right thing to do. In the end, it will make us better” (p. 438).

Further, the changes needed to advance and shape workplace environments are not just left to the leadership. Ferdman and Avery stated:

Work groups ... also have the potential to influence perceptions of an LGBT-inclusive culture, as they set norms of behavior and interactions, such as equality of treatment, the importance of voice, the expectation of collaboration, and productively engaging in conflict. (as cited in Cunningham, 2015, p. 427)

When employees came together, the literature demonstrated that positive changes occurred, increasing inclusivity for the queer community. When looking at model organizations that demonstrated a supportive, safe, inclusive environment, Vohra et al. (2015) argued that “in inclusive organizations, non-traditional employees are not expected to merely assimilate to dominant norms. ... where identity group status is unrelated to access to key resources, creating opportunities for heterogeneous individuals to have ties that are cross-cutting” (p. 327). Helping employees connect and build relationships throughout the company gives rise to more inclusive environments that lack

a dominant cultural or sexual-orientation group, but rather an environment that recognizes people of all backgrounds.

Continuing with the importance of inclusivity to fostering a positive and productive work environment, it is important to consider that “people working in inclusive workplaces have equal status and power, irrespective of their personal identities ... a characteristic long recognized to facilitate constructive dialogue and interpersonal interactions” (Allport, 1954 as cited in Cunningham, 2015, p. 427). Providing employees with equal status and power leads to a strong community of peers who are more likely to feel safe and willing to reveal their sexual orientation. In working to create an inclusive workplace, Goodwin noted, leaders must have the:

Courage to challenge biases based on sexual orientation and gender identity, despite the fact that “much has been published in the last five years on employment concerns of GLBTQ people” and include groups of employees that are disinterested in inclusivity or changes. (2007, as cited in Hill, 2009, p. 46)

Learning to incorporate the opposition into creating an inclusive workplace takes effort and time, and will not be without barriers. Vohra et al. (2015) stated:

Emphasizing on the fairness perspective and the active seeking out of employees in the process of inclusion, Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands (2004) describe inclusion as “equality, justice, and full participation at both the group and individual levels, so that members of different groups not only have equal access to opportunities, decision-making, and positions of power, but they are actively sought out because of their differences.” (p. 327)

Despite efforts to seek out and resolve differences between individuals and groups in an organization, “gay-friendly organizations do not guarantee a working environment which engages with and embraces ‘sexual minorities’ or prevents homophobic attitudes and treatment across the board” (Colgen, 2008, as cited in Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009, pp. 764–765). Even though some occurrences of discrimination may arise in workplaces that are seeking to improve their climate and culture through inclusion, the “perception of nondiscriminatory climate toward lesbians and gay men is positively related to their formation of similar developmental network” (Trau, 2015, pp. 358–359). Through a nondiscriminatory climate, lesbian and gay workers may find it safe to engage with the community and their peers.

Organizations must actively demonstrate inclusive, safe environments beyond written policies and trainings. Researchers demonstrated “the practice of inviting same-sex partners to company social events had, by far, the strongest relationship to perceived workplace discrimination, as well as to the decision to disclose one’s sexual orientation at work” because the presence of same-sex partners in the company environment “sends a very distinct message to both gay and heterosexual employees, which may affect perceptions of discrimination and organizational climate” (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001, pp. 1255-1256). The context of workplace environment and inclusion activities build toward several of the research points in that the safer and more supportive the workplace, the more likely lesbian and gay individuals are to disclose their sexual orientation, leading to a healthier and more productive environment.

Impacts of Workplace Policy

Workplace policies govern nearly all aspects of work life in organizations, which are expanding to include lesbian and gay employees. Everly and Schwarz (2015) found from their studies that “the most striking [finding] is the strong and consistent effect that the social/political environment plays in the formulation of companies’ HR policies” (p. 378). With the shifting social and political landscape in the United States, companies are taking an active approach to expanding their policies and protections to include lesbian and gay employees.

Raeburn remarked that “federal and state governments have been slow to adopt overarching antidiscrimination laws, some individual organizations have been more amenable to adopting LGBT-friendly HR policies” (2004, as cited in Everly & Schwarz, 2015, p. 368). Even though the United States does not enforce a federal nondiscrimination policy that encompasses sexual orientation “organizations are beginning to recognize that the increase of diversity in the workforce necessitates greater attention to policies and procedures regarding the treatment and experiences of diverse employees” (King et al., 2008, p. 379).

Further reporting on the status of nondiscrimination policies, Williams and Giuffre (2011) stated that “in contrast to the federal government, most major US corporations have instituted policies banning discrimination against LGBTQ employees ... [and] gender identity and expression, again despite the absence of federal mandates to do so” (p. 555). Research by Ragins and Cornwell (2001) also indicated, “although organizational cultures are certainly influenced by regional legislation and culture, [they found], that the passage of protective legislation alone may not be sufficient for reducing

reports of workplace discrimination” (p. 1255). It is important for organizations to be aware that the use of nondiscrimination policies in the workplace typically has positive effects but do not successfully eradicate discrimination immediately. “Anti-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation are the best tool for combatting these forms of harassment, especially when coupled with company-wide employee diversity training that includes sexual orientation issues” (Anastas, 1998, p. 86).

Firms with more women on the board of directors are more likely to adopt LGBT-friendly HR policies. Although there is no clear pattern of increasing percentages of women on boards of directors of companies in our sample of publicly traded firms, those who are there may be exerting greater influence on organizational policies. (Everly & Schwarz, 2015, p. 379)

This finding indicates how policy changes are impacted by the most senior leadership and highlights that policies not only affect those in the company but also those governing the company.

Bell et al. (2011) found “when management clearly articulates that GLBT employees are valued contributors to organizational success, and that heterosexism is not tolerated (Waldo, 1999), GLBT employees are more comfortable being out” (p. 141). However, organizations must fund their efforts for diversity inclusion for the programs and policies to be effective. Further, to improve the visibility and inclusion, leaders must push “for GLBT issues to be mainstreamed in decision processes at work, [and] organizations should introduce GLBT monitoring in their human resource reporting systems” (Bell et al., 2011, p. 141). When companies actively engage their employees through practices that promote safety, nondiscrimination, and inclusion, Gates found

“that the presence of an anti-discrimination law increases the relative earnings of gays by 3.0 percent and by 0.3 percent for each year the law is in effect,” which illustrates one of the benefits of an improved work environment through policy work (2009, as cited in Christafore & Leguizamon, 2013, p. 221). As this section demonstrated, the implementation of nondiscrimination policies in an organization, beyond those of federal or state governments, create significantly positive impacts on the work environment and employees. In relation to this study, lesbian and gay leaders, aspirers in their careers for many years, possibly decades, witnessed firsthand the ways organizations grew and developed in the light of social and political forces. Understanding how participants’ perspectives and priorities shifted throughout their career can be analyzed in the context of workplace policies that improve and protect the workers and workplace.

Historical Context

Save Our Children and Anita Bryant

The mid-1970s marked a time of modest, albeit hard-won, advancements in gay rights when:

Several cities and counties had added sexual orientation to their lists of non-discrimination statuses, the U.S. Civil Service Commission repealed its ban on homosexual employment... [and] a number of states had decriminalized lesbian and gay sex by reforming or eliminated sodomy laws. (Bernstein, 1997 as cited by Fetner, 2001, p. 411)

The advancement in protections, locally and nationally, drew the attention of the conservative right that opposed the growing acceptance and support for homosexuality as a publicly disclosed identity. In particular, “religious conservatives were well represented

among ... traditionalists, and Christian evangelicals were at the forefront of a number of social and moral issues, including the anti-abortion movement, the anti-feminist movement, as well as the anti-gay movement” (Diamond, 1998, as cited by Fetner, 2001, p. 414).

A turning point in the momentum gained by the gay movement was in 1977 when Dade County, Florida, passed an ordinance that “protected people from discrimination based on sexual orientation” (Fetner, 2001, p. 415). The move by Dade County to approve the protection of sexual orientation represented a minority position, considering that in 1977 “thirty-two states still maintained sodomy laws” and teachers could still be fired for being known homosexuals (Graves, 2013, p. 3). The conservative-Christian right “organized in a genuine attempt to stop the lesbian and gay movement from gaining any more political ground, as well as to repeal some of the legislative gains that had already been won” (Fetner, 2001, p. 415). Leading the charge to overturn the legal protections was Anita Bryant, “a small-time celebrity who worked as a spokesperson for a number of corporate interested ... who resided in Dade County, Florida” (Fetner, 2001, p. 414). Bryant launched the organization “‘Save our Children from Homosexuality’—later ‘Save Our Children,’ [which sought] to collect signatures that asked the County Commission to hold a special referendum on the issue” (Van Cleve, 2013, p. 8). The “‘Save our Children’ organization conflated homosexuality with child pornography and molestation [and] appealed to particular notions of family values and sexual morality” (Fejes, 2008, p. 137 as cited in Graves, 2013, p. 5) and, as Bryant claimed, was a “right to control ‘the moral atmosphere in which [her] children grow up,’ insisting that the state’s support of gay civil rights infringed upon her status as a parent.” She also proclaimed, “homosexuals

cannot reproduce—so they must recruit. And to freshen their ranks, they must recruit the youth of America” (Frank, 2013, p. 127).

The outspoken and aggressive work of Save Our Children and Anita Bryant successfully led the overturn of sexual-orientation protections in Dade County and subsequently led to similar successful antigay initiatives throughout the United States. Several participants in this study expressed feelings of fear and trepidation in coming out as gay or lesbian in their places of work during the late 1970s due to the efforts of Anita Bryant, which they often referred to as “Anita Bryant Cities.” The work of the Christian right, threatened the job security of countless queer individuals and challenged the process made to ensure protections for all citizens.

California Proposition 6 — “The Briggs Initiative”

One-week following the success of the Save Our Children campaign, the conservative movement targeted efforts in California, with help from Senator Jon Briggs (R-Fullerton), who introduced the ballot initiative Proposition 6, commonly known as The Briggs Initiative (Fetner, 2011, p. 415). This initiative specifically aimed to remove gay and lesbian teachers from their positions. Graves (2013) cited, “The fact that gay and lesbian teachers occupied such a vulnerable position intensified the risk of coming out” and ultimately increased the urgency for opposition to Proposition 6 (p. 8). The call for visibility by Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in San Francisco, urged people to come out of the closet and help show people that the ones they know and love are gay or lesbian (Graves, 2013). Ultimately, California defeated Proposition 6, but the impact on participants in this study lives on. Many recounted the fear and vulnerability

that Proposition 6 instilled in them as younger adults and ultimately led to career changes for some.

AIDS Epidemic and the Impact on the San Francisco Queer Community

To understand the impact and catalytic force that the AIDS epidemic brought to survivors and community, it is paramount to understand the scope and scale of the crisis. Prior to the AIDS epidemic that emerged in 1981, San Francisco maintained a fairly obscure gay culture, even though nearly “100,000 or so gay and bisexual men moved to San Francisco [starting in the 1970s]” (Rogers et al., 1995, p. 668). The city provided a vibrant, extensive support system for the burgeoning queer community with “more than 150 gay organizations including church groups, political parties, and business associations” (Rogers et al., 1995, p. 668).

The increase in queer people began in the 1970s with “approximately 5,000 gays per year moving to San Francisco,” leading to about “40% of the male population of San Francisco (approximately 140,000)” identifying as gay in 1980 (Rogers et al., 1995, p. 669). In the gay community, newly won rights and sexual freedom represented a changing society, struck down by the AIDS crisis. Rogers et al. (1995) pointed out, “the AIDS epidemic disrupted socially constructed meanings about community ... and radically changed the urban landscape of the city [which] forced residents to give new meaning to the concept of community” (p. 667). Since 1981 “when the first man succumbed to a disease that did not yet have a name, AIDS has taken more than 20,000 lives in San Francisco,” noted Allday (2016). Allday also remembered, “students and lawyers, musicians and doctors, drugstore clerks and teachers”, equally ravaged by the virus: a generation gutted. Rogers et al. (1995) recalled, “When the AIDS epidemic began

in 1981, initial reactions often were fatalistic and apathetic” because so many members of the community were dying (p. 670). In 1993, Luse took an iconic photo of the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus (see Figure 6) showing “122 members on stage with 115 dressed in black and facing away from the camera. They represented the members of the chorus who have died from AIDS since 1981. Only seven members of the chorus are dressed in white and face the camera. They are the seven members of the 1981 Gay Men’s Chorus who are still alive” (Roger et. al, 1995, p. 666).



Figure 6. San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus.

Note. Retrieved from *San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus 1993* [Photograph], by E. Luse (Photographer), 1993, retrieved from <http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/Gay-Men-s-Chorus-carries-on-A-quarter-century-2533823.php#photo-2660633>. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

“The AIDS crisis left a lasting mark on the gay community of San Francisco, specifically in the city’s historically gay Castro district” Schwartz (n.d.) stated. The scares of the AIDS crisis are borne even today in San Francisco, in the Castro district, where “60% of HIV positive people ... over the age 50, who have survived the epidemic of the 1980s” continue to live (HIV Epidemiology Annual Report 2015, as cited by Schwartz, n.d.). With such a monumental impact on the gay community in San Francisco,

many participants in this study voiced that living through and surviving the HIV outbreak and AIDS crisis, as a young adult in San Francisco, greatly impacted their trajectory toward activism and community-based work.

Summary

This study analyzed how the lived experiences of lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles shifted their perspectives and priorities in the workplace. This chapter assessed the two theoretical frameworks—queer theory and social-constructionism theory—that informed the data-analysis phase and conclusions of this study. Further, this chapter reviewed key themes, studies, and theorists that layer together to form a context by which the researcher examined their experiences. Current and historical research in this field guided this study to identify four major themes that provided social and political influence on study participants: discrimination in the workplace, disclosure of sexual orientation, sexual-orientation formation, and organizational implications. Further, the content from this chapter provided guidance for Chapter 3 through understanding the population and factors that need to be studied and developing the interview protocol.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter on methodology presents the design of the study and methodologies for data collection and analysis. The researcher designed this qualitative study through a phenomenological approach, centered on capturing the essence of participants' experiences with the intersectionality of sexual orientation and career development. The researcher selected a phenomenological approach because “the researcher [is] able to gather information from the participants' perspectives and gain a better understanding of the lived experiences” (Soeker et al., 2015, p. 177). The intention to add to the existing literature, as well as understand how workplaces impact lesbian and gay people due to their sexual identities, guided this research.

The researcher used the lenses of queer theory and social constructionism to analyze participants' experiences, to create a new perspective. The researcher selected participants through a purposeful, homogenous sampling procedure that developed a sample that is diverse and representative of the lesbian and gay population over the age of 50 years old. The researcher conducted multiple one-on-one interviews with the participants through an audio recording device, discussing in-depth experiences of the phenomenon following an interview protocol designed specifically for this study. During the data-analysis phase, the researcher used coding and memoing to derive the essence of the lived experiences of participants in this study. This chapter comprises 12 sections: restatement of the purpose, research design, research setting, research questions, population and sample, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data-collection procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations, summary, and researcher background.

Restatement of the Purpose

Through this study, the researcher intended to gain insight into how the professional priorities and perspectives of lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles shifted throughout the development of their careers, impacted by their sexual-orientation formation. Throughout the exploration of this study, the researcher intended to describe how lesbian and gay leaders continued to manage their professional identity following the disclosure of their sexual orientation to their colleagues.

Due to higher prevalence and longer standing recognition of lesbian and gay individuals in the professional workspace, this study pursued an understanding of how these individuals used disclosure strategies and approaches in the workplace to navigate their “strategic outness” with their peers. Further, the researcher identified the impact that workplace culture and climate played in the decision to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation, and how this culture impacted their career development. The researcher investigated the experiences of leaders in the corporate, noneducational business professions. The qualitative approach to this study enabled the researcher to extensively speak with each participant regarding personal lived experiences.

As stated earlier, six research questions guided this study:

Research Questions

1. How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?
2. How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?

3. Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?
4. What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?
5. What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?
6. How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Research Design

The researcher designed this study following the phenomenological approach, as “it involves the use of thick description and close analysis of lived experience to understand how meaning is created through embodied perception,” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373). Sokolowski (2000, as cited in Starks and Trinidad, 2007), wrote:

Phenomenological statements, like philosophical statements, state the obvious and the necessary. They tell us what we already know. They are not new information, but even if not new, they can still be important and illuminating, because we often are very confused about just such trivialities and necessities. (p. 1373)

Therefore, the qualitative approach to the study design allowed for the voices of participants to be captured as they reflected on their lived experiences.

“Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive and includes describing the individual and setting, analyzing data for themes, and eventually drawing conclusions about its meaning” (Soeker et al., 2015, p. 177). The researcher designed this study to

follow “the phenomenological approach [which] may be referred to as a way of understanding people’s perceptions and perspectives of the meaning of a particular situation or event” (Soeker, et. al., 2015, p. 177). Creswell noted that a phenomenological study is:

Describing the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon,” which seeks to identify “what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon ... [and] reduce them down to a description of the universal essence. (2013, p. 76)

Understanding the design of a phenomenological study requires an understanding of the historical context in which phenomenology developed. Leonard (1989) systematically described the work of Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, who first stated the “phenomenological view of person centers on the relationship of the person to the world. Phenomenologically, world is the meaningful set of relationships, practices, and language that we have by virtue of being born into a culture” (p. 43). Using the context of an individual’s world as a frame to understand how the person encounters the world is the center focus of the Heidegger phenomenology. Heidegger believed that:

Human beings are already ... interpreting themselves in light of their cultural background: all of those hidden skills and practices and the linguistic meanings that are so all-pervasive as to be unnoticed and yet make the world intelligible for us, create our possibilities and the conditions for our actions. (as cited in Leonard, 1989, p. 47)

Further, the foundation in which we experience the world is based on “our common practices [that] are based on shared, embodied, perceptual capacities” (Leonard, 1989, p. 48).

Understanding the world as experienced by each participant of the study is central to phenomenology and became the responsibility of the researcher to construct a study that drew on the notion that “persons not only have a world in which things have significance and value but they have qualitatively different concerns based on their culture, language, and individual situations” (Leonard, 1989, p. 46). Further building on the notion of each person’s world, Palmer stated:

World cannot be described by trying to enumerate the entities in it; in this process world would be passed over... the entities which comprise man’s physical world are not themselves world but in a world. Only man has a world. (1969, as cited in Leonard, 1989, p. 43)

Therefore, the researcher conducting a phenomenological study must make the world conscious, as each person experiencing it and can only occur when it is partitioned into pieces (Leonard, 1989).

The researcher of this phenomenological study followed the principles outlined by Creswell (2013) and focused on a group of lesbian and gay leaders who experienced a shift in priorities and perceptions of themselves in the workplaces as their sexual orientation developed, whereas the researcher refrained from sharing any personal experiences during the interviews (p. 78). To develop a well-defined phenomenological study, Creswell (2013) found that certain procedural elements are critical:

1. Ensure that the focus of the research is most appropriately studied through a phenomenological approach;
2. Correctly identify the central phenomenon to be studied;
3. Researcher brackets out himself in order to view the phenomenon as it exists, without regard to the outside world;
4. Through in-depth and multiple interviews with participants, the researcher collects data about the experience. (p. 81).

In following the recommendations of Creswell (2013), the researcher clearly identified the focus of this study and determined through reflection on the research topic that the phenomenological approach was best suited to capture the experiences of the participants. The researcher selected each participant through purposeful, homogeneous, and snowball sampling procedures, enabling the researcher to reach a threshold of the recommended 5 to 25 participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 148). The researcher selected and verified each participant, ensuring they met predetermined criteria for the study (discussed further in the Sampling Procedures section). Next, the researcher scheduled one-on-one interviews with each participant. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews following an interview protocol, using voice recordings for the purposes of transcription and record keeping. Following each interview, the researcher recorded a reflective memorandum regarding the researcher's initial thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and review of the interview content. After completing each interview transcript, the researcher sent the full transcript to each participant for review and approval. After participants approved their interview transcript, the researcher moved forward with analysis.

The researcher analyzed each of the interview transcripts to identify common statements, leading to the creation of a list of common themes. With a series of themes identified, the researcher then constructed textural and structural descriptions of the experiences, providing the context to explain what and how participants, as a group of people, experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Ultimately, this study surmised the essence of lesbian and gay leaders' experiences of shifting priorities and perspectives over the course of their sexual-orientation formation.

Research Setting

The researcher identified potential participants for this study through a variety of methods to ensure a more diverse pool of candidates and to target the most qualified participants. The researcher notified a majority of participants through a personal-status posting on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and LinkedIn, requesting that interested people contact the researcher primarily through an online prospective participant-screening survey (see Appendix A). The researcher also purchased an advertisement through an e-mail ListServ and a webpage banner advertisement through Betty's List, a San Francisco Bay Area LGBTQ news and events network with more than 25,000 subscribers. In addition to the use of social-media platforms, the researcher also identified participants through the researcher's personal network of contacts and through individual introductions by a University of San Francisco faculty member.

Once the researcher completed the initial round of participant selection, the researcher identified additional participants through snowball sampling from the current study sample. Additionally, the researcher used snowball sampling to further develop the pool of potential study participants, deriving candidacy through recommendations of

other study participants. Although the participants identified may not be representative of the entire lesbian and gay population, the structure follows the method employed by Orne (2011), who selected participants based on what M.M. Bell (2009) noted was not “representativeness but the representedness” of the gay population (p. 686). The researcher limited participation in this study to residents of the United States to control for social and political factors that vary from country to country. During the initial screening-survey process, the researcher asked participants to identify their country of residence (excluding their immigration or citizenship status) and used this information as a factor to determine eligibility to participate in this study.

Leonard (1989) remarked:

To understand a person’s behavior or expressions, one has to study the person in context, for it is only there that what a person values and finds significant is visible. Understanding the relational and configurational context allows for a more appropriate interpretation of the significance that things have for a person.
(p. 46)

Based on the assessment of Leonard, the researcher conducted interviews through in-person or video conferencing, determined by the location of the participant during the data-collection phase of this study. The researcher intended to conduct the initial interview in person, which occasionally required the researcher to travel to the location of the research participant. Regardless of the format of the interview—in person or through videoconference—the researcher conducted each interview in a quiet location, ensuring the participant and researcher had the ability to clearly hear one another and for the voice-recording device to clearly capture each person’s voice. If the researcher conducted

the interviews in person, the researcher selected a safe and neutral location, agreeable to both parties, ensuring an optimal interview. Based on the potentially sensitive nature of the study, the researcher anticipated that in-person interviews needed to take place outside the workplace, and potentially outside their home (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009, p. 771). In the study by Soeker et al. (2015), the researchers interviewed participants in a location that was familiar to them based on their daily routine, ensuring participants' comfort, leading to their cooperation in the interviews and increasing the potential for more honest, in-depth responses to the interview questions.

Research-Question Analysis

The researcher examined how perceptions and perspectives of lesbian and gay persons in leadership positions shift as their sexual orientation develops over the course of their career through the lenses of social constructionism and queer theory. The researcher informed each research question by the themes identified through content analysis of relevant academic literature, including journal articles and books related to sexual-orientation formation, social constructionism, queer theory, phenomenology, workplace discrimination, and career development.

Research Question 1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?

This overarching question is central to this study because it anticipated that this question would yield insights into each participant's experience when ascending into leadership positions, while managing their career development, and during the formation of their sexual and professional identities. This question pursued information specifically

related to how lesbian and gay persons' career and success in leadership positions have been shaped when they disclosed their sexual orientation in the workplace. It was likely for participants to inform the researcher about how they made decisions regarding disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace to achieve certain positions or advancements in their career trajectory.

Research Question 2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?

This question focused on the intersectionality between career development and the evolution of sexual orientation for lesbian and gay people in leadership roles. The researcher anticipated that participants might reveal experiences of their sexual-orientation formation, including their strategic outness, discrimination experiences, and career development. The information provided in each of the aforementioned areas culminated in in-depth exploration of how each factor shifted participants' professional priorities and perspectives on their sexual orientation related to their career advancement in leadership roles in the workplace.

Research Question 3: Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?

Lesbian and gay study participants may have regularly faced the decision of whether and how to disclose their sexual orientation. The decision to disclose or withhold their sexual orientation in each workplace situation rests on specific situations or contexts that cause participants to deem their decision most appropriate. With each situation, participants navigated their workplace environment to maintain an optimal workplace

climate, directly impacting their success as leaders and their career advancement. The participants' decision to disclose their orientation, based on certain situations or contexts, provided insight into how perspectives and priorities changed for each participant throughout their leadership career.

Research Question 4: What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?

The researcher anticipated that this question might yield insight into the various strategies used by lesbian and gay participants in disclosing or concealing their sexual orientation in the workplace. Each participant, being a leader in their workplace, obtained more visibility and potentially greater interactions with colleagues: both subordinates and superiors. Understanding how leaders managed their orientation disclosure provided awareness into the factors that influenced their decision to be out in the workplace and how it impacted their perspectives and priorities over the course of their career.

Research Question 5: What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?

Professional identity formation and the disclosure of sexual orientation are simultaneous and an ongoing processes that continually shape participants' perceived position in their workplace. The researcher based this question on the notion that once a participant disclosed their sexual orientation in the workplace, it could be undone, directly impacting the formation of their professional identity. In other words, this question explored the possible impact of coming out in the workplace on participants' ability to successfully advance their leadership career. Further, the researcher anticipated

that coming out in the workplace resulted in experiencing discrimination from peers. The researcher predicted that the information provided by participants helped inform the discussion on how their perspectives and priorities shifted as a result of their sexual-orientation disclosure.

Research Question 6: How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

The decision to disclose sexual orientation does not occur in the workplace without the influence of workplace climate and policies. The researcher anticipated that this question might expose how participants navigated the decision to disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace based on the climate, workplace discrimination, or inclusion policies. Ultimately, the impact of a workplace climate and policies may influence how participants' perspectives and priorities shifted over the course of their career.

Population

The researcher of this study specifically targeted the lesbian and gay population, identifying as either male or female, and serving in a leadership role. Martinez et al. cited:

These individuals [lesbian and gay] represent a sizable portion of the U.S. workforce, with estimates ranging from a 4 to 17 % constituency (Gonsiorek and Weinrich 1991; Powers 1996). The variance ... reflects the fact that accurate estimates are difficult to obtain, as many individuals fear the repercussions of and/or simply avoid revealing their sexual orientations in the workplace (e.g., Ragins and Cornwell, 2001). (2013, p. 456)

With a considerable size of the U.S. workforce potentially identifying as lesbian and gay, the researcher sought to provide insight that may be applicable to a majority of the population in focus; however, to capture the intimate details of lived experiences, the researcher needed to limit the population to a smaller sample size, making the data-collection process manageable and allowing for extensive interaction between the participant and the researcher.

Sample

For this study, the researcher sought a purposeful, homogeneous sample of 15 participants, which is larger than the recommendation by some phenomenologists. Starks and Trinidad (2007) noted:

Although diverse samples might provide a broader range from which to distill the essence of the phenomenon, data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon—and who can provide a detailed account of their experience—might suffice to uncover its core elements. Typical sample sizes for phenomenological studies range from 1 to 10 persons. (p. 1375)

Further, Starks and Trinidad stated:

Given that an individual person can generate hundreds or thousands of concepts, large samples are not necessarily needed to generate rich data sets. The exact number of individuals needed, and the number of interviews per individual, depends on the goals and purpose of the study. (p. 1374)

The researcher designed this study to include 15 participants to account for any attrition of study participants and to increase the probability of incorporating individuals from a variety of organizations.

Creswell (2013) recommended that each “participant in the study [will] need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question” to ensure the study yields a common understanding of participants’ experiences (p. 83). The researcher identified participants through purposeful sampling, as Creswell (2015) noted: “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 205). Further deriving the sample for this study, the researcher considered the participants to be a homogeneous sampling: a purposeful sample “of individuals based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics,” which, in this study, would be the subgroup associated with sexual orientation of lesbian and gay individuals (Creswell, 2015, p. 207).

To reflective a purposeful, homogenous sampling, the participants must meet the following criteria:

- Individuals must be residents of the United States;
- Individuals must identify as either lesbian or gay;
- Individuals must identify as cisgender;
- Individuals must be currently or previously employed in a leadership, managerial role;
- Individuals must currently or previously manage more than five employees, indirectly or directly;
- Individuals must be at least 50 years old;

- Individuals must have disclosed their sexual orientation in either their previous or current workplace prior to this study.

If a participant did not meet the above-mentioned criteria, the researcher excluded them from the study. Rumens (2011) noted:

Gay men and lesbians are famously hard to access and persuade to participate in academic studies (Bowringand & Brewis, 2009; Ward & Winstanley, 2003). This is due, in part, to the “invisibility” of LGBT sexualities in many organizational settings and the associated risks of participating in research that might expose sexual minority employees to negative workplace repercussions (Ward & Winstanley, 2006). Research has shown how sexual minority employees can go to extraordinary lengths to manage their sexuality in the workplace in ways that avoid the deleterious effects of homophobia and heterosexism (Burnett, 2010; Woods & Lucas, 1993), making them a challenging body of people to access. (p. 448)

Given the potential difficulty of identifying lesbian and gay participants for this study, Creswell (2015) recommended, “in certain research situations, you may not know the best people to study because of the ... complexity of the event” (p. 208). As a result of the researcher’s inability to locate the ideal number of participants for the study, the researcher deemed it necessary to implement “snowball sampling, [which] is a purposeful strategy used during a study to follow up on specific cases to test or explore further specific findings” (Creswell, 2015, p. 208). Researchers use snowball sampling to identify additional participants for the study through the recommendations of current study participants (Creswell, 2015).

The researcher limited participants to organizations based throughout the United States to control for unique differences in the social and political contexts impacting the workplace, which may be different in organizations outside of the United States, due to discrimination laws and policies. The researcher applied this sample of participants to the larger population of lesbian and gay persons in leadership positions working in organizations in the United States.

Sampling Procedures

The researcher selected participants for this study through a purposeful, homogeneous sample process and snowball sampling, using various methods to recruit each participant. Primarily, the researcher solicited potential participants through a status update in social-media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Instagram. The researcher included a link for a prospective participant-screening survey (see Appendix A) on the previously mentioned social-media platforms, providing the information needed to screen individuals, based on set criteria. The researcher also identified participants through an e-mail ListServ and webpage advertisement through Betty's List, a San Francisco-based LGBTQ news and events network. Additionally, a faculty member from the University of San Francisco facilitated the introductions between the researcher and the potential participants. As study participants were identified through purposeful sampling and recruitment through social media, the researcher employed snowball sampling, using participants in the study from the recommendations of other potential participants.

The researcher reviewed all interest-intake-survey responses from all study candidates to determine the participants who met the criteria of the study sample. The

researcher used this survey tool to gauge the interest and willingness of the individual to participate in the study. Guittar (2013) found, “participants in studies on coming out tend to be white, highly educated, and of a high socio-economic status” (p. 172). The researcher sought to include participants of varying socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds to increase the perspectives of the phenomenon being studied. Selecting participants for this study presented the challenge of balancing a diverse sample of participants in a small period of time. As a drive to maximize the diversity of participants in the study, the researcher screened a list of individuals amassed by the researcher, qualifying them to participate, using the list to select a sample of participants based on the purposeful, homogeneous sampling requirements.

To ensure a diverse sample of participants, this study required a minimum of five cisgender women and five cisgender men, filling the remaining participant spots with cisgender individuals of either gender. Requiring a minimum threshold of five cisgender men and five cisgender women ensured adequate representation of lesbian and gay individuals in this study. The current composition of the U.S. labor force, as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), consists of 79% White, 12% Black, 6% Asian, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and 17% Hispanic (pp. 1–2). Drawing on the composition of the U.S. labor force, the researcher required no more than nine White participants and no less than six Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Natives, or Hispanic participants. The researcher’s composition requirements for this study called for greater diversity than the current composition of the U.S. labor force to incorporate a more diverse representation of experiences.

The researcher sent the selected participants a welcome e-mail that included a link for them to sign up for preset interview dates and a separate e-mail generated by DocuSign that included the informed-consent form (see Appendix B). The researcher asked all participants to participate with the expectation that they would provide a minimum of one in-depth interview lasting approximately 2 hours. Once the individual electronically signed and returned the informed consent and self-scheduled their interview date and time, the interview process commenced.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The researcher designed this study to focus on a set of experiences that provide insights into how priorities and perspectives shift in the workplace for lesbian and gay people in leadership positions. The researcher designed the study to include certain limitations and delimitations, stated as follows.

Limitations

Throughout the development of this study, several limitations presented unique challenges. The researcher focused this study on the experience of out lesbian and gay leaders, which required obtaining a sample of participants who met the requirements to participate in the study. Identifying out individuals in a leadership position, who are considered a leader, and possessed willingness to participate in the study acted as this study's first limitation. Due to the typically limited number of out people working at the managerial level, locating professionals willing to participate in the study proved a significant challenge.

Further, the researcher called on individuals to share their experiences of their career development that accounted for shifting priorities and perspectives as their sexual

identities formed, only allowing for the participation of individuals already out in their workplace. The researcher recognized that the exclusion of closeted managers only allowed the focus of this study to express the experiences of individuals who already lived the coming-out process and were able to reflect on the process and other major factors resulting from being out. Also, the researcher intentionally chose to exclude the stories and experiences of closeted individuals from this study to avoid skewing the research results.

The sample population selected to participate acted as this study's third limitation. In preparation for data collection, the researcher conducted an extensive search to identify a national organization for lesbian and gay leaders across multiple disciplines, potentially providing the researcher access to a cross section of the population. However, no national organizations currently represent a cross section of lesbian and gay managers and professionals that could provide access to a large pool of potential participants. Thus, the researcher selected participants in this study through social and professional networking systems, possibly limiting a broad representation of professionals from numerous regions throughout the United States.

Delimitations

The researcher specifically focused the scope of this study on lesbian and gay individuals, identified as the target population, because these are the most prominent sexual orientations. The researcher chose to exclude members of the transgender community due to the complexity of this gender identity in the workplace, which deserves its own study to provide adequate data collection and analysis. Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers (2011) made the case:

In accordance with previous researchers (Erich, Tittsworth, & Kersten, 2010; Gagne, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997) ... transsexual individuals as including all of the following groups of individuals: those who have had gender reassignment surgery to change from one biological sex to the other, those taking hormones and other medications to help transition their physical body from one sex to the other, those who dress as the gender opposite of their biological sex because they feel that they were born as the wrong sex, and those who desire to be the gender opposite of their biological sex but have not yet taken steps to physically transition. Clearly, these individuals are inherently different from LGB individuals (who are characterized by romantic object choice, not gender identity) and deserve to be studied in their own right. (p. 710)

The exclusion of bisexual individuals from the sample of participants acted as an additional delimitation of this study. The researcher decided to exclude bisexual individuals from the study, in large part because of the work of McFadden (2015, p. 138), who highlighted:

Bisexual workers, by virtue of their ability to discuss their “heterosexual side” openly and honestly, while hiding their emotional and sexual attraction to those of the same sex, and therefore “passing” (Parnell et al., 2012), may have different experiences ... with identity management strategies, than gay and lesbian workers.

Bowman (2003, as cited in McFadden, 2015) further discussed the conclusion that bisexual individuals hold the potential for different sets of experiences, stating,

“bisexuals may ... find themselves expected to choose one orientation or another,” while Rumens (2011) discussed how bisexual people may “find themselves reticent to disclose their sexual orientation, out of fear that both their heterosexual and homosexual colleagues would not understand or label them as ‘confused’” (pp. 138–139). Based on these findings from recent research, it is clear that bisexual individuals face a myriad of challenges different from those of gay and lesbian individuals, necessitating further research on bisexual individuals, separate from lesbian and gay individuals.

Additionally, the researcher selected participants who are managers in organizations predominately outside of the education field. This allowed for no more than 30% of the participants to be education leaders, enabling development of a study extending beyond education into the business workplace, increasing applicability of the findings to a broader audience. Management principles and positions vary greatly in roles and responsibilities between education and business, potentially limiting the ability for this study to reach gay and lesbian managers in the business workplace if it solely focused on educational leaders.

Further, the researcher only included managers from the United States to control for variations that may occur in the international community related to social and political contexts, including laws and policies prohibiting discrimination. The ability to focus solely on the experiences of leaders in the United States provided a narrower focus to explore the findings of this study. The researcher screened each individual participant using the same screening survey to determine eligibility.

Instrumentation

The researcher used a set of interview questions that align with the research questions (see Appendix C). The researcher used the interview protocol, including the research questions, throughout the initial in-depth interview to remind the researcher of the interview questions and as a space for notes. The notes later accompanied the audio recordings of the interviews. The interview protocol shown in Appendix C reflects only the questions asked in the first in-depth interview, because the initial in-depth interview acted as the starting point for data collection. The researcher formulated each question to be open ended, allowing for participants to reflect on their stories and lived experiences related to their shift in perspectives and perceptions as their sexual orientation formed. The researcher planned to conduct the interview in a semistructured format that allowed participants to follow through the interview using the interview protocol as a guide that encompassed other pertinent information.

The researcher developed the interview protocol by reviewing each of the research questions guiding this study and designing questions that caused specific details to ultimately inform each research question. The interview questions covered a significant range of content themes to fully encapsulate the intention of the research questions shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Crosswalk of Interview Questions and Research Questions

Interview questions	Corresponding research question	Anticipated data
Tell me about your career history.	N/A	Gather an overview of participants' education, career history, and key data points that provide a foundation for understanding the remainder of the interview protocol questions.
What does coming out at work look like to you?	RQ1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?	Potential data includes participants' interpretations and thoughts on what it means to disclose, or come out to the people with whom they work. Responses will likely range based on prior experiences and positions in the workplace.
How would you describe your perceptions of the decision to disclose your sexual orientation to your peers in the workplace?	RQ1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?	Participants are expected to detail how they feel and think about their decision to disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace to their peers. The data from this question will provide insight on how the perceived reactions from peers impacted the decision to disclose in the future and inform which maintenance strategies were used in the future related to sexual orientation.
How has your career been shaped, positively or negatively, by your sexual orientation?	RQ1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?	Data from this question may reveal information about how being a lesbian or gay person impacted and shaped career development and advancement.
How has your sexual orientation shifted your career priorities throughout the course of your career?	RQ2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?	Insight into the ways that career development has been shaped over time. With sexual orientation changing throughout the years, it is anticipated that career advancement, opportunities, and interests may be impacted as a result.

Interview questions	Corresponding research question	Anticipated data
How has the way you view your career been shaped by your sexual orientation?	RQ2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?	Anticipate information related to how on-going sexual orientation formation throughout adulthood shaped the way each participant views their career advancement and way they present themselves in the workplace.
What factors affect your decision to divulge your sexual orientation to peers in your workplace throughout your career?	RQ3: Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?	It is anticipated that participants will share information about the treatment they received from peers and the organization in response to their coming out.
What factors attributed to your decision on how and when to come out at work?	RQ2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?	Participants may share information about what factors in the workplace and home life play a part in the decision to come out. This may include workplace climate and policies, friendships with peers, need to champion gay rights movements, or being “outed.”
What has been your previous experience with coming out at work? How has that shaped your decision-making process to come out now and in the future?	RQ3: Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?	Because all participants in this study will have disclosed their sexual orientation in the workplace, participants are expected to discuss positive and negative interactions and reactions from their peers and organizations once they disclosed their sexual orientation. Considering their prior experience, it is expected that participants will express the thought process that guides their decision to disclose their sexual orientation in future workplaces.
What reactions did you receive from your colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors when they learned of your sexual orientation?	RQ5: What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?	Participants hold decades of experience in the workplace, potentially providing examples of instances when they disclosed their sexual orientation and experienced a variety of responses from their colleagues and supervisors.
How did the disclosure of your sexual orientation impact the interactions with your peers at work?	RQ6: How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?	This question moves beyond how participants perceived their peer’s reactions to more specific terms regarding how the interactions between participants and peers change.

Interview questions	Corresponding research question	Anticipated data
How have you managed your “coming out” in the workplace?	RQ4: What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?	Due to the ongoing nature of coming out, participants are anticipated to discuss the strategies they employed to conceal and disclose their sexual orientation in their previous work environments.
What strategies do you use to conceal or disclose your sexual orientation?	RQ4: What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?	Participants will share specific strategies they used in general to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation. This question applies to personal and professional lives over time.
How would you describe the impact your organization’s policies, climate, and culture have in the decision to come out?	RQ6: How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?	Participants will share how the workplace environment, both the culture and specific policies regarding sexual orientation, played a role in the decisions to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation to their workplace peers.
Over the years, how have changes in society’s view of sexual orientation shaped your career?	RQ5: What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?	Data gathered from this question may include information about how changes in social norms changed how, when, and the frequency that participants disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace.
How has luck or being blessed impacted your experiences throughout your career?	N/A	Several participants mentioned good fortune, luck, and blessings in their career. Anticipated gathering data about how forces beyond their control influenced their careers.
Is there anything you would like to share with me regarding your sexual orientation and career development that I have not captured up to this point in the interview?	N/A	Potential for participant to share additional details of their career experiences and lessons they have learned that pertain to their careers as out leaders.

The researcher designed each of the questions in this interview protocol as open ended to illicit responses from participants that are “unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher of past research findings,” allowing for participants to speak freely without influence from the researcher (Creswell, 2015, p. 216).

Data Collection

The researcher adopted the qualitative research focus to:

Locate the observer in the world ... [and] to make the world visible” through a set of practices during data collection, “empowering people to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and participants. (Creswell, 2013, pp. 43, 48)

To learn about the lived experiences of participants in this study, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews, allowing for maximum privacy and increased opportunity for full disclosure. In

a phenomenological study ... the objective of the interview is to elicit the participants’ story ... the researcher/interviewer presents herself as the listener and ... asks probing questions to encourage the participant to elaborate on the details to achieve clarity and to stay close to the lived experience. (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375)

The process of collecting the data followed the recommendations of Creswell (2013), beginning with an initial, short screening interview through phone or video conference between the researcher and participants. This process established rapport with participants and created an understanding of the study and how their participation would impact the research findings. During the initial screening, the researcher discussed the purpose of the study and the expectations of participants during the interview process. Additionally, the initial screening tool served as a way to elicit demographic information: age, race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, job position, and region. The

researcher used the demographic information collected through the screening tool to build a pool of potential participants that the researcher employed to select the final participants of the study.

Following the initial screening, the researcher sent an informed-consent form (see Appendix B), details of the study, and a request for a date for the first interview to participants selected for the study. The researcher conducted each in-depth interview in person or through a video-conferencing tool, recording each interview for later review and transcription between June 2017 and August 2017. At the start of the first interview, the researcher asked participants to provide a pseudonym to identify him or her for the remainder of the study in transcripts and in the analysis. The researcher provided the option for the use of a pseudonym to all study participants to provide anonymity in their interview data and a space for participants to speak freely about their experiences in the workplace. Some participants chose to use their legal name, whereas others selected a pseudonym. The in-depth interview followed a formal set of questions (see Appendix C) with allowance for unscripted, informal follow-up questions used for clarification or further probing into an experience that provided a more precise insight into the phenomenon being studied. Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) reported, “the interviews were semi-structured, tape-recorded, and generally lasted between two and three hours, which allowed the men to describe their general experiences of work in rich detail” (p. 771). The researcher felt compelled to set aside ample time for the interview to fully explore each participant’s experiences with the phenomenon.

Leonard (1989) highlighted the importance of ensuring participants’ lived experiences received full exploration: “nothing can be encountered without reference to

our background understanding. Every encounter entails an interpretation based on our background” (p. 47). Understanding participants’ background—as it informs their view of the phenomenon—is critical to developing the essence of their experiences. The researcher conducted the interviews in-person or through a video-conferencing tool, depending on which format most agreed with the interviewer’s and each individual participant’s schedule and location.

The follow-up interviews allowed the researcher and the participant to clarify any missing information or questions that arose in interviews. Following the second interview, the researcher had the conversations transcribed and provided each participant a copy to review for accuracy and ensure the researcher captured the intention of the responses during the conversation. If any issues arose that called for clarification, the researcher collaborated with participants, scheduling subsequent interviews to allow for the development of an accurate reflection of the intent of the participant. Starks and Trinidad (2007) commented, “phenomenological analysts seek to capture the meaning and common features, or essences, of an experience or event” (p. 1374). Allowing participants to review the transcripts of each interview ensured the researcher captured an accurate depiction of their experiences prior to analysis. Once each participant approved the transcript of the interview, the researcher made the information available for analysis. The researcher included approvals of the interview transcripts by participants in the appendices for review. In addition to the audio recording of each interview, and subsequent transcripts, the researcher participated in memoing: a process in which the researcher writes a reflection following each interview to capture immediate reactions to the information shared by each participant. Memoing allows the researcher to “explore

hunches, ideas, and thoughts and then [take] them apart, always searching for the broader explanations at work in the process” (Creswell, 2015, p. 441). Further, Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated,

Memos also serve the function of establishing an audit trail, whereby the analyst documents her thoughts and reactions as a way of keeping track of emerging impressions of what the data mean, how they relate to each other, and how engaging with the data shapes her understanding. (p. 1376)

The researcher also used these memoranda as a part of the data-analysis process.

Data Storage

Creswell (2013) discussed key principles of storing data gleaned from the interview process, including the following:

- Keep a backup of all files. For this study, the researcher maintained a backup of files on a local hard drive and a cloud-based application.
- Maintain the anonymous identity of participants in all documentation associated with the study. The researcher accomplished this by maintaining pseudonyms on all files.

Further, in accordance with the requirements of the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher kept any data participants provided in this study confidential unless legalities forced disclosure. The researcher kept informed-consent forms, participation information, and all data in a secure, cloud-based data-storage platform and local hard drive. The researcher restricted access to interview recordings to only the researcher, a transcription service, and the three members of the

dissertation committee. Additionally, the researcher codified the participants' names and information through a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. To ensure participants' confidentiality, the researcher kept personal information—such legal name and contact information—in a cloud-based data-storage platform, away from participants' pseudonym and data collected during the interviews. The researcher intends to destroy the informed-consent forms and audio files in 5 years of this study, but intends to indefinitely keep the interview transcripts (filed under a pseudonyms).

Data Analysis

Following Creswell's recommendation, the data analysis consisted of several stages, first focusing on analyzing the interview transcripts to identify "significant segments, sentences, or quotes, that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (2013, p. 82). This initial process provided identification of themes that emerged from the interviews. "Phenomenological analyses produce rich thematic descriptions that provide insight into the meaning of the lived experience. Phenomenologies are often written as anecdotes or thematic stories, drawing on elements reported from different narrators to create a blended story" (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, pp. 1376–1377). To capture the essence of the phenomenon being studied, the research must start with the organization of the data collected during the data-collection phase.

Creswell (2015) remarked that qualitative studies yield extensive amounts of content for analysis by the researcher, requiring an organization system to manage the content for detailed analysis while keeping backup files in a separate location and sorting files by type. Further, Creswell (2015) recommended "researchers [should] convert their files to appropriate text units (e.g., a word, a sentence, an entire story) for analysis ... and

must be easily located in large databases” (p. 182). For the purposes of this study the researcher analyzed data using NVivo, a qualitative analysis tool developed by QSR International. The use of NVivo to store data chunks for processing acted as a key feature of the data-analysis process.

Prior to starting the analysis process, the researcher had the interview data transcribed to view the content in its entirety. For the purposes of this study, the researcher hired a third-party transcriptionist to transcribe the audio-recorded interviews. The researcher transcribed the field notes, interview notes, and reflective memoranda related to each interview. The researcher uploaded all transcribed files into NVivo for further data analysis and review. Moustakas employed an approach using “systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions” (1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 80). The researcher followed a systemic analytical process to ensure accurate review and synthesis of the interviews to draw out the essence of the lived experiences of each participant.

Following the recommendation of Creswell (2015), the first step in analyzing qualitative data is to “explore the data to obtain a general sense of the data, memoing ideas, thinking about the organization of the data, and considering whether you need more data” (p. 242). Similarly, Agar remarked, “read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts” (1980, as cited in Creswell, 2015, p. 242). This critical first step in the analysis process enabled the researcher to start to grasp the span of information and form ideas about themes and concepts that may appear in the texts. Spending time repeatedly reviewing and contemplating the content and context of the

transcripts helped the researcher start to formulate an understanding of the phenomenon the participants discussed during their interviews. No analysis of interview data is absolute and

this detailed work [is] time consuming but an important part of the sense-making process, one that is integral to qualitative data analysis ... it must be understood that my analysis of the study data represents merely one possible interpretation of the interview data. (Silverman, 2001, as cited in Rumens, 2011, p. 450)

During the data-analysis phase, and throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in the bracketing process to remove any bias or preconceived notions regarding the phenomenon and experiences participants expressed throughout the interview process, which reemerged during the analysis phase of the research. This process helped push the researcher into deeper reflection regarding participants' relationships with the phenomenon being studied. Tufford & Newman (2012) noted, "the researcher is the instructor for analysis across all phases of a ... researcher project" and "the subjective endeavor entails the inevitable transmission of assumptions, values, interests, emotions, and theories ... within and across the research project" (p. 81). Soeker et al. (2015) noted in their study the importance of exploring the researchers' own biases and preconceived notions prior to and during the study as a means to maintain high-quality research validity.

Although, throughout this paper the researcher followed the Heidegger school of phenomenology, which intersects social-constructionism theory such that Heidegger "adopted the position of being in the world, where contextual interpretation and meeting were sought" (Gearing, 2004, as cited in Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 82), it is important

to note that Heidegger rejected the notion of bracketing. In this study, the researcher employed bracketing throughout the entire process, and particularly during the data-analysis phase. Researchers may use several forms of bracketing through the research process, as early as prior to the formation of the research questions to any point thereafter (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The researcher used two forms of bracketing throughout this study: memoing throughout the data collection and analysis phase to explore the researcher’s interaction with the data and to identify his predisposed notions and “engaging in interviews with an outside source to uncover and bring into awareness preconceptions and biases ... [that can] ... uncover themes that may hinder the researcher’s ability to listen to respondents or trigger emotional responses” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 86).

After the researcher conducted the initial review of the transcripts and data, the researcher then conducted a coding process to “label segments [of text] with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes,” allowing the researcher to decide what data to use or discard (Creswell, 2015, p. 242).

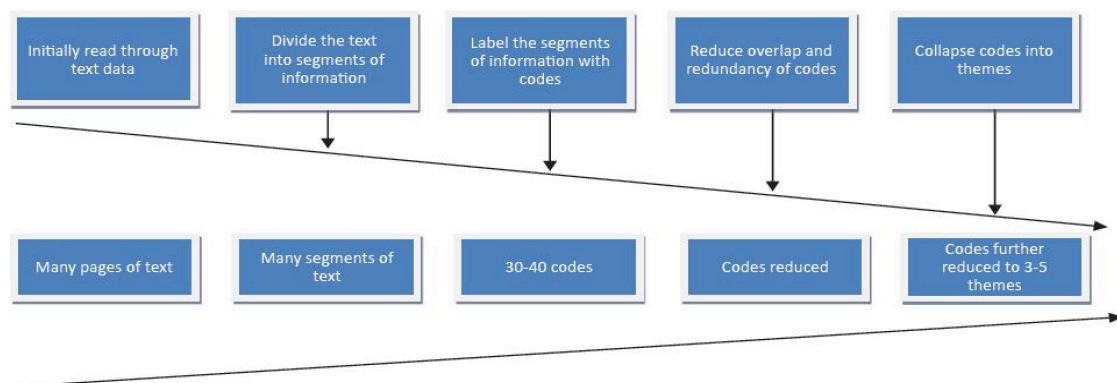


Figure 7. Coding process visual model.

Note. An Exploration of How Spiritual Nursing Care is Applied in Clinical Nursing Practice, by L. V. Monareng, 2013, Health SA Gesondheid, 18(1), doi:10.4102/hsag.v18i1.635. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

Several cycles of coding the transcripts (see Figure 6) occurred, enabling the researcher to narrow the findings from broad segments of text to a list of codes, and then to a final aggregated list of five to seven themes that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2015). The codes from each of the three phases of the analysis process are available in Appendix D. In addition to the creation of themes derived from the data (see Figure 8), this analysis process “increase[d] the rigor” of the study by layering themes, resulting in interconnected levels that “subsumes minor themes in major themes ... in broader themes” as a means to show “broader and broader levels of abstraction” (Creswell, 2015, p. 250).

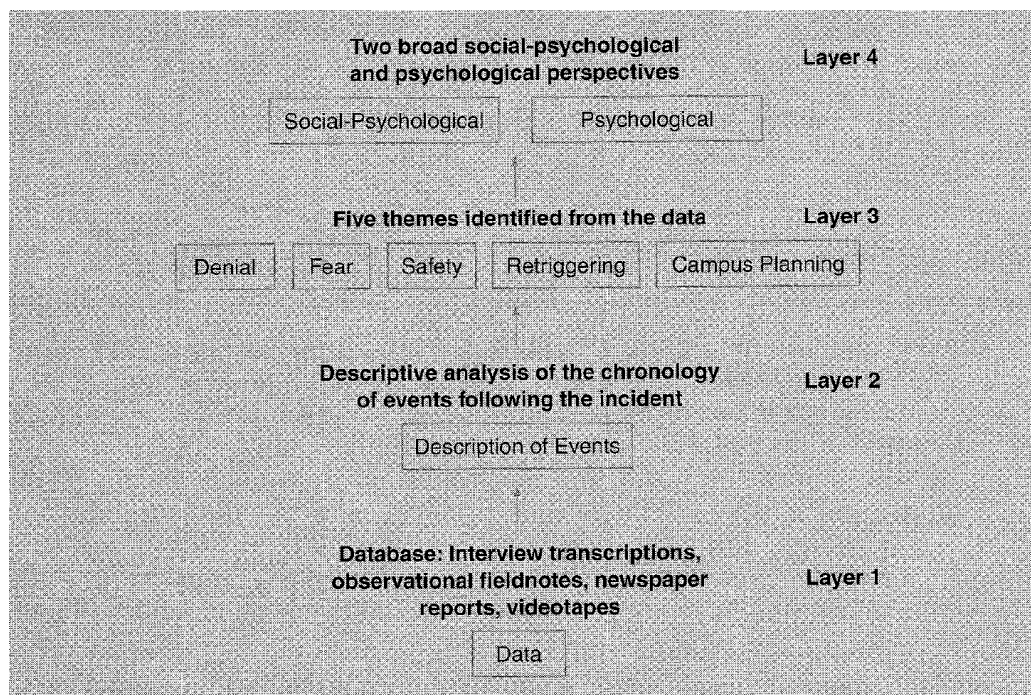


Figure 8. Layers of themes example.

Note. Retrieved from *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (5th ed.), by J. Creswell, 2015, Boston, MA: Pearson. Used with permission from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association.

In the last phase of data analysis for this study, the researcher reflected on the themes derived from the data and created a series of narratives that helped further explore the essence of participants' lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this study, the researcher employed the use of an interview protocol during one-on-one interviews with each participant. To ensure study participants did not experience harm during the interview process, the researcher created an informed-consent form outlining the nature of the study and their role in the research. In March 2017, the researcher submitted the informed-consent form to the University of San Francisco IRB, along with the interview protocol used in the individual interviews and an accompanying application outlining the study. The IRB reviewed the application, informed consent, and interview protocol to ensure the documents contained no inappropriate questions or intentions. The IRB approved all materials sent, in writing, in April 2017 (see Appendix E), prior to the start of any data collection.

Each participant signed the informed-consent form in agreement prior to participating in this study. Although participants received no compensation for their participation in the study, they received the intrinsic reward of helping advance a field of research directly pertaining to their professional lives. The researcher granted every participant in this study the right to withdraw their participation and all data they shared, including their interview recordings and transcripts. If, at any point during the study, a participant developed questions or concerns regarding the objectives of the research, purpose of the study, or the participant's involvement, the researcher or the dissertation chair would have sought to resolve the issue. The University of San Francisco IRB

mitigated potential ethical issues regarding the researcher and participants in the study through the review and approval process. Further, the final data in this study masked organizations' names and locations, further protecting the identity of each participant in this study.

Creswell (2015) noted that ethical considerations for qualitative studies include (a) crossing the boundary between the role of the researcher and participant, (b) reporting information that was shared "off the record," and (c) the dire importance of maintaining confidentiality of the participants and the potentially sensitive nature of the information they share during the interviews. Ultimately, the researcher demonstrated great care toward the unique bond shared between the researcher and the participants in the study. To execute this research, it proved critical that the researcher maintained the highest level of integrity in all aspects of the study. The researcher clearly defined the terms in this study—formal and colloquial—to ensure the researcher accurately captured participants' voices and experiences in the analysis and reporting phases (Guittar, 2013).

Summary

The researcher collected data from this study through a phenomenological approach that explored how professional perspectives and priorities shift throughout the course of the career for lesbian and gay people in leadership positions, as it is impacted by their sexual orientation. Through multiple one-on-one, open-ended interviews with each participant, the researcher employed a set of interview protocols approved through the University of San Francisco IRB. The researcher designed the interview questions to explore (a) how prior experiences disclosing sexual orientation impacted future decisions to disclose orientation, (b) how workplace climate and policies impacted disclosure

decisions, and (c) how participants perceived changes in their relationship with peers in the workplace after disclosing sexual orientation. Analysis of the interviews followed a phenomenological approach that included coding to identify major themes, layering of themes, textural writing, structural writing, and composite writing. The researcher designed all themes to surmise the essence of lived experiences and to provide the reader with an understanding of the experiences participants shared throughout this process. In the following chapter, the researcher provides detailed reporting on the findings from the data-collection and -analysis phases of this study.

Researcher Background

The researcher is a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco School of Education in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco in San Francisco, California. Currently, the researcher works as the Staff and Faculty Experience Specialist in the University of California San Francisco Department of Medicine, focused on developing programs and initiatives to improve and advance professional development, networking, mentoring, and onboarding for more than 2,000 employees across five sites in San Francisco, California. Additionally, the researcher is a diversity champion, focused on creating a pipeline for rising leaders of color to advance in the department. Prior to work at the University of California San Francisco, the researcher was a full-time instructor in the University of San Francisco School of Nursing and Health Professions, teaching undergraduate and graduate coursework in healthcare administration.

Prior to work in higher education, the researcher practiced as an assistant principal, instructional coach, and elementary school teacher in Orange County Public

Schools in Orlando, Florida, during which time the researcher completed a Master of Science in Education Leadership & Policy degree at Florida State University. The researcher also earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Central Florida with an endorsement focused on teaching English-language learners.

From entering the classroom as a third-grade teacher, the researcher spent the entirety of the researcher's public-school career working with underserved populations in inner city and suburban neighborhoods. During this time the researcher sought training and mentoring for working with vulnerable populations and learned about understanding the functions and impacts of poverty on children and families and how to provide innovative, high-quality instruction to students in the classroom. During the years teaching in the classroom, the researcher began to understand that to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes for students in school and in others like them, the researcher needed to better understand the role of the leader in education.

Following the completion of a master's degree, the researcher transitioned out of the classroom and into the role of instructional coach, eventually becoming assistant principal, enabling the ability to provide mentoring and coaching to every teacher in the school. This role change created a more significant impact on students' outcomes and opportunities to advance in their education. Throughout work in public education, the researcher diligently worked to develop, assess, implement, and monitor education plans and teaching for all students at the school site.

Through continued interest in the functions of leadership in an organization, the researcher enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of San Francisco, focused

on Organization and Leadership upon moving to San Francisco. As a gay man, the researcher grew increasingly aware of the impact one's sexual orientation plays, consciously and unconsciously, on the development of one's personal and professional identities. During studies, and now research interests, the researcher developed greater insight into the structures and influence society plays in one's education and teaching career. Now, the researcher is able to weave together theory and practice to examine administration topics through the lens of sexual orientation, gender identity, leadership principles, and organization-development practices, with special emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and professional development.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS

This chapter presents the evidence gathered and prepared from the data-collection process in a series of breakdowns that enable the reader to identify the connections between participants' experiences, developing a series of positions to view the evidence from multiple angles. This chapter begins with a review of the research questions constructed to guide and inform this study. The following section summarizes participant demographics, providing context to the evidence provided throughout this chapter. The participant demographics are key to understanding the perspectives, experiences, and reflections each person shared in relation to the interview protocol and overarching research questions.

Further, to develop a more extensive context of the evidence presented in this chapter, the researcher developed a profile for each participant that provides the reader with a more thorough understanding of the age, gender identity, sexual orientation, professional experience, and a summary of the perspective their interview data brought to the study. As the chapter progresses, the researcher presents evidence from participant interviews in the analysis of the research questions and additional findings. The presentation of evidence clustered by research question enables the reader to view the data as it supports the line of inquiry guiding this study. Following the research-question analysis, the researcher presents substantiation for an additional finding, providing a evidence based on an association between common themes not directly tied to research questions but critical to this study. Key findings bridge to the research questions below:

Table 2

Research questions and corresponding key findings crosswalk

Research Questions	Corresponding Key Findings
RQ1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?	Coming Out Identity Social Change
RQ2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?	Coming Out. Social Change
RQ3: Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?	Coming Out
RQ4: What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?	Coming Out
RQ5: What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?	Discrimination
RQ6: How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?	Coming Out. Workplace Culture
Additional Findings	Activism

The section on findings draws on the same evidence base collected from study participants and reiterates key points and statements. Understanding the evidence by considering an association with the research questions and the additional findings creates a deeper insight into the essence of the phenomenon.

Research Questions

This study was grounded in six guiding research questions that explored the experience of study participants in career development and leadership position(s). The research questions this study seeks to answer follow:

1. How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?
2. How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?
3. Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?
4. What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?
5. What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?
6. How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Participant Demographics

This study identified 14 participants available to participate in one semistructured interview between June 2017 and October 2017. The researcher drew on the experiences of 15 participants with their demographic data described below.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Breakdown

	Number	Percentage
Gender identity		
Cisgender male	9	60
Cisgender female	6	40
Age (in years)		
50–59	7	47
60–69	5	33
70–79	2	13
80–89	1	7
Ethnicity		
African American	1	7
Latino/a	2	13
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	7
Other	1	7
White	10	66
State of Residence		
California	13	86
Florida	1	7
Texas	1	7
Profession		
Agriculture	1	7
Arts	1	7
Education	3	20
Healthcare	2	13
Management	1	7
Other	6	39
Professional	1	7

Participant Profiles

Each participant in this study provided a unique perspective on the essence of navigating their career path to leadership as an out lesbian or gay person. This study acknowledged that each individual's account of their experiences over the decades

created a composite narrative for a clearer understanding of the broader experience. The researcher believes it is important for each participant's background to be highlighted—giving context to the findings and conclusions discussed in the upcoming sections. Profiles serve as a lens to understand the individual experiences that comprise the overall essence of how lesbian and gay leaders navigate their careers into leadership roles.

Chris.

Chris is a self-identified, White, cisgender, lesbian woman. Born in 1967, she is a highly successful physician researcher working in academic medicine at a university in California. She is currently employed, working in a leadership position for more than 20 years with an average of five supervisees. For the duration of her career she worked for the same organization, which provided a perspective of witnessing the growth and change of an organization over a few decades. Additionally, Chris' work with other faculty physicians, students, and the community provided insight into the interactions that occur in academic medicine, in the examination room with patients, and in the offices of the institution.

Chris reflected that her challenge as a leader in medicine presented most frequently during her years of medical school and residency, as well as during interactions with patients in the examination room early in her career. Her insights gave rise to the notion of parallels between current activist movements and her work with gay-rights movements in the 1980s and 1990s. Further, Chris noted the exceptionally positive experiences she had in her place of employment due to the progressive work of the department and university at large.

David

David is a self-identified, White, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1951, he is a retired high school mathematics teacher from northern California, who taught a majority of his career in a school with 50–99 employees. He considers himself to have served in a leadership position for 7–10 years, leading and mentoring approximately 50 students at a time who participated in his courses or with him in clubs.

David's experiences in the classroom highlighted the unique role of the teacher as a leader, shaping and guiding the lives of the students in his sphere of influence. Further, David brought to light the importance of professionalism as a means to protect himself from discrimination or termination during 1970s and 1980s as a result of the Save Our Children movement and California Proposition 6. His discussion pointed to the importance of being a visible, out role model and pushing back on the discriminatory behaviors of supervisors over the decades.

Dharma

Dharma is a self-identified, White, cisgender, lesbian woman. Born in 1942, she retired from a full-time faculty role and is currently teaching part time for a university based in California. Prior to her work as a faculty member, Dharma worked for more than 20 years as a leader in healthcare with approximately 50 subordinates. Her experience in healthcare started in the late 1970s in Wales with the Royal College of Nursing, followed by a lengthy career in the United States starting in the early 1980s.

Following a difficult experience with alcoholism as a form of coping with her sexual orientation in her early 20s, Dharma successfully completed her nursing degree and moved to Europe. Although she reflected on her attraction to women, she did not

embrace her orientation until much later in life. Throughout her career, Dharma did not openly identify as a lesbian. She noted that coming out proved to be significantly more difficult to embrace compared to when she admitted to alcoholism nearly 50 years earlier. Her career in healthcare leadership was speckled with challenges of coming to terms with her sexual orientation and the orientation of those on her staff. Her perspective on leadership lent a lens to working extensively in a leadership role while in the closet and coming out following her departure from healthcare leadership and into academia.

Dick

Dick is a self-identified, White, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1930, he is retired from a public-service county-administration position in an office of 500–999 staff, based in a large city in Minnesota. During his career, Dick served in a leadership role for approximately 7–10 years, with six subordinates. Following retirement, he relocated to California but continues to return to Minnesota where he currently serves on a Board of Directors for the second largest gay lending library in the United States.

Dick's extensive activism characterized his career as a leader in public service. Starting in the 1970s, Dick participated in a union to advocate for protections and rights for gay and lesbian employees that eventually extended to the state level. Interestingly, Dick brings a prospective as a former Episcopal priest, who left the ministry in his mid-40s after suffering from depression, which he later realized stemmed from his undisclosed sexual orientation. His public-service career in Minnesota gave perspective to the social progress and activism that characterized his leadership work over the decades.

James

James is a self-identified, White, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1965, he accumulated extensive experience in information-technology engineering primarily based in California's Silicon Valley, and allowed him to travel to multiple destinations throughout the world. From his role as chief technology officer and senior vice president to his current role of industry consultant, James worked in companies where his subordinates ranged in size from 50–1,200 spanning 15–20 years in designated leadership roles.

Throughout his early career, James ascended to a senior leadership position while identifying as a straight male. James experienced significant challenges when he publicly disclosed his sexual orientation as a gay male and simultaneously proceeded through a divorce process. James shared his insights and perspectives from working with publicly traded companies as a chief or senior officer, guiding the organizations through the initial-public-offering process. James now embraces his sexual orientation and works as an advocate for other queer employees' benefits and rights. Further, James is able to connect the emotional toll of disclosing his sexual identity and reconciles it with his professional career and personal life as a father and leader in the technology–engineering field.

Jim

Jim is a self-identified, cisgender, gay man who reports his race/ethnicity as Other. Born in 1963, Jim accrued substantial experience working as an administrative director at a university in California where he directed approximately 25 subordinates. Throughout his career, spanning more than 20 years, Jim worked in the same university

where he continues to advance the goals and mission of the department and best interests of his staff.

His entry into higher education followed an anxious start following graduate school. Jim reflected on a pivotal moment in setting his career trajectory. He first spent many years working with the National Institute of Health's grant-funding management, followed by years working in a public relations firm with projects focused on the LGBTQ community. From his experience, Jim recognized the opportunities largely available to him because of his gender, but did not feel limited to the job roles traditionally divided by gender roles, providing him with the opportunity to lead a staff that he counsels and guides in their development. Jim characterizes his professionalism as armor, which translates to protection and concealment of his personal life—including his sexual orientation. Jim consciously understands the importance of connecting with his subordinates and discloses his sexual orientation as a way to build connections with team members.

Graham

Graham is a self-identified, White, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1954, Graham advanced his career in ballet companies worldwide from a dancer to his current role as artistic director. Throughout the course of his career, with 15–20 years in leadership positions, Graham managed 50–100 subordinates, and currently works for a company with 20–49 total employees located in northern California. Graham's current employer hired him and his partner to lead the company jointly.

Graham expressed the fortune of training and working in dance for the duration of his career—a field traditionally characterized by the prevalence of out, gay, male dancers.

Throughout his reflection on his experience as a gay male in dance, Graham provided a counternarrative, stating his professional leadership experience flourished in an environment with nearly no resistance or challenges to his sexual orientation. Graham provided insight to the fairly sexually fluid environment he trained in at the Royal Ballet School in London, England. Graham later danced with the Dutch National Ballet and the Royal Ballet before coming to the United States. His lens of openness and acceptance highlights the significant difference between his work in the performing arts and other participants in this study.

Judge

Judge is a self-identified, White, cisgender, lesbian woman. Born in 1958, she worked extensively in law as an attorney and judge, with a distinguished career that started in the 1980s and continued in the same California district for the duration of her career. For nearly 10 years she served as a judge with approximately 300 subordinates.

Judge provided a reflection on the benefits of working in an organization for the duration of her career and the unique challenges and opportunities associated with developing her career, rising in the ranks of the organization. Her challenges arose at the intersection of her sexual orientation and gender, where she characterized the situation as having to work significantly harder for the same recognition as her male counterparts. Routinely, she expressed a feeling of being blessed with good fortune to work in an organization where the policies and leadership foster a supportive environment for all sexual orientations, though she often keeps her professional and personal lives, including her sexual orientation, separate.

Larry

Larry is a self-identified, African American, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1952, Larry worked in public administration at the county level and in nonprofit organizations. Over the course of his career, based in California, Larry worked in leadership positions for 15–20 years, with approximately 100 subordinates. Early in his career, during the 1980s, Larry worked in AIDS nonprofit organizations, supporting his community through the initial phase of the AIDS crisis, eventually leading to his transition to work in city government administration for the majority of his career. Throughout his city-government work, he served in roles ranging from planner to special-projects manager, to the board of supervisors, giving him insight into the experiences of working in local government. Just prior to his retirement, Larry worked in the high-stress role of raising funds for a nonprofit organization.

Throughout his experiences as a leader in public and private organizations, Larry encountered a mix of support and opposition. Larry reflected that the encounters, confrontations, and resistance attributed to any one, or combination of, his identities as a gay man or African American. Larry's experiences in the public sector highlighted the challenges of being an out gay man who took action to defend and advocate for himself and his colleagues in the face of microaggressions and discrimination. Although Larry highlighted the need to work around certain supervisors and coercive dynamics, Larry pointed out that he paid the price by hitting the lavender ceiling.

Lora

Lora is a self-identified, White, cisgender, lesbian woman. Born in 1959, Lora held a distinguished career in the U.S. Army for 25 years, where she retired as a full-bird

colonel. With her career in the military starting just prior to the implementation of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Lora spent her military service with a bifurcated identity—out in her personal life and concealing her sexual orientation at work. Her military service provided her with extensive training and leadership opportunities spanning more than 20 years, with approximately 10,000 subordinates. Following her retirement from the U.S. Army, Lora joined the Girl Scouts of America as the CEO for Kentuckiana, a portmanteau of Kentucky and Indiana, later becoming the CEO of the entire Girl Scouts of America organization—both mission-driven organizations.

When Lora joined the Girls Scouts of America Kentuckiana and Girl Scouts of America, she experienced the first opportunity for her to merge her personal and professional identities to include her sexual orientation. Most recently Lora became the CEO of CenterLinks, a nonprofit organization based in Florida that focuses on bringing together LGBTQ centers throughout the United States. Lora's experiences and reflections regarding her leadership roles brought to light the impact that organization culture and policy play in the lives of employees—further highlighted by the stark comparison of her work in civilian life.

Lynn

Lynn is a self-identified, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, cisgender lesbian woman. Born in 1954, she worked in the public sector, beginning her career as an elementary school classroom teacher in the mid-1970s. After nearly 10 years in the classroom, Lynn transitioned to social work, where she spent a majority of her remaining career. Over the course of her career, based in California, Lynn worked in leadership

positions for 10–15 years, managing approximately 500 subordinates in her role as an assistant director.

Lynn’s experience in teaching elementary school coincided with the Save Our Children campaign and The Briggs Initiative, both aimed at barring lesbian and gay teachers from the classroom and revoking their credentials. Throughout our interview, Lynn reflected on the fear The Briggs Initiative brought to her as a classroom teacher, resulting in her internally shutting down and leading a compartmentalized life, separating her personal and professional lives completely. As she transitioned to social work in the years to come, Lynn experienced microaggressions based on her gender expression, as well as discrimination based on her identities as a lesbian and person of color. Over the years, Lynn advocated for her advancement and for the rights of the clients she served. Lynn identified that her experience with the lavender ceiling discouraged her and made a lasting impact. In the past several years she began to embrace her sexual orientation at work and started to slowly merge her two worlds into one—living a more united life.

Manjot Singh

Manjot Singh is a self-identified, Latino, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1959, he started his career in the banking industry in the western region of the United States, where he worked with more than 200 banking branches. Manjot Singh left the banking industry after 17 years, transitioning to a career more focused on human resources. Manjot Singh spent 4 years working for a nonprofit organization, and afterward left to work for a major university in administration, where he worked in for more than 25 years. Currently, he oversees administrative operations, enabling him to directly impact the day-to-day experience of staff, from development to increasing the diversity pipeline.

Through a career marked by two distinct periods, Manjot Singh spent his career in banking, conforming to the heteronormative structures of the industry as it was in the 1980s. This environment required him to conform to the expectations of the organization, forcing him to keep his personal life and sexual orientation in the closet, diverging these two aspects of his life. After leaving banking, Manjot Singh worked for an organization that fully embraced employees and held the expectation that each person brings all of themselves to work every day—an expectation set by the senior leaders. Through his experience in an organization that required he merge his personal and professional life, he learned how to be out at work, resulting in Manjot Singh learning the value of being one's authentic self. Now in a senior leadership position in higher education, Manjot Singh continues to teach others on his staff about bringing the whole of one's self to work and creating a safe space for others to work and grow as professionals.

Maria

Maria is a self-identified, Latina, cisgender, lesbian woman. Born in 1949, she worked primarily in the nonprofit sector, with extensive experience serving underrepresented students throughout California. Over the course of her career, Maria served in leadership positions for more than 40 years and currently serves as an executive director. Activism became one of the major threads of Maria's career, starting with advocating for workers' rights in Mexico, followed by her work in the revolution of Argentina, and her subsequent return to the United States. Maria spent a few years lobbying in Washington, DC, against military funding to Argentina, followed by a few years of work in the northeastern region of the United States. In the late 1970s, Maria

returned to California and worked with several nonprofit organizations, transitioning later to a career in professional development/preparation for youth of color.

With an extensive career in activism and advocacy, Maria reflected on the slow process of integrating her personal and professional list; a process that required nearly 35 years of her career. As a woman of color and a lesbian, Maria experienced the lavender ceiling that blocked her advancement, a reality she embraced and shifted her course. As she approached retirement, Maria led her organization while embracing her multiple identities that make her the powerful leader she is today.

Max

Max is a self-identified, White, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1964, he worked in higher education across several states and currently resides in Texas. Over the course of his career, Max worked in leadership positions for more than 20 years and oversees more than 100 subordinates in his current senior-level position. His career in higher education launched shortly after he completed his undergraduate studies provided him with insight into the ways sexual orientation shaped his career in positions in multiple universities.

Max came out in his mid-20s and chose to maintain a separated personal and professional life for a majority of his career as a way to navigate the professional situations he encountered as a highly visible university leader. His experience of concealing his sexual orientation at work developed his sense of empathy and care for the students in the university. Max's experience demonstrates how shifting social norms changed his approach to disclosing his sexual orientation at work, starting slowly with peers and colleagues, and evolving to a more integrated life.

Michael

Michael is a self-identified, White, cisgender, gay man. Born in 1946, he worked primarily in public administration at the county level as a gardener. Over the course of his career, based in California, Michael worked in a leadership positions with three subordinates. Although retired now, Michael developed his career in the county and publicly disclosed his sexual orientation at work. During his reflection, Michael shared how his experience with The Compton Cafeteria Riots in the 1960s to the passage of marriage rights for same-sex couples continually fueled his passion for activism over the decades, as it continues in his retirement. Michael's insight into activism over the years provides a perspective on the benefits of activism and standing up for marginalized groups of people.

Research Questions Findings

The researcher sought to answer six research questions, designed to gather data from participants that, when compiled, would provide great insight and a refined essence of their experience as lesbian and gay leaders over the course of their careers. The findings associated with each research question are intended to present the data associated with and used to support each of the research questions. The data obtained throughout the interview and reflection process provide insight and evidence for each research question. It is important to note the overlap of evidence associated with each of the research questions. This is due in part to the interconnectedness of the evidence and the central phenomenon.

Research Question 1 Findings

RQ1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?

This initial question represents the overarching question that derives explanation from the information in the subsequent supporting research questions. Three major concepts comprise this question: (a) navigating leadership, (b) disclosure of sexual orientation, and (c) identity formation. Below is a summary of these three concepts, as defined by study participants, with substantial detail articulated in Research Questions 2–5.

Navigating Leadership Roles

Participants in this study held leadership experience ranging from as little as 5 years to more than 40 years, providing insight into the ways their careers developed and how their sexual orientation influenced their role in the workplace. Two sets of experiences prevailed throughout participants' experiences: the limiting of their career due to the lavender ceiling, glass ceiling, racial/ethnic discrimination, or gender discrimination and leaving an organization from a senior-level position because the workplace culture did not support their sexual orientation.

Disclosure

Significant discussion occurred surrounding the experiences and process of disclosing sexual orientation over the decades and in various types of organizations. Ragins et al. (2007) commented, “the disclosure process may be affected not only by the current environment, but also by the individual’s perceptions of past experiences with

discrimination” (p. 1107). Throughout the interviews and discussions with participants in the study, it became clear that many experiences impacted their decisions to disclose their sexual orientation at work; however, the most notable seemed to be rooted in social movements, including the Compton’s Cafeteria Riot, the election of Harvey Milk to public office, the Save Our Children campaign, The Briggs Initiative, and the U.S. Military’s Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy.

Reflecting on the early portion of his career, David stated,

We had no employment protection and they weren’t about to hire open homosexuals. They just weren’t. It just was not being done. [Now,] a lot of the stigma’s gone. Not all. It depends where [you are]. [I] wouldn’t generalize too much. I think the stigma’s gone and young gay people have a whole different take on this than we do. We went through a lot of shit. They [younger generations] don’t have to. (David, September 25, 2017)

Looking forward nearly 50 years, the disclosure process and option to disclose one’s sexual orientation is dramatically different and arguably more open.

Identity Formation

Reynolds and Hanjorgiris and Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter noted, “becoming aware of the personal and societal implications of one’s LGB sexual orientation, and revealing that sexual orientation to others can be a multifaceted and ambiguous process” (as cited by Marrs & Staton, 2016, p. 41). The revelation of a person’s sexual orientation informs their identity—the personal and professional roles they assume over the course of their lifetime—and is a factor that informs their leadership

development. The course of this study found evidence of extensive identity development, further explored in the findings section below.

The experience of an evolving sexual orientation in the workplace points to a shifting from actively concealing sexual orientation to disclosing it, although this is a unique experience for each individual. For each participant, the process of developing their professional identity and disclosing their sexual orientation became a process that lasted for decades. Judge reflected on the disclosure of her sexual orientation:

I don't think that there was ever a time where I came out. I think when you work with people over an extended period of time, and you have relationships over the years, people recognize those relationships, and then recognize that you're a lesbian. But, that's sort of been my evolution. When you work with people for 23 years, they know who you are, and they accept you for who you are, so it was a natural process for me. (September 26, 2017)

Identity formation is a life-long process and the participants routinely reflected on the more organic approach to the development of their sexual orientation and professional identity.

Research Question 2 Findings

RQ2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?

This question focused on the impact of sexual orientation on setting career priorities and the way each person viewed their career over the decades. Of the study participants, a range of reflections captured the impact sexual orientation brought to their career priorities. Notably, Chris commented:

I'm sure it [sexual orientation] has. I don't know how directly or focused on that [I have been]. I do view medicine as a tool for social justice, for example.

Certainly, there was a lot of work around gay marriage and access to reproductive health, technology and, access to parenting rights. (October 7, 2017)

Chris' experience highlights the indirect influence of sexual orientation on her career priorities, mainly the push for her to practice medicine that provides her the opportunity to treat and care for members of the LGBTQ community.

Taking a more overt approach to setting career priorities and learning from positive experiences with certain companies, James narrated:

The fact was at the software company in the retail industry, [I was] so just surrounded by love in every direction. So, it was a very embracing environment. With all that courage, I just, it became part of my life. And it changed the standard with which I talked about myself and whoever I was seeing ... As a matter of fact, this is probably something that comes up pretty early on [when working with a company]. And every company I've worked for since has had a fairly large LGBT contingent. (September 10, 2017)

Following James' reflection on how one of his employers produced a significantly positive experience for him, he described shifting career priorities to primarily work in LGBT supportive companies. Taking a different approach to shift career priorities, the way she views her career, and the intersection of her sexual orientation and ethnicity, Maria shared that her work:

was done this way ... because I'm Latina. Because I'm lesbian. It is ... It is because of that. It's not in spite of it; it's not regardless of it ... And in the past, I might have thought of like, 'Well, that [being a lesbian] doesn't even matter.

(October 19, 2017)

Maria's reflection highlighted a key point in much of the evidence: Many participants see themselves as having multiple identities that informed and enhanced their careers.

Social Acceptance

Changes in social norms to the way lesbian and gay people are viewed, received, and portrayed in the United States, positively impacted the career development for out leaders. Improving social acceptance impacted participants differently, in particular with regard to age. Chris found in her medical practice that social acceptance:

freed her up to [provide more focus on the patient]. It's [social acceptance] made it [sexual orientation] play a smaller role. I'm more comfortable, so I don't have to be focused on it, you know? I don't have to fight these battles [for acceptance and equality] because they've been won. That opens me up to do other work. I used to do it [advocate for social change and equality] out of [a] need to change this culture because I'm not going to be comfortable if I don't. (October, 7, 2017)

Sharing a different experience, Dick, a former Episcopal priest, noted he "was very concerned about [being gay]. And of course, now I have to laugh because the Episcopal church priests now [have] women and gays," which he explained changed the course of his career as a priest because society, and the church, now accepted gay men. Dick elaborated further, "I lived my life in shame, as we all did back then. You lived in

a closet. You lived in shame.” Identifying as a gay man brought Dick isolation and depression. Dick reflected,

I know my very best friend from college asked me one time why I never discussed it [sexual orientation] with him and I said, “Well, I was embarrassed and I was ashamed that that’s the way it was” [however,] once I realized it was nothing to be embarrassed about or ashamed about, it was like, “So?” (Dick, September 5, 2017).

Dick illustrated the changes that occurred in society through his reflection on his early career experience and personal relationships, causing life-changing impacts that completely changed his priorities and perspectives for his career. During the researcher’s interview with Lora, she discussed that toward the end of her military service career she started to integrate her personal and professional life, even with Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell still in place. Lora noted, “while we [military colleagues] were in Atlanta [and] I reached a point where I would actually take them, with some friends of mine, gay couples” which was very different from the earlier years in her career (October 25, 2017). Lora continued, “there at the end, I was actually sharing a lot more of my life and my friends, as we would meet them to do things. So then eventually they actually started having us over to their house for dinner,” highlighting how the social acceptance of her sexual orientation changed the way she perceived her career (October 25, 2017). These key pieces of evidence from interviews make clear the impact that shifting social acceptance influences the careers and experiences of gay and lesbian leaders.

Forced Shifts in Priorities

Throughout the interviews, participants stated that situations arose during their careers that forced them to shift their career priorities and make changes to their career trajectories. Most often, these situations resulted from some form of discrimination. This evidence was presented as forced shifts in priorities because various acts of discrimination forced each participant to change their career priorities and respond to the discrimination while moving forward. Larry reflected, “I think I could’ve gotten a hell of a lot farther in the world if I had not been gay,” telling the researcher that right out of college he interviewed for a position in his career field and received feedback from the hiring manager that he was “not going to hire this guy [Larry]. He’s, he’s obviously a homosexual” (Larry, September 22, 2017). As a result, Larry had to pivot his career and job choice from the start, in search of opportunities elsewhere. He experienced several similar situations, both overt and subtle:

A man or a woman is at a certain age where they’re at their optimum effectiveness professionally. I was at that point in my life when that [being passed over for a promotion] happened to me [and] what I did is I end up going back to college to pursue higher education. What I’m planning on doing now is a compromise. I mean, I’m going to be 65 in October. (Larry, September 22, 2017)

Through this situation, Larry responded by seeking additional education to shift his career into a new field and explore a different set of career options; something he would not have done without being forced to do so. Similar to Larry, Maria recounted sexual-orientation discrimination when she worked for an organization headquartered in the southern United States. As a lesbian, she often feeling as if her sexual orientation

played a role in the way others viewed her. Maria remarked, “I exited from one company because I knew I would never receive the promotion to CEO,” forcing her to shift her career and find a new organization in which to grow and lead (October 19, 2017).

Michael and Lynn both worked as educators, teaching in public schools during the 1970s. They each experienced situations that forced them to shift their career priorities and perspectives. Lynn recalled, “I remember my first gay pride parade in San Francisco and I volunteered because that way I wasn’t marching in a contingent that was gay. I was very closeted because I, I felt I could lose my livelihood,” because California and the majority of the United States passionately supported the Save Our Children campaign and The Briggs Initiative (Lynn, September 30, 2017). Lynn continued,

I do remember thinking here I sacrifice all this stuff, I went to school to become an elementary school teacher and somebody with a political view, just come and take it all away from me, [which] probably did impact and restrict my ability to connect and to network with people out of fear of being labeled a dyke and then something negative happen. (September 30, 2017)

Ultimately, Lynn chose to leave education, a career she trained for in college in pursuit of career opportunities that would not be jeopardized by her sexual orientation.

Additionally, David recalled that a church leader, from the Catholic school where he taught, challenged him for participating in the Gay Men’s Chorus. David’s teaching experience in that school became confrontational and challenging, resulting in David’s decision not to return the following academic school year. With their departures from the schools where they taught, and Lynn’ departure from the field altogether, it is evident that the shift in career priorities occurred for both. Also, Lynn highlighted that her sexual

orientation and the potential for negative consequences at a job she loved impacted the way she viewed her teaching career—always in jeopardy.

Research Question 3 Findings

RQ3: Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?

Each participant in this study identified disclosure decision as an ongoing process throughout the span of their careers, particularly once they embraced their sexual orientation and began merging their personal and professional lives. Although each circumstance is unique for each individual, commonalities were clear in their responses. Ragins et al. (2007, p. 1105) noted:

Disclosure is not an all-or-none phenomenon but occurs on a continuum ranging from full disclosure on one end to nondisclosure on the other. To make matters more complex, the decision to disclose may or may not parallel the actual act of disclosure,

meaning people may change their minds about the decision to disclose their sexual orientation. The evidence from the data collection provides insight into the context and situations that lead to disclosure of sexual orientation.

James worked in the technology field and recalled his experiences while working with senior leaders and clients to whom he did not disclose his sexual orientation. However, at one point in James's career he transitioned to a new company where his supervisor disclosed James's sexual orientation by telling others "Oh, James is gay. Don't talk to him about that stuff [women]. He doesn't want to go out and play golf," and James fondly commented, "So she was like my little mother hen" (James, September 10, 2017).

Although this situation could be considered a circumstance where James was outed, he feels that his supervisor took action to defend and protect him at work.

In the context of higher education, Jim recounted that his decision to come out as a senior leader in higher education was a slow process that included increasing involvement in national conferences. Jim shared:

The professional society that I was studying to become part of has an annual meeting. At the annual meeting that year, there started to be a lesbian and gay studies group and thankfully, some of the members of that group were fairly senior members of the profession who were well respected. And I started participating in that group basically from its inception, eventually becoming an officer in the group, helping to write some of the articles for the newsletter, and at that point it sort of became impossible to hide who I was in the field. (September 10, 2017)

This process of coming out in his professional association helped Jim slowly disclose his sexual orientation and come out to his peers. Jim noted what he considered to be most important:

Be who you are. Be yourself. Be aware that not everybody is going to accept your lifestyle, so as disappointing as that could be, as hurtful as that could be, just be aware of it, and that you might get judged because of it in a negative way potentially. (September 10, 2017)

His explanation and caution—that disclosure brings with it positive and negative reactions—highlighted the important point that the decision to disclose may bring with it

consequences that shape one's career. Judge further cautioned to "be yourself, but also use some discretion about how much information you want to share about yourself with people. I think it's important to exercise some discretion in who you want to open up to" because the situations may present themselves to disclose your sexual orientation but extra consideration should be given (September 26, 2017).

Along the notion of discretion as a context to disclosing sexual orientation, Larry discussed how emotional intelligence, which he translated as being politically strategic, is key in determining situations where he moved forward in disclosing his sexual orientation. Larry advised to be:

Politically strategic to the extent that you have to. Do a career risk analysis and say to yourself, "What if I am totally out here. What if I stay in the closet until I get my foot in the door, and then I come out when it may be possibly safer?" (September 22, 2017)

The key is to look at the situation and context and anticipate possible consequences before disclosing sexual orientation. Larry continued:

One has to do the risk analysis, and it really is the outcome of which depends on what the work situation is. The personal, spiritual analysis that you have to do is, what can I handle? What are my limits? And, you know, unfortunately, that's a hard question to answer because we don't know it sometimes until we're challenged. (September 22, 2017)

Knowing one's limits and how much one can handle directly addresses the situation and context of a disclosure decision because the emotional consequences that

arise can compromise or enhance one's workplace relationships. Considering the risk analysis Larry discussed, the decision to disclose sexual orientation became a higher priority for many participants in this study because, as they grew older, it was a priority for them to live an integrated life: one that intertwined their personal and professional lives. Lora prioritized the disclosure of her identity when transitioning to a position with the Girl Scouts of America, stating, "coming out with the Girl Scouts, and, and the reason that I ended up there too, is that they are inclusive," causing her to "make sure that my board of directors knew I am gay and that my staff ultimately knew" (Lora, October 25, 2017).

Similar to Lora, Lynn found through her reflection that the environment of the workplace played a significant role in her decision to disclose her identity. Lynn stated in disclosing her sexual orientation:

I'm trying to think about how I did that. It's not that I ever denied it. But I never talked about it. You know, which culturally I think was how my family handled it. So even though I didn't formally announce myself as this big old bad lesbian, just being in the present company of folks who were gay [in organizations outside of her time spent teaching in public education], there were some that created an ease about that [being a lesbian] for me. It felt like I was in a more accepting environment than when I was teaching elementary school. (September, 30, 2017)

When considering the relationships that Lynn formed with other queer people, she felt more at ease with herself in relation to her sexual orientation. The ease that she expressed translates to the situation and context of coming out, because, as a result of her ease, she was able to embrace her workplace environment and share her story. The

evidence provided by study participants presented another factor: comfort found in relationships.

Research Question 4 Findings

RQ4: What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?

The disclosure of sexual orientation is an ongoing process where individuals are continually navigating each interaction with an unfamiliar person to determine if, or when, and how, they share information related to their sexual orientation. Due to consideration of sexual orientation, an invisible identity, study participants, and the LGBTQ community often face a choice as to how and when to disclose their sexual orientation, known as strategic outness. Button (2004, p. 473) pointed out that it is “likely that many gay and lesbian employees rely on a combination of identity management strategies rather than a single strategy,” meaning individuals have ways to tell people (disclosure) or hide (concealment) their sexual orientation. Throughout this study, participants discussed the ways they concealed or disclosed their sexual orientation in the workplace.

For several participants in this study, the management of their sexual orientation in the workplace came in the form of a passive disclosure process, where, as Chris pointed out, “I live my life, and it comes out casually,” instead of making disclosure at “some event where I say ‘I have something to tell you’” (October 7, 2017). Chris highlighted even further how her sexual orientation existed as more of a casual point when she discussed that although colleagues at work share personal lives, “you would

talk about your partner, like my partner and I do this, or we do that. And people just understand” (October 7, 2017).

Dick and Michael found themselves passively disclosing their sexual orientation to colleagues at work. Dick noted, “I don’t bring it up unless something in a conversation,” but refused to deny it if the conversation led to his personal life and sexual orientation (September 5, 2017). Michael echoed Dick’s approach noting he “talked with them [work colleagues] about it [sexual orientation]. They knew I was gay. I would never deny it, but I didn’t make it an issue” (September 25, 2017). The passive approach to disclosure hinted at a growing comfort level in each participant that allowed them to embrace their whole self and not have a strong need to lead conversations with colleagues about their sexual orientation.

Max kept a picture of him and his partner on his desk in the office that disclosed his sexual orientation without requiring direct conversations with individual colleagues. This approach took the pressure off of the individual and colleagues to address sexual orientation head on and allowed for a more natural discussion of sexual orientation. Max recounted a time when a colleague commented to him, “you know Max, most people pretty much know whether you choose to tell them or not,” which he later said helped him realize that just because you are not out in the workplace, does not mean people are unaware (September 14, 2017).

As the primary findings related to disclosure indicate, many participants continued to share how their disclosure process took a more passive approach and evolved over time. Maria reflected on the disclosure process as being organic by “slowly but surely coming out here and there, and with close friends. So, I’m sure it was

definitely one of those situations where in some ways most people knew” her sexual orientation, allowing her the time to ease into coming out as a professional and control the disclosure process. In a second approach that Maria shared, used during the later portion of her career, she often spoke at large events and conferences. During those speeches, she thanked her family and partner for support, and allowed that statement to serve as her way of sharing her sexual orientation with colleagues in the field (Maria, October 19, 2017).

Following an evolutionary process, Dharma recalled her disclosure method as being a passive development process:

I was identifying internally as a lesbian. I never announced it, but I noticed that I was invited to lesbian Thanksgiving parties. Then somebody said someone saw, saw you at this. I was invited to same sex marriages or commitments and obviously people were picking up on this and I was very comfortable with it.
(August 25, 2017)

The evidence in this study demonstrates that participants preferred the passive-disclosure process and that this process enabled them to allow their sexual orientation to gradually become known among peers.

It is of note that study participants who needed to conceal their sexual orientation did so by making a concerted effort to keep their personal and professional lives separate. Jim described it as the “armor of professionalism” that you use to defend yourself and personal details by shielding them from discussion with your work colleagues (September 10, 2017). David shared a similar sentiment by noting, “Being professional and being competent at the same time gives you protection. Be competent and be good.

[If] you do a good job being professional, most people will overlook what you do to whom” (September 25, 2017). Continuing with the notion of protecting yourself by being professional in the workplace, Dick mentioned, work colleagues’:

Answer for never saying they were gay was I don’t discuss my personal life. And I always told them I didn’t either. I mean to this day I don’t give people details of my personal life any more than straight people are likely to do. (September 5, 2017)

The concealment strategy to maintain personal and professional boundaries acted as the most common approach employed by participants in this study. As a result, study participants found that they could successfully conceal their sexual orientation at work, while being out in their personal life. The separation between their personal and professional lives created a significant emotional toll.

Lynn believes she likely “missed out on many, um, relationships, connections with people because I was so compartmentalized” (September 30, 2017); and Larry discussed the stress and fear associated with concealing his sexual orientation at work. Larry remarked:

It was scary. It was kinda schizoid because here I am playing one role on the job, and the moment I got off the job, boom, I’m hitting the Castro and Polk Street. I was living in a gay community and working in a closeted community. (September 22, 2017)

With the stress, missed connections, and continual challenge of maintaining a personal and professional divide, participants expressed the relief and greater satisfaction

they experienced following the merger of their two identities. Lynn summed up the sentiment of many participants' relief when her bifurcated approach to life ended. She discussed the point when she felt ready to merge her two lives together:

I started questioning how I was living my life in compartments and how well had that served me and I started asking, 'How much of life have I missed out on because I'm so compartmentalized?' I wanted to see what that felt like because I really wanted to be whole. And I didn't want to have regrets when I died about things I wish I had done. I think I just got tired. It takes a lot of energy to hide something, or the illusion of hiding something I should say. (Lynn, September 30, 2017)

Lynn's decision to advance the integration of her personal and professional lives also came at a point in life, like many of the other participants, where society shifted to be a more inclusive and accepting place when compared to the earlier points in their careers. Although the merger of personal and professional lives varied with each participant, as expected, ultimately, all participants merged their personal and professional lives.

Graham's experience acted as one exception to this. Graham never needed to conceal or disclose his sexual orientation in the workplace. He remarked, "you say 'being out at work,' it's as if you have to do something to become out," to emphasize the point that, in his industry, sexual orientation is free and not a point of discussion or concern (Graham, September 11, 2017).

Research Question 5 Findings

RQ5: What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?

Discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals in the workplace, among a wide number of other intersecting identities, is common knowledge, well documented, and remains widely pervasive. Through the interview process with study participants, discrimination was represented through a variety of actions that impacted the career development and leadership work of many participants. The section below presents key forms of discrimination experienced and discussed by study participants.

Lavender Ceiling and Unattained Job Opportunities

Most study participants loosely defined the lavender ceiling as unattained or missed job opportunities through means of advancement. It is challenging to identify overt cases or instances when discrimination occurred; however, participants shared their perceptions regarding their advancement.

Larry shared his most prominent memory of an unattained job advancement. He recalled:

I really wanted the position. It was something I was very good at. In fact, it was something I was already doing. I was acting in the position. Everybody thought, “Okay, Larry’s shoo-in for this [position].” (Larry, September 22, 2017)

However, Larry later found out that his superiors did not select him for the position.

Larry continued sharing his insight and emotion:

When I understood and briefed on the circumstances under which I had been denied, it broke my heart. I was actually shattered. It was probably one of the most difficult emotional experiences I've ever had in my life. And I don't think I don't think I've recovered from that because it left me wondering, 'Well, what's wrong with me?' A manifestation of a self-hatred syndrome. I see it with people in the LGBTQ community. I see it with African Americans. (September 22, 2017)

Despite the details of the feedback about being denied the position, Larry indicated that the feeling of being out, proud, and acting as an advocate for LGBTQ rights drew a target on his back. Larry stated, "I was and still am part of an international movement of liberation, which had to and has to occur. In those kind of movements, there are casualties. There are causalities. I am one of many, but I'm still here" (September 22, 2017). This experience of denial of a position because of sexual orientation is a prime example of the lavender ceiling.

During the interview with Maria, she described preparing for an opportunity as senior leader for a national organization and shared "a lot of people would say, 'Well, you know, you should be the next in line for the executive vice president,'" eventually leading to the CEO role (October 19, 2017). She went on to reflect on her intersecting identities: "I just thought to myself, 'That's not going to happen.' I think there it was a combination of both of being Latina, for a largely ... with a largely Black organization, and a lesbian" that may have kept me out of the position (Maria, October 19, 2017). Maria's experience highlighted the difficulty that people of color and a queer sexual orientation may experience in navigating career advancement in organizations.

Although the outright discrimination of the lavender ceiling is difficult to prove, it acted as insight and experience in an organization that gave each participant the notion and judgment to realize that their sexual orientation likely curtailed their advancement to the top position.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions can be thought of as the feeling one gets when they have an interaction with another person and they say or do something that leaves one feeling odd and unsure of how to interpret their behavior. Microaggressions can occur toward people based on a variety of illegitimate reasons, and prevailed in discussions with study participants. Chris reflected on her early years of coming out and shared that people often commented on her appearance. She noted that when she came out, people's perceptions shifted and it impacted the way they saw her. She commented that you become "physically unattractive. You're desexualized. Or you're hypersexualized. It's exactly the same trope" where people say things to you about your appearance and gender expression that would otherwise be unacceptable (Chris, October 7, 2017).

Continuing to share experiences as an out leader in the workplace, Larry recalled many instances when "despite the organizational culture I would hear people say things that were off-color about colleagues, and they would say it to me privately" by saying things or "making off-color jokes about gay men or faggots and using harsh language" (September 22, 2017). These encounters often ended by Larry addressing them directly to raise awareness about the microaggression that occurred and, in turn, to disclose his sexual orientation. A majority of participants did not share many details about

microaggressions among the recollections of the discrimination they endured; however, it likely that these occurrences continue to persist.

Homophobia

Several participants shared their experiences of encountering homophobia in the span of their careers. The illogical fear of a queer person persists in the workplace and is represented in a variety of ways. Chris recalled her time during medical school when more homophobia existed: “In medical school I set up a confidential support group. I put up provocative posters for the support group that brought up a lot of different things.” In particular Chris recalled that she experienced death threats and hate messages posted on the wall near the posters (October 7, 2017). She recounted another instance when she planned to attend a dance with her partner and other students refused to attend as a protest of her sexual orientation. Although it occurred early in her career, Chris still recalled the experience; the homophobia raised awareness of how other people might respond to her sexual orientation. Now she feels like her sexual orientation is not an issue and is thankful she no longer faces homophobia on a regular basis.

In regard to his time in public teaching, David recalled that a principal at the high school would “make jokes about people with AIDS. She made AIDS jokes about people she knew, her neighbors, in front of these other three people [administrative team],” causing David to take extra precautions when interacting with her for the duration of her tenure as principal (September 25, 2017). Judge shared her experience in learning that she worked with a homophobic detective and a colleague shared Judge’s sexual orientation with the detective. Judge recalled the detective “never spoke to her again. I mean it was like he went from being warm to being cold” (Judge, September 26, 2017).

Her example of homophobia resulted in the termination of a professional relationship and is a reminder of the challenges homophobia brings to the workplace.

Although this overt discriminatory attitude and vocal homophobia may not be tolerated in most corporate environments today, less overt forms of homophobia are expressed. James shared that in one of his senior-level positions, he participated in overnight events. He remembered “everybody else’s wife got asked to the company offsite, but you were not [allowed to bring your partner/husband].” The company treated James’s sexual orientation by acknowledging that “we have a gay guy in the room, but you know he’s not bringing another gay guy” because that is not the way things are set up (James, September 10, 2017). James’s feeling of exclusion from the company, senior leadership, and his peers is a direct example of homophobia, and is the expectation of all employees to fit into the heteronormative structures of an organization.

In the last example of prevalent homophobia, Lynn reflected back to her experiences in the earlier part of her career and commented, “I think I got out of elementary school teaching because the parents were having a problem with my physical appearance—that’s when I had really, really short hair. And I think they were pretty homophobic.” This led to parents wanting to remove their kids from her classroom, or to challenging her teaching methods (September 30, 2017). Interestingly, Lynn noted, “back then, because I was so closeted, I would always attribute the stuff to being black but as I look back retroactively, I am pretty sure it was because I was a lesbian” (September 30, 2017).

Coercive Dynamics

Coercive dynamics arise from a variety of circumstances and reasons that placed several participants in this study in a position that forced them to confront their sexual orientation in light of misguided accusations, threat of termination, and sabotage. Michael recalled a time when he worked as a gardener at a residential school and “radical people” on the leadership team and in the administrative staff pool, who identified as right-wing Christians, turned Michael in for smoking marijuana in his office (September 25, 2017). Upon investigation Michael did not possess any marijuana in his office. He reflected, “People were out to get me. I believe to this day, that were out to get me, and that was how they did it. It was about being gay ... because I didn’t hide it from anybody,” which put him in an increasingly difficult situation with the school and his work colleagues.

Dick noted that during the earlier part of his career as a priest, his superiors could have evicted him from the church for being gay (September 5, 2017). When James first came out in his career, his “board, which was all straight White guys”, confronted him. “And they asked me to resign,” but James’s superiors rescinded the request and followed up with him, scheduling two interviews to discuss his coming out as a senior leader. These types of coercive dynamics are commonplace in organizations. Larry noted, “you pay the consequence for daring to be free. Freedom is not free” (September 22, 2017). On another occurrence, Larry disclosed, “I was supposed to be the CEO of this particular place that I worked. I was just getting ready to make that leap when the plank was pulled out from under me” and I didn’t get the position (September 22, 2017).

Research Question 6 Findings

RQ 6: How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

The organizational climate and policy impact people's experience in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues and clients. A few key pieces of evidence emerged from participant interviews that highlight the importance of understanding an organization's culture and how policies factor in to the daily work environment. The interconnectedness of policy and climate help provide structure for organizations, advance inclusivity, and provide spaces for LGBTQ employees to disclose their sexual orientation.

Culture

The workplace environment comprises individuals in the organization. Participants in this study explored their experiences with workplace culture and the impacts on the disclosure of their sexual orientation. Graham noted that in the performing arts, "you become very much like a very intimate kind of family where it's not like you have to wear your heart on your sleeve in some regard and say, 'Oh, I'm the gay person here,'" because there are significant numbers of out colleagues who build an inclusive, safe culture (September 11, 2017). Further, he noted that his organization adopted nondiscrimination policies as a safety net to protect employees; however, the organization has not needed to enforce these policies because the workplace is safe and positive (Graham, September 11, 2017).

Echoing the sentiment shared by Graham, Judge noted that she never experienced an issue regarding her sexual orientation in the workplace and she "feels blessed because my office accepted me for who I was, and I never once felt discriminated against. I felt

welcomed and embraced. I was fortunate” (September 26, 2017). She attributed her exceptional experience to the district attorney who treated her extremely fairly and held everyone to a high standard of behavior, including a safe, positive work culture. The role of the supervisor played a key part in the establishment of a safe, positive workplace.

In contrast to an inclusive workplace culture, Judge shared the challenges she faced as a woman in law. Judge recounted,

When you're a young woman you get dismissed a lot, because you're young, and then there's the little boy's club and you walk in. There are things that men will say to a woman that they would never say to another male lawyer. There are things that a few male lawyers, not all, say to a female judge, that they would never say to a male judge, in my opinion. There's less respect, there's more aggressiveness. (September 26, 2017)

Her experiences highlight the ways an organization's culture can be positive and supportive for the LGBTQ community, while still allowing gender issues to persist.

Larry expressed that in his early career, he learned of organization culture and how to navigate it as an out, Black man. He recalled holding the naïve assumption that no space existed for certain freedoms of self-expression in an organization's culture. He stated, “here we are in 2017, people have the right policies and procedures in place, but it doesn't mean that the people who are in leadership positions will adhere to them,” potentially undermining the work environment and presenting a significant issue for developing a positive organizational climate (Larry, September 22, 2017).

Heteronormative Structures

Barron and Hebl noted, “even if an organization has an LGBT-inclusive environment, prospective employees might find it difficult envisioning themselves working in a community marked by heterosexism” (2010, as cited by Cunningham, 2015, p. 428). Heteronormative structures that impact workplace environments and culture came to light in an interview with James. He recalled his experience as a senior leader struggling to fit in with heteronormative structures: “It was really rough time. I had always been an oddball [working as an out, gay engineer], the one that doesn’t golf but goes on all the golfing events” (James, September 10, 2017). He also described his work environment as “a straight, white boy ruled world where the women are boxed out, so are gay people early in the engineering profession” (James, September 10, 2017). These heteronormative structures produce the experiences that James shared, as well as impacting the workplace culture and policies.

Additional Research Finding

The section below presents additional research findings that emerged as key evidence articulating common themes throughout participants’ experiences beyond the data clustered by research questions in the section above.

Activism

Activism takes the shape of many different types of actions and calls people, on behalf of themselves and others, to search for equality and equity, and to create a voice in their environment. Evidence that emerged from participants’ responses indicated that 13 of 15 participants took part in activism at some point in their lives. Their drive to be

active in their communities and politically stemmed from their development as leaders during the gay-rights movements of the 1970s and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

James discussed being able to serve as an advocate for employees in particular, through the management of his chronic illness of HIV, giving him first-hand knowledge of how disability, long-term care, and the cost of prescription drugs affect employees with certain types of insurance. James was able to facilitate difficult conversations when he interviews potential employers about their benefits packages and advocated for better coverage for himself and his staff (September 10, 2017). Max actively supported and advised an LGTBQ student organization on a university campus, giving him the power to build a space, presence, and visibility for the student body (September 14, 2017).

Further, Michael and David shared that in the 1970s people were:

Coming to San Francisco and there was that impetus and that push ‘now is the time,’ with marches in Sacramento. The legislation was starting to perk up in Sacramento on gay issues. We did that for years; for years, years and years we marched and we protested until we got what we wanted. (David and Michael, September 25, 2017)

As Michael and David continue their political resistance, Lora was getting started. She remarked how her career, postmilitary, provided her a voice on LGBTQ rights and she is making the most of her position, sharing her perceptions on how to move legislation and protections forward (Lora, October 25, 2017). These examples of a push for activism and the many other examples evidenced by participant’s career paths, bring light to the importance of leaders engaging and being active in the work of the community.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings in clusters associated with each of the research questions, with the addition of one key finding: activism. Overall, participants expressed unique perspectives and insights into their careers, growth as leaders, the role of activism, and the transition of coming out at a later point in their careers. This chapter identified six key findings associated with the research questions: (a) coming out, (b) discrimination, (c) identity, (d) social change, (e) workplace culture, and (f) activism. Although the key findings support the existing body of research, their application to the experiences of lesbian and gay leaders provides the foundation for the discovery of their essence and what their unique experience brings to this field of study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the researcher conducted this study to explore how gay and lesbian people navigated their career growth and ascension into leadership positions in relationship to how their sexual orientation evolved over the decades. The findings from this phenomenological study demonstrated that (a) social changes impact how people set career priorities and view their career, (b) sexual orientation can be a factor in career choice, (c) the integration of personal and professional life is a priority, and (d) the impact of the workplace culture is heavily influenced by leadership and attributes of discrimination situations. Ultimately, the social norms of the decade and the organization's culture impacted the experiences of study's participants.

This chapter begins with a review of the research methods, data collection, and analysis process and is proceeded by a summary of the research questions and major findings. The discussion section provides the researcher's interpretation of the evidence presented in the findings, with an overlay of key pieces of academic literature and theoretical lenses, in relation to the research questions used to guide the formulation of this study. Following the discussion, the researcher provided a set of conclusions derived from the findings of the study as they connect to the research questions and present the essence of participants' experiences. Recommendations are made for practice in organization development, education, and policy creation that connect to areas of future research.

The following research question guided this study and are discussed later in this chapter.

1. How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?
2. How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?
3. Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?
4. What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?
5. What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?
6. How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Methods and Procedures

The researcher designed this study using the phenomenological approach to capture the essence of the experiences that gay and lesbian people in leadership roles experienced over the span of their careers. In particular, this study sought to gain insight into how professional priorities and perspectives shifted for gay and lesbian leaders as their sexual identity formed. Further, the researcher designed this study to explore how gay and lesbian leaders managed their sexual orientation through disclosure and concealment decisions, which impacted their professional identities.

The design of this study required 15 participants, with a majority from fields outside of education, business, or healthcare professions. To gather data from a diverse sample of participants, the researcher used the following criteria for selection:

- Individuals must be residents of the United States;
- Individuals must identify as either lesbian or gay;
- Individuals must identify as cisgender;
- Individuals must be, or have been, employed in a leadership or managerial role;
- Individuals must hold previous experience in a leadership or managerial role for a minimum of 5 years;
- Individuals must have previously disclosed their sexual orientation in either their previous or current workplace;
- Individuals must be 50 years of age or older.

The researcher specifically designed this study to learn about the experiences of gay men and lesbian women because these sexual orientations are the most widely recognized, allowing for access to a broader population of prospective participants.

Beyond the experiential criteria listed above, the researcher designed this study to ensure representation of men and women, as well as people of color. Ultimately, the researcher interviewed 15 participants, reaching the target number of participants for this study. Further, the study called for no less than five gay men and five lesbian women. The researcher achieved this ratio, recruiting nine men and six women—a result aligned with the original expectations of the study. Additionally, the study required no more than

nine White participants, and a minimum of six participants of color; however, 10 white participants and five participants of color composed the final demographic breakdown.

Recruitment for this study proved to be particularly challenging in identifying and securing participants of color. As indicated above, the study consisted of one participant of color less than the target set forth in the original plan for this study. In speaking with the participating people of color, several shared the significant conflict associated with being out and a person of color, due in large part to the deeply held traditions and heteronormative expectations of their families and communities. The lack of alignment between support and acceptance of sexual orientation in communities of color may give cause for people to not readily disclose their sexual orientation through participation in this type of research study.

Further, recruitment for participants of color in leadership roles is limited by the fact that institutions throughout the United States are deeply entrenched in White, male, heteronormative structures that seek to retain power and position for White males by limiting access to leadership position for cisgender women and people of color. Therefore, a system designed to prohibit the advancement of cisgender women and people of color into positions of power ultimately hindered the researcher's ability to identify people of these demographics in leadership positions. Even further, with the minimum age of participants set at 50 years old, this further highlights the prevalence of institutional racism and gender oppression, due to limited opportunities for woman and people of color to rise into leadership positions starting in the 1970s and 1980s.

Although this study lacked one participant of color below the target, its validity and strength remain intact, evidenced by the data and the findings, indicating similar

shared experiences of participants in the workplace rooted in their sexual orientation and gender expression. The research presented in this study remains valid and represents a variety of perspectives that generated a set of themes relevant to nearly all participants, regardless of gender or race.

Originally, the researcher designed this study to identify study participants through one-on-one introductions in personal and professional networks that led to individual conversations in which the researcher explained the study's purpose, obtained informed consent, and confirmed an interview time. This design did not allow for broad-reaching contact and ultimately did not succeed in identifying any study participants. However, the researcher revised the approach to leverage the connectedness of social media, using it as the primary tool for recruiting study participants. The researcher arranged for the development of marketing material (see Appendix F) and created short video advertisements that the researcher posted routinely onto Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Instagram over the span of 2 months. The online-marketing approach required participants to provide basic demographic and contact information that the researcher used to follow up with participants, share details of the study, e-mail the informed-consent form, and schedule an interview time. This revised marketing approach generated approximately 40 leads, but the follow-up process for interested candidates produced high attrition, due to the amount of correspondence between the individual and the researcher. As a result, the researcher adjusted the recruitment approach a third time.

The final process continued using marketing distributed through social media, but also added the use of Betty's List, an LGBTQ news and events ListServ that reaches more than 24,000 subscribers. Also, the researcher created a more extensive demographic

online screening tool (see Appendix A) that provided adequate information to the researcher to prescreen study candidates. Once the researcher determined that a person fit the criteria of the study, the researcher sent the candidate an e-mail with a link to appointment slots on Google Calendar for them to review available time slots and select a convenient time for the research to interview them. The online appointment sign-up ensured privacy and could only be viewed by the researcher, allowing for secure communication and easy organization.

Additionally, the researcher automated the informed-consent collection process by using DocuSign to send and receive the informed-consent form (see Appendix B) from each study participant. Ultimately, the researcher learned the most effective means to optimize the participant-recruitment process: create a high-impact marketing tool that could be shared widely through social media and other electronic sources, limiting unnecessary back-and-forth communication with candidates. The researcher opted for a much more self-guided direction and used digital tools to assist in scheduling interviews and collecting informed consent.

Initially, the researcher designed this study so that ZOOM, a video-conferencing tool, hosted all interviews for participants to participate from a convenient place and to allow for participation across the United States. Additionally, ZOOM offers a recording feature that allowed for interviews to be recorded and downloaded after each interview. The ease of ZOOM made the interview set up and execution straightforward, with only minor technical difficulty. A few study participants preferred to speak in person and the researcher worked directly with each of these individuals to determine a date, time, and location to meet in person. Successfully completing interviews proved to be an additional

challenge, as participants cancelled, rescheduled, or did not show up for several of them. The researcher provided a reminder e-mail to participants approximately 2 hours before the scheduled interview time; this improved the adherence rate to the originally scheduled interview slot or provided adequate notice to reschedule if necessary. Originally, the study design included the potential for a second and third interview with participants; however, each participant expressed their inability to join the study if the time requirement exceeded one interview. The researcher removed the option for follow-up interviews from the data-collection plan to yield study participants. It is also important to note that the recruitment process, document collection, interview sign up, and online videoconferencing typically target a younger age demographic that is more technologically savvy; however, the design of the study required participants to be over the age of 50. Several participants successfully navigated the online process and tools, but future studies need to consider how to best recruit participants from an older age bracket to obtain their perspectives and insights and bring perspective to the study.

The researcher developed an interview protocol to gather data pertaining to the guiding research questions. The initial interview protocol consisted of 15 questions and guided the semistructured interviews that lasted approximately 1 hour. Following the first three interviews, the researcher noticed that each participant discussed their fortune or luck and also shared some general advice for rising lesbian and gay leaders. As a result, the researcher adjusted the interview protocol to include two additional questions to formally explore the emerging themes identified from the first few interviews (see Appendix C). At the start of each interview, the researcher reviewed the purpose and intent of this study, reviewed the process and expectations of the participant, determined

if the person preferred a pseudonym (if so, what name), and agreed on the content to keep confidential in the final write up of the study. Following the interview, the researcher recorded a voice memorandum documenting the interview—capturing thoughts, feelings, ideas, and reflections—and had the interview transcribed for later analysis.

Data analysis began with the researcher submitting the audio recording to a San Francisco-based third-party transcription company (Rev.com) that provided transcription services typically within 24 hours of the file's submission. Once the researcher received the transcript, the participant also received a digital copy for their review. The researcher encouraged each participant to review the transcript to determine any content they wanted masked or removed or to expand on any particular details of the interview discussion. Once the transcript met the participant's satisfaction, the participant e-mailed the transcript back to the researcher for analysis.

The researcher used NVivo to code the data and to identify key findings that emerged from participant interviews. The researcher used a multistep process for the coding process that began with the researcher reading through the interview transcripts several times to become immersed in the interview text. The first round of coding involved the researcher coding key statements in each interview transcript, resulting in more than 160 different codes. For the second round of coding, the researcher grouped the codes into similar themes, based on context and content, reducing the number of different themes to approximately 20. Following the recommendation of Creswell (2013), the researcher conducted a coding process for a third time and generated a final set of seven key themes that the researcher ultimately used to inform the findings and forthcoming discussion. Each round of coding is shown in Appendix E, providing further

detail of the exact codes that emerged. The core of the methodological approach remained consistent throughout the execution of the study, with minor changes implemented to refine the overall process of data collection and analysis. The researcher derived key findings from the data and used them to inform the research questions.

Discussion

The findings from this study directly address the core problem grounding this study: lesbian and gay leaders maintain and advance their careers in every organization. However, little research exists studying how the impact of factors such as discrimination, identity formation and maintenance, disclosure dilemmas, and workplace environment converge in an individual's career development for adults over the age of 50. The evidence gathered in this study produced several key findings that are best understood in the context of three factors:

1. Of the 15 participants, 14 came out during the 1970s and 1980s, at the height of the gay-rights movement and AIDS crisis.
2. Most participants shared an age range between their late 20s and 50s when they first came out.
3. The coinciding of each participant's coming out during the gay-rights movement and AIDS crisis increased their propensity to engage in activism and advocacy throughout their career.

The researcher identified these three key contexts as overarching drivers in each participant's life story by pulling together (a) the details of each participant's date of birth, (b) the information they shared about their initial process of coming to terms with their sexual orientation, (c) comments made during interviews about the social

movements in which they participated around the time they started to publicly disclose their sexual orientation, and (d) the decades of personal and professional activities that followed. Interestingly, participants opted to join this study because this research's focus, providing another way they could contribute to the LGBTQ community and help raise awareness of the challenges gay and lesbian leaders face throughout their career development.

This study incorporated two theoretical lenses for analysis: social constructionism and queer theory. Social constructionism, at its core, concerns how one constructs meaning and reality, arguing that social norms, beliefs, and understanding of the world are constructed by shared knowledge and experience. Queer theory challenges societal norms and argues for the queer things that disrupt heteronormative structures and expectations. These two theoretical lenses provide the tools to form a deeper understanding of the evidence produced through this study and how it informs our practice as educators, organizational development practitioners, and the queer community.

The researcher identified several key themes derived from the literature that individual research questions in Chapter 4 clustered, discussed as key findings in this section. The key findings from the interview data follow: (a) coming out, (b) identity, (c) social change, (d) discrimination, (e) workplace culture, (f) activism, and (g) support. However, support intertwines with the other major key findings.

Coming Out

Coming out means something different to each person, in particular when they reflect on their experiences of doing so in their personal lives as compared to their

professional lives. However, regardless of the person, factors impact one's decision to share their sexual orientation with others. The decision never to disclose sexual orientation is the right of each individual. However, it could be argued that, based on the evidence from this study, that the separation of the personal and professional life causes discontentment and isolation in the workplace.

Separation of Personal and Professional Lives

Throughout the interviews, a resounding theme occurred in several discussions about career development as leaders, centered on the separation between their personal and professional lives. For participants in this study, all over the age of 50, the impact of growing up in the mid-1900s brought with it several social norms that guided the conduct of people's lives. People used to consider gay men and lesbian women as unacceptable people who did not receive recognition from the mainstream, White, straight behaviors associated with the time period. As a result, participants in this study grew up with only one socially acceptable sexual orientation: straight.

When these participants grew into adulthood, during a time of social change, primarily through the gay rights movement and AIDS crisis, deeply entrenched beliefs and practices about sexual orientation slowed the process of coming out in the workplace. Often, study participants noted they chose to conceal their sexual orientation in the workplace, where they maintained a mask of professionalism. No doubt participants performed as exceptional leaders in their fields. The mask of professionalism speaks to the notion that they espoused that professionalism in the workplace means one's personal life has no place in it. Further, they shared that always doing an exceptional job,

executing one's job responsibilities, and maintaining a clear boundary line that prohibited discussion of anything personal at work characterized professionalism.

Maintaining that professionalism keeps a person from sharing any details about their personal life, creating dual identities and forcing study participants to remain undisclosed at work. As a result of these dual identities, many participants grew increasingly disconnected from their work and colleagues, unable to form meaningful relationships. Another impact of using professionalism as a mask to conceal sexual orientation at work meant that outside of work, where participants did not hide their sexual orientation, they constantly faced the risk of being exposed by a colleague. Living life with fear of being outed in the workplace creates disengagement in the workplace and limits people's ability to embrace their entire being at once. A few participants expressed that they became severely depressed, whereas a few others struggled with alcoholism as a means to cope with their dual identities.

Separating one's personal and professional life also stems from the traditional version of a white-collar employee and permeates the idealized United States: a 1950s-style, White, middle-class man whose work stays neatly in the office and wife and children neatly in the home. Over the decades, society shifted what is considered socially acceptable in the workplace and who belongs in the workplace. Study participants expressed that at the dawn of the gay rights movement in the 1970s, they witnessed the increasing visibility of lesbian and gay peers in the community, drawing others out into the public eye. During this same time, society slowly started shifting and recognized that lesbian and gay people are already part of society—neighbors, friends, and family. Society continued to slowly reestablish norms to include lesbian and gay individuals.

Participants and others pushed the social norms, rejected the notion of heteronormative workplace expectations, and paved the way for merging the dual identities into one: out wherever you are, not just at home. With the champions leading the way to reject the social norms of the 1970s, pushing society forward to accept lesbian and gay individuals, participants recognized the shifts and started transitioning their lives to be more integrated, no longer needing to conceal their sexual orientation in the workplace. Some experienced a long, slow transition, whereas others came out early in their careers. Either way, a majority of participants discussed how the wall that separated work and home took years to breakdown, and some waited until the last decade to fully disclose their sexual orientation at work.

Passive Disclosure of Sexual Orientation

At the point when study participants began the transition to integrate their work and home lives, many shared they did not make an announcement or sit down with individuals on their staff one-by-one to deliver the news. Instead, many participants expressed a more passive approach for disclosing their sexual orientation. The approach to passive disclosure simply meant that participants refused to deny their sexual orientation when asked, preferring to disclose through subtle hints or remarks that gave others indication of their sexual orientation without having to share it directly.

The approach to passive disclosure holds true for many of the participants, even to this day. A few participants cautioned of the risk of sharing too much personal information with colleagues at work, leading back to the classic social norms of keeping personal and professional lives separate. Although, it is important to note that several participants expressed the need to be politically savvy or emotionally intelligent as a

means to read the room and understand the people with whom one is interacting, this savvy helps protect individuals from experiencing a difficult situation with a colleague or supervisor who may not be accepting of the participant's sexual orientation.

Other passive-disclosure tactics employed by participants in this study included displaying a picture of their partner or spouse at their desk or joining an LGBTQ professional association. Over the decades, several participants took a varied approach to disclosing their sexual orientation in the workplace. More recently, passive disclosure became the approach taken in situations with a stranger or with someone outside of the organization and a more direct or forward approach may be employed with an internal contact. Although the current stance of the United States is more welcoming and accepting of lesbian and gay individuals than in previous decades, the need to share one's sexual orientation through a passive approach shifted in meaning. In earlier decades, one employed a passive approach as a way to quietly disclose sexual orientation without drawing significant attention to the fact. More recently a passive approach indicates that sexual orientation is not an issue and is less of a defining characteristic of an individual.

As leaders in their organizations, participants expressed that a passive disclosure is a dwindling approach because technology and communication tools bring people together much more easily than in the past. In a leadership role, participants' sexual orientation is more visible, searchable, and easily communicated, reducing the ability for participants to control the details of their personal lives at work. The flow of information shifted many participants' perspectives at work and now they approach their role as being a visible advocate and mentor for their employees and clients, embracing their sexual orientation and letting it inform their work.

Strategic Outness

Although not specifically mentioned by name, study participants defined strategic outness as the deliberate decision to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation at any given time. Throughout the interviews, participants shared that they may deliberately disclose their sexual orientation as a tool to connect with a peer or client in a meaningful way. The deliberate disclosure centers the locus of control on the individual and allows them to communicate and shape the message of their sexual orientation that relates best to the person with whom they are speaking. As a result, they are able to connect on a deeper level with the person. Strategic outness also returns control of the disclosure process to the individual, giving them power over their message and the situation.

Evidence collected indicated that over the decades, conflicts have arisen between a participant and a colleague or supervisor, based on ideological differences regarding sexual orientation. Early in employment, participants shared the value of coming out strategically to build allies as needed, but concealing their sexual orientation as a way to navigate office politics. As leaders in their fields, participants recognized that strategic outness plays a valuable role in building a professional identity and shaped the way their career developed. Additionally, participants disclosed their sexual orientation and eventually experienced discrimination at the hands of a superior. The value of strategic outness is that it possesses the ability to shift the power dynamic around sexual orientation and disclosure.

Workplace Environment

The workplace environment plays a significant role in the coming-out process. Participants spoke frequently about how the workplace environment can factor into the

comfort level that each person experiences. The level of comfort a person feels while in the workplace gives an indication of the type of reaction they may receive from their colleagues and supervisor when disclosing their sexual orientation. Because society's views on the appropriate environment and the types of employees that belong in the workplace shifted to be more open and inclusive, the opportunity for participants to share details about their personal lives, including sexual orientation, is more of an option. Advancing the notion of a shifting workplace environment, queer theory argues that the social norms of today are not inclusive enough and that increasing visibility of all members of the LGTBQ community brings more representation to society. As leaders in their fields, participants are charged with taking ownership and responsibility for changing the workplace environment to embrace all people equally.

Identity

The researcher found that the second key finding centered on identity. Identity is broad and encompasses an extensive set of characteristics including gender expression, multiple intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender, along with intrapersonal skills. Participants in this study expressed how their identities informed their careers over the decades and shaped who they became. In the context of this study, professional identity is the visible set of characteristics and the internal decisions that individuals take toward self-care as a means to nurture and protect their developing identities. Throughout this study, participants shared three key points around their identities as out, lesbian or gay leaders: career choice, authentic self, and gender expression.

Career Choice

Many factors influence the careers participants chose; however, the most notable references the decades when they started to disclose their sexual orientation. In the 1970s, a marked transition occurred in society that gave lesbian and gay individuals the opportunity to pursue job opportunities they may previously have viewed as unobtainable due to gender stereotypes, but even more so, they received a calling to speak up and out for social reform to give them citizenship equivalent to their heterosexual peers. Many study participants described their career development in terms of how they worked to advocate for their staff, clients, and students at the local level or fought at the national and international level for equal rights and protections. It is striking that the career choices of many of the participants gave place to positions that lobby, advocate, and create opportunities for other marginalized groups of people.

Further, this study controlled for a certain level of career status to ensure that each participant worked as an experienced leader in some form. These leaders are challenging current social norms and are pushing against the status quo of society to establish a new set of social norms that are more broadly inclusive and to raise the issues of equality for everyone. As a result, participants are in positions of power not traditionally maintained by women or women of color, and are holding true to their roots of social movements to fuel their passion for social change.

Authentic Self

True to effective and positive leaders, participants shared the importance of being true and kind to themselves as a means of self-care and preservation throughout the course of developing as a leader and champion in their field. Authenticity means being

who you are, all the time, anywhere you go. Over the decades of shifting social norms and challenging the heteronormative structures of the workplace, individuals are required to draw on qualities proven beneficial throughout the development of their careers.

Participants shared the need to be brave, compassionate, kind, and to love themselves. Developing as a leader and setting their career priorities still requires an individual to maintain a sense of self and to be keenly aware of others' needs as well. Bravery is heralded as a key quality because often, the position of an outed leader requires individual to face adversity while seeking to advance their mission at work. The researcher noted compassion and kindness as critical qualities because they enable the leader to connect with their colleagues and provide a safe space to learn, grow, and take the risks necessary to change social norms and challenge the way things previously took place.

Last, and arguably most important, loving one's self means putting away the self-hatred and internalized homophobia that may persist from being raised in the 1940s to 1960s, and even later in some cases. Several participants discussed instances when adversity or failure brought about a tendency to internalize hatred or to fear that circumstances occurred because of sexual orientation. Therefore, loving oneself is a practice that requires time and effort but can change the way individuals view themselves in the world.

Gender Expression and Passing

Several participants cited "looking the part" as a key experience in several of their careers, even to this day. Looking the part is also known as "passing," meaning to adhere to the social norms of gender expression in the workplace and society at large. A few

lesbian leaders in the study recalled times when they experienced encounters with their patients, clients, and students that centered around mistaken genders because of their short hair, lack of makeup and jewelry, and apparel: a social norm traditionally associated with male gender expression. Although the researcher of this study adamantly disagrees with gender conformity, the study participants shared that at some point in their careers they made an effort to pass in the workplace by changing their gender expression to conform to the social norms of the time. Participants remarked that a mistaken gender identity often impeded their ability to deliver services because of the situation that arose.

Queer theory immediately challenges the notion of passing and pushes for individuals to present themselves in any way they desire, regardless of gender conformity and expectation. As current leaders, participants did not discuss the implications of transitioning back to their former gender-expression practices; however, they did note that the effort to pass required a great deal of effort. As society shifts to recognize and embrace different forms of gender expression and uniqueness, the workplace is lagging to do the same. It is the responsibility of the leaders to make space for a diverse, unique set of individuals.

Social Change

With the central theories of this study focused on social change and rejecting social norms, resulting in change, this key finding speaks to the shifts occurring in the workplace around the country. A few participants shared how the youngest generation entering the workforce brings a remarkably different approach to the workplace, social norms, and the disclosure of their sexual orientation. First and foremost, participants stated that young lesbian and gay people approach their professional identity in an

entirely differently way, without stigma or concern for how they are received by their colleagues. The impression and observation that young people are shifting society requires that study participants continue to draw on their experiences and participation in social changes to advance the changes working their way up through society from younger generations.

The lesbian and gay leaders in this study, thought it important to share how the younger generation presented an attitude of “take me for who I am or not, I do not change.” Gradually, the participants in this study embraced their sexual orientation in the workplace, impacting their career priorities and the way they view themselves. These shifting priorities and perceptions of leaders empowered them to leave positions that denied them promotions based on their sexual orientation and to confront microaggressions and other forms of inequity they experienced. The empowerment of social change is prevalent across generations, even if it takes shape in different forms.

It is important to note that the workplace culture and climate is shifting, progressing toward a safer, more inclusive environment. From the earliest recollections of participants in this study, nearly everyone reflected on the likelihood of experiencing discrimination early in their career; yet, as society developed over time, the likelihood of discrimination diminished. Further, study participants expressed that the shifts in society provided space in the workplace to defend their rights and protest discriminatory practices with less fear of retaliatory actions from their workplace supervisors or colleagues. History proved that the more often organizations implemented policies protecting underrepresented groups of individuals, for example lesbian and gay leaders,

the more secure the positions of these individuals became over time, creating safe spaces for employees to come out and express their sexual orientation in the workplace.

Discrimination

Endless forms of discrimination occur in workplaces across the United States; however, two in particular surfaced during the course of this study: the lavender ceiling and microaggressions. Participants frequently described discrimination as homophobia by their colleagues, leading to a form of consequence in the workplace. Over the span of their careers, many participants shared that disclosing their sexual orientation in the workplace led to fear of consequences or job loss, which took an emotional toll. Discrimination in the workplace creates inequity between employees because opportunities for recognition, advancement, and other benefits are inevitably unavailable to employees in these situations.

The leaders in this study expressed the risks they took by disclosing their sexual orientation in the workplace, recalling times when they chose to conceal it, and talked about specific examples when their careers made changes as a result of their sexual orientation. The power dynamics in action during these discriminatory moments are precisely why gay and lesbian leaders must challenge the longstanding power structures and establish new ways of doing business that provide space for all individuals to flourish and advance.

Lavender Ceiling

The lavender ceiling speaks directly to the barriers of advancement that LGBTQ individuals face, as the glass ceiling does for women. Although the researcher examined the shifting priorities and perceptions of lesbian and gay leaders, this does not mean that

the leaders reached senior-level leadership positions in their organizations during their career. On several occasions, participants recalled situations when they sought advancement or promotion to a top, senior-level position and their superiors passed them over for the opportunity. Alternatively, some participants advanced to a certain level in an organization and became aware that the organization held no intention of appointing a lesbian or gay individual to a top leadership position.

In either circumstance, the lavender ceiling acted as a barrier to their advancement, and in some cases, resulted in them resigning from the organization in pursuit of a position somewhere else, leading to a shift in career priorities and altering the way they viewed their career advancement. As society continues to shift the definitions of what is acceptable, organizations are slow to adopt new norms. For lesbian and gay leaders, challenging the system to change is a responsibility and connects to the core of activism and advocacy that formed a portion of their personal and professional identity.

Microaggressions

In many cases, discrimination is not as overt at hitting the lavender ceiling. Instead, it often takes the form of microaggressions: those encounters with others that are uncomfortable, usually in relation to a marginalized identity such as sexual orientation. Participants recounted many occasions when they encountered people who spoke to them in an unacceptable way, commenting on participants' looks, intelligence, attire, and HIV status, all rooted in their sexual orientation. The lesbian and gay leaders in this study shared that they adopted the approach of addressing each microaggression in the moment whenever possible, or afterwards, to call attention to unacceptable behavior. Addressing the aggressor is key to establishing cultural changes and creating a safe environment. As

visibly out leaders, it is important for them to address actions of microaggressions and discrimination to foster a safe, inclusive space for other employees to experience.

Particular to the interests of this study, organizations need to provide a safe space for undisclosed LGBTQ individuals to feel safe and supported in the development of their sexual orientation and professional identity.

Workplace Culture

Similar to that of workplace environment, workplace culture speaks directly to the impact individuals have in shaping the way others interact and feel in the space. Building from the argument that a positive workplace culture enables people to more freely contribute their ideas and bring their integrated lives to work, workplace culture plays a significant role in career development and can create a vision for the future. Two key factors drive workplace culture, according to participants in this study: supportive leadership and policies. The human element that shapes workplace culture can be impacted and influenced from all levels; however, for participants in leadership positions, their role provides broader reach across the organization.

Supportive Leadership

A pivotal point in the development of an open, inclusive workplace starts with supportive leadership, which can take the shape of a mentor, maintaining a support network outside of work, seeing others who are out, and obtaining the support of colleagues. Mentors serve many distinct functions, ranging from helping rising leaders navigate their accession to more advanced roles to troubleshooting a difficult situation. Mentors played one key role for this group of participants: a guide to embracing sexual orientation as a part of one's professional identity. For each participant, the role of a

mentor spoke to them differently, ranging from that of a mentor to others or to being mentored by someone. As a mentor to others, participants hold the power to demonstrate what the successful integration of sexual orientation may look like at work, help rising leaders navigate the disclosure of their sexual orientation, and providing opportunities for LGBTQ and people of color a place at the table where decisions are made. In contrast, when participants used mentors, they gleaned perspectives on how to navigate a difficult situation or maintained a relationship with someone in the organization who advocated on their behalf for opportunities to grow and advance.

Continuing with the formation of an integrated professional identity, it is important to establish a network of support outside of the workplace that can stabilize an individual when circumstances arise at work. The leaders in the study shared the importance of having friends or family who gave unconditional support and love. The personal level of an outside network can help a person get through a difficult time because they are removed from the situation and are often more approachable.

Supportive leadership also requires that lesbian and gay leaders be visible in the organization and community. Early in their careers, several leaders in this study saw the ability to identify and relate to a lesbian or gay senior-level employee who already had disclosed their sexual orientation in the workplace as a key factor in the successful integration of their sexual orientation in their professional identities and their ability to form career goals. Based on the evidence from this study, being an out leader who is visible in the organization humanizes the LGTBQ community and provides connectedness to others. As more people disclose their sexual orientation in an

organization, a shift in the organization culture can occur that becomes increasingly more inclusive and supportive.

Developing and maintaining a support network in the workplace acted as the fourth type of supportive leadership necessary for the successful development of a leader. Regardless of the sexual orientation of the people in one's workplace support network, it is key to seek people who are positive, reflective, and hold one's best interest at heart. A positive support network can increase the comfort level of everyone in the office, providing space, risk taking, and innovation.

Ultimately, the leader is responsible for demonstrating supportive leadership skills and fostering the opportunity for teams to network, support one another, and identify mentors to help young talent develop. Society is shifting from top-down directives and, as evidenced by the data collected in this study, support comes from all aspects of a person's life.

Impact of Policies

At the onset of this study, the researcher anticipated that an organization's policies had a significant impact on the career priorities and perspectives of gay and lesbian leaders; however, most participants surmised that a company's LGBTQ policies are only as beneficial as the people enacting them. That is to say, organization policies are words on a page when compared to how people in the workplace embody them. One responsibility of a leader is to set the tone, behavior, and expectations of employees and ensure that policies are brought to life. The common response to exploring the impact of an organization's policy centered on how the leader enforced and adhered to the policy.

Although society shifts and queer individuals may seek to break the boundaries of society, policies provide a safety net of protection while new norms form.

Activism

A common thread that runs throughout this discussion is the role that activism and advocacy play for nearly all participants. Looking back to the social movements of the 1970s and the AIDs crisis of the 1980s, participants experienced the call to become involved in the fight for rights and protections afforded to their heterosexual counterparts. At the core of activism sits the desire to seek change for the better, to raise awareness of injustice, and to seek equity for everyone. Each participant's career development and current or most recent, leadership roles involved working at the organization, local, national, or international level for just and right causes. Although not all of the activism centered in the LGBTQ community, each participant found a way to bring their sexual orientation as one intersecting identity to the cause they are addressing.

Conclusions

This section answered the research questions by synthesizing the evidence presented in Chapter 4 and the prior discussion of the findings in this chapter, as a means to contribute to the growing body of research regarding how lesbian and gay leaders in the workplace shape career priorities and perspectives, with special attention given to the impact their sexual orientation plays on their development.

Research Question 1 Conclusion

RQ1: How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual-orientation disclosure, and professional-identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?

The evidence supports that lesbian and gay people in leadership roles navigate their ascension into leadership positions through the use of (a) support networks that include mentors, (b) seeking organizations that employ visibly-out LGBTQ leaders, (c) leverage the use of networks in and outside of their organization, and (d) employ political savvy to determine the most appropriate time and method to disclose their sexual orientation. Ultimately, working toward an integrated professional and personal life enabled the leaders to develop a professional identity that embraces their sexual orientation and may increase their comfort level in the workplace, enabling them to bring their authentic self to work.

Unique to the leaders in this study, age played a key role in the formation of their professional identity in relation to their sexual orientation because many of the individuals did not start the journey to create a professional identity that included their sexual orientation until much later in their careers—a product of the social norms at the time of their upbringing. The experience of coming out as a lesbian or gay individual presents a perspective that enabled these leaders to understand the value of emotional intelligence, developing support structures, and being actively involved in the culture of work to build a more inclusive and open workplace. Social norms change with time, and these leaders are presently and actively working to leverage their position to influence the way new norms will form, breaking down the heteronormative structures and empowering the generations after them to follow suit.

Research Question 2 Conclusion

RQ2: How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?

Sexual orientation does not evolve in a vacuum; rather, it is defined by the understanding shared among members of society in the form of social norms. To be clear, sexual orientation is not a choice or lifestyle. Social constructionism means that members of society form meanings and definitions to share a common understanding. Therefore, sexual orientation always existed; the way society defines a person's sexual orientation is what changed. The leaders in this study came out publicly as lesbian or gay in their 20s or later, some much later (i.e., 70 years old). As a result, these leaders are able to share their experiences while evolving their sexual orientation in the workplace and advancing a career.

The leaders in this study shifted their career priorities at a few key junctures as their careers developed, directly in relation to their sexual orientation. Some leaders chose to leave an organization due to the denial of a promotion or the realization that their superiors held no intention of promoting them to a senior leader position due to their sexual orientation. This situation forced some leaders to change career paths, setting new priorities about the types of positions and organizations they sought. Additionally, some leaders in this study experienced the denial of a leadership position due to their sexual orientation by an organization they attempted to join, resulting in a reevaluation of their career priorities.

Regardless of the circumstance, the leaders in this study experienced a shift in perspective related to the way they viewed their career as a direct result of the lavender ceiling or denial of a job opportunity, raising their awareness of the inequity in certain organizations. The shift in perspective for the leaders caused them to identify the type of organization that better advocated for them and viewed their career as one with more

responsibility to create change through activism and advocacy, working to prevent similar circumstance from occurring for others in the LGBTQ and other marginalized communities.

Research Question 3 Conclusion

RQ3: Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?

The situations and context that lesbian and gay leaders chose to disclose their sexual orientation is as unique as the person; however, the leaders in this study indicated that disclosing their sexual orientation most often occurred when they worked in an inclusive, open work culture where they felt comfortable and supported by their colleagues and peers. The context of disclosing sexual orientation at work requires the leader to conduct a risk assessment and determine the benefits of coming out and when to do so. As previous discussed, when a lesbian or gay leader is publicly out, the visibility of other employees provides context and space for them to disclose their sexual orientation. Ultimately, a leader may disclose their sexual orientation at their own pace, ensuring they are comfortable and in control of the process.

Research Question 4 Conclusion

RQ4: What disclosure strategies do lesbian and gay people in leadership roles employ to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?

Disclosure directly addresses the decision to signal others about one’s sexual orientation; however, some conceal, hiding their sexual orientation. The researcher explored both approaches during this study. Both approaches to managing outness in the workplace can be appropriate at times, depending on the situation and context. Leaders

noted that early in their career they concealed their sexual orientation by maintaining strict boundaries between their personal and professional lives. These boundaries enabled the leader to only discuss professional activities in the workplace, excluding any mention of their personal lives. This is a concealment strategy due to the leader actively working to hide their sexual orientation. Consequences of maintaining strict boundaries include the inability to form meaningful, personal connections with work colleagues and the potential to suffer emotional distress, such as depression.

To the core focus of this question, on a regular basis, the leaders used the disclosure strategy of passive disclosure, meaning they did not overtly disclose their sexual orientation to their colleagues, but instead allowed the disclosure to occur naturally in conversation. The lesbian and gay individuals who used this approach did so as a way to not discuss their sexual orientation when it was not the topic of conversation. However, in the past decade, sexual orientation shifted to be part of the conversation, with less concern placed on disclosure due to its broader social acceptance.

Research Question 5 Conclusion

RQ5: What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay people in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?

Discrimination takes many forms—all having lasting impact on the leader. Following the disclosure of sexual orientation, leaders expressed job loss, denial of promotion (also referred to as hitting the lavender ceiling), microaggressions related to their appearance and cognitive abilities, and reprimands from their supervisors. Although

such overt discrimination may appear to be less common in today's society, it is still prevalent and a factor that must be considered when disclosing sexual orientation.

Research Question 6 Conclusion

RQ6: How do organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay people in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Several aspects of organizational climate impact the decision of a lesbian or gay leader to come out in the workplace. The key factor in organizational climate that influences a person to disclose their sexual orientation rests in the leader who sets the tone for the organization and demonstrates the active implementation of company policies. The presence of organizational policies does not, in and of itself, guarantee a positive, inclusive workplace. People in an organization shape the organizational climate. Further, the role of leader is to bring policy to life and foster an environment where people are able to develop support networks.

Recommendations

The researcher intends for the recommendations in this section to serve as a guide for current and developing lesbian and gay leaders, as well as researchers exploring this line of inquiry. Three areas of recommendations derived from this study: (a) research structure, (b) individual leaders, and (c) organizations. These recommendations are intended to be a catalyst for individual and organizational improvement and to launch an exploration of additional ways to disrupt the social norms and status quo as a means to advance all people in an organization.

Research Recommendations

As discussed previously in this chapter, the researcher learned several lessons during the data-collection phase that may help enhance future studies in this area.

Recruitment Challenges

Sexual orientation is an invisible identity, meaning that individuals control who knows about their sexual orientation, how they are informed, and when to disclose their sexual orientation. As a result of the invisible identity, recruitment for research studies specifically targeting LGBTQ leaders can be exceedingly difficult. Research studies recruiting members of the LGTBQ community are likely to only yield individuals who already disclosed their sexual orientation, resulting in a sample that may lack the perspectives of closeted individuals for fear of being outed. Additionally, the researcher conducted the recruitment for this study through online social-media platforms, which potentially precluded those who do not use social media or people who are not digitally connected. In particular, the researcher designed this study to target lesbian and gay individuals over the age of 50. I recommend that in future studies targeting the LGBTQ population, digital and print media be used to recruit individuals. Further, it is important to provide multiple ways for potential participants to contact the researcher, including during the digital scheduling and paperwork-collection processes. These changes may remove additional barriers for participants of future studies.

Develop New Samples for Study

The researcher designed this study to explore the experiences of only lesbian and gay leaders. However, with the increasing prevalence of other sexual orientations and gender expressions, minimal research describes their leadership and disclosure

experiences. Additionally, I recommend that this study be conducted again using a sample drawn from more regions throughout the United States to capture various regional impacts of their leadership and professional-identity formation.

For the Individual Leader

Establish Mentor and Support Networks

Identifying formal and informal LGBTQ mentors to support, guide, and develop rising leaders in the workplace has substantial value. Repeatedly, participants in this study expressed the importance of working with a mentor to navigate coercive dynamics that novice leaders may not be competent to address. Further, networking in an organization is key to establishing a positive work environment, but also for allowing colleagues to provide an individual with day-to-day contact, feedback, encouragement, and connectedness to the organization. The sense of belonging that comes from a solid support network on one's immediate team and beyond increases satisfaction in the workplace and enables an individual to be their authentic self.

Get Involved in Activism and Advocacy

Leaders who actively participated in the gay-rights movement in the 1970s continue to be activists and advocates for the rights and protections of the LGBTQ community. However, those hard-won battles do not translate to younger generations that grow up enjoying the rights and protections that the previous generations earned. Recently, it is even more apparent that these rights are not unconditionally secure and it is time for the next generation of activists to step up and lead. Many battles require persistence for protections and rights, if not for one's self, for those in the community.

Integrate Professional and Personal Lives

Despite considerable overlap between work and home life in when and how work is completed, the recommendation for individuals to integrate their professional and personal lives speaks to the notion that hard boundaries separate personal and professional relationships, and experiences often result in isolation, lack of connectedness to the organization, and less satisfaction at work. Further, because societal norms shifted, it is becoming increasingly commonplace for personal and professional lives to share some integration, embracing it appropriately.

Maintain Visibility

Often LGBTQ individuals are not identifiable unless the individual publicly and regularly discloses their sexual orientation. It is vital that individuals who are out maintain visibility by participating in professional organizations and conferences, workplace councils and advisory boards, and other means to maintain a presence in society. When one maintains visibility, they serve as an example for others in the community to do the same, providing encouragement, support, and courage to others who may not have a visible example of someone who is out.

For the Organization

Develop Leadership Pipelines for LGBTQ People of Color

As evidenced by the demographic classification of this study, a need persists for increasing the number of LGBTQ people of color in leadership positions. However, it cannot be the expectation that LGBTQ people of color secure leadership positions when, historically, these communities receive limited access to education and opportunities. Organizations must form pipelines from communities, schools, and networks that

educate, mentor, and foster opportunity for youth to start early in building a path toward leadership positions.

Address Gender Inequity in Career Advancement

Echoing the call for the development of pipelines for people of color into leadership positions, organizations need to develop criteria to evaluate their advancement practices, evidenced by disproportionate numbers of female leaders when compared to their male counterparts. Further, mentoring and professional development needs to be provided to members of the LGBTQ community to help them navigate the intersecting identities that impact their leadership-advancement opportunities.

Support Leaders in Organizational Culture Work

Throughout this study, leaders shared the invaluable role they play in shaping an organization's culture. Organizations must actively support the efforts of its leaders in strategic, well-planned initiatives and projects designed to embrace diversity, improve employee experience, and create an inclusive, open environment. It is time to shift the culture and resource intensive, requiring planning, dedication, and efforts to be top priorities.

Future Research

The field of LGBTQ research maintains well-documented aspects of the community; however, minimal research intersects organizational leadership and sexual orientation, particularly for bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. This section begins with recommendations for future research based on findings derived from this study, followed by a summary of recommendations identified from literature obtained during the course of the literature-review process.

While developing the foundation for this study, the researcher explored the interaction between heterosexual and queer individuals. One line of inquiry may examine the code switching that occurs when queer individuals interact with other queer individuals, compared to interactions with heterosexual individuals. The notion of code switching derives from the field of linguistic studies and may provide unique insights into the interactions that occur between queer and heterosexual individuals, informing the way people understand and approach employee feedback, professional development, and informal versus formal communication.

A major area of study that emerged as a result of this research is the need to explore the intersectionality of gender expression and racial dynamics of lesbian and gay leaders in the workplace. Throughout this study, participants of color and those who identify as cisgender female routinely expressed how their experiences throughout their career may be a result of their sexual orientation, gender expression, or racial identity, but they are often unable to tell which because others subjected them to microaggressions and denied them access to opportunities. Future research must untangle the experiences of lesbians and people of color in leadership roles to more clearly capture and understand how each of these factors impacted their careers and continues to do so in today's society. Digging deeper into the intersections of sexual orientation, race, and gender with each participant over time may provide greater opportunity for participants to reflect on their experiences and help construct an image of what they endured throughout their careers.

Another line of inquiry mentioned in the recommendations section is to conduct a study regarding how other members of the LGBTQ community experienced the formation of a professional identity in relation to their sexual orientation or gender

identity. This study approached the research topic by selecting lesbian and gay participants, due to the higher percentage of people openly identifying as such. However, little to no research exists measuring how other members of the community experience ascension into leadership roles and navigates the process while accounting for their sexual orientation. Data gathered from a variation of this study may inform human-resource teams of how to prevent discrimination in the workplace, fostering positive work environments for all staff members, and identify the needs of this specific community in the workplace.

Further, researchers may replicate this study with the same population of lesbian and gay leaders but should incorporate follow-up interviews, as originally intended in this study, to explore more deeply the individual examples provided by participants and capture an even more detailed picture of their experiences as queer leaders. Additionally, a comparison study of leaders from different age brackets might inform organization development and human-resource practitioners of how age differences, cross referenced with social movements, are impacting the LGBTQ community entering the workplace. These data may help document social shifts that are occurring and the disruptive efforts to change sexual orientation and gender expression laws and policies.

Through the extensive preparation of the literature review, other researchers in the field identified two additional lines of inquiry for consideration to advance this field of research:

Investigate the specific elements of workplace climates that foster the use of different management strategies and the methods in which these elements can be

targeted effectively to increase the supportiveness of workplace climates for lesbian and gay employees. (Reed & Leuty, 2016, p. 1011)

The implications of coming out in the workplace and the consequences of a burgeoning LGBT identity in teenage years are well documented, but the management literature has yet to track the development of one's LGBT identity in the context of the workplace or explore the work-lives of those who identify as heterosexual until later than usual in their lives. (McFadden, 2015, p. 145)

The field of research pertaining to the LGBTQ community in the workplace barely ventured beyond exploring discrimination and coming-out strategies. As society continues to redefine social norms and more sexual orientations and gender identities are clarified, the field needs even more researchers to develop this research.

Concluding Thoughts

The researcher designed this study to advance the field of organization and leadership, with a particular focus on exploring the space in which sexual orientation, career advancement for leaders, and professional identity management interact. The data revealed in this study captured a unique perspective on career development related to sexual-orientation disclosure, as the majority of participants in this study came out later in life, most at a point when they already established leadership positions. This study captured the experience of how older adults who navigated their position as leaders learned to disclose their sexual orientation, and the impact that doing so brought to their professional image. Further, the researcher addressed the significance how leaders shifted their career priorities and perspectives when faced with the lavender ceiling, termination, or reprimands due to their sexual orientation.

Individuals learned to navigate many intersecting identities over the course of a lifetime—sexual orientation, gender expression, parent, relationship status—and nothing can prepare an individual to successfully navigate these intersections better than those with previous experience. Throughout this study, the lesbian and gay leaders who shared their insights and the lessons they learned expressed a desire to pass along the knowledge of the LGBTQ community to the up-and-coming generation of leaders. It is critical that the research community turn its attention to capturing and documenting the experiences of elders to share the collective history of the community and to advance the rights and protections that are not guaranteed for LGBTQ individuals, but are a requirement to be a complete citizen of the United States.

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APPENDIX A

DISSERTATION PROSPECT PARTICIPANT SCREENING SURVEY

Dear Prospective Participant

This survey is designed as a tool to capture your interest in participating in this study, which will explore the experiences and self-perceptions of lesbian and gay people in leadership positions in order to understand their decisions and strategies to manage their professional identity while openly expressing their sexual orientation in the workplace. Please read this information sheet and contact the Principal Investigator, Justin W. Moore [jwmoore2@dons.usfca.edu; 415-920-3206] to ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Description of the Process

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be contacted by the researcher to confirm your participation and coordinate an interview time. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions that will explore your personal and career experiences in relation to your sexual orientation. Your interview will be recorded so it can be transcribed for analysis.

Length of Participation

If you are selected to participate in this study, you will partake in a 2-hour interview (in-person or online) with a potential follow-up interview.

Risks and Benefits

There are no foreseeable risks or physical discomforts to you for taking part in this study. There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However,

participating in this study will give you an opportunity to share your experiences and reflections on your sexual orientation and leadership career.

Confidentiality

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. If you are selected to participate in this study, you will choose a pseudonym that will be associated with your interview responses. Only the researcher will have access to your legal name and associated pseudonym, which will be stored in separate files on a secure server. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only anonymous data and will not identify you or any individual by your legal or preferred name.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question.

Rights and Complaints

If you are not satisfied with the way this study is performed or have any questions about this study, you may contact Justin W. Moore.

Justin W. Moore, University of San Francisco School of Education

IRB Number: Protocol: 761 Approval date: April 5, 2017

By providing information to the researcher, I am agreeing to participate in this study.

Introduction Information

In an effort to get to know you better, please provide your general demographic information.

What is your first and last name?

What is your contact e-mail address?

What is the best phone number at which to reach you?

What is your year of birth?

Sexual and Racial Identity

In order to evaluate your fit for this study, please provide information about your sexual identity, gender identity, and racial category based on the U. S. census.

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual (straight)

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Transgender

Pansexual

Asexual

Intersex

Other

Which best described is your gender identity?

Cisgender Male

Transgender Male

Cisgender Female

Transgender Female

Gender non-conforming

Other, my gender is not listed but it should be!

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other

Do you identify as Hispanic?

Yes

No

Location of Residency

In order to determine your eligibility, please provide your residency information.

In which country do you currently reside?

▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

In which state do you currently reside?

▼ Alabama... I do not reside in the United States

What is your ZIP code?

Employment Information

Which statement best describes your current employment status?

Working (paid employee)

Working (self-employed)

Not working (temporary layoff from a job)

Not working (looking for work)

Not working (retired)

Not working (disabled)

Not working (other)

Prefer not to answer

Which of the following industries most closely matches the one in which you are employed?

Forestry, fishing, hunting or agriculture support

Real estate or rental and leasing

Mining

Professional, scientific or technical services

Utilities

Management of companies or enterprises

Construction

Admin, support, waste management or remediation services

Manufacturing

Educational services

Wholesale trade

Health care or social assistance

Retail trade

Arts, entertainment or recreation

Transportation or warehousing

Accommodation or food services

Information

Other services (except public administration)

Finance or insurance

Unclassified establishments

How many employees work in your establishment?

1–4

5–9

10–19

20–49

50–99

100–249

250–499

500–999

1,000 or more

What is your current (or most recent) job title?

Do you currently, or have you served in a leadership position in which you supervised individuals, teams, departments, etc.?

Yes

No

How many supervisees would you estimate work, or have worked, under your indirect or direct supervision as a manager?

Approximately how many years would you say that you have worked in a leadership role?

Less than 5 years

5–7 years

7–10 years

10–15 years

15–20 years

20+ years

Have you disclosed your sexual orientation to your co-workers while serving in your leadership position?

Yes

No

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Justin W. Moore, a graduate student in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Genevieve Negron Gonzalez, a professor in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of lesbian and gay persons in leadership positions in non-education settings in order to understand how their priorities and perspectives about work have changed over the course of their career while openly expressing their sexual orientation in the workplace. Through this study, the following questions are components of the research you are assisting to answer:

1. How do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles navigate leadership, sexual orientation disclosure, and professional identity formation through their experiences in the workplace?
2. How do perspectives and priorities related to the workplace shift for lesbian and gay leaders over the course of a career as sexual orientation evolves?

3. Under what situations and contexts do lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace?
4. What disclosure strategies are employed by lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles to manage their strategic “outness” in the workplace?
5. What forms of discrimination and other occurrences have lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles experienced following the disclosure of their sexual orientation in the workplace?
6. How does organizational climate and policy impact the decision of lesbian and gay persons in leadership roles to disclose their sexual orientation?

Your responses and additional input will be compiled to give insight into how lesbian and gay sexual orientation impact perspectives and priorities in the workplace for gay and lesbian managers.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

First, you will schedule, then participate, in an initial one-on-one interview with Justin W. Moore that will explore your experiences and perceptions of coming out experiences as a leader in the workplace, which will follow a set of interview questions and casual conversation. Following your interview, you will be asked to review a transcript of your interview to ensure that your responses were transcribed and reflected accurately with any adjustments made based on your feedback. Your interview will be conducted in a one-on-one setting.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will involve between one interview between May and October 2017. You will be asked to participate in one interview session that lasts between

one to two hours. The study interviews will take place in your office/home or through ZOOM, a teleconferencing tool.

VIDEO AND AUDIORECORDINGS:

This study will capture each interview with an audio recording device in order for the research to play back the interviews at a later time for the purposes of transcription. All audio recordings will be stored on password protected cloud-based storage and identified by your pseudonym and date. Following the completion of the research, transcripts, codified by pseudonyms will be archived indefinitely in a password protected, cloud-based platform. Audio files of the interviews will be stored on a password protected, cloud-based platform, separate from the list of participant identifications, for 5 years; at which point it will be destroyed.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

I do not anticipate any risks or discomforts to you from participating in this research. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, we hope to learn more about how gay and lesbian leaders grow and shift their priorities and perspectives in the workplace based on their sexual orientation. This research will hopefully illuminate workplace factors that contribute to the decisions made regarding disclosure of sexual orientation and how leadership roles have been impacted. Findings from this research may also inform up-and-coming gay and lesbian leaders on the factors

contributing developing their career as “out” leaders and maintain their sexual orientation in the workplace.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. Specifically, I will keep your IRB Consent Form (this document), participation information, and all data on a secure, cloud based data storage platform. Your interview recordings may be accessed by me, a transcription service, and the three members of my dissertation committee. Additionally, your name and information will be codified through a pseudonym in order to maintain your confidentiality. Your legal name and contact information will be kept in a separate location from your pseudonym and data collected during our interviews on the cloud based data storage platform in order to maintain your confidentiality. Your IRB consent form and audio files will be destroyed in 5 years of your participation in this study, while transcripts of your interview (filed under a pseudonym) will be kept indefinitely.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Justin W. Moore at 415-920-3206 or jwmoore2@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Dissertation: A Phenomenological Study of Lesbian and Gay Persons in
Leadership Roles: How Workplace Perspectives and Priorities Shift as Sexual Orientation
Evolves through Social Constructs.

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Pseudonym of Interviewee:

[Describe here the project, telling the interviewee about (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the individuals and sources of data being collected, (c) what will be done with the data to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee, and (d) how long the interview will take. Mention that some questions may seem similar, but are designed to explore the nuances of the research topic.].

[Turn on the audio recording device if in person or click “record” if using ZOOM].

Questions:

1. Tell me about your career history.
2. What does coming out at work look like to you? (Research Question 1).
3. How would you describe your perceptions of the decision to disclose your sexual identity to your peers in the workplace? (Research Question 1).

4. How has your career been shaped, both positively or negatively, by your sexual orientation? (Research Question 1).
5. How has your sexual orientation shifted your career priorities throughout the course of your career? (Research Question 2).
6. How has the way you view your career been shaped by your sexual orientation? (Research Question 2).
7. What factors affect your decision to divulge your sexual orientation to peers in your workplace throughout your career? (Research Question 3).
8. What factors attribute to your decision on how and when to come out at work? (Research Questions 2, 3, 5, 6).
9. What has been your previous experience with coming out at work? How has that shaped your decision-making process to come out now and in the future? (Research Question 3).
10. What reactions did you received from your colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors when they learned of your sexual orientation? (Research Question 5).
11. How did the disclosure of your sexual orientation impact the interactions with your peers at work? (Research Question 6).
12. How have you managed your “coming out” in the workplace? (Research Question 4).
13. What strategies do you use to conceal or disclose your sexual identity? (Research Question 4).

14. How would you describe the impact your organization's policies, climate, and culture have in the decision to come out? (Research Question 6).
15. Over the years, how have changes in society's view of sexual orientation shaped your career? (Research Question 5).
16. How has luck or being blessed impacted your experiences throughout your career?
17. Is there anything you would like to share with me regarding your sexual orientation and career development that I have not captured up to this point in this interview?

(Thank the individuals for their cooperation and participation in this interview.

Assure them of the confidentiality of the responses and the potential for future interviews).

Source: Creswell, 2015, p. 225.

APPENDIX D
CODING STRUCTURE

Phase One Codes.

For the first round of coding, the following codes were generated from the evidence collected from the participants, as listed below.

Table D1

Code Name	# Sources	# References
Ability to shift culture	1	1
Accepted before coming out	3	4
Action to restore soul	1	2
Activism	8	39
Advice to rising out, future leaders	8	21
Advocacy	4	10
Aggression against another LGBTQ	1	1
AIDS Epidemic	4	23
AIDS survivor	1	1
Anita Bryant administration	4	6
Antidiscrimination policies	1	1
Authenticity	4	5
Awareness of lack of acceptance	1	1
Being 'outed'	4	5
Being out threatens closeted	1	4
Benefits of being LGB	2	2
Benefits of coming out at work	1	1
Boundaries	1	1
Bravery	1	1
Briggs initiative	2	3
Call to action	1	1
Career held back	1	1
Club raids	1	2
Come out earlier and more aggressively	1	1
Comfort Level	2	3

Code Name	# Sources	# References
Coming out	7	28
Coming out challenges	1	1
Coming out definition	1	2
Company image	1	1
Compartmentalize	1	3
Compassion	1	2
Completely out later point in life	1	1
Compromise career goals due to homosexuality	1	1
Compton's Cafeteria Riots	1	1
Concealment	6	16
Confidence of self	1	2
Conforming to environment	4	7
Confront aggression	1	1
Consequence	5	11
Continual coming out	1	4
Coping Strategies	8	15
Cost of rights	1	1
Culture	3	7
De or Hypersexualization	1	2
Disclosure strategy	1	1
Discrimination	8	31
Diversity factor	1	1
Embrace diversity	1	2
Embrace identity	1	4
Emotional toll	3	5
Empathy for others	1	1
Environment	6	18
Fear in early career	3	10
Formal conference involvement	1	1
Fortune	4	8
Blessed	1	1
Luck	0	0
Gay lens	1	1
Gay parallel to other movements	1	1
Gay personality	1	2

Code Name	# Sources	# References
Gender expression	3	12
Generational shift	2	3
Geography or Location Choice	8	17
Glass ceiling	1	2
Helping jobs	2	2
Helping profession	1	3
Heteronormative	2	3
Hitting the lavender ceiling	1	1
HIV + Status and Visibility	1	2
Identity shift	1	3
Importance of lenses	2	5
Individual process	1	1
Integrated life	1	1
Integration of personal & professional	1	1
Integration of personal identities	1	2
Internalized homophobia	5	5
Intersectionality	6	34
Invisibility in the closet	1	2
Invisible disability	1	1
Job scope	1	1
Kindness & respect for older generation	1	2
Lack of diversity	1	1
Lack of family	1	1
Lavender ceiling	2	5
Lawsuit	1	1
Left position due to gay	1	1
Legal protection	1	1
Lens from person of color	1	4
LGBTQ leaders as role models	3	5
Limit to tolerance of microaggressions	1	1
Lost Residency Opportunity	1	1
Make a stand by coming out	1	1
Media	1	2
Mentor	6	14

Code Name	# Sources	# References
Merged identities	1	4
Microaggression	6	9
Military – Don't ask don't tell	1	1
Missed opportunities	1	3
Navigate politics	1	1
Need for others to be out	1	3
Network support	6	13
Never Hidden Orientation	1	1
No place for out, black man in white community	1	1
Non-acceptance from lack of community	1	1
Non-employer protection	1	1
Normalizing	2	3
Not a Declaration of Sexual Orientation	8	19
Not hired due to being gay appearance	1	2
Notion of being lucky	4	7
Opportunity to speak out	1	1
Oppressor	1	1
Organization culture	6	17
Organizational changes	1	1
Organizational policy	5	10
Parallel to Other Inclusivity Movements	1	6
Pass wisdom on to younger generation	2	3
Passively Mention Sexual Orientation	1	1
Peer response supportive or not	1	1
Perceived as weak by not coming out	1	1
Perceptions & reactions to sexual orientation	1	2
Perceptions of coming out at work	1	1
Political savvy	1	1
Preconception of a leader	1	4

Code Name	# Sources	# References
Presumed straight	1	1
Process over life	2	3
Professional and competent as protection	2	9
Professional Involvement	1	1
Purpose in life	1	1
Reaction of colleagues	1	1
Rights taken for granted	1	1
Risk assessment in coming out	1	2
Role Model to Others	2	6
Self-acceptance	2	3
Self-hatred	1	2
Separate personal & professional life	6	13
Setting	4	13
Sexual orientation impacts decisions	1	4
Shift in politics opened hiring	1	1
Shift in society	2	8
Social justice career	1	1
Social acceptance	3	5
Social change	8	38
Social justice mission or work	1	1
Social responsibility	1	1
Split identities	1	1
Stand up for being gay	1	1
Standing up for yourself and others	1	3
Stay because you love the work	1	1
Strategic outness	8	27
Strategy = build network	1	1
Struggle of orientation & acceptance	1	4
Supervisor role	1	1
Support	8	20
Toxic	1	2
Transition point	2	18
Trauma of discrimination	1	1
Trump	2	2
Visibility	4	15

Code Name	# Sources	# References
Work selection	2	3
Workplace culture	2	2
Workplace support	3	7

Phase Two Codes.

In the second round of coding, the following codes emerged from the phase one codes, as listed below.

Name	Sources	References
▶ ● Activism	8	65
▶ ● AIDS	4	26
▶ ● Coming out	12	84
▶ ● Concealment and Disclosure	12	56
▶ ● Discrimination	12	76
▶ ● Embrace diversity	4	5
▶ ● Fortune	7	16
▶ ● Gender expression	5	23
▶ ● Geography or Location Choice	8	18
▶ ● Glass ceiling	1	2
▶ ● Helping jobs	5	9
▶ ● Heteronormative	3	4
▶ ● Intersectionality	7	38
▶ ● Intrapersonal	12	49
▶ ● Lavender ceiling	3	10
▶ ● Legal Matters	7	18
▶ ● Lens from person of color	3	10
▶ ● Seperate personal & professional life	9	56
▶ ● Social change	10	58
▶ ● Support	12	63
▶ ● Visibility	6	22
▶ ● Workplace culture	13	58

Figure D1. Phase Three Codes.

During the final round of coding, seven key themes were identified from the evidence and the codes from phase one and two, which are listed below.

Name	^	Sources	References
▶ ● Activism		8	65
▶ ● Additional Reference Material		9	42
▶ ● Coming out		12	140
▶ ● Discrimination		13	106
▶ ● Identity		13	176
▶ ● Social change		10	58
▶ ● Support		13	85
▶ ● Workplace culture		13	94

Figure D2. Seven key themes.

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL

DonsApps
FACULTY/STAFF

Justin Moore <jwmoore@usfca.edu>

Expedited Review Approved by Chair - IRB ID: 761

2 messages

Christy Lusareta <noreply@axiommentor.com>
Reply-To: Christy Lusareta <calusareta@usfca.edu>
To: jwmoore@usfca.edu

Wed, Apr 5, 2017 at 7:08 PM



IRBPHS - Approval Notification

To: Justin Moore
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #761
Date: 04/05/2017

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your research (IRB Protocol #761) with the project title **Perceptions of Gay and Lesbian Manager's on their Experiences of Ascension to Leadership in the Workplace through the Management of Professional Identity** has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on **04/05/2017**.

Any modifications, adverse reactions or complications must be reported using a modification application to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS via email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT MATERIAL



Are you a lesbian or gay person in a leadership role?

Please consider participating in my doctorate dissertation study:
"A Phenomenological Study of Lesbian and Gay Persons in Leadership Roles:
How Workplace Perspectives and Priorities Shift as Sexual Orientation Evolves through Social Constructs"

Contact Information of Researcher:
Justin W. Moore
jwmoore@usfca.edu
415.920.3206

Study approved through the
University of San Francisco
Institutional Review Board

Interested?

Please fill-out this brief screening survey: bit.ly/jmoorestudy

The poster features a vibrant illustration of a diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities and styles, celebrating with rainbow Pride flags. The background is a light green with vertical stripes. The text is in a mix of bold, stylized fonts and clean sans-serif fonts.