DISSERTATION

QUEER LEADERSHIP: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF

OUT GAY AND LESBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION PRESIDENTS

Submitted by

Eric A. Bullard

School of Education

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Doctoral Committee:

    Advisor: Linda Kuk

    James Banning
    Marlene Strathe
    Emily Dakin

ABSTRACT

QUEER LEADERSHIP: A PHEONOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF

OUT GAY AND LESBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION PRESIDENTS

The purpose of this dissertation was to better understand the experiences of "out" gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Of the more than 4,500 institutions of higher education in the United States, only 30 presidents have identified themselves as gay or lesbian. As institutions of higher education face large-scale retirements at the presidential level in the coming years, it will be increasingly important for search committees and boards to consider hiring qualified gay and lesbian candidates for the presidency. Using the lens of Queer Theory, this study identified and described gay and lesbian presidencies through the direct experiences of current gay and lesbian presidents.

Using qualitative research methods, the study was conducting using semi-structured interviews with three gay male presidents and three lesbian female presidents. Study participants included those from public and private institutions, and represented both large and small, and urban and suburban campuses. In accordance with an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach, four stages of data analysis were undertaken to analyze the text for patterns, trends, and themes that emerged and developed from the participants' responses. The analysis used personal and in-depth detail derived from individual interviews to describe the experiences of 'out' gay and lesbian higher education presidents.

The findings of the present research study provided new insights about the experiences of "out" gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Analysis of the data presented three themes,

"identity", the "LGBTQ presidency", and "future LGBTQ presidents and leaders". The three themes were backed by twelve sub-themes, all of which answered the primary research question, "What are the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in institutions of higher education?" The interview data yielded new information for search committees, boards, human resources professionals, and LGBTQ persons to consider when hiring for or pursuing a presidency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Dave and Karla Wardlow. Their support and love is

unwavering, and for that my gratitude to them is immeasurable.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

According to Renn (2010), "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) research in higher education is embedded in a central paradox: although colleges and universities are the source of much queer theory, they have remained substantially untouched by the queer agenda" (p. 132). Historically, research in the social sciences, business, politics, culture, and many other fields has largely excluded or ignored Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) individuals or has assumed heterosexuality/congruent gender and identity (Lehigh, 2010). In addition, when queer people have been included, studies have often treated them as though they were novelties, abnormal, in need of "repair", or otherwise less than full human beings. Given this historically poor relationship between the LGBTQ community and the scientific research establishment, many LGBTQ people have been understandably wary of participating in research studies. The effect of this, however, may have paradoxically led to less inclusion of queer people in mainstream research, less representation, and therefore, findings that are skewed toward the heteronormative (Lehigh, 2010).

Today more researchers recognize the value of inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in adding to the validity of their research. There are also LGBTQ individuals conducting research themselves. Some research is specifically focused on the community in order to better understand and improve the life experiences of LGBTQ individuals. Renn (2010) indicates that higher education scholars frequently divide their work into categories of students, faculty, organizations, governance and finance, policy, and teaching. LGBTQ scholarship varies considerably across these categories, with the greatest amount occurring in studies of and about

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college students. Few published studies about college students and faculty use queer theory as a framework, and no empirical studies of administrative leaders, organizations, governance, or policy have been identified which do. Further, no research has been found on the role of LGBTQ presidents or administrators in higher education, their impact, their struggles, and their ability to affect change for students, staff, and faculty.

While organizations on the landscape react and respond to the environments differently, the challenge of dealing with sexual minorities, specifically LGBTQ people, in organizational settings is formidable. According to Hill (2006), LGBTQ individuals have traditionally "joined organizations where the dominant organizational culture has been silence regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, with the concomitant expectation of invisibility, to which sexual minorities have often complied" (p.8). Sexual minorities constitute one of the largest, but least studied, minority groups in the workforce including in education (Ragins, 2004, p. 35). Compared to corporate America, the experiences of LGBTQ faculty, staff, and administrators in K-12 and higher education settings have been explored only in limited ways (Hill, 2006).

In recent years, an LGBTQ-rights workplace movement to support sexual minorities in organizational settings has taken hold. This movement has been shaped by and is shaping organizations' cultural context. Nevertheless, widespread heterosexism flourishes, and sexual minorities still fear discrimination in the workplace (Day and Schoenrade, 1997). The *lavender ceiling*, a term used to "describe the kinds of systemic barriers which prevent recruitment, retention, and promotion of openly gay and lesbian people (Swan, 1995, p. 52), is often an invariable threat. Systemic barriers manifest in several ways, especially through systemic exclusion of sexual minorities and systemic inclusion of straight discourses (Wade, 1995). Systemic exclusion is the absence of affirming policies, rules, role models, mentors, internship

programs, recruitment, and advancement to highly visible positions, messages, merited awards, and images about LGBTQ members. Though higher education is arguably one of the more progressive employers of LGBTQ persons, organizationally and culturally institutions of higher education remain conservative, and there has been little research in the area of higher education settings as workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons.

Completion of the literature review for this dissertation reinforced the lack of data and literature pertaining to gay and lesbian higher education presidents and administrators. Further, the researcher engaged key LGBTQ researchers, Sanlo, Renn, and McCrae, regarding the need to add literature pertaining to LGBTQ administrators in higher education. Each of the key researchers encouraged further exploration of this area citing the need for additional research to support the development of gay and lesbian administrators in higher education. Few studies have been undertaken in an effort to understand LGBTQ students and faculty, and little is being done to understand the experiences of LGBTQ administrators in key leadership roles within colleges and universities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents as related to their formal position with a college or university. Of the more than 4,500 institutions of higher education in the United States, only 30 presidents have identified themselves as gay or lesbian. The presidency in higher education is a quasi-political position that requires incumbents to interact with multiple stakeholders including government officials, faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, and donors. Therefore, a higher education president is often scrutinized on multiple levels by multiple stakeholders, including scrutiny related to their personal lives. Unfortunately, little is known about how gay and lesbian

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presidents ascend to and subsequently experience the role of president; this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature that exists. Numerous publications have been produced by the American Council on Education (ACE) that focused specifically on the presidency. In a 2007 study by ACE titled, "On the Pathway to the Presidency", it was identified that more than half of presidents are age 61 or older and that less than 9 percent of presidents were age 51 or younger. The age distribution identified in the 2007 ACE report indicated an aging presidency. The same ACE report reviewed diversity characteristics of the presidency, indicating that 23 percent of presidents were female and that less than 14 percent were ethnic or racial minorities. As institutions of higher education face large scale retirements at the presidential level in the coming years, it will be increasingly important for search committees and boards to consider hiring qualified gay and lesbian candidates for the presidency. Institutions of higher education cannot afford to exclude qualified gay and lesbian presidential candidates, as there will be an increasingly smaller pool of qualified presidential candidates in the future. It is also imperative for ACE and other organizational leaders in higher education to begin including LGBTQ persons in future discourse and research, including establishing benchmarks of current LGBTQ identified persons in university leadership roles.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Queer Theory. According to Spargo (2000), the term "Queer" can "function as a noun, an adjective or a verb, but in each case is defined against "normal" or normalizing". Queer theory is not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender, and sexual desire. The term describes a diverse range of critical practice and priorities: readings of critical practices and priorities; readings of the representation

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of same sex desire in literary texts, films, music, images; analyses of the social and political power relations of a sexuality; critiques of the sex-gender system; studies of transsexual and transgender identification (Spargo, 2000).

Halperin (2003) described Queer Theory as a field of post-structuralist critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of Queer Studies and Women's Studies. Post-structuralist critical theory is a response to structuralism, which seeks to understand human culture through structure. Post-structuralist critical theory includes multiple interpretations of an event or article, rejecting single meaning, single purpose, or singular existence. Queer Studies has emerged at colleges and universities as the critical theory based study of issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, an area of study that typically focuses on the study of LGBTQ people and issues. Similar to Queer Studies, Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that explores politics, society, and history as related to women. Tierney (1998) indicated that Queer Theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self and upon gay and lesbian studies' close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities.

Using the lens of Queer Theory, the researcher explored how sexual orientation does and/or does not impact the lives of gay and lesbian higher education presidents. The use of Queer Theory helped to inform the study by rejecting binary sexual orientation and heteronormativity, instead, the study sought to understand the phenomena of being an "out" gay or lesbian president through the unique perspective of each research participant. As applied, Queer Theory aided the study by exploring how sexual orientation may or may not impact one's role as a university or college president/chancellor.

Research Question

Based on a review of the literature and a noted lack of research pertaining to LGBTQ

higher education presidents, the following primary research question guided this study: What are

the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in institutions of higher education?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of terms are provided:

Queer – whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominate (Sullivan, 2007).

Out – sometimes referenced as "coming out" or "coming out of the closet", to be "out" is a

reference for people's disclosure of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Hill, 2006).

Openly Gay or Openly Lesbian – those gay or lesbian individuals who openly disclose their

sexual orientation/sexual identity.

Gay – a homosexual male

Lesbian – a homosexual female

Heterosexism - heterosexism is the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that

heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than homosexuality (McNaught, 1993).

Researcher Perspectives and Assumptions

I am an openly gay male working in an administrative position in a higher education

setting. It was through this lens that I became interested in learning more about the experiences

and perspectives of other gay and lesbian administrators. As the primary data collection

instrument, I had to identify and be in tune with my personal values, assumptions, and biases at

the outset of the study. Working in higher education for over a decade has led to several biases

that I bring regarding what it means to be gay in the workplace, including the belief that

experiences of gay and lesbian administrators differ from those of their heterosexual

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counterparts. My personal experiences and biases may have shaped the way that I collected and interpreted data for this study; however, I made every effort to be objective, noting possible biases through the data collection and analysis process.

Delimitations of the Study

Participation in this study was delimited to openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents. The study focused on gay males and lesbian females and excluded bisexual, transgender, or questioning individual from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) population. The study also excluded "closeted" individuals, as the purpose of the study was to better understand the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of a study refer to methodological decisions that set parameters on the generalizability and utility of research findings. One limitation of the current study was that only individuals who identified as a member of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education group were involved in the study. This was part of the selection criteria because it was a readily available source of "out" gay presidents.

A second limitation of the current study was that it did not include those who identify as bisexual or transgender, two additional groups that are part of the LGBTQ population. While that may have added to the richness of the study, it would have been difficult to identify potential research participants without surveying and/or soliciting all 4,500 presidents/chancellors in the United States. The LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education group appears to primarily consist of individuals who identify as either gay or lesbian, not bisexual or transgender.

The small number of openly gay and lesbian presidents in higher education may make it difficult to relate the experience of these individuals to the larger LGBTQ higher education presidential population. An additional consideration is due to the nature of the role a university or college president. Since presidential positions in higher education are quasi-political, research participants may have been unwilling to share personal stories or challenges related to their professional position.

Significance of the Study

This study is the starting point for future generations of researchers to begin better understanding how sexual orientation impacts the lives of higher education presidents. As previously noted, an impending wave of presidential retirements will make it necessary for search committees and boards to consider gay and lesbian presidential candidates, whereas previously those populations may have been overlooked. The study will provide an opportunity for LGBTQ persons considering pursuing a higher education presidency, to better understand the experiences of current out gay and lesbian presidents. Currently, there is no literature for prospective LGBTQ presidential candidates to reference with regard to the experiences of current LGBTQ presidents. The study may also be useful to human resources professionals, diversity officers, higher education boards, and search committees seeking to better understand the challenges that gay and lesbian presidents and presidential candidates may face as a result of their sexual orientation. To avoid discriminating against or stereotyping presidential candidates, HR professionals, search committee members, and boards need to educate themselves about the LGBTQ community. Higher education administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as society at large will benefit from better understanding the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in United States institutions of higher education. A better understanding of the experiences of

the research participants of this study may help to move the focus away from the sexual orientation to that of qualifications and competence by demonstrating that presidents, regardless of their sexual orientation, must be able to perform the duties of their position.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One includes the background of the research problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and a theoretical lens through which to frame the exploration of results. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature. Chapter Three describes the methodology and theoretical framework used for the study, including data collection methods, the analysis process, and steps taken to ensure trustworthiness. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. Chapter Five reviews the results and discusses the future of research related to LGBTQ presidents and administrators in higher education settings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

It comes to this then: there have always been people like me and always will be…
E.M. Forster

The lesbian and gay community and its visibility are growing in today's institutions of higher education. Unfortunately, prior to this study, there was no research or data pertaining to the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents available. Through the literature review process, it is evident that literature pertaining to LGBT students is by far the most abundant, followed by limited data pertaining to faculty. I sought to better understand the socialization and acculturation processes of university and college administrators; however, the literature only supports secondary or parallel groups (e.g. – LGBTQ Faculty and Students, and Gender or Race related studies). Additionally, as a result of the nature of this dissertation, other categories related to the study have been added to the literature review, including the Presidency, Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity, Gender Identity, Gender Stereotypes, Heterosexism and Heteronormativity, Queer Theory, Coming Out and Personal Stories, and Gay Issues in the workplace. The literature reviewed for this study nicely frames the need for additional research in this area.

The Presidency

According to a 2007 study by the American Council on Education (ACE), *The American College President*, the portrait of the average president masks important differences among the leaders of higher education by the type of institution they serve. Institutions vary in size, values, and mission. College presidents are often selected because they embody the values of, and are prepared to meet the particular challenges associated with, one of these groups of institutions. Presidents tend to come from the ranks of their own or similar institutions. Presidential

characteristics differ between public and private institutions. Presidents of public doctorate-granting universities were more likely than presidents of private doctorate - granting universities to be a member of a racial or ethnic or minority group. According to ACE, "fifteen percent of the presidents of public doctorate-granting institutions identified themselves as an ethnic or racial minority…only 5 percent of private doctorate-granting institution presidents identified themselves as a minority" (ACE, p. 27). Similarly, women were more likely to be presidents of public-versus private – doctorate granting universities. ACE reported that "women were presidents of 16 percent of public doctorate-granting universities and 8 percent of private doctorate-granting universities" (ACE, p. 27).

The ACE study also reviewed marriage status of presidents, reporting that "eighty-six percent of all presidents of doctorate-granting universities were married in 2006 – a decrease from 1986 when 90 percent of these presidents were married" (ACE, p. 28). A large portion of this decrease was explained by the declining share of married presidents at private doctorate-granting universities. Overall, marriage amongst U.S. presidents in higher education has decreased. ACE report that, "in 2006, 71 percent of presidents of these universities were married, compared with 84 percent of presidents in 1986" (ACE, p. 29). The percentage of presidents of public doctorate-granting universities who were married stayed constant during the survey's history. According to the ACE study, the discrepancy in marital status between presidents of public and private doctorate-granting institutions were explained in part by the number of presidents at private institutions whose religious vows preclude them from marriage; this attribute relates to twelve percent of presidents at private doctorate-granting institutions.

The American College President study solicited information on presidents' duties for the first time in 1998, with a follow up in 2001. The 2007 study expanded this effort and asked

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presidents how they used their time and what challenges they faced as leaders of postsecondary institutions. Presidents were asked to identify which constituency presented the greatest challenge to them as presidents. Data collected by the study indicate that "leaders of public institutions most often identified relationships with legislators and policy makers as their greatest challenge (44 percent), followed by faculty (37 percent), and then the system office or state coordinating board (32 percent). Presidents of private institutions were most likely to identify faculty (42 percent), donors/benefactors (22 percent), and governing boards (22 percent) as presenting the greatest challenge" (ACE, p. 39). In the study, presidents also identified the three areas that occupied the most significant amount of their time, indicating "the most frequently identified presidential duty was fund raising, which was selected by 38 percent of president. Budget/financial management was ranked second (35 percent), followed by community relations (21 percent) and strategic planning (21 percent)" (ACE, p. 40).

To present a more balanced picture of the presidency, the 2007 edition of the ACE study included new questions about the activities and constituencies that offer presidents the greatest levels of satisfaction. Fortunately, several of the activities that presidents enjoy the most are also areas which they said occupy the greatest amount of their time. Presidents selected community relations, fund raising, and strategic planning as among their most enjoyable activities. Twenty-seven percent of presidents selected academic issues as the most enjoyable area, but only 10 percent of presidents selected it as one of the activities that occupies a significant portion of their time. Presidents differed in the activities that they most enjoy. At public institutions, community relations topped the list, while private institution presidents were more likely to select fund raising.

Presidents participating in the 2007 ACE study also were asked to select the constituent groups that provided the greatest reward to them as presidents. The ACE study indicates that "presidents from both public and private institutions chose students as one of their most rewarding constituencies (53 percent), followed by administration/staff (43 percent), and faculty (30 percent)" (ACE, p. 41). Reflecting their enjoyment of community relations, 41 percent of public institution presidents selected community residents as one of the groups that offer the greatest reward. Similarly, private institution presidents – who were more likely to select fund raising as an enjoyable activity – selected donors/benefactors as one of the constituencies that they enjoyed working with (28 percent).

Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity

According to the American Psychological Association (2010), sexual orientation is enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction toward others. Sexual orientation exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality and includes various forms of bisexuality. Persons with a homosexual orientation are sometimes referred to as gay or as lesbian. Sexual orientation is different from sexual behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. Individuals may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors.

The American Psychological Association (2010) indicated that there are numerous theories about the origins of a person's sexual orientation. Most scientists today agree that sexual orientation is most likely the result of a complex interaction of environmental, cognitive and biological factors. In most people, sexual orientation is shaped at an early age. Although one can choose to act on his or her feelings, psychologists do not consider sexual orientation to be a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed (p. 193).

Sexual identity and sexual behavior are closely related to sexual orientation, but they are distinctive with identity referring to an individual's conception of themselves and behavior referring to actual sexual acts performed by the individual. As previously stated, individuals may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors. People who have a homosexual sexual orientation that does not align with their sexual identity are sometimes referred to as "closeted" (APA, 2010). Sexual identity may also be used to describe a person's perception of his or her own sex, rather than sexual orientation (APA, 2010).

While cultural attitudes prevent most gays and lesbians from acknowledging their sexual orientation or prevent them from behaving sexually in a way that is consistent with their orientation, homosexual people have lived, live now, and will continue to live in every age, culture, race, religion, gender, economic level, and profession (Lewin & Leap, 2002). No one knows for certain how many gay people there are in the world. For many years, social scientists relied upon Kinsey's groundbreaking research, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), on American sexual behavior. Published in 1948 and in 1953, the Kinsey studies said that in a sample of nearly 12,000 men and women, approximately 10 percent of the respondents were either exclusively homosexual or predominately homosexual in their behavior. Based upon that figure, most sexuality professionals reasoned that at least 10 percent of the population was therefore homosexual in their internal feelings of attraction (McNaught, 1993).

Gender Identity

According to Sherif (1982), gender identity means different things to different people. Some broad definitions encompass everything that it means to feel, think and act like a woman or a man. More specific definitions are modeled on social stereotypes of masculinity or

femininity and on androgyny. Gender is a scheme for social categorization of individuals, and every gender scheme recognizes human biological differentiation while also creating social differentiations (Sherif, 1982). Sherif further clarified gender identity indicating, "If gender is a social category scheme, then gender identity has to refer to an individual's psychological relationships with the gender categories in a society." Gender identity refers to the individual's knowledge of the categorical scheme for gender and that individual's psychological relationships to that scheme (Sherif, 1982).

Gender Stereotypes

Stereotyped beliefs about the attributes of men and women are pervasive and widely shared. Moreover, these stereotyped beliefs have proven very resistant to change (Dodge, Gilroy & Fenzel, 1995; Leuptow, Garovich, & Leuptow, 1995). Men and women are thought to differ both in terms of achievement-oriented traits, often labeled as "agentic," and in terms of social – and service-oriented traits, often labeled as "communal" (Bakan, 1966). Men are characterized as aggressive, forceful, independent, and decisive, whereas women are characterized as kind, helpful, sympathetic, and concerned about other (Heilman, 2001). Heilman indicated that not only are the conceptions of women and men different, but they also often are oppositional, with members of one sex seen as lacking what is thought to be the most prevalent in members of the other sex (2001).

According to Heilman (2001), there is evidence that traditional stereotypes of women and men predominate in work settings as well as non-work settings. Research has demonstrated, for example, that even when they are depicted as managers, women are characterized as less agentic than men (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995). Not only are gender stereotypes descriptive, they are also prescriptive. They denote not only differences in how women and men actually are, but

also norms about behaviors that are suitable for each – about how women and men should be (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly, 1987; Terborg, 1977). There is a great deal of overlap between the content of the prescriptive and descriptive elements of gender stereotypes, with the behavior that is prescribed directly related to the attributes that are positively valued for each sex. Related to these stereotypes, there are "should" and "should not's" for each sex. Typically, these include behaviors associated with the opposite sex that are seen as incompatible with the behavior deemed desirable for one's own sex. So, for example, agentic tendencies for which men are positively valued are looked down upon for women (Heilman, 2001).

Queer Theory

The term "queer" is used by some, but not all, LGBTQ people as an identity category including sexualities and gender identities that are outside heterosexual and binary gender categories. Queer theory refers not to identity per se, but to a body of theories that "critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender" (Abes & Kasch, 2007, p. 620). Queer theory is built from the post structural theories of Foucault (1976/1978), Derrida (1967/1978), and Lyotard (1984). Sullivan (2003) state, "Post structural theorists such as Foucault argue that there are no objective and universal truths, but that particular forms of knowledge, and the ways of being that they engender, become "naturalized" in culturally and historically specific ways" (p. 39). Queer theorists apply these ideas to gender and sexuality to suggest they are socially constructed (Butler, 1990). As Pinar (1998) noted, queer theory migrated from language and literary studies to education, "a highly conservative and often reactionary field" (p. 2). In education, as in literary criticism, "queer theorists seek to disrupt "normalizing" discourses (Tierney & Dilley, 1998, p. 61), such as those that have been used historically to police teachers,

students, and administrators at all level of education. Renn (2010) asserted that, "among

education researchers, LGBTQ, queer, and queer theory are contested terms, and the prevalence

and quality of LGBTQ/queer scholarship varies across fields within education research" (p. 132).

Heterosexism and Heteronormativity

McNaught (1993) described heterosexism as the assumption that all people are

heterosexual or that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than homosexuality.

Heterosexism is also the stigmatization, denial and/or denigration of anything non-heterosexual.

Heterosexism is a worldview. It is probably not even conscious for most people. It is a mind-set

based upon limited opportunity to experience diversity. It is also a bias. Because individuals are

proud to be whom or what they are, there is a belief that others should be like them or, at the

very least, should want to be like them. We live in a predominately heterosexist society, and that

attitude is used to justify the mistreatment, discrimination and harassment of gay and lesbian

individuals. Many gays and lesbians internalize this attitude leading to denial of their true

selves/identities, low self-esteem, self-hatred, and other issues.

Heteronormativity is the use of heterosexuality as the norm for understanding gender and

sexuality (Warner, 1991). Queer theory offers a threefold critique of this dominant social

construction of gender and sexuality. First, heteronormativity creates a binary between

identification as heterosexual and non-heterosexual in which non-heterosexuality is abnormal

and measured in its difference from heterosexuality. This binary suggests that individuals

separate into two distinct groups with identifiable differences. Second, heteronormativity

consolidates non-heterosexuality into one essentialized group (Muñoz, 1999). The use of the

label LGBTQ to represent students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer

as one group is an example of consolidating non-heterosexual identities. Third, by privileging

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heterosexuality, society does not acknowledge gender and sexual orientation as reflections of social power structures (Foucault 1976/1978). Heterosexuality's hegemony creates the perception that heterosexuality defines what is natural or acceptable (Britzman, 1997). Queer theory provides a framework for resisting heteronormativity (Watson, 2005).

Lavender Ceiling

In recent years, a LGBTQ rights workplace movement to support sexual minorities in organizational settings has taken hold. This movement has been shaped by and is shaping organizations' cultural contexts. Nevertheless, widespread heterosexism flourishes, and sexual minorities still fear discrimination in the workplace (Day and Schoenrade, 1997). The *lavender ceiling*, a term used to "describe the kinds of systemic barriers which prevent recruitment, retention, and promotion of openly gay and lesbian people" (Swan, 1995, p. 51), is often an invariable threat to LGBTQ person's ability to grow professionally. According to Hill (2006), systemic barriers manifest in several ways, especially through systemic exclusion of sexual minorities and systemic inclusion of straight discourses. Systemic exclusion is the absence of affirming policies, rules, role models, mentors, internship programs, recruitment, and advancement to highly visible positions, messages, merited awards, and images about LGBTQ members. Systemic inclusion of only heterosexuals is the process of institutionalized heterosexism. In higher education, the lavender ceiling may be encountered during the tenure process for faculty, or at the advancement stage for a staff member or administrator.

Impact of "Coming Out" and Personal Stories

According to Rocco and Gallagher (2006), heterosexist privilege has caused LGBTQ people to make a choice to pass as straight at different times, which may not be a choice in cases where economic or family relationships are concerned. Gay and Lesbian administrators in

higher education may be placed in situations whereby they are forced to determine whether to disclose their sexual orientation, when to disclose, or how much to disclose. Rocco and Gallagher reported that between 25 and 66 percent of gays and lesbians experienced workplace discrimination in 2005. People do not work at their best if they work in fear. Prevalent homophobia and heterosexism in the workplace, however, still induce many gay people to hide their sexual orientation and stay in the closet. The Kaiser Family Foundation Studies on Sexual Orientation in the Workplace (2001) reported the following:

- That 93 percent of self-identified LGBTQ people are open about their orientation (sexual) with heterosexual friends, but only 55 percent with their bosses.

- More than 62 percent of LGBTQ people made important decisions about their lives and work based on their non-majority orientation (sexual).

- More than 75 percent of the gay population had experienced or known someone who experienced discrimination in applying to college, applying for a job, buying/renting a house, trying to get insurance or trying to serve in the military.

- That 75 percent of all LGBTQ people had been the victim of verbal abuse at some point in their lives.

Gay Issues, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

While research has increasingly focused on gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace, issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees have received little attention. Silva and Warren (2009) report that it is estimated that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals represent up to 21 percent of the population depending on country, age, and whether researchers measure identity, attraction, or behavior. Given the globalization of businesses and economies, organizations striving to lead their industries cannot afford to underutilize any

segment of the talent pool. LGBTQ women and men are highly engaged in workforces globally. Nevertheless, the difficulties that LGBTQ employees face in the workplace are often unnoticed or ignored by organizations. As "invisible minorities" who differ from the majority on dimensions that are not always immediately apparent, LGBTQ employees may choose not to disclose their LGBTQ identity. Thus, organizations may not be aware of the full diversity of their workforce or understand the benefits, needs, and challenges of LGBTQ employees (Silva and Warren, 2009).

According to McNaught (1993) what gay, lesbian, and bisexual people want is equal and fair treatment in the workplace. Discrimination is not limited to negative interactions at the individual employee level. As with racism and sexism, homophobia also operates at the institutional level. The company's policies, hiring and firing practices, job-performance evaluation methods, benefits packages, and modes of communication often reflect conscious or unconscious bias against gay employees.

McNaught (1993) advocated for a systematic plan for eliminating discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees, which required:

1. A specific employment policy that prohibits discrimination based upon sexual orientation;

2. Creation of a safe work environment that is free of heterosexist, homophobic, and AIDS phobic behaviors;

3. Company-wide education about gay issues in the workplace and about AIDS;

4. An equitable benefits program that recognizes the domestic partners of gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees;

5. Support of gay/lesbian/bisexual employee support group;

6. Freedom for all employees to participate fully in all aspects of corporate life;;

7. Public support of gay issues.

Sometimes the opponents of gay civil rights confuse the issue by insisting that gay people want special privileges or rights. Even fair-minded people become concerned when they hear these carefully chosen words. The words *special privilege* or *special rights* arouse the concern that one group is getting something that others don't have access to. With regard to gay issues in the workplace, nothing could be further from the truth (McNaught, 1993).

A principal goal of any organization should be to create a culture in which each employee has the opportunity to make a full contribution and to advance on the basis of performance (Hill, 2006). Hiding forces gay employees to lead a double life, to pretend that the things that motivate them to succeed on the job – their partner, their family, their home, their interests – don't exist. Organizations that continue to exclude segments of their workforce are sending the message that some people are less valued, less important, and less welcome (Winfeld, 2005).

Workplaces that lack antidiscrimination policies and practices may promote heterosexism. Even with gay-friendly policies, company practices may promote heterosexism. The best indication of a non-heterosexist work environment is being able to invite same-sex partners to company social events (Ragins and Cornwell, 2001). Unlike the experience of racial minorities with a strong family support system who have encountered and managed discrimination based on race, people with differing sexual orientations may have little to no family support (Ragins and Wiethoff, 2005). Their family members may be struggling with their own heterosexist baggage (Ragins and Cornwell, 2001).

LGBTQ Centers and Students

According to Sanlo, Rankin, and Schoenberg (2002), the number of gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) offices and resource centers has grown rapidly on college and university campuses throughout the country. Based on a mixed methods review of the histories of current LGBTQ centers or offices, most were created for one of three reasons. The first -- and by far the most prevalent -- was a university or college administration's response to incidents of homophobic harassment. The second most often cited was the administration's response to faculty, staff, and/or students' insistence that the campus provide a "safe place" and/or a means for educating the university/college community regarding LGBTQ issues and concerns. Finally, the third – and unfortunately the rarest – was an administration's recognition that an LGBTQ resource center was an important step toward fostering diversity and providing a welcoming campus climate.

Regardless of the primary motivation, in nearly all of the histories a committee or taskforce was created and charged with providing recommendations to the administration as to how to address the LGBTQ communities' needs, issues, and concerns on campus. These committees/taskforces, usually comprised of students and faculty, were commissioned with providing reports and recommendations to the central administration (Sanlo, et. al, 2002). According to Sanlo, et al the first step taken by many of the taskforces was to provide an assessment of the campus climate for LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty. The data collected served to support the recommendations that they provided.

The study conducted by Sanlo, Rankin, and Shoenberg (2002) at 30 institutions of higher education regarding campus climate yielded important data pertaining to LGBTQ students. It is clear from the study that LGBTQ prejudice was prevalent in higher education institutions. For

example, in studies where surveys were used as the primary tool, the data indicated that LGBTQ

students were the victims of prejudice ranging from verbal abuse (2% to 86%), to physical

violence (6% to 59%), to sexual harassment (1% to 21%). In those investigations that utilized

qualitative data, analogous findings were reported indicating the invisibility, isolation, and fear

of LGBTQ members of the academic community (p. 16). The findings of the campus climate

review also indicated that 50% to 90% of those who responded stated that they did not report at

least one incident of anti-LGBTQ discrimination.

For professors, counselors, staff assistants, and students who identify as gay, bisexual, or

transgender, there is the constant fear that, should they "be found out," they would be ostracized,

their careers would be destroyed, or they would lose their positions. While the Sanlo et al (2002)

study indicated differences among the experiences of these individuals, their comments

suggested that regardless of how "out" or how "closeted" they were, all expressed fears that

prevented them from acting freely. The pervasive heterosexism in higher education institutions

not only inhibits the acknowledgement and expression of queer perspectives, but also affects

curricular and research efforts. Further, the contributions and concerns of LGBTQ people are

often unrecognized and unaddressed, to the detriment of the education not only of LGBTQ

students, but of heterosexuals as well (Sanlo, Rankin, and Shoenberg; 2002).

The results of the campus climate review revealed two important themes. First,

institutions of higher education did not provide an empowering atmosphere for LGBTQ students,

faculty, and staff – an atmosphere where their voices were heard, appreciated, and valued.

Second, and perhaps more significant, the results suggested that the climate on college campuses

acted to silence the voices of its LGBTQ members both subtle and overt oppression. These two

findings were presented separately to distinguish between a culture of disempowerment and a

culture that acts to silence. Sanlo et al contend that the latter culture at institutions of higher

education are problematic in that they disallow or prevent faculty, staff, and students from

exploring research related to LGBTQ persons and/or limit student activities.

LGBTQ Faculty

The decision about whether to be out as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer

person in a heterosexist society, as well as in the higher education classroom, is often a dilemma.

It is usually dependent on a multitude of factors, including the context, whether direct discussion

of sexual orientation seems relevant to the course, the political and institutional climate, one's

relationship status, the degree to which one feels safe, one's emotional energy on a given day,

and the nature of the relationship among those in the learning environment (Bettinger, Timmins,

and Tisdell, 2006). A further complication is that coming out, that is, self-disclosing, is a never-

ending process (Sedgwick, 1990). In each new situation, some people will not realize the sexual

orientation of even the most out person. Thus, although one might be out to colleagues, friends,

and family members, one almost invariably faces the dilemma of whether to be out when

entering a new higher education classroom.

Two studies related to LGBTQ faculty have been conducted to better understand the

effects of being 'out' at a university or college. One study conducted by Bettinger, Timmins,

and Tisdell (2006), highlighted the pitfalls and successes for LGBTQ faculty being "out" in the

classroom. The Bettinger et al (2006) study, qualitative in nature, consisted of disclosing their

personal stories related to being LBGTQ in a university setting. Their information was reported

in a narrative format and provided information on being LGBTQ at a university or college from

three distinct faculty viewpoints. Another study, conducted by Jennings (2008), sought to better

understand whether faculty disclosure of their LGBTQ identity would result in poor evaluations

by biased students. The Jennings study, which was quantitative in nature, was commissioned at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) to gather data from 24 individual classes, across three fields, including: Economics, Communication, and English. The Bettinger et al study was qualitative in nature, and utilized the authors' personal experiences to better express what it meant to be out in the classroom.

Jennings (2008) compared student evaluations from course sections where instructors disclosed their LGBTQ identities to students against the same courses where LGBTQ identities were not revealed. Bettinger et al discussed, in-depth, their personal stories of coming out, and how each experience was different from the other. Bettinger, what some would label a bisexual, did not like labeling herself; Timmins was able to break out of the closet through a career change; and, Tisdell viewed his being "out" as an expression of activism and as a political act. Jennings emphasized the importance of faculty understanding the potential implications of self-disclosure of sexual orientation, yet ultimately concluded that disclosure of sexual identity did not detrimentally affect student evaluations in statistically significant ways.

Both studies concluded by affirming the importance of the individual deciding when to come out, and both described potential ramifications for that act. While important in terms of data for one specific environment, namely CSUSB, and important in terms of personal impact through storytelling, both studies have challenges. The Jennings study was significant for faculty teaching in Southern California and at one campus, and did not address implications for "out" faculty at more conservative institutions. Further, the Jennings study did not take into account legal protections afforded to LGBTQ faculty in the State of California and how that may have played a significant role in the ramifications for being "out". The Bettinger, Timmins, and Tisdell (2006) study, while fascinating and impactful, was limited in that the author's biases

were not offset by the accounts of other faculty or individuals at their suburban university in Pennsylvania.

Gay and Lesbian Administrators in Higher Education

The contemporary landscape is both diversified and diversifying; as such, the presence of Gay and Lesbian administrators in higher education is inevitable. Unfortunately, there is no research pertaining to the experiences and/or the effectiveness of LGBTQ administrators within the higher education setting. Most of the literature for LGBTQ issues in higher education has focused on students and faculty. In September 2007, The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that, nationwide, there were only 11 openly gay college presidents (p. A37). The Chronicle of Higher Education also reported that Dr. Byron P. McCrae, associate vice president for student affairs at the San Francisco Art Institute, someone who studied lesbian and gay college presidents as part of his doctoral program at Fordham University, reported, "there is a growing cohort of lesbian and gay leaders who are coming up through the ranks…much like women did several years ago by forming peer-support groups".

Indeed, there has been growth in the area of openly gay and lesbian American college and university presidents. In a follow-up article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Fain (2010) reported that there were 30 openly gay and lesbian chief executives in American higher education. The most noteworthy recent presidential appointment was the 2008 hiring of Carolyn A. Martin, Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin at Madison; Martin has since moved to a new position as the Chancellor of Amherst College. A new group has formed in Chicago, which has three openly gay college chiefs, which will bring together "out" presidents and possibly be the platform for future advocacy. According to Fain (2010), several barriers may prevent the appointment of an openly gay president, including skittish governing boards that fear the

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alienation of donors or state lawmakers. Additionally, gay and lesbian leaders say that vice presidents often choose to avoid the scrutiny that comes with being a candidate for a presidency, or might stay in the closet throughout their career.

Literature Review Summary

The literature in this area of study is continuing to expand; however, follow up searches of current literature yield no information about the studied phenomenon, "out" gay and lesbian presidents in higher education settings. The changing landscape of attitudes toward the acceptance of gays and lesbians in the United States also continues to change. These changes will likely lead to the additional contribution of literature related to LGBTQ persons, including LGBTQ persons who work or are students in higher education settings.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Is life not a hundred times too short for us to stifle ourselves?
Friedrich Nietzsche

This chapter provides an overview of the study's research design. "Drawing from a long tradition in anthropology, sociology, and clinical psychology, qualitative research has, in the last twenty years, achieved status and visibility in the social sciences and helping professions" (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). According to Merriam (2002), the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. Characteristics of qualitative research include a focus on: understanding meaning, the researcher as the primary instrument, an inductive approach to research, and inquiry is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2002). The limited study of this area led the researcher to a qualitative design because there is a lack of theory or existing theory that can adequately explain this phenomenon. This study attempted to understand and make sense of the experiences of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents through their perspectives.

Methodology

Qualitative research methods were used to identify the experiences and perceptions of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Phenomenology is a qualitative method of research that emerged at the end of the 19th century as a way to answer in-depth questions posed by the human sciences that could not be adequately answered by a positivist approach (Sadala & Adorno, 2002). As part of a philosophical movement initiated by Husserl (1859-1938), phenomenology views individuals as whole beings, complete with past experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values who live in a world with both cultural and social influences (van Manen, 1997; Willis, 2001). The phenomenological method seeks to understand the core of

phenomenon by describing an experience in a person's daily life. The methodology allows

unexpected meanings to emerge, thus creating a link between a phenomenon and participant

(Giorgi, 1997). As researchers, phenomenologists collect data from people who have all

experienced the same phenomenon of interest, and develop a composite description of the

essence of the experience for all individuals (Willig, 2001).

Interpretative phenomenology follows Husserl's lead in the pursuit of describing meaning

for individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon. However, as a methodology,

interpretative phenomenology goes beyond just describing a phenomenon. It accepts the

impossibility of gaining direct access to a participant's life worlds, and recognizes that

exploration of people's experiences must include the researcher's own view of the world as well

as the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant (Willig, 2001). Interpretative

phenomenologists thus impose their own insights and theoretical concepts onto participants'

descriptions in order to give textual interpretation of the phenomenon of interest (Kleiman,

2004).

According to Smith, Flower, and Larkin (2010) interpretive phenomenological analysis

(IPA) is "concerned with the detailed examination of the human lived experience, which aims to

be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems". An

interpretive phenomenological design allowed me to understand the participants' perspectives as

they related to their experiences in their role as an out gay or lesbian higher education president.

Through the theoretical lens of Queer Theory, I analyzed the meaning of identity relating to each

out gay or lesbian higher education president. The analysis was conducted by focusing on the

intersection of identities, for example, "gay president" or "lesbian president" versus solely

focusing on one identity, such as "gay", "lesbian", or "president" (Abes & Kasch, 2007). Given

the limited number of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents, the use of qualitative research methods was chosen; quantitative research methods were not adequate or appropriate for the study.

The use of interpretive phenomenological techniques enabled the study to focus on the essence of the experiences of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents as related to their formal role as a university or college president. This form of inquiry attempted to deal with inner experiences unprobed in everyday life (Merriam, 2002). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) pursues an idiographic commitment, situating participants in their particular contexts, exploring their personal perspectives, and starting with a detailed examination of each case before moving to more general claims (Smith, Flower, and Larking, 2010). Specifically in this study, essences of what it means to be an openly gay or lesbian serving as a president in an institution of higher education was explored through the unique lens of each participant. I was aware of my personal attitudes and beliefs about the phenomenon, which allowed me to participate as the primary data collection tool with the research participants.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the primary data collection instrument necessitated the identification of my own personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study. My perceptions of being openly gay or lesbian in an administrative role within higher education stemmed from my own personal experience as a gay male working in higher education. From 2001 until present, I have served in various administrative roles at varying levels at three different institutions of higher education in the State of California. While I do not have direct knowledge about serving as a higher education president, I have had the opportunity to interact with several presidents on both professional and personal levels throughout the years. Interactions with each of these presidents

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helped me to understand the challenges facing presidents as they serve in a quasi-political role serving the diverse needs of governments, local constituents, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Working in higher education for over a decade has led to several biases that I bring with respect to being openly gay in the workplace. These biases may have shaped the way that I view and understand the data that were collected and the way that I interpreted my experiences, though I made every effort to be objective.

Research Participants

A primary objective of qualitative research is to obtain information by engaging individuals who are involved or affected by the issue under study (Morse, 2001). From this perspective, the appropriate participants should have knowledge and experience of the topic being studied, the ability to critically examine and articulate their experiences, and a willingness to share their thoughts (Morse, 1991). The limited number of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents -- 30 at the time of writing this dissertation -- helped to inform the number of participants to be included in the study. Utilizing the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education website as a resource to identify research participants, I selected and interviewed six presidents, including three female presidents and three male presidents. A member of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education group assisted in the dissemination of requests for study participants to the active membership. Based on the responses received from the initial call, I selected six participants using purposeful sampling methods to provide a representative sample of male (gay) and female (lesbian) research participants. Each potential participant was sent an email that outlined the purpose of the study and the requirements for participation (Appendix B). Once participants opted to participate in the study, they signed and returned a consent form (Appendix B) to me. The gay and lesbian presidents who selected to participate in this study

were located throughout the United States representing multiple regions and cities. Study participants were predominately located on the West and East Coasts, as well as in major metropolitan areas. Study participants represented both public and private universities as well as comprehensive and research institutions across multiple institutional sizes. Study participants were associated with small regional universities serving 10,000 or fewer students, as well as large comprehensive or research institutions serving more than 30,000 students.

The identities of study participants were masked due to the nature of the information that was disclosed through the interview process. Identity masking was not the result of fear of reprisal due to sexual orientation; rather, it was to ensure that stories shared would not be attributable to any one study participant.

Data Collection

Qualitative research uses interviews to discover meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their world. These structures are often hidden from direct observation and taken for granted by participants; however, qualitative interview techniques can reveal such meanings (Hatch, 2002). Kvale defines the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1983). The goal of the qualitative research interview is therefore to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why they have come to this particular perspective (King, 2004).

There are several types of qualitative interviews researchers may use to meet different objectives. Semi-structured, or in-depth, interviews can generally be adapted for use within any of the qualitative paradigms. They are semi-structured because, although researchers come to

the interview with guiding questions, they are open to following the leads of participants and

probing into areas that arise during interview interactions (Hatch, 2002). They are in-depth in

that they are designed to go deeply into the understandings of participants, making them

appropriate for a phenomenological approach (King, 2004). Semi-structured interviews can be

time-consuming for both researchers and participants; however, given the size and scope of this

study, it will be a flexible way to collect data.

The interview protocol used in this research included a 12 question semi-structured

interview guide (Appendix C) that enabled participants to provide open-ended responses. The

interviews addressed multiple dimensions, including personal stories related to a participant's

decision to become a president, whether or not sexual orientation had created challenges for the

participant, how sexual orientation affected relationships across the institution, how sexual

orientation affected external relationships, advice for those seeking to become a president, and an

opportunity for participants to provide additional information that was not asked during the

interview process. The participant interview questions were used as a guide and assisted in

gathering descriptive data in the subjects' own words. Where and when appropriate, I asked

follow up questions to unexpected dimensions or topics that were not directly related to the

questionnaire. Given that this study was groundbreaking in this particular area of research, it

was necessary to ask follow up questions to explore unanticipated concepts related to the study.

This approach led to deeper and more meaningful understanding about the personal experience

of each participant.

I used face-to-face interviews as the primary method for collecting data. Data were

collected during two hour audio recorded interview sessions that were conducted onsite at the

institution of the out gay or lesbian president. Conducting interviews at the institution of each

study participant allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the environment and community

of each participant. In an effort to build trust, I requested to meet with each participant in an

informal setting, such as at breakfast, lunch, or dinner prior to the formal interview. Partners or

significant others of the participants were also included in the invitation to meet informally.

While this was to be a trust building activity, unfortunately, none of the presidents were able to

meet informally due to their extremely busy schedules. Researcher field notes were recorded

using a laptop computer prior to and subsequent to each interview. Researcher field notes helped

to arrange key concepts and to track ideas, thoughts, and patterns related to the study.

Data Analysis

Once all interviews were completed, I transcribed the audio recordings from each

participant interview. Upon completion of direct transcription of each interview, I scanned each

transcript independently to identify emergent themes. Once initial coding of each interview was

completed, I utilized NVivo software to cross reference each interview to identify common word

repetitions that were then categorized into themes. During the coding process three emergent

themes were identified: Identity; The LGBTQ Presidency; and Future LGBTQ Presidents.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methods were used to analyze the data

(Smith et al., 2010; Willig, 2001). Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation,

the first document accessed in the study. The first step of an IPA analysis involved immersing

oneself in the original data by reading and re-reading the participant responses, and producing

notes reflecting initial thoughts of the researcher. Step two required reduction of the volume of

detail in the data by identifying and labeling themes that characterize each section of the text.

Theme titles developed at this stage are "conceptual, and should capture something about the

essential quality of what is represented by the text" (Willig, 2001, p. 55). Step three involved

searching for connections across identified themes, and clustering them into structured themes that made sense in relation to the original data. During the last step, the researcher looked for patterns across interviews in order to integrate themes into an inclusive, master list with which to summarize and understand the phenomenon of interest (Smith et al, 2010; Willig, 2001).

I was cognizant of the inductive data collection and analysis methods employed by qualitative researchers, and where necessary, made adaptions to the study. Once data were collected via the participant interview, the electronic recording of the interview was transcribed verbatim and coded. Coding of the data sought to identify and describe patterns and themes from the perspective of the participants. Throughout the coding process, I reviewed and referred to the field notes taken during the time of the site visits. I utilized NVivo software as a tool for entering and coding data. The NVivo software assisted me by providing a tool to record all elements of the study, including participant interviews, field notes, etc. The software allowed me to organize, code, and display data in an illustrative fashion, which enhanced the analysis, results, and discussion of the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness provides and evaluation of the extent to which the findings of a study are deemed to accurately reconstruct and represent the multiple realities conveyed by participants. Trustworthiness attempts to answer the question of how a researcher can "persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). The evaluative criteria used to establish reliability and validity in quantitative research are not particularly relevant for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Instead, alternative evaluative phraseology such as "consistency", "truth value", and "neutrality" are advocated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Willig (2001) I incorporated multiple strategies related to validity, which enhanced my ability to assess the accuracy of findings. In addition to peer review, I checked transcripts for accuracy, compared coding to data, and maintained a separate memo regarding the definitions of coding. Peer review is another strategy that adds truth value to a given study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer reviewer is someone who asks questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations within the study and provides and objective opinion and suggestions. Throughout the study I met with an expert in qualitative research at California State University, Long Beach. These meetings occurred at critical junctures during the study in an effort to ensure appropriate and reasonable data analysis and interpretation.

To ensure validity, I incorporated the following strategies; member checking, and rich, thick description. Member checking was implemented by requesting that research participants review the themes and initial analysis of data to ensure that it had been interpreted accurately. Member checking provided a means of assessing trustworthiness by ensuring that participants' experiences have been accurately represented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final validity strategy, use of rich, thick description, was incorporated throughout the analysis. "When qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting…the results become more realistic and richer" (Creswell, p. 192).

Study Limitations

Six presidents at six distinct institutions of higher education were selected for the study. Given that selection criteria included self-identified and "out" gay or lesbian participants and that the study did not include closeted gay or lesbian higher education presidents, the study may not be representative of the complete lesbian and gay presidency. The study also did not include

other members of the LGBTQ community, including bisexual, transgender, and questioning individuals. The study's focus on gays and lesbians may not represent the LGBTQ community in a broad context, which may be a bias on the part of the researcher. Participation in this study was delimited to openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents. The study focused on gay males and lesbian females and excluded bisexual, transgender, or questioning individuals from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) population. The study also excluded "closeted" individuals, as the purpose of the study was to better understand the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents.

Another limitation relates to the researcher's "monopoly of interpretation" common in qualitative research (Kvale, 2006). As the primary data collection instrument, the researcher interprets and reports the findings based on an interpretation of the information that study participants provided. The use of IPA as a method of analysis allows the researcher to integrate the researcher's own views. IPA provides a framework for researchers to constantly compare developing themes to actual data. Though much was done to enhance trustworthiness, biases and perceptions of the researcher may have affected the findings.

Reporting the Findings

After descriptions and themes related to the data were developed, results were reported on the detailed experiences of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents. When possible and appropriate, I embedded quotes in passages, presented text information in a tabular form, and used wording from participants to form codes and theme labels. Additional strategies for reporting the data included the use of metaphors and analogies, as well as the use of the narrative form.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The ultimate authority must always rest with the individual's own reason and critical analysis.
Dalai Lama

The main objective of this interpretative phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents. To accomplish the purpose, an interview guide was developed and used to conduct semi-structured interviews with six gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Participants were asked to reflect upon personal experiences and perceptions related to being a gay or lesbian president at an institution of higher education. The information reported within this chapter is information gathered during the semi-structured interviews with the six study participants.

Each of the three emergent themes had a number of supporting sub-themes. Sub-themes for identity included: Gender Identity and Stereotypes; Being "Out"; "Out as President; and, LBGTQ Identity and Leadership. Sub-themes for The LGBTQ Presidency included: Path to the Presidency; Institutional "Fit"; Challenges related to Sexual Orientation; LGBTQ Campus Climate; LGBTQ Administrators; and the Role and Importance of Spouses and Partners. Sub-themes for Future LGBTQ Presidents included: Advice from Current LGBT Presidents; and, LGBTQ Leadership Opportunities. Each of the emergent themes and sub-themes identified during data coding helped to answer the primary research question, "What are the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in institutions of higher education?"

The three identified themes and twelve sub-themes focused exclusively on common elements of each interview that were related to better understanding each participant's experience as an out gay or lesbian university or college president. In order to mask the identity of each participant, I have grouped participant responses by each relevant theme and sub-theme.

Rather than using pseudonyms, common groupings were utilized; participant identification is fully masked except to acknowledge the participants' genders as related to a specific quote or idea. After themes were finalized, I re-reviewed each transcript using the themes and sub-themes to synthesize common data elements. Using Nvivo software, data collected from each of the research participant interviews was arranged in relation to three themes: Gender Identity and Stereotypes; Being "Out"; "Out as President; and, LBGTQ Identity and Leadership. Each theme was further organized by the twelve identified sub-themes: Gender Identity and Stereotypes; Being "Out"; "Out as President; LBGTQ Identity and Leadership; Path to the Presidency; Institutional "Fit"; Challenges related to Sexual Orientation; LGBTQ Campus Climate; LGBTQ Administrators; the Role and Importance of Spouses and Partners; Advice from Current LGBT President; and, LGBTQ Leadership Opportunities.

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Theme: Identity

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The *Identity* theme captured the essence of identity for each participant. As an individual, one has multiple identities related to their personal and professional lives. The theme captures common identity elements of study participants as they relate to each interview transcript. Each participant was selected through purposeful sampling utilizing the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education group as a resource. Identified participants had to meet the criteria of being a university, college, or school president/chancellor, and each participant had to identify as openly gay or lesbian. Ultimately, six research participants opted to participate in the study, and of those six participants three identified as being gay males and three identified as being lesbian females. The identity of each participant consisted of multiple sub-themes, including: sexual orientation, gender identity and stereotypes, being "out", being "out" as president, and LGBTQ identity and leadership.

Sub-theme: Gender Identity and Stereotypes

Each research participant identified as a gay male or a lesbian female, but it was

unexpected that the interview process would result in discussions related to gender and gender

stereotypes. As previously noted, each participant in the study identified as being a gay male or

a lesbian female, both identifiers being important in that there are other identities within the

LGBTQ community outside of gay and lesbian and male and female. Discussions regarding

masculinity and femininity, as well as gender roles, occurred during each interview. From the

discussions, it was learned that a sexual orientation other than heterosexual resulted in unique

discussions with outsiders (e.g. – staff, alumni, community members, and faculty) about gender

roles and gender identity.

A male participant discussed his awareness of discussions related to his perceived

femininity because of his identity as a gay male. One of his first actions at his institution was to

improve the campus physical plant, which resulted in negativity related to his presidency. The

participant revealed that there was dialogue amongst the campus community about his sexual

orientation:

> Look a gay president comes in and the first thing that he does is redecorate. That was in
>
> the narrative in some ways, but I was doing other thing that people didn't like. I went to
>
> the board to get the faculty contract changed, but it was easier for them [the faculty] to
>
> talk about the thing that I allegedly did because I was gay versus the thing that I did that
>
> was more substantial or scary.

Another participant reported that:

> Some students put a YouTube video out that made fun of how I dressed. There have
>
> been cuts and jabs like that along the way. I think that is part of being a president, you

are not always popular, but sometimes the shape that the job has taken is because I am gay.

An unexpected characteristic related to female participants was related to gender identity. There was prevalence amongst the lesbian participants to identify as female in a way that juxtaposed that identity with their sexual orientation. A few of the female participants of the study identified more closely with the women's rights movement and women's issues than with LGBTQ issues. One female participant reported that early in her career she was asked, "Don't you have any skirts?" by her supervisor. She reported that, "it was the 1960's and I did not have any skirts, but then I got a few mini dresses because that's what you did." Another female participant indicated that a board member expressed his concern by indicating, "what if people don't send students here because you're a woman and a lesbian".

Gender stereotypes and issues of gender and sexual orientation remain prevalent in today's society. One research participant captured the current climate in her words:

I think that sexual orientation is really about gender. It's misogyny. The problem for [lesbian] women is how can you get along without a man? And for [gay] men the problem is someone is perceived as acting like a woman.

Gender roles were the biggest factor for confusion. Often constituent groups did not understand how to refer to a spouse or partner of a same-sex couple. During social occasions and functions there were also questions by constituent group members about the role of each partner (i.e. – host, hostess, etc.).

Sub-theme: Being "Out"

An important and unifying characteristic of each participant was their identity of being an "out" gay or lesbian person. While sexual orientation can be used as an identifier, the choice and

desire to be "out" was echoed throughout the participant interview process. Each research participant discussed the importance of being "out", linking the concept to authenticity and integrity. One participant summarized, "For me as president the best thing that I can do as a president is to walk the talk. Authenticity and integrity is very important, both in symbolic and communicative ways." Another participant indicated that, "…as president you have to be transparent; you live in a "glass house"…the energy that it would take to be closeted would be exhausting [to me] – it wouldn't be worth it." For one participant, being closeted was closely aligned with being disingenuous:

> I think that leaders help set tones [at an institution]. I can't imagine doing this job being in the closet or being disingenuous. There was a period of time when I was in college in the 1970s when people would ask about what I did over the weekend and I would not answer honestly. On the simplest things, I would change the nouns or leave people or aspects out of the conversation. I maybe wouldn't talk about where I went, what I did, or who I did it with.

Sub-theme: "Out" as President

While being "out" in one's personal life is relevant, of more relevance to this study is the impact and importance of being "out" in one's professional life. Every participant in this study revealed that they immediately came 'out' before or during the interview process for the positions that they currently hold. Some study participants came "out" by talking about their partners or listing information on their resumes that would indicate that they were gay or lesbian. In addition to those methods of coming "out" study participants were each very direct with the search consults, search committee or boards about their sexual orientation. One participant said to the system chancellor, "Wait, stop. You need to know that I'm a lesbian. If you want to go

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home now I won't sue you." Another participant indicated, "I came out to the board in the interview, which most people would say not to do."

Other stories about coming "out" during the interview process were more colorful. One study participant described her discussion with a headhunter:

I talked to this headhunter before I sent my credentials and told him that I didn't want to waste his time or my time. I told him that I was a lesbian. My attitude in life is that I'm perfectly proud and happy about being a lesbian. If there is a problem, it's someone else's problem not mine. This is not a judgment or grievance; I just will not submit my credentials to become president unless they are ready for me. I said [to the headhunter], I'm counting on you. You need to help me find ways and opportunities to appropriately inform the committee because I do not want to meet with them or come on to campus without them knowing.

Another participant described his experience with a headhunter, "I said there is one reason that I can't [be president] and they won't pick me even if I was perfectly suitable…it's because I'm gay". Later this participant learned that the search committee and board already knew that he was gay and that his sexual orientation was not a factor in making the decision to hire him as president.

Sub-theme: LGBTQ Identity and Leadership

Through discussions with the study participants, it was identified that an LGBTQ identity indeed impacts cognitive processes related to the individual, as well as leadership style and decision making for professionals. One research participant described the juxtaposition of an LGBTQ identity to leadership style and his presidency:

For me it is crystal clear. The fact that I am a gay man means that I know what it means

to be marginalized. So, it means that I am temperamentally inclusive; I have an emotive

side of understanding why it is important to be inclusive versus exclusive…it comes very

strongly from an internal place that is at its core the fact that I am a gay man, and I know

what it feels like to be marginalized because of who I am, not what I can do. So it affects

how I see every issue. It filters every issue through inclusiveness and a sense of justice

for other people. Whatever I am doing that is always fundamentally in there, and it's in

there now that I'm an out gay man that emerged over the course of me coming out, first

to myself and then to others.

Another participant described how his perspectives and perceptions as a leader have been

impacted by his identity as a gay man stating:

My identity as a gay man manifests in how I look at the world, so therefore, it [a gay

identity] manifests how I lead. So for me, being gay growing up has you looking at

things from an outsider perspective. You get better, I think…you read about this in the

literature, and for me what resonates is that I often don't' think like other people, I look

for the unexpected solution because that is what disenfranchised people have to do

normally to be successful. I also think that we get super sensitive because we have to

scan the environment all the time for danger. We must pay close attention to situations

and close attention to people. So, it [being gay] has made me very relationship oriented in

how I act…it's probably in part because I'm gay, and I hope to be collaborative and

supporting, rather than commanding and pushing.

One of the female research participants described her LGBTQ identity as one that is ever evolving, and further described how her identity as a lesbian female helps her to be courageous and self-confident:

I think my sexual orientation has influenced my entire approach as an educator. I first and foremost look at myself as an educator, and then I've held different roles as administrator, leader, and professor. I think that being a lesbian in particular growing up as a young lesbian in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's and watching myself have to deal with other in that and manage through and develop the courage to be who I was and who I wanted to be. The courage to draw out from other how I want them to treat me because I can't compel others to do something. I can give them the framework for helping them with understanding how to treat me. I have to be aware of my audience and understanding what they need. When you are part of a marginalized population and a historically oppressed population, like when you are gay or lesbian, I think that you overdevelop those aspects as survival mechanisms and tactics…we all do this as human beings. We are constantly developing these skills, whether consciously, semi-consciously, or unconsciously. I was developing my identity when the idea of being queer was a mental illness. I think that the talents of surviving and thriving as a lesbian have served me well throughout my career and certainly they have served me in my role as president.

Theme: The LGBTQ Presidency

The theme LGBTQ Presidency is the central theme for the study, focusing specifically on the primary research question, "What are the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in institutions of higher education?" The LGBTQ Presidency theme was assembled through the

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direct review of participant transcripts and includes the critical elements involved in the daily work lives of each participant. Included in this theme are sub-themes related to the Path to the Presidency; Institutional Fit; Challenges Related to Sexual Orientation; LGBTQ Campus Climate; Role and Importance of Partners and Spouses; and Hiring Considerations related to LGBTQ Administrators. This theme also describes the unique and not so unique characteristics of an LGBTQ presidency.

Sub-theme: Path to the Presidency

A unique characteristic of each of the research study participants is that none of them planned to pursue a higher education presidency. One participant reported, "This was not part of the plan ever. When I was a lot younger I thought that I was going to be a professor forever." For this participant the turning point to be placed on the path to the presidency occurred when she became a president's assistant. This change resulted in the realization that being president was, "more fun than anything. The reason that it was fun was because [she] was making change at the institutional level." Later that same participant participated as an American Council on Education (ACE) fellow, which led her to a dean position, followed by holding the positions of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The majority of the study participants became presidents after serving in very traditional academic roles (i.e. – faculty, dean, provost). When asked how he came to serve as a president, one participant responded, "By accident; I'm a traditional academic." This gentleman held increasingly more complex positions within the academy, first serving as an assistant dean, then as associate dean, followed by a dean and vice chancellor role. He eventually went on to serve as an interim chancellor; however, due to professional challenges related to his sexual orientation, he was not selected for the permanent position. This did not deter him from

continuing to excel; he later held a position as the chief academic officer at a large higher education system. Ultimately, he was recruited for his current position by a headhunter; for him, the job of being president was appealing because this would enable him to work with students and faculty.

While the majority of study participants became presidents after holding traditional academic roles within an institution of higher education, one participant came from a Student Affairs background. This participant described ascending to the presidency as, "…an interesting story because only truly about 6 or 8 months before I became president did I give it any serious consideration…I was never one to have that goal." She described her background as, "…unique, not that being an out lesbian president isn't enough, but coming out of student affairs, I think in the academy, in higher education, there is quite a bit of bias that overlooks student affairs professionals as viable candidates for the presidency. Her unique background in student affairs started as a resident advisor, and she eventually worked her way up through the ranks to serve as a director of residence life, an associate dean of students, a dean of students, as associate vice president for student affairs, and later as a vice chancellor of student affairs.

Sub-theme: Institutional Fit

Beyond having the necessary experience to become a university or college president, study participants discussed the need for an "institutional fit" to exist in order for a candidate to become a president. In the context of this study "institutional fit" can be defined as far-from-objective, going beyond selection criteria. According to a recent Chronicle for Higher Education article, *How Institutional Fit Influences Presidential Selectio*n:

> "…identifying with, and honoring institutional culture are absolutely essential for a
> candidate to be named president and to lead the campus successfully. Candidates must

establish their appreciation for a college's norms and values and must be able to

comprehend and speak its special language. All the qualifications in the world—fund-

raising success, financial acumen, management expertise, scholarly accomplishment,

teaching experience—will not suffice if the fit is not right" (Chronicle for Higher

Education, 2010).

One study participant described institutional "fit" and the presidency, "I think that when

you are a president, you lead because you are allowed to lead, to serve the mission of the

institution and community. So the question that one needs to ask themselves is, is there an

institution and a community that would want to be led by me?" Following a similar line of

thinking, another participant described her ascendancy to the role of president:

> [Not] random. I met all of the qualifications listed. I did a lot of thinking about who I
>
> was as a leader, an educator, and an administrator; I wanted to be clear on those things.
>
> There are over 4,500 institutions [of higher education], but I am definitely a public
>
> university person. I like working with first generation college students; I like to be at a
>
> university that is dedicated to the region that it serves; I like being entrepreneurial; I am
>
> committed to community and civic engagement – those are the things that excite me

Sub-theme: Challenges Related to Sexual Orientation

While study participants mostly reported positive experiences related to their professional

role as a president, there were stories of discrimination and challenges for some of the candidates

as a result of their sexual orientation. Every study participant experienced some form of

discrimination or controversy related to their sexual orientation prior to being in their formal role

of president of an institution of higher education. When describing her negative experiences

related to her sexual orientation one participant said:

My encounters were typically with peers who were either biased in some way or

homophobic. At only a couple of points in my life have these types of encounters ever

been public, usually those encounters have been in private. I'm the type of person who

doesn't enjoy gossip or hate speech, and if I learn that this is occurring, I will confront

the individual. I am not a victim, nor do I have a victim personality; I refuse to allow

outsiders to dictate how we live or how we help others to see who we are.

There were also specific instances described by study participants about negative

situations in the workplace. One participant described such an experience:

I once had a boss when I was an academic administrator where I was getting great results

and was more effective than my peers, but this person just didn't like me. He would take

a whack at me at every opportunity, including in performance appraisals, and I was so

confused by that until a number of people took me aside and said to me 'it's because you

are queer.

Another study participant described his experience as being a finalist for a key position; due to

his being a gay man he was not considered for the position. He described being, "Told

confidentially by a couple of key people in the room during the discussion that a couple of board

members said that there was no way that they would have a gay person in the position."

Two study participants had negative personal experiences during their studies as

undergraduate and graduate students. One participant described the challenges of being a lesbian

in the 1950's, "I was turned in to the dean by one of my friends because I thought that I was a

lesbian. She [the dean] said that I shouldn't talk about those things because I was scaring

people." Many years later the study participant found out that the same dean with whom she met

about her being a lesbian was herself a lesbian. The participant described the dean as, "…a

coward, a yellow person." According to the participant, the institution, "…threw people out for being lesbians, and they almost threw me out, except the only reason they didn't was because my parents were paying full tuition." After that encounter, the participant decided, "That's not happening to me anymore," referring to not being a victim because of her sexual orientation.

The second participant to experience challenges related to his sexual orientation was during graduate school. He described the situation as follows, "In graduate school I know that the faculty had discussions about me where some faculty said some homophobic things and other faculty had to take up for me." When further questioned about the experience and whether or not the negativity was related to research or only his sexual orientation the candidate indicated, "It was just related to me being a student." He further indicated:

> I learned to hang with the appropriate ones [faculty], but you know that is not what
>
> school is supposed to be like. I'm sure that there are all sorts of different ways that that
>
> experience impacted me…I got really good at tuning out. If you have a history of being
>
> beaten over your head or being bullied, you develop coping mechanisms.

One study participant described a situation that was directly related to her current role as president. That individual received much negative publicity from an outside national group because of her sexual orientation. She indicated, "There was a petition drive by a national group after I was appointed, which was sent to the board asking that they reconsider my appointment as president." The study participant shared a very large stack of petitions from the national group. The petitions were very negative and described in great detail how her sexual orientation would negatively impact the institution. When asked why she kept the petitions the participant indicated, "They [the petitions] serve as a reminder to me that homophobia and heterosexism

exist. They give me strength and courage to carry out my duties as president in an objective and fair manner."

The negative experiences described by study participants related to their sexual orientation no doubt have influenced how each of them perceive and operate within their professional communities. These experiences occurred for each participant at critical junctures in their identity development, as young undergraduates, as graduate students, and as professionals. These experiences, negative as they may be, are the sum of their collective experience as individuals and as professionals.

Sub-theme: LGBTQ Campus Climate

Each of the study participants' experiences have been grounded within their own institutional contexts. An important and relevant aspect of each institution is the campus climate, community and culture, especially as they relate to LGBTQ persons and issues. One participant described his experience of coming onto the campus as president, "I came to an environment with no 'out' students and no gay faculty, which was surprising. The institution was nonetheless a receptive and friendly place." The study participants reported positive information about their campus climates and attitudes toward LGBTQ administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Another participant spoke of the campus climate at the institution where she was recently appointed as president stating, "This place seems to be very open. They [students] have annual institutionalized drag shows and very active LGBTQ organizations. We also have a large transgender population." Many of the campuses where the study participants were located have active LGBTQ associations, clubs, and trainings programs, and some campuses have Gay and Lesbian Studies as majors, minors and emphases within university/college curriculum.

The study participants described the impact that an LGBTQ president has on the overall campus climate and community related to LGBTQ persons. One participant indicated, "Having a gay president has helped to create a gay friendly environment at the institution. I didn't necessarily have an agenda in this regard, but I think that over time more gay faculty and students felt comfortable being here." He further described an uptick in the number of LGBTQ students applying to his institution stating, "We know that the incoming freshman class was 11% gay because we started asking that question on the admissions application this year."

Particularly interesting were the thoughts of the research participants about campus climate as related to LGBTQ students, faculty and staff. One study participant indicated that, "It unlocks something to have a gay president; diversity begets diversity." Another participant described the LGBTQ student experience indicating:

> A lot of times gay and lesbian students feel invisible. They bring their own fears into the situations…they bring their own fears and if you don't do anything to counteract their fears, they'll keep the fears. So when I walk into some LGBTQ club meeting or event I always say 'brothers and sisters' or 'my people' to create a safe and supportive environment. Treat them like human beings and create a sense of community of which everyone is a part, not just gay people should attend, everybody should attend.

One study participant was proud that his institution is considered LGBTQ friendly indicating:

> Actually we don't have Safe Zones here. The reason that there are not Safe Zones is because every place here is a Safe Zone, and it would be a huge step backward if we were to put up signs because it would suggest that there were places that are not safe.

A female study participant described her campus climate through the perceived lens of LGBTQ students at her institution:

We don't have a center [LGBTQ] but we do have student clubs, one specifically is called "Allies", which is for both gays and straights. The students were stunned and thrilled that their president could be a lesbian. What I've noticed as president is that often it is like the attention that I wanted from my Mom when I would play in the pool when I was a little girl – I wanted her to watch me. Well, just about every constituent group wants the president to come watch them.

Sub-theme: Role and Importance of Partners and Spouses

A discovery through this study is that spouses and partners play an important role in the lives of each of the study participants, both from a personal and professional perspective. Spouses and partners had both personal and professional influence and impact for each participant. Some of the participants described their spouse or partner as a person who helps both behind the scenes and with duties directly related to their role as president, while others indicated that their spouse or partner was helpful to them in their personal life by providing support related to their profession. All participants except one reported that their spouse or partner's professional role was directly related to higher education (i.e. – staff or faculty). The outlier's partner was self-employed working as an artist.

One participant described the composition of her family describing her personal life and partner, "We are very much an academic family. My partner left an appointment as a full professor so that I could take this job [the presidency]; she is now underemployed as an assistant professor, but she loves being a faculty member, so this is a great fit for her." The participant described the interaction between her partner and the search committee at her institution during the presidential search process stating, "When I was interviewing for the position, she was worried that she would do something to embarrass me, which was the least of my worries; she is

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an award winning professor and teacher." This participant also recognized the importance of recognizing her partner at functions and events. She described her technique for recognizing her partner as, "At most of my public talks, and if I think that it is rhetorically appropriate, I acknowledge my partner. My litmus test is in what way would a heterosexual couple of 18 years recognize one another, and that's exactly what I do."

For LGBTQ presidents, similar to heterosexual presidents, partners can play an even greater role at social functions, fundraising events, and at campus activities. One participant described how her partner is involved with campus functions and presidentially hosted events indicating:

> I frequently host events and dinners that include my partner. Most of our guests and
>
> participants are fine, some of them have cognitive issues and maybe have to redefine
>
> [sexual orientation] in the moment, but I want to believe in the human spirit and a
>
> human's ability to take who you are and construct positive identities. I approach this
>
> through compassion, love, and authenticity; we're real people just like everybody else.

Recognizing his partner as being extroverted, one research participant described the importance of the role that his partner plays at events and social functions stating:

> My partner is a big part of my professional life; I do a lot of fundraising things, alumni
>
> events, etc. My partner really is my secret weapon, everyone here [at the institution]
>
> knows my partner. They are always excited to see him because he is a lot more fun than
>
> me. He's great with donors and really helps to soften the conversation.

While the majority of participants described their partners and spouses as being involved at events and willing to participate, there was one participant who described a much different scenario in his professional life. For this participant, he and his partner have a long standing

agreement about social events and functions related to his presidency. He described his partner

and the agreement as follows:

> My partner really doesn't like socializing and he doesn't see my job as his responsibility.
>
> So, for us the deal is that I will always ask him if wants to participate and he has three
>
> choices or scenarios. One is that I don't care if you go or not, I just want you to know
>
> what is happening. Then there are things that are really important and I really want him
>
> to attend, but if he doesn't I will understand. And finally there are the command
>
> performances and he must attend because he is the spouse of the president.

Sub-theme: Hiring Considerations related to LGBTQ Administrators

A few of the study participants volunteered information about recruiting and appointing

other LGBTQ administrators at their institutions. While this does not necessarily reflect the

thinking that was described by all study participants, it is nonetheless a theme worth exploring.

It was reported by one participant:

> I have actually appointed a lot of gay administrators, which is a very interesting and
>
> challenging issue because you have to be careful to think through the appointment.
>
> When you get ready to hire a senior colleague you have to think about what appointing
>
> another LGBTQ may look like because there will be some people who say that the person
>
> is only being hired for that reason. That's a constraining thing on your thought process,
>
> though it should never stop you from doing the things that you want to do.

The same participant also talked about his first appointment of another LGBTQ professional at

his institution indicating:

> The first gay man that I hired as a vice president resulted because he was clearly superior
>
> to the other candidates in the search, but nonetheless, I went and talked to the chairman of

the board and asked if it would be a problem if I appointed another gay man. We talked

our way through it and ultimately decided that the board had every confidence in me

hiring the most qualified person. I always check with the board chair when appointing a

vice president anyway, but I don't talk about sexual orientation unless I'm appointing a

gay man or a lesbian woman.

Another participant described his challenges with interviewing and appointing LGBTQ

administrators at his institution:

I interviewed a gay man and gave a little tougher interview of him because I didn't want

to hear that I was bringing in gay people just because they are gay. You always have to

deal with that as a gay or minority leader.

One study participant shared that:

Since presidents are on their own, and this is especially true if you're gay, I'm cognizant

of when I'm talking to an LGBTQ candidate; I don't want to make that the issue, but on

the other hand I don't want to make them think that I'm not supportive of the LGBTQ

person trying to advance their career.

While the scrutiny of other LGBTQ professionals may be a newly identified phenomenon for

LGBTQ leaders in higher education, this same phenomenon has occurred with other

marginalized populations such as women, African Americans, and Latinos.

Theme: Future LGBTQ Presidents and Administrators

The theme, Future LGBTQ Presidents and Administrators, was developed outside of the

scope of the research questions; however, this is an important theme as one considers the future

for LGBTQ presidents and administrators in higher education settings. Given the currently small

number of openly gay and lesbian presidents in higher education, this theme provides a unique

opportunity to obtain advice and insights from current LGBTQ presidents for future LGBTQ

leaders.   Study participants provided their perspectives on matters ranging from pursuing a

presidency to being "out". Another unique area covered in this theme is through the collection

of perspectives of several of the study participants about future presidential vacancies and a

proposed agenda for advocacy for LGBTQ inclusiveness in higher education.

Sub-theme: Advice to Future LGBTQ Presidents and Leaders

When asked what advice research participants would give future LGBTQ leaders

regarding the pursuit of a presidency, answers varied across study participants. One female

participant stated:

> I would say do it! Make your plan and align your professional skills and competencies
>
> with your goal and then do it. There are not enough talented administrators of any gender
>
> or any sexual orientation such that we can afford to take ourselves out of the pool.
>
> People need us…we just need to find the right match. It's like anything else…I don't
>
> think that being LGBTQ is a deal breaker. There are plenty of other things that will be
>
> deal breakers before they ever get to that; your job in an interview is to make them fall in
>
> love with you – then it [sexual orientation] won't matter.

Another study participant offered:

> I would say talk to somebody who is the type of president that you want to be. Get
>
> advice from them about how to structure your presentation in a way that will help you
>
> attain that job. It is so specific to individuals and types of institutions, but everyone that I
>
> know who has been successful in attaining this type of role has had good mentorship.

Two study participants provided advice related to a presidency around identity and sexual

orientation. A female study participant indicated:

You know…it's hard for me. I recognize that there are times in one's career that one

may need to lay low and be closeted, but I tend to think that those times have passed.

I've reached a good point, so perhaps it's easy for me to say that now. My belief is that if

you can't bring yourself to what you're doing, you never really had it anyway. If you

can't have it as who you are, then it is probably not worth having.

Continuing with the theme of identity and sexual orientation related to leadership one female

participant indicated:

Take stock and pride in who you are and know that each of us is our own unique

collection of items, which constructs our identity. Being LGBTQ is just one element and

there are so many others; the sum of our parts is who we are as individuals. Be clear on

problems that are yours and problems that are others.

The same participant gave advice about creating trust with constituents and being true to one's

self, related to identity:

If you are going to be a leader – if you are going to ask other people to follow you – you

have to be willing to be really clear on who you are and comfortable with who you are in

your own skin. You must also trust, create and exude trust and create a trusting

environment. So you have to be very comfortable, confident, and secure, especially if

you identify as LGBTQ. The more secure you are the better leader you will be. If you

are insecure and closeted, I don't know what level of leadership that one could really

obtain.

The advice of one of the male study participants varied greatly from other responses.

Related to the pursuit of a presidency he indicated, "First of all I would say don't pursue the

presidency, if you're gay, straight, whatever. If you're interested in the presidency, you have to

have a series of progressively successful experiences at higher levels." He advocated for

professionals to hone their skills and understand their strengths stating:

> If you think that one day you might want to be a president of an institution then pay
>
> attention to your career. Don't stay too long in one place, and don't fall into the trap of
>
> thinking that you can wait until one day that you will be pulled out of a particular
>
> environment. You have to be willing to walk away from the job that you love if you are
>
> no longer being challenged because if you don't, you will not gain new skills.

For those who have entered a new presidency he offered:

> When you are president, you get a lot of conflicting advice and it is very important that as
>
> president you stay on your course. You can't be so risk adverse to not take calculated
>
> risk to help others; if it is the right thing to do, you do it.

Sub-theme: Leadership Opportunities

Related to advice to future leaders, several participants offered information about their

perception of the future related to LGBTQ professionals in higher education. One of the male

participants is active in ACE and has the opportunity to provide input into the future inclusion of

LGBTQ candidates for leadership roles in higher education. This participant indicated:

> I'm on the commission of inclusion for ACE. I've been active for over twenty years,
>
> including serving on the ACE board; this is my newest thing [participation in the
>
> commission of inclusion]. I'm there explicitly because I'm gay – they are very conscious
>
> of that fact and what they are doing is giving me a platform, though they have not said
>
> that explicitly. They're giving me an opportunity should I choose to take it, that when
>
> they are talking about diversity and inclusiveness, and when they are talking about
>
> developing leadership, we're [LGBTQ persons] there. I've been to a couple of meetings

now, it's a diverse group but I'm the only gay man at the table. I still have to bring it

[LGBTQ issues and identity] up because it's not automatically included in that group of

people.

Discussions about the future for LGBTQ higher education leaders also included a

discussion about the unique nature of the LGBTQ presidents in higher education group and how

that organization is and will play a crucial role in setting the agenda for future LGBTQ leaders.

One participant stated:

The LGBTQ presidents in higher education group is critical. It's not that we are doing a

lot in terms of career development and advocacy, though we do some of that, it's that our

presence makes it [being a gay president] somewhat ordinary. We've become part and

parcel of the leadership agenda in higher education. That's one of our goals, to expand

opportunities for people who are talented enough to become presidents or vice presidents

or whatever it is and to provide support for them as they go through the process.

Another participant described the challenges facing the LGBTQ presidents in higher

education organization and future LGBTQ leaders stating, "The question becomes, how do you

make inclusiveness and what strategies do you follow so that we [LGBTQ persons] can have

opportunities as society moves into more of an understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ

people." One female participant supported the assertion stating:

If we have fair opportunities to compete, we'll succeed proportionately well on the merits

of our case. That will take a while just because institutions tend to be very conservative

and they are controlled by elements that are least predisposed to be progressive, but that's

an evolving situation. We're no different than anybody else in terms of our talent, and if

you give us a chance to talk to you, you'll discover that some of us are a perfect fit for

you and this other issue [being gay or lesbian], you'll just have to get over it or make it

clear that you don't care.

While it is important to continue focusing on the inclusion of LGBTQ leaders on

campuses, one study participant discussed the importance of increasing such diversity on

governing boards. The participant described what he is doing to help stating:

There is a movement to make more diverse boards of trustees and to have explicitly "out"

gay trustees. I am working with other leaders to create a joint program at the Association

of Governing Boards (AGB) about leadership development and inclusiveness and

explicitly inviting into the board room and presidencies LGBT people to discuss why that

is important. The strategy is very clearly a demographic one. If you look at the

American presidency [in higher education], over half of the presidency is over 60 years

old. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that in 10 years those people won't

be presidents, they'll either retire or die.

Summary

The study was designed to identify and explore the experiences of "out" gay and lesbian

higher education presidents. Study participants included six presidents from six distinct

institutions of higher education located throughout the United States. The study introduced the

importance of identity for gay and lesbian presidents and explored how identity affects

leadership and perceptions of leadership. Through the identity development process, each study

participant determined the importance of being openly gay in both their personal and

professional lives. The study further explored how each gay and lesbian president experiences

their role of president at their institution and beyond. Study participants described their

experiences related to the search process, challenges experiences related to their sexual

orientation, their campus climate toward LGBTQ persons, the role and importance of spouses

and partners, and human resources considerations and implications for hiring other LGBTQ

administrators. Overall, study participants described their experiences as positive with regard to

their role of being an openly gay or lesbian president. Each participant provided advice to future

LGBTQ leaders in higher education, with specific advice about overcoming fears and

perceptions about sexual orientation, as well as how to be an authentic leader. A few of the

participants are active in advocacy and leadership roles within higher education organizations

and are helping to establish resources for LGBTQ leaders in higher education. Study

participants advocated for LGBTQ leaders to be "out" and confident, as well as supportive of

other LGBTQ administrators.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The aim of argument, or of discussion, should not be victory, but progress.

Joseph Joubert

This study focused on understanding the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Data were collected from six study participants, three participants were gay males and three participants were lesbian females. Analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews led to the identification of three main themes and twelve sub-themes. The themes that emerged were related to each of the research questions presented prior to commencing the study.

Review of Themes

The three primary themes, "identity", the "LGBTQ presidency", and "future LGBTQ presidents and administrators", were identified through the data analysis process using NVivo software. Each primary theme supports the primary research question, "What are the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in institutions of higher education?"

Identity

The first theme, "Identity", relates to the study participants' individual and professional identities. Discussions regarding sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and being "out" took place with each participant. Participants also discussed how their sexual orientation and identity development within that paradigm affected their decision-making and leadership skills.

Gender identity and gender stereotypes played a role in how each participant was perceived in their role as president. Female participants reported the greatest incidence of gender identity and stereotype issues. Female participants also reacted to gender in a way that suggested their female identity played as large a role in their personal and professional lives as being a

lesbian. Female participants had two identities, being a female and being a lesbian, that have historically encountered discrimination and disparity in treatment, and that have impacted their identity development.

For male participants gender identity played a lesser role; however, a few male participants reported experiencing gender stereotypes as a result of their sexual orientation. Male study participants reported instances of being assigned a feminine identity simply because they were gay. One participant had a YouTube video released by students that ridiculed him because of the style of his dress. Another participant described a situation where he was considered courageous for wearing the color purple at an all-campus event; however, that participant described the situation as one of necessity because his laundry was dirty and the purple shirt was the only readily available option in his closet.

For each of the participants "coming out" was an ongoing process. The choice to be openly gay or lesbian in the study participants' personal lives was an individual choice and one that required discussions with friends and family. Making the decision to be "out" in a professional setting required a greater commitment of study participants' time and greater confidence in that the "coming out" process is never ending. All of the study participants assigned values of authenticity and integrity as their rationale for being openly gay or lesbian in the workplace. Participants felt that in order to be effective as leaders that they needed to be comfortable with their sexual orientation and confident in their leadership, two concepts that are not mutually exclusive from the perspective of the study participants.

The "Identity" theme is particularly important because of the effect that identity has on one's decision making, leadership style, and other personal characteristics. Study participants each reported how their identity as a gay male or lesbian female impacted them as professionals

and leaders. Participants discussed how their sexual orientations encouraged them to be inclusive in their leadership style, which was attributed to being part of a marginalized population. Participants described their decision-making as being influenced from an outsider perspective, in other words that they often approach problems differently than others and think differently about their approach to situations. Participants also described themselves as being relationship oriented, which is likely attributed to the need to build allies in their personal lives because of their sexual orientation.

The LGBTQ Presidency

The "LGBTQ Presidency" is the primary theme for the study in that it directly addresses the experiences of "out" higher education presidents. The theme itself captured the reported elements of the experiences of the study participants related to their formal role as a higher education president and their sexual orientation. The study findings provide useful insight into a gay and lesbian presidency, addressing unique elements of a gay and lesbian presidency, as well as indirectly addressing elements that may not be unique.

A unique characteristic about the study participants is that none of them outwardly pursued a presidency. In fact, all six participants anticipated holding faculty or other key administrative positions within an institution of higher education. Another unique characteristic of each participant is that they openly disclosed their sexual orientation during the presidential search process for their current positions. Study participants worked closely with search committees and search firms to disclose their sexual orientation, citing the need to ensure that the position was a good fit for them professionally. Institutional fit was described by all participants as being an important issue for both the institution and the presidential candidate. Institutional fit was described as necessary to ensure the short and long term successes of presidents. A new

president cannot apparently enjoy, or succeed in, the job if his or her values and inclinations are not consonant with the institutions. The institutional "fit" is arguably one of the most important aspects for a president. Most successful presidencies are the result of a good "fit". The same is true of unsuccessful presidencies; those are the result of a bad "fit".

The study directly sought information about challenges that study participants may have faced as a result of their sexual orientation. Open ended questions related to challenges/concerns were included in the semi-structured interview questions; each candidate could elect to share or not share information about challenges. Study participants described challenges and situations that related to their role as a gay or lesbian president. This sub-theme identified issues and challenges at multiple stages of each participant's development, starting from experiences as undergraduates at colleges and universities to experiences at their current institutions. One of the more egregious examples of challenges related to sexual orientation included an example by one participant of receiving a petition and recall notices after she was appointed as president simply because she was a lesbian.

Other study participants also experienced adversity due to their sexual orientation. One study participant described a situation whereby he was not considered for a presidency because he was gay; though he was not told that directly by the board, outside colleagues told him about discussions that took place regarding his sexual orientation as a rationale for not appointing him in the role of president. Although it is the 21st Century and most institutions of higher education embrace diversity, there are still systematic barriers that exist for gay and lesbian candidates pursuing a presidency. Stereotypes and misconceptions about the lifestyles of gay and lesbian candidates stigmatize that population. In part, these experiences necessitate the further exploration of the experiences of gay and lesbian presidents and administrators in higher

education settings. An enhanced understanding of the group's experiences will help to overcome future challenges by establishing a framework for working with LGBTQ professionals.

Campus climate related to LGBTQ populations was discussed with each study participant. While the experiences of study participants varied related to campus climate, it was clear that campus climate plays an important role in the lives of gay and lesbian presidents. To have a gay or lesbian president at an institution helps to unlock hidden diversity. Study participants being out in their role as presidents enabled other LGBTQ persons to feel more comfortable in their environment. Study participants reported that LGBTQ faculty, staff, students, and administrators experienced an enhanced campus climate as a result of having an openly gay or lesbian president. The enhanced experience manifests in several ways, including unlocking diversity, creation of LGBTQ and ally organizations, improvements in human resources policies, and in some cases the creation of training programs such as Safe Zone.

While overall gay and lesbian presidents appear to have positive impacts on campus environments related to LGBTQ issues and people, some of the study participants revealed insight about the challenges of hiring other gay and lesbian professionals. In what could be described as discrimination, study participants described additional processes and practices that are put in place when they are considering hiring openly gay and lesbian candidates. One study participant described a process whereby he has a discussion related to a candidates' sexual orientation with the chair of the board, but only if the candidate identifies as gay or lesbian. The study participant described this practice as being helpful to demonstrate that he is not hiring candidates based on their sexual orientation; he wants to ensure that the board and others understand that the candidate being hired is being hired for his or her qualifications. Given that sexual orientation is discussed, one might argue that having the discussion at all is inserting

sexual orientation into a hiring decision could lead to a gay or lesbian candidate not being hired. This study participant, however, reported that the board always accepts his recommendations regardless of the candidate's sexual orientation. Another study participant described himself as "being tougher on gay and lesbian candidates" during an interview process. This participant indicated that he feels that he must be somewhat "tougher" given that he may experience negative feedback about hiring gay and lesbian administrators. His goal is to ensure that the candidate is being hired because of his or her skills, not because of sexual orientation.

A final element that was explored related to the LGBTQ presidency concerned study participants' spouses and partners. As discovered through the interview process, spouses and partners played an important role for gay and lesbian presidents. While this may not be a unique aspect when comparing gay and lesbian presidents to heterosexual presidents, there appear to be differences in the perceptions of two same-sex spouses/partners. These divergent perspectives manifest from outside stakeholders and other university personnel. Same-sex spouses/partners often have to clarify their roles within a relationship and overcome gender and gender identity stereotypes.

Interestingly, five out of six study participants reported that their spouse or partner was professionally affiliated with an institution of higher education. As higher education "insiders", spouses and partners may be better positioned to navigate the demands of being a "first lady" or "first gentleman". The one participant that reported that his partner was employed outside of the academy indicated that his partner was very well received in social settings. This partner was helpful to the president in that he was able to unlock new potential with donors and campus constituents because of "his extroverted personality". Similar to spouses of heterosexual presidents, partners and spouses play a critical role in supporting gay and lesbian presidents, both

personally and professionally. This is not a surprise, but it would be interesting to further explore the role, treatment, and impact of same-sex partners/spouses of gay and lesbian presidents.

Future LGBTQ Presidents and Administrators

The future holds many uncertainties; however, one certainty for those pursuing a presidency is that there will be numerous retirements in the coming years. These retirements will create new opportunities for LGBTQ professionals to pursue higher education presidencies, and will create new opportunities for search committees and boards to discuss diversity and inclusion of LGBTQ candidates. Insight provided by current study participants will be helpful to LGBTQ persons pursuing a presidency or other leadership position in higher education. Salient advice from study participants related to LGBTQ candidates seeking a presidency include, being authentic, being "out", being confident, and ensuring that the presidential position is the right fit. For LGBTQ persons who are new to a presidential role, advice from current study participants included creating trusting environment, being authentic, staying the course (on decisions and strategies), and articulating a vision for the future of the institution. Furthering on those comments, I would recommend that new LGBTQ presidents join the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education group. The group of study participants with whom I was able to meet were very supportive of future LGBTQ leaders. Each study participant would provide unique insight related to being an "out" gay or lesbian president. Joining the LGBTQ presidents group would also create an instant support infrastructure and mentor group for new LGBTQ presidents.

Future advocacy for the inclusion of LGBTQ candidates in leadership roles in higher education settings is critical. A few of the current study participants are working to create additional opportunities for LGBTQ leaders via their advocacy within professional groups such

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as the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards. In addition to advocacy work, another important role that new LGBTQ presidents can play is being visible to the public at large. To further the agenda of "normalizing", at least in perception, LGBTQ presidents and leaders, it is important for LGBTQ persons to be "out" in their professional lives. This is not to suggest that sexual orientation is the only element that is important in a person's life; however, in order for institutions of higher education to become more inclusive, it is important for leaders to demonstrate that their sexual orientation will not limit their professional achievements.

Study Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of a study define the boundaries of the research and are determined by exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made throughout the study development. The scope of the current study was limited to the perceptions and experiences of "out" gay and lesbian presidents who elected to participate in the study. While the number of study participants represents twenty percent of the larger group of thirty "out" presidents in the United States, one wonders if the sample is enough to infer generalizable elements of all gay and lesbian presidents. Although questions were open-ended and participants were given the opportunity to discuss their own perceptions and experiences that came to mind, given that this is the first study of its kind, it may have been useful to establish follow up interviews. Beyond the member checking, a follow up interview may have resulted in additional relevant data. A follow up interview may also have assisted in building rapport and trust with each of the study participants.

Use of Queer Theory

Queer theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Queer theory "critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting

oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender" (Abes & Kasch, 2007). The approach taken in this study was to resist the oppressive social construction of sexual orientation and gender and to identify experiences of "out" gay and lesbian presidents in higher education settings. Reflecting on the interviews and analysis; however, I would argue that Queer Theory may not have been the best theoretical lens through which to view the experiences of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Participants in this study are attempting to overcome stereotypes and prejudices about their sexual orientation by "normalizing" gay and lesbianism. In other words, each study participant advocated for the need to change the perception of the masses that gays and lesbians are "normal", just like their heterosexual counterparts.

Throughout the study, participants discussed the involvement of their spouse and or partner in their formal role as president. Interactions with partners and the campus and external communities were also perceived as further assisting to "normalize" the participant's sexual orientation. One study participant referred to a book authored by Andrew Tobias, "The Best Little Boy in the World." The book was originally published anonymously, but nearly a decade later, Mr. Tobias wrote the sequel, "The Best Little Boy in the World Grows Up." The original books ensue in a discussion of the trials and tribulations of growing up "in the closet" being perceived as a good "straight" little boy. In the sequel, however, Tobias describes how the LGBTQ movement changed drastically from one of activism to one of normalization. He describes the changes as the "ho hum-ization of gays and lesbians", meaning that gays' and lesbians' lives are really rather boring just like straight males and females; there is nothing too different or exciting about how gays and lesbians live.

The use of Queer Theory may have assisted in the study in recognizing that gay and lesbian study participants are unique individuals who bring unique characteristics to their

presidencies. Use of Queer Theory also helped to not assume that participants were like their heterosexual counterparts. However, after conducting the participant interviews and subsequent analysis, it is clear that gay and lesbian presidents share a lot in common with their heterosexual brothers and sisters. As one participant so eloquently noted, "At the end of the day, the board doesn't care that I'm gay, they care more about my achievements as president. They want to know if I am furthering the mission of the institution, if I am fundraising, and if objectives are being met." It was further discussed with one study participant that the primary agenda of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education group is to "normalize" the perception of gays and lesbians so as to create opportunities for future leaders. The principles of Queer Theory would challenge this assertion, likely leading to the opposite view that gays and lesbians should not have to fight to "normalize" themselves within the heterosexual context.

As previously indicated, there are no prior studies related to this phenomenon. As a result, there are no other studies to which I can relate the findings of the current study. This study provides a unique opportunity for future research to explore the experiences of being an openly gay or lesbian president.

Future Research

This research study focused on the experiences of six gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Future research about gay and lesbian presidents may add to the literature pertaining to leadership and diversity in higher education. Research pertaining to other LGBTQ groups in higher education settings, for example, faculty, staff, and administrators, may be supported by the findings of this study.

Future research might include a comparison of heterosexual presidents to gay and lesbian presidents. Such a study may better highlight whether or not differences in experiences result

due to sexual orientation. Other areas to consider would be studying the role that partners play in the lives of gay and lesbian presidents. In speaking with each of the current study's participants, partner and spouse stories were varied; however, it seemed common that partners have great influence in the lives of presidents.

Another area that should be further explored by researchers is related to the hiring practices of gay and lesbian presidents and/or administrators. Specifically, given the information reported in the current study about hiring practices related to gay and lesbian candidates, it would be interesting to further explore if/how hiring decisions are impacted based on a candidate's sexual orientation. This would be especially interesting if one were to specifically focus on the hiring practices of other gays and lesbians.

In his 2013 inaugural address, President Barrack Obama stated, "We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths -- that all of us are created equal -- is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall..." he said. He continued: "It is now our generation's task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers, and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law -- for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well." This was the first time that a United States president has addressed gay rights during an inauguration speech.

As attitudes in the United States evolve and change regarding sexual orientation, it will become increasingly important for scholars, researchers, and institutions of higher education to understand this social, economic and political experiences of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents. Institutions of higher education, much like the military, should be beacons

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for social equality and equity. These institutions should give the same educational and professional opportunities to gays and lesbians as they would to their straight counterparts. High level administrative and presidential positions in colleges and universities will increasingly become occupied by gays and lesbians, but in order for better understanding to occur, social and research agendas will need to align the gay and lesbian movement with the likes of race and gender.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological research study was to explore the experiences of "out" gay and lesbian presidents in higher education. Using Queer Theory as the theoretical lens through which to observe this phenomenon, I created a semi-structured interview guide consisting of twelve questions and interviewed six study participants who were university or colleges presidents and who identified as openly gay or lesbian. Study participants included three gay males and three lesbian females. The study began without preconceived notions about outcomes because no prior study had attempted to understand the experiences of this group, data collected as part of the study would provide a benchmark for future study.

The findings of the present research study provided new insights about the experiences of "out" gay and lesbian higher education presidents. I analyzed the six semi-structured recorded interviews using NVivo software. Analysis of the data presented three themes, "identity", the "LGBTQ presidency", and "future LGBTQ presidents and leaders". The three themes were backed by twelve sub-themes, all of which supported the primary research question, "What are the experiences of openly gay and lesbian presidents in institutions of higher education?" The interview data yielded new information for search committees, boards, human resources professionals, and LGBTQ persons to consider when hiring for or pursuing a presidency.

The final study will be submitted to the Journal of Homosexuality, the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education and other professional journals for publication consideration. Additionally, the LGBTQ Higher Education President's group is interested in having the study made available to its constituents as well as the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in the American Council of Education.

Chapter 5 presented the study findings related to the three themes explored in Chapter 4, along with personal insights and reflection from the researcher. Use of Queer Theory as a theoretical framework was explored. Future research ideas based on the study findings include expansion of the study to include a comparative analysis of gay and lesbian presidents to heterosexual presidents, as well as to further explanation of the role and influence of partners and spouses of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

Colorado State University
Knowledge to Go Places

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE:	August 27, 2012
TO:	Kuk, Linda, School of Education
	Robinson, Dan, School of Education, Bullard, Eric, School of Education, Lucas, Kathy
FROM:	Barker, Janell, Coordinator, CSU IRB 2
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Queer Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Out Gay and Lesbian Higher Education Presidents
FUNDING SOURCE:	NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	12-3726H
APPROVAL PERIOD:	Approval Date: August 24, 2012 Expiration Date: August 22, 2013

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Queer Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Out Gay and Lesbian Higher Education Presidents. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

Janell Barker, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1655 Janell.Barker@Colostate.edu
Evelyn Swiss, IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381 Evelyn.Swiss@Colostate.edu

Barker, Janell

Janell Barker

Barker, Janell

Approval is to recruit 6 participants with the approved cover letter and consent. The above-referenced project was approved by the Institutional Review Board with the condition that the approved consent form is signed by the subjects and each subject is given a copy of the form. NO changes may be made to this document without first obtaining the approval of the IRB.

Approval Period:	August 24, 2012 through August 22, 2013
Review Type:	EXPEDITED
IRB Number:	00000202

Page: 1

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM AND RECRUITMENT LETTERS

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: *Queer Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Out Gay and Lesbian Higher Education Presidents.*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Linda Kuk, Ph.D., School of Education, email:* linda.kuk@colostate.edu *and phone, 970-491-5160.*

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Eric Bullard, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, email:* eric.bullard@colostate.edu *and phone, 562-308-6118.*

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? *You have been identified as a potential research participant because of your affiliation with the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization.*

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? *The principal investigator, Dr. Linda Kuk, is the Director of the College and University Leadership program and an Associate Professor in the School of Education. Dr. Kuk is the primary advisor to the co-principal investigator, Mr. Eric Bullard. Mr. Bullard is an openly gay university administrator who works full-time at California State University, Long Beach. This study is being conducted for Mr. Bullard's doctoral dissertation.*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? *The purpose of the study is to better understand the experiences of openly gay and lesbian higher education presidents as related to their formal role at an institution of higher education.*

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? *The study will consist of a 2-hour face-to-face audio-recorded interview that will take place at the workplace of each research participant. In addition to the 2-hour interview, the investigators would like each research participant to participate in member checking, an activity that will verify the accuracy of the transcribed formal interview.*

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? *Each research participant will be asked to participate in a 2-hour audio-recorded face-to-face interview. Additionally each participant will be asked to participate in member checking, an activity designed to verify the accuracy of the interview transcript. The member checking activity should take each participant 1-2 hours.*

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? *While each research participant will have a masked identity, it may be possible for individuals to identify each participant through identified experiences, etc. It is the intent of the investigators to publish the study with an appropriate journal.*

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
There are no known risks associated with participating in this research.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? *Participation in this study will not directly benefit participants; however, the study itself will be a ground-breaking study on the experiences of LGBTQ administrators. This study should prove useful to future LGBTQ scholars and researchers, as well as to LGBTQ individuals who may aspire to become a higher education president.*

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

Each research participant will choose a pseudonym that will be used to discuss and analyze information that is provided during the formal interview. For example, Mr. Bullard may elect to use the pseudonym of "George"; in this case all information related to Mr. Bullard would be identified as George. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court OR *to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.*

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? *Research participants will receive no compensation for their participation in this study.*

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the co-principal investigator, Eric Bullard at 562-308-6118. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on August 24, 2012.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW? *Each interview will be audio-recorded.*

Research participants will be asked to participate in member checking, an activity designed to verify the accuracy of their transcribed interview. Please acknowledge that you are willing to participate in member checking after the initial interview by checking the following _____ and initialing here _____.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

Colorado State University

School of Education

August 30, 2012

Sample President
Sample University

Dear Dr. XXXX:

My name is Eric Bullard and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on the experiences of gay and lesbian presidents in higher education. The title of our project is *Queer Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Out Gay and Lesbian Higher Education Presidents*. The Principal Investigator is Dr. Linda Kuk in the School of Education. You have been identified as a potential research candidate due to your affiliation with the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization. I obtained your contact information via the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education website (http://www.lgbtqpresidents.org/).

We invite you to participate in the study by participating in a 2-hour audio recorded face-to-face interview to talk about your experiences as a gay or lesbian president in higher education. Participation will take approximately 2 hours and will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. In addition to your participation in a 2-hour audio recorded interview, the investigators would like you to participate in member checking activity after initial data analysis for the project. The member checking activity should take no more than 1-2 hours of your time; the purpose of the member checking is to ensure that interview transcription is accurate. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. I would also like to invite your partner or significant other to attend breakfast, lunch or coffee prior to the formal interview. This will allow us to get to know one another prior to the formal research activity.

I have attached the consent form for this research to give you more information about the study. If you would like to participate in this research or have any questions, please contact Eric Bullard at 562-308-6118 or eric.bullard@colostate.edu You may also contact Dr. Linda Kuk, Principal Investigator, at 970-491-5160 or lind.kuk@colostate.edu If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-7243. I will be following this email with a phone call within the next week.

Sincerely,

Linda Kuk, Ph.D.   Eric Bullard, M.P.A.
Associate Professor   Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant Interview Guide

1. Tell me how you came to serve as a university/college president

2. At what point in the application and/or interview process did you come out?

3. How has your sexuality impacted your experiences in your role as president?

4. Have you ever encountered challenges in your professional life as a result of your sexual orientation?

5. How would you describe the campus climate toward gays and lesbians at your institution?

6. How would you describe the institution's board of governors' attitude toward your sexual orientation?

7. How have faculty, staff, and students responded to your sexual orientation?

8. What do you think is helpful in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for gays and lesbians?

9. How have community members, alumni, and other stakeholders responded to your sexual orientation?

10. Does your partner/spouse attend official university functions? How has that been?

11. What advice would you give to someone in the LGBTQ community considering pursuing a presidency at a university or college?

12. Are there any questions that come to mind that I should have asked you that were more pertinent to your experience?