

Institutionalized Sexual Prejudice:
A narrative analysis of LGBTQ teacher experiences

by

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ABSTRACT

**Institutionalized Sexual Prejudice:
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This thesis is an investigation of the experiences of LGBQ public elementary teachers in Ontario as described by the personal narratives of 13 respondents. In general, these teachers often remain closeted at work because elementary schools tend to be oppressive environments for any person who violates heteronormative expectations (Duke, 2007; Hooker, 2010). To date, little is known about this demographic group, and this study was designed as an exploratory investigation within a narrative inquiry framework. Three main research questions guided this thesis: (1) what are the experiences and opinions around coming out in the classroom among LGBQ elementary school teachers in Ontario, (2) How does being an LGBQ teacher influence one's pedagogical approaches, and (3) In what ways are LGBQ teachers resilient in the face of prejudice-related adversity. Teachers reported feeling oppression and fear of job loss, engaging in risk-benefit analyses before letting their LGBQ identities influence their teaching, and finding satisfaction in being a positive LGBQ role model to students.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ¹) identified educators find themselves in a “matryoshka” closet insofar as disclosing their sexual orientation can occur at each layer of the education system – school boards and unions, administration, colleagues, parents, and students. Coming out at each layer comes with its own challenges and risks because elementary schools are oppressive environments for teachers who challenge the heteronormative status quo (Duke, 2007; Hooker, 2010; Singer, 1997). Previous research, mostly from the United States, has shown that LGBQ K-12 teachers experience prejudice and discrimination at work; however, not enough research has been done to determine why this occurs. Furthermore, cultural differences between the two countries may affect LGBQ teachers’ experiences and may challenge any assumption of similarity or uniformity. The present research examines the question of if and how LGBQ teachers in Ontario, Canada experience oppression, prejudice, and discrimination in their work environments. A narrative methodological approach was chosen in order to obtain detailed and personally-interpreted information from the respondents.

The research focused on elementary teachers in the public school system, excluding teachers within private or religious school boards. The decision was made to exclude teachers outside the public school system because of policy and value differences between these teaching environments. Elementary teachers were chosen for two main reasons. First, previous research has shown that one source of prejudice and discrimination for LGBQ teachers is parents who, on average, have been shown to hold a very strict set of views about teachers (Singer, 1997). The frequent assumption underlying many parents’ prejudice and discrimination is the worry that

¹ While often grouped with sexual orientation minorities, transgender individuals are not included in this research for two reasons: (1) none were identified during recruitment of the participants, and (2) very little literature on teacher experiences includes those who are transgender (likely for the same reason).

individuals from non-heterosexual orientations may affect children's sexual activity. The topic of sex (and in particular same-sex sexuality) in elementary schools is contentious (CBC News, 2013; CTV News, 2014; O'Connell, 2013), so it naturally follows that some parents will be concerned about LGBTQ individuals teaching their young children. The second reason for focusing on elementary teachers is also related to the young age of the students. A harmful stereotype exists that LGBTQ people (especially gay men) are more likely to be pedophiles, and parents have used this stereotype as an argument against LGBTQ people being teachers of young children (King, 2004, Rensenbrink, 1996; Schlatter & Steinback, 2010; Wright, 2010).

Three research questions guided this exploratory study: (1) what are the experiences and opinions around coming out in the classroom among LGBTQ elementary school teachers in Ontario, (2) How does being an LGBTQ teacher influence one's pedagogical approaches, and (3) In what ways are LGBTQ teachers resilient in the face of prejudice-related adversity. These questions were designed to be broad, enabling participants to guide and develop the focus of data collection. Such a respondent-driven, exploratory approach was chosen due to the dearth of existing research on this demographic group and their set of experiences. The literature that does exist has been reviewed below.

LGBTQ teacher experiences

There is a paucity of research on LGBTQ educators and only one known peer-reviewed publication exists on their experiences in Canada. A thorough search of the literature using multiple keywords, multiple databases, and citation searching resulted in locating eleven academic sources of LGBTQ, K-12 teacher experiences. Four of these were dissertations, and eight were based on U.S. samples. Five of these papers were older than ten years (i.e. published before 2004), which, in a research area so dependent on an ever-changing social environment,

may not necessarily reflect current realities. Only three of the ten sources were based on Canadian samples: one was a PhD dissertation on lesbian teachers in Nova Scotia (Singer, 1997), another a Master's thesis on lesbian and gay teacher experiences in Vancouver, British Columbia (Lecky, 2009), and the third, an Ontario survey of teachers (in general) that included LGBT teachers in its sample and focused on opinions more than experiences (Schneider & Dimito, 2008). Although representing a different context, a small amount of literature also exists on LGBTQ Catholic School teachers. A brief comparison of public and religious school teacher experiences is discussed later in this chapter.

Much of the existing literature that has explored the challenges of LGBTQ teachers is non-academic (e.g. personal narratives and essays, non-academic books). Given the context of the study, one that explores personal experiences of an oppressed group in a rapidly changing social and political environment with few academic studies at my disposal, I chose to expand the nature of my research to sources that are not scientifically validated in the traditional sense but still extremely valuable. Major themes garnered from the larger body of knowledge are incorporated into discussion of empirical research findings in the following literature review.

Oppressive environments. Schools are oppressive of individuals and of discourses that “undermine” heterosexuality and gender role norms (Duke, 2007; Hooker, 2010; Singer, 1997). Even those who are comfortable being out in their private lives, and who may even be LGBTQ activists in their communities, feel the oppressive power of the school system and feel unable to be out at work (Duke, 2007; Hooker, 2010; Jennings, 2005). One teacher who submitted her story to Jennings's (2005) compilation stated that she was told as a student teacher that she would have to conceal her sexual orientation for her entire professional life.

Although religious school educators are beyond the scope of this study due to different policies and values (i.e. different from Canadian majority policies and value norms), religious schools provide a perfect example of how LGBQ individuals can be discriminated against in the employment setting even when provincial legislation exists to protect against discrimination in the workplace (Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990; Egan v. Canada, 1995). Catholic schools affirm that it is ok to love the sinner (i.e., do not discriminate), but being LGBQ is still a sin and cannot be “endorsed” (Ferfolja, 2005). It is an oppressive paradox. As a result, LGBQ teachers in Catholic schools experience harassment, having their teaching under observation and scrutiny, having their identities silenced, and job loss through firing and feeling forced to resign (Ferfolja, 2005, Paterson, 2001).

This lack of effectiveness of anti-discrimination legislation reflects the experiences in public schools as well (Duke, 2007; Hooker, 2010; Irwin, 2002; Woods & Harbeck, 1992; Wright, 2010). Given that religious school boards are exempt from anti-discrimination laws that infringe on their religious rights (Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990, s 24;1), the fact that we find the same patterns of discrimination in both public and religious schools can be seen as a statement about the lack of effectiveness of anti-discrimination laws in Ontario. As further evidence for the lack of effectiveness of anti-discrimination laws, the existence of anti-discrimination policy (by region) does not necessarily predict employment equity in any profession (Klawitter & Flatt, 1998). The lack of relationship between anti-discrimination policies and income for LGBQ people suggests that anti-discrimination policies are not consistently effective in maintaining employment equity. While Klawitter and Flatt’s study is based on a U.S. sample, the finding that anti-discrimination policy may not be effective could be

relevant to Canada; although Canada has widespread anti-discrimination policies, these policies may have less effect than expected.

While most LGBQ educators report having supportive relationships with coworkers and at least some administrators, this support of their sexual orientations may only apply outside of the classroom (Hooker, 2010, Jennings, 2005; Singer, 1997; Wright, 2010). That is, colleagues may be supportive of their LGBQ coworkers in staff room discussions about personal lives, but do not believe that LGBQ teachers should be out to the students. In fact, one Canadian survey found that even among heterosexual teachers, 27% expected their colleagues to oppose them for teaching about LGBQ issues, and 23% feared their colleagues would harass them for doing so (Schneider & Dimito, 2008). Without support to be out to students, the main mechanism of oppression appears to be fear (Duke, 2007; Jennings, 2005; Wright, 2010).

Fear. In general, teachers are afraid of prejudice and discrimination based on their sexual orientation. One commonly reported form of discrimination that LGBQ teachers are afraid of is job loss (Duke, 2007; Griffin, 1992; Hooker, 2010; Irwin, 2002; Jennings, 2005; Singer, 1997; Woods & Harbeck, 1992; Wright, 2010). Interestingly, one national U.S. study found that those who had been teaching for 11-15 years felt more job security than those with 0-5 or 21-30 years of experience (Wright, 2010). Wright theorizes that this difference occurs because older generations who have been teaching longer are less empowered by the Gay Rights Movement and therefore have more fear than those whose careers have been ongoing for a shorter period of time. By contrast, members of the youngest generation who have been teaching for less than 5 years does not feel like they have had enough chance to prove themselves as teachers, and therefore feel more at risk of discrimination affecting their employment.

Norris (1992) and Wright (2010) also identified geographical location as a key variable in feeling fear. For example, there is more homophobia and homophobic bullying in schools in the Midwestern, conservative states in the U.S., which leads to more fear for LGBTQ teachers in this region than for those in more liberal leaning regions. More generally, Tilcsik (2011) found that states with majority conservative attitudes and values (e.g. Texas) were more discriminatory of gay men in their hiring practices than states with majority progressive or liberal attitudes and values (e.g. New York). While I cannot test hypotheses based on such geographical patterns due to the small sample size, previous research suggests the important role that conservative versus liberal regions can play in the experience of oppression and discrimination for LGBTQ employees. Therefore, participant context will be monitored for stories about particularly conservative or liberal areas of Ontario.

LGBTQ teachers believe that employers will either terminate their employment for “other reasons” (i.e., claim poor performance as a cover for termination based on sexual orientation) or will harass them until they feel forced to resign (Singer, 1997; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Another tactic for termination that these teachers fear is loss of credibility or respect in their positions as teachers. Loss of credibility can occur among students, colleagues, and parents that will give the employer just cause for termination (Griffin, 1992). Singer also identified that lesbian teachers feel the need to work harder to protect themselves from being fired for “other reasons”.

Griffin (1992) created a model of the fear LGBTQ teachers face, which begins with public accusation of being LGBTQ. This public outing leads to the expectation that, because they are lesbian or gay, they will be accused of molesting children or attempting to recruit students to a gay lifestyle. Once the teacher is publicly out, the fear progresses to the heightened anxiety that

being out will result in the loss of effectiveness as a teacher or, worse, the fear of job loss. The fears of being accused of child molestation and recruiting to the gay lifestyle are quite consistent with the well documented and typical fear of parental response (Singer, 1997). Some research has also expressed some fear for personal safety (Hooker, 2010; Wright, 2010). Actual experiences of threats to personal safety will be discussed in a later section.

More generally, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees in various areas of employment (e.g. professional, technical, clerical, sales, etc.) reported the same fears experienced by LGBQ teachers, such as fear of public disclosure of their sexual orientation and fear of job loss (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). Antecedents of fear in the general LGB employee population were also revealed: Those employees who had LGB supervisors or coworkers reported less fear than those with heterosexual supervisors and colleagues, and those with supervisors and colleagues who were supportive of LGBT orientation and rights reported less fear. Also, those employees who had experienced sexual orientation-based discrimination in the past reported more fear in their workplace (Ragins, et al., 2007). It is yet unknown if these fears, mostly reported from the U.S., are the same fears Ontario teachers feel given the generally more accepted status of gays and lesbians in this province when compared to the more conservative values held in many parts of the U.S. (Lehman, 2006).

Identity conflict. Many LGBQ teachers feel the need to juggle their personal and private identities so they can remain closeted in their professional lives (Singer, 1997). Every teacher seems to negotiate her/his identity differently with regards to the level of openness and the selection of people her/his sexual orientation is disclosed to (Hooker, 2010).

Woods and Harbeck (1992) revealed three identity management techniques used by lesbian and gay teachers. The first, passing as heterosexual, often involved using an opposite sex

friend to pose as a heterosexual couple at school functions, or bringing partners to school functions but referring to them as friends or roommates. Teachers who are attempting to pass as heterosexual also report changing pronouns and names of partners in discussions at school to give the impression of being in a heterosexual relationship. The second technique is self-distancing from others at school, which is simply a way of selecting which colleagues or, rarely, students, are safe to disclose to and which should be avoided. The third technique, self-distancing from discussion of gay issues, is potentially the most harmful, as it involves remaining silent when students make homophobic remarks. This technique also involves avoiding teaching curriculum that relates to sexuality in any form (e.g., AIDS education and sexual health education) for fear that topics covered will lead students to associate the teacher with homosexuality.

Students are intuitive. Despite some teachers' efforts to disassociate with homosexuality, even elementary school aged children are sometimes more intuitive than expected, knowing of the teacher's sexual orientation before it had been disclosed (Jennings, 2005). Such accurate guessing might be because of physical characteristics or mannerisms that LGBQ teachers exhibit in conjunction with increasing representation of stereotypical LGBQ people in the media, or it may be a more subtle effect, as found by Rule, Ambady and Hallet (2009) who recorded the accurate guessing of females' sexual orientation in a 50 millisecond first impression. If students are more perceptive than we think and are able to detect when a teacher is of another sexual orientation, hiding one's orientation and ignoring homophobic comments between students will likely give the impression that being lesbian or gay is something worth hiding and to be ashamed of.

Opposing arguments based on misconceptions. In past studies, the teachers who have shared their experiences report three common misconceptions held by those who oppose the disclosure of LGBTQ teachers to students: (1) gay men are pedophiles, (2) coming out to a class would involve vulgar sexual discourse and description of gay sex, and (3) if heterosexual teachers don't feel the need to share their sexual preferences with students, neither should LGBTQ teachers.

The misconception that LGBTQ² (especially gay male) teachers are pedophiles is a common and harmful stereotype (King, 2004, Rensenbrink, 1996; Schlatter & Steinback, 2010; Wright, 2010) and is somewhat related to the idea that sexual orientation is purely about sexual activity. These stereotypes exist in a belief system that labels homosexuality as a sinful, abnormal, sexual deviancy (Khayatt, 1992). Not only are these harmful and unfounded stereotypes, there is a flaw in the logic behind using these stereotypes to oppress discourse of sexual orientation in schools: elementary school-aged children are hearing about sexuality from potentially inaccurate sources like other children on the school yard. Professor of adolescent medicine at University of British Columbia, Elizabeth Saewyc, discussed with *The Globe and Mail* the need for improved health education with inclusion of sexual orientation: "We need to have those conversations by age 11 or 12... If you want to hear explicit, listen in to the conversations in the schoolyard and online. There isn't anything explicit or shocking in the curriculum" (Agrell & Picard, 2010, p. 1). If coming out in the classroom increases the amount of discourse on same-sex sexuality, the result would not be "introducing young children to sexuality, but simply contextualizing information to which most already have been exposed" (Agrell & Picard, p. 1).

² Previous research has focused on the pedophilia misconception as it pertains to gay men; however, the present findings show that this misconception is a concern for other sexual minority teachers as well.

Those who oppose LGBTQ teachers as outlined above argue that straight teachers don't talk about their sexual preferences in the classroom, and therefore LGBTQ should not either (Jennings, 2005). This argument reveals that oppressors of disclosure may be ignorant to the concepts of heterosexism and dominant group privilege and do not recognize the subtle ways heterosexuals disclose their sexual orientation. This argument may also reveal that some oppressors of disclosure understand their heterosexual privilege and intend to use their privilege to maintain the heterosexual status quo. One teacher in Jennings's (2005) compilation of personal narratives explained how he responds to such an argument:

...I ask them if they wear a wedding ring or have a photo of their spouse on their desk or brag about their children. When they reply yes, I mention that *all* of those simple acts are ways of letting the kids know that you are heterosexual. I also note that sexual orientation is a spectrum of emotions, feelings, and people in our lives that make us who we are. And if your students can know who you are, why can't my students have that same right? (Richard Ognibene, in Jennings, 2005, p. 226).

Overt discrimination and harassment. The norm in this body of literature is qualitatively reported experiences. Irwin (2002), however, conducted a quantitative study of harassment and discrimination among 120 LGBT Australian k-12 and post-secondary teachers and found that thirty-five percent of the sample reported being the target of homophobic jokes, 31% received unwelcome questions about their sexuality, 23% felt socially excluded, 18% reported being ridiculed, and 16% were harassed. Twenty-seven percent of the sample reported that they had been "outed" without their permission. Eleven percent were threatened with physical violence, 5% were threatened with sexual violence, and 5% had personal property damaged as an attack on their sexual orientation. Three respondents had been physically

assaulted and 1 had been sexually assaulted. In terms of the effects of sexual orientation on workplace dynamics and employment, 26 of the 120 educators/academics experienced the undermining or sabotaging of their work, 18 reported unreasonable work expectations (undefined), 18 felt they were given limited opportunities for career development, 16 reported a loss of promotion, and 11 were denied entitlements available to heterosexual staff (e.g. parental leave).

Pedagogical implications

How teachers negotiate their identity affects their work relationships. That is, being guarded about their sexual orientation results in being less open in general with members of the school community, which in turn affects their roles and practices in dealing with students and curriculum issues (Hooker, 2010). For instance, LGBQ teachers who were not out at school reported failing to stop homophobic name-calling and avoiding teaching the sexuality curriculum (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). In contrast, those who were out in the classroom felt that their LGBQ identities better equipped them for dealing with homophobia among students (Singer, 1997). Griffin's (1992) respondents expressed somewhat conflicting opinions about themselves: that being gay has nothing to do with being a teacher, and that being gay makes them sensitive to the implications of being 'different' from the norm which brings something special to their teaching. One possible reason is that LGBQ teachers notice and are more likely to address homophobic comments as teachable moments (Hooker, 2010; Jennings, 2005).

In addition, Griffin (1992) found that the teachers in her sample reported being more productive after coming out to a supportive environment, when they no longer had to "expend energy hiding and protecting themselves from the prejudice and ignorance of a homophobic

community” (p. 194). Similarly, Mike Russell (see Jennings, 2005, p. 195), notes that “I’ve found that the more myself I am in front of my class, the more effective a teacher I can be”.

Resilience

Resilience literature addresses the ways, or processes, by which individuals respond to adversity to reach an adaptive outcome (Garmezy & Masten, 1991; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2007; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). A resilient response has been ascribed to individual difference (Gallo, Bogart, Vranceanu, & Matthews, 2005), but also depends on the type of adversity and the individual’s perception of the adversity (Kumpfer, 1999). For example, two teachers may experience discrimination from a parent who wants their employment terminated because of their sexual orientation. One teacher perceives this as an unrealistic threat due to Canada’s anti-discrimination laws, while the other perceives it as a very real threat due to past experiences of discrimination affecting employment (either personally, or knowledge of someone else’s experience). Unger (2011) theorizes that the contextual environment influences whether an individual will respond to adversity with resilience or not. Specifically, resilient individuals “navigate their way to the resources they need to flourish” (p. 2). Following with the same example, this theory would suggest that one teacher is resilient because she focuses on the protection she can receive from anti-discrimination laws, while the other does not find a protective resource.

Bowleg, Brooks, and Ritz (2008) investigated how Black lesbians showed resilience in response to prejudice and discrimination in the workplace and found three consistent coping strategies: being out, navigating how closeted they needed to be to avoid prejudice and discrimination, and challenging heteronormativity by educating their coworkers about prejudice and discrimination. Hayes, Singh, and Watson (2011) found similar resilience strategies among

transgender people coping with societal oppression and discrimination. These include: (1) having confidence, or a sense of self-worth, (2) being aware of and understanding the oppression, (3) having a supportive community, (4) being hopeful for an end to oppression and discrimination, and (5) being a positive trans role model.

No research has investigated the resilience strategies of LGBQ teachers. However, while LGBQ teachers may have specific factors in the oppression and discrimination they face (i.e. students and parents), the research presented here bears a close resemblance to the teacher sample in terms of identity (Lesbian and Trans), environment (workplace), and adversity (oppression and discrimination). We can therefore expect that some of these same resilience strategies will be utilized by LGBQ teachers.

Chapter 2: Methods

Hidden Population

LGBQ communities, where research is concerned, are a hidden or hard-to-reach population. Hidden populations are those individuals or groups of people who have identities or experiences that are not validated by dominant society, and because of this, are at risk of discrimination if exposed (Browne, 2005). Research topics of a sensitive nature can also make populations hidden to the researcher. In the present research, for instance, the topic produces discussion of sexuality based discrimination which can increase the risks associated with disclosure – for instance, further discrimination, personal distress from re-telling painful stories, etc. – therefore making potential participants more hidden (Tortu, Gondsamt, & Hamid, 2001).

The primary goal of research with hidden populations is to represent a demographic that is not captured in standard probability or randomly sampled research (Crosby, Salazar, DiClemente, & Lang, 2010). The more potential participants feel the need to hide their identities

or experiences, the more difficult sampling will be (Faugler & Sargeant, 1997). To recruit such a sample we have tools at our disposal such as snowball sampling (Browne, 2005; Faugler & Sargeant, 1997), derived rapport, which involves recruiting via people, organizations or communities that have an existing relationship with the population of interest (Temple, 2011), and internet advertising, including posting on content-specific message boards and forums and emailing listserves (Temple, 2011), to name a few. The internet recruiting method is a highly recommended method for hidden populations (Klein, Lambing, Moskowitz, Washington, & Gilbert, 2010; Miner, Bockting, Romine & Raman, 2012; Temple, 2011). In a previous study testing the effectiveness of different internet recruiting methods for accessing a hidden population (i.e. cannabis users), the researchers found that posting on websites and forums that were relevant to the population was more effective than posting on general websites and forums (Temple, 2011).

Recruitment

Sampling for hidden populations should also always be ongoing – a reflexive part of the research process (Faugler & Sargeant, 1997; Hoppitt, Shah, Bradburn, Gill, Calvert, Pall et al., 2012; Lee, 1993). This instruction is based on the logic that the more we learn about our topic or population of interest, the better we can know who (and where) to sample. Four main recruitment strategies were employed: in order of *expected* success, I attempted to recruit through the teachers' union, school principals, internet advertising, and snowball sampling. Actual success levels varied from what was expected.

There is a common theme underlying the methods used: they are all dependent on derived rapport. Sometimes these people, organizations or communities can be useful in starting off the referral chain by passing along the research information, and sometimes they can contribute to a

tentative map of where to find the population (Faugler & Sargeant, 1997). In this case, the former was most helpful.

Initially, a recruitment notice was sent to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (the largest teachers' union in the province) for distribution (see Appendix A). After attempts at developing connections with union employees via email and phone (the only available contact methods), one district president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario agreed to distribute the recruitment notice (see Appendix B) to all teachers in their membership (about 2200 teachers). Only two of the thirteen participants were recruited from this method. The recruitment notice was also sent to individual schools, care of the school principal, for distribution. Principals were phoned and told that they could help by either emailing the recruitment notice to all teaching staff or by posting a physical copy in their staff rooms. However, two school boards quickly intercepted the school contact method (after only twenty-five contacts had been made) and requested that we work through the boards to access the schools; the boards then either refused our applications to access the schools, or deterred us from applying altogether.

The strategies of contacting the teachers' union and school principals utilized a blend of derived rapport – assuming the teachers had a positive rapport with their union representatives and/or their principals – and internet recruiting methods – the researcher's rapport with these connections was developed online through emails, and the teachers were informed of the research via a mass e-mail that was delivered to all members of the ETFO local that agreed to assist us. No participants resulted from contacting twenty-five school principals, although it is unknown how many principals distributed the information before the school boards restricted our access. It is impossible to know whether the attempt at using derived rapport with school

principals, had it not been discontinued by the school board policies, would have yielded the hoped-for result, because principals may not have been willing to expose their LGBTQ teachers, and because LGBTQ teachers may not have been willing to reveal themselves to an employer in a traditionally oppressive work environment (Faugler & Sargeant 1997).

Topic-specific internet advertising resulted in the most participants. Internet recruiting involved contacting Canadian LGBTQ websites and having the recruitment notice (Appendix B) circulated on content-specific listservs; in most cases, the website belonged to a community group with a physical presence and the recruitment notice was emailed to members. Following is a list of successful internet recruiting strategies:

- Durham District School Board's privately organized LGBTQ Educator's Group – president emailed recruitment notice to members (resulted in n=2)
- Guelph Rainbow Chorus (a community choir for LGBTQ people) – group's website manager emailed recruitment notice to members (resulted in n=3)
- PAR-L (National electronic feminist network) – distributed through listserv (resulted in n=1)
- Equity Conference Website – unidentified participant posted study information on website forum (resulted in n=1)

In addition, an attempt was made to utilize Toronto's 519 LGBTQ Community Centre's listserv, but the organization decided to post physical flyers in their community space instead (resulted in n=1). Only two participants were recruited via traditional snowball sampling, and both were referred by participants who had initially been recruited from the Rainbow Chorus. Business cards containing the recruitment information were given to participants as a tool to aid in the referral process (see Appendix C), but it is unknown if the card was distributed by anyone.

The goal for recruitment was twenty participants, but after five months, thirteen participants completed interviews and timelines necessitated wrapping up the recruitment process. Three additional participants were located, but two ceased responding to emails to schedule interviews, and one was found after the data collection phase (during writing of the final draft of thesis).

Procedure

Potential participants were given a detailed consent form (see Appendix D) outlining all possible risks and benefits, and if they consented, an in-person interview was scheduled at a location of their choice (e.g. participant's home, coffee shop). In two cases the participant was outside of a reasonable driving distance (one had recently moved to New Brunswick and one was located in Northern Ontario, approximately 500km from the interviewer). For these situations we employed phone or Skype interviews, depending on what the participant was most comfortable with (we did one of each). The interviews lasted between forty minutes and two hours, and participants were given \$25 honorariums. Two participants declined the honorarium, giving the reason that this was important research and they were happy to participate without being paid. Participants were also given the opportunity to read their transcripts and a summary of the final analysis for a validation check.

The interviews were audio recorded, and audio files were moved onto an encrypted computer as soon as the interviews concluded. Although two recording devices were used at all times, one interview's data was lost due to malfunctions of both recorders, and this participant was re-interviewed one month later by another Master's student with experience interviewing LGBTQ participants. The re-interview was conducted by a different interviewer at the suggestion of the participant, so that the participant would feel motivated to retell her stories in the same

detail she told the first interviewer, rather than feeling as if she was repeating herself. Besides this one instance, all interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed by the same person. It is desirable for the principle investigator to remain involved in all of these stages because it helps the investigator to know the data extremely well, which in turn aids interpretation of the data (Bishop, 2012, Hunter, 2010, Minichiello, 1995). The transcribed interview data was analyzed using MAXQDA (MAXQDA, 1989-2014), a qualitative data analysis software.

Materials

The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix E) contained open-ended questions that went beyond the traditional open-ended format in that participants were encouraged to tell full stories and to explore any tangents that might have come up. Probes to ensure that stories were rich and complete were developed during the interviews depending on participant responses. The general content of the interviews covered coming out (or not) to colleagues, supervisors, students, etc. Content also covered respondents' general opinions on being out to young students, as well as on the perceived school, community, and national climate toward anti-prejudice/pro-diversity initiatives in schools. Information about participant context was gathered from interview questions about participants' childhood teachers, pre-service teacher training, and general context of the participants' current school and community climate in regards to politics, values, and size.

Chapter 3: Narrative Inquiry

Narrative is all at once the theoretical and epistemological framework of this research, the method of inquiry (or data collection), and the approach to analysis. *Narrative inquiry* is not concisely nor reliably defined in the literature (Langellier, 1989), but this challenge is balanced with its benefits of being flexible and applicable to research in various disciplines and sub-

disciplines. Narrative inquiry is an amalgam of multiple types of analysis and methodological approaches (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2003; Hunter, 2010), with roots in sociology and anthropology, feminism and sociolinguistics (Chase, 2005); it is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary³ (Langellier, 1989).

Some scholars have provided purposefully vague definitions: “narrative research is not a method... Rather, it is a loose frame of reference” (Huttunen, Heikkinen & Syrjala, 2002, p. 14), and “narrative methodology is more art than research... and can hardly be taught” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998, as cited in Bleakley, 2005, p. 537). There is one consistent underlying tenet, though, which is that narrative inquiry uses a social constructionist frame of reference (Bishop, 2012; Bleakley, 2005; Chase, 2005; Hunter, 2010).

Narratives, in a broad sense, can perhaps best be described through what they do: narratives are stories that distill and reflect the narrator’s social and political relations through the sharing of events, experiences or ideas (Feldman, Sköldbberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004; McAdams, 2011). “Through the events the narrative includes, excludes, and emphasizes, the storyteller not only illustrates his or her version of the action but also provides an interpretation or evaluative commentary on the subject” (Feldman et al., 2004; p. 148). The type of narrative we are interested in for this research is the *personal narrative*, that is “used to refer to brief, topically specific stories [or events] organized around characters, setting, and plot” (Riessman, 2001, p. 172). Personal narratives are often told in response to specific questions about an experience or event, and are therefore the most common type of narrative resulting from interviews (Riessman, 2001).

³ Multidisciplinary refers to multiple, separate disciplines researching the same thing, or independently working toward the same research goal, while interdisciplinary involves multiple disciplines working together, such as a cross-departmental research team (Pless, 1995).

Confusion around narrative inquiry is rooted in what we expect to garner from these narratives and how we should attempt to interpret them. The narrative research community is divided into what can be categorized as traditional and contemporary streams (Bamberg, 1997; Bleakley, 2005). Bleakley (2005) describes the difference between traditional and contemporary approaches to narrative as “thinking about a story and thinking with a story, story as content (structure) vs. story as process (discourse)” (p. 536). Researchers adhering to the traditional approach see narratives as organized sequences of events (Murray, 2003), and focus on “the *what*, or the internal structure, of narrative” (Bleakley, 2005, p. 536). Labov was an early pioneer of using this approach for social research, and along with his colleague, attempted to develop a reliable structure of what narratives should look like, and therefore, how to analyze them. Labov and Waletzky (1997) posit that a narrative will be told in chronological order, with the apex of the story being the main event (the “complicator”), followed by the narrator’s reflection on what the story meant personally. However, this may be an oversimplification of narrative, as not all stories follow this organized structure (Langellier, 1989). Analysis in the traditional, Labovian approach involves breaking down the narrative into clauses, or small units of expression (Labov & Waletzky, 1997), which is similar to coding for a thematic analysis. This approach is also very narrator-centric, with little to no focus on context or other social effects like interaction with the audience/researcher (Bishop, 2012; Langellier, 1989).

Researchers working within the contemporary narrative approach not only embrace the idea of the narrative as socially constructed but also recognize that the narrative can construct social meanings through the interpretive feature of stories (Bamberg, 1997; Bleakley, 2005). Chase (2005) put forth five ways of thinking about narratives from the contemporary perspective: (1) narrative is a form of discourse that can be used to understand experience, (2)

narratives are actions and performances, (3) narratives are constructed within social circumstances, (4) narratives interact with their social environment, and (5) the researcher is also a narrator, through interpretation of the narrative data. Analysis of narratives from the contemporary perspective focus on *how* events happen, not just on *what* events happen, and take a holistic approach to analysis, reporting on overall patterns, or the gist, of a narrative (Bleakley, 2005; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011). This perspective comes from the concern that “we cannot recount our experiences perfectly. However 'real' and 'true' these accounts seem to us, they are inevitably reconstructions and often change in light of shifting social circumstances and identities” (Bishop, 2012, p. 376). Contemporary narrative researchers are interested in how participants weave together past, present and future experiences to create a narrative (Bishop, 2012).

The goal of the contemporary approach is not to ignore *what* happened to a narrator, but to “capture the interplay between the *whats* and *hows*” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 9). The traditional approach, which involves de-contextualizing and fragmenting the narratives, may actually be harmful to the researcher's ability to see the "gestalt of the narrative" (Bishop, 2012, p. 376; Bryman, 2001; Miller & Glassner, 2004). I feel that the contemporary approach is appropriate for this specific sample, because narrator backgrounds all differ, and these diverse backgrounds may impact the gestalt of the narratives differently (e.g. the teacher who grew up in the time of the Stonewall Riots⁴ and experienced hate crimes versus the teacher who grew up in a progressive city and has never experienced homophobia directly; or, the difference between teachers who have permanent positions versus those who are trying to be hired full-time).

⁴ In 1969 police raided Stonewall Inn, a gay tavern in New York City. The gay community engaged in violent riots in reaction to the infringement on their rights and freedoms, and the events are remembered as the Stonewall Riots.

The contemporary approach to narrative is also appropriate for research on social issues because we have a chance to investigate how people of different social groups are experiencing events. Beyond just what the narrator says has happened, we want to know why they think it happened, and how it happened. "The in-depth analysis of the stories that participants tell provides insights not only into what is happening but also into the understandings of the participants about why and how it is happening" (Feldman et al., 2004, pg. 150).

Narrative Analysis

As with all data, analysis of narratives involves interpretation. Narrative data has already been through one interpretation before the researcher analyses it – this is the interpretation of the participant, and it is done through the “organization of events and objects into meaningful constellations, connecting subjects, actions, events, and their consequences over time” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 6). Since the main output goal of contemporary narrative analysis is overall patterns (Bleakley, 2005; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011), the researcher needs to interpret the narrative arc from these “constellations” that the narrator provides (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 6). Hearing a story as it is told is generally easy for us to interpret because it is told in such a way or in such a context that we get the gist of what is meant; however, when a story has been transcribed, "stories are loaded with embedded, sometimes hidden information" (Feldman et al., 2004, p. 150). When we are aiming for a more in-depth understanding of a story's meaning, we need to employ rigorous methods of analysis (Feldman et al., 2004). Due to the varied background and inconsistent epistemology of narrative inquiry (as discussed above), the “rigorous methods of analysis” (Feldman et al., 2004) that we have at our disposal are not offered in a reliably tested series of steps that every narrative researcher follows (Bishop, 2012). Reissman explains, “there is no canonical approach to validation in interpretive work, no recipes

or formulas” (2001, p.184). There is, however, a selection of steps identified across narrative work; and since mixing narrative methods is encouraged based on what is most relevant to the data (Bishop, 2012; Hunter, 2010), the guidance available across narrative literature was adapted to create the following series of steps that worked ideally for the present data.

Preliminary: validation checks. In narrative inquiry, the concern is not necessarily on having the data reflect some “objective” *reality*, but the reality for a given participant (Bishop, 2012). Having participants check the researcher’s interpretation of their data (member check) is a way to test the validity of qualitative research (Cho & Trent, 2006; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Participants were asked to read their interview transcripts and essentially approve them as accurate representations of their experiences. Although the transcripts contained their own words verbatim, participants may have decided that a story they told did not accurately reflect how they felt about a situation, or how they wanted to portray a situation. No participants requested any changes to their transcripts beyond minor additions of context.

Step One: Code for themes. Coding for themes as a component of narrative analysis is suggested by some for its ability to reveal patterns in the data (Hunter, 2010; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003) and criticized by some as an oversimplified way of looking at the data (Bishop, 2012; Bleakley, 2005; Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004). In the present research I decided to code early in the process, following the final interview transcription, as a way to familiarize myself with the data and discover what storylines were most common among respondents. When narrative analysis was undertaken, the themes became mostly irrelevant as they did not consistently line up with the narratives and were only occasionally used to assist identification of context and scattered parts of a story that were embedded in other information or non-narrative sections (more on identification of narratives below).

Step Two: Identify the narratives. Identifying a narrative is not as straight forward a process as the Labovian perspective suggests (that stories will be identifiable by their predictable, plot-like structure; Labov & Waletzky, 1997). *Emplotment* refers to the narration process of weaving together past, present and future experiences to create a narrative (Bishop, 2012; Polkinghorne, 1991). This method of narrative formation suggests that identifying a story can be complex, and involves thorough familiarization with each participant's data. For this reason, the present analytic steps were undertaken vertically, by analyzing each interview in its entirety before moving on to the next. Vertical analysis in narrative inquiry has been suggested by Chase (2005) and Hunter (2010) as a way to maintain awareness of narrator context during researcher interpretation.

When identifying narratives it is important to understand that stories may be spread out into *kernels*, which are small hints or allusions toward a larger storyline, and when kernels of a story are spread throughout an interview, for example, it is up to the researcher to determine how they fit together into a full narrative, called a *serial* narrative (Kalčilk, 1975). It may also be unclear where non-narrative material (such as a "rationale for telling the story...an analysis of characters, events, or theme...or an emotional response to the story"; Kalčilk, p. 7) ends, and where the narrative begins. For this challenge, it is important for the researcher to have pre-existing knowledge about the population and topic under investigation to aid in piecing together kernels and context; that is, to be able to predict, to some extent, where a story is going in order to connect it to other related content (Kalčilk, 1975; Langellier, 1989).

Step Three: Identify the storyline. Once the narratives have been identified, the storyline – or narrative arc – of each narrative needs to be identified/constructed. Storylines are summaries of "the basic point (sometimes points) that the analyst thought the interviewee was

trying to make” (Feldman et al., 2004, p. 154). Identifying storylines can be made easier by determining a focus (Feldman et al., 2004; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). The focus of the present research includes specific experiences (e.g. discrimination), a specific identity (e.g. Queer), and a specific environment (e.g. elementary schools). Under this focus, storylines were identified that can be categorized into three main areas: *experiences of prejudice and discrimination, approaches to equity education, and resilience*. Storylines about the resilience of teachers who experienced prejudice and discrimination were interwoven into narratives on both of the formerly mentioned focus areas.

Step Four: Analytical tactics to aid interpretation. Review of the literature has found that the various guidelines and procedures offered for narrative analysis generally describe positions or lenses through which the data can be seen, as well as rhetoric tactics. These analytical tactics can be mixed and matched based on what is most relevant to the data (Bishop, 2012; Hunter, 2010). For example, if it is unclear what a narrator meant by a particular statement, the researcher can take into account narrator positioning, or can look to a description of something the narrator does *not* believe in order to determine what she/he *does* believe. Another example of how these tactics may be utilized during analysis is for the researcher to refer back to personal reflections made shortly after the interview took place for any notes of physical cues that may suggest a narrator’s meaning, or feelings. Below is a review of the analytical tactics that were useful in the interpretation of the present data.

Positioning. People tell stories from a certain position, or perspective (Bishop, 2012; Riley & Hawe, 2005), and interpreting the narrator’s position is vital to making an accurate interpretation of the story (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2000). A narrator can position oneself in relation to another person in their story or in relation to the audience/researcher (Bamberg,

1997). Bishop (2012) defines the position of empowerment versus victim as the narrator's "agency," and posits that a narrator may move through a continuum of positions, for example, as a victim of discrimination but also as someone who is resilient.

Opposition and enthymeme. Feldman and colleagues (2004) introduced two concepts from the fields of semiotics and rhetoric to application in narrative analysis: opposition and enthymeme. The theory behind opposition is that a narrator may give meaning to what is good about a situation merely by talking about what is bad about its opposite. Enthymeme is "an incomplete or careless logical inference... it takes the form of an argument, one of whose parts is missing" (Feldman et al., 2004, p. 152). Similar to opposition, an enthymeme assists interpretation of meaning by providing the analyst with the material to make a likely inference to the narrator's implicit argument (Feldman et al., 2004). Context and familiarity with the data is important to making such inferences (Feldman et al., 2004).

Story Performance Feature. Story performance features are visual displays, and are not generally captured in a transcript (Bamberg, 2011). When a participant makes hand gestures, smiles, or cries during the telling of a story, she is providing story performance features to aid in interpretation of her meaning. Because the present study did not utilize video recording equipment, the interviewer made notes during the interviews of any such features, which were referred to during analysis.

The analytic tactics outlined above were all used in different cases during analysis, when interpretation was unclear or vague. Determining the appropriate analytic steps for the present data and actually analyzing and interpreting the data was an iterative process (as Hunter, 2010 advises).

Chapter 4: Participant Context

Below is a description of the participants, and a summary of contextual factors for each. Finally, two tables (see table 1, table 2) provide summarized demographic information for ease of referral.

Participants span a geographical range of over 600km North-South, over 50% of the span of Ontario⁵. Most participants had experience teaching at different schools, sometimes at the same time (two Long Term Occasional/supply teachers, and one multi-school resource teacher). Five school districts have been represented: Durham District School Board (SB), Upper Grand District SB, Simcoe County District SB, Toronto District SB, and the Sudbury Rainbow SB⁶. Communities served by these teachers included urban, suburban and rural, with conservative, liberal, and religious⁷ community norms. Cultural and ethnic diversity was generally lacking, and even the Toronto school community that had a majority of non-white students was referred to by one participant as not diverse.

Only three of the thirteen interviewees were male, but this is very representative of the gender gap in elementary teaching in general, with one in ten teachers being male (Ontario Public School Boards' Association, 2005). Due to the challenges of recruiting from a hidden population, it is impossible select a representative sample, and this is unfortunately reflected in the lack of ethnic diversity and the non-existence of transgendered teachers in the sample. Finally, our participants represent a broad continuum of outness, from being very near completely in the closet in their professional lives, to being completely out.

⁵ For the recent Migrant to New Brunswick I consider the participant's previous Ontario district.

⁶ The Rainbow SB was *not* associated with the LGBTQ appropriation of the rainbow symbol, but refers, instead, to the regional tourism designation.

⁷ When religion was mentioned in community context it generally referred to Judeo-Christian or Islamic religious values

Below, participants (identified by pseudonyms) are grouped based on the positivity or negativity of their experiences and their overall perspective on the social climate for LGBQ elementary teachers. The brief descriptions provide context which can be referred to for a deeper understanding of the results.

Mostly negative experiences and negative perspective

- Elizabeth is a twenty-nine year old primary resource teacher who is afraid to come out because of fear that parents will make false accusations that she is behaving inappropriately with the children. She is afraid for her physical safety and afraid of losing her job if she comes out, so she is very careful to keep her orientation hidden from everyone at school except for a select few colleagues who she knows as friends outside of school. Elizabeth hopes for a day when sexual orientation won't matter for one's teaching career. She has social justice interests but doesn't fully act on them in her educating out of fear that it will reveal her orientation. Elizabeth has been teacher for three and a half years and does not have a permanent teaching contract.

- Loise is a fifty year old lesbian grade seven teacher who has experienced homophobia from administrators, union officials, colleagues, and parents. She has been deeply affected by the homophobia – she used to love teaching and now can't wait for retirement. Loise is concerned for LGBQ children in Ontario elementary schools because she believes the environment is oppressive. Her community context is conservative religious – the Mayor had the only gay bar closed. Loise is not out to students and is very careful to keep her orientation hidden at school from everyone but a select few colleagues whom she has learned to trust. Loise has been a teacher for nineteen years and has a permanent contract.

- Jet is fifty-six years old, Queer identified, and primarily teaches grades two to four. She has endured overt discrimination from all levels of the school system (colleagues, administration,

school board officials, students, parent community). She has been forced to resign from teaching multiple times due to discrimination. She has anger for the discrimination she has experienced, and this fuels her passion and motivation to change the education system. Jet has been a teacher for thirty years, and at the time of the interview was in the process of resigning.

- Brandon is a sixty-one year old gay grade five teacher. Brandon shared a dark personal history narrative about growing up during the time of the Stonewall Riots, and being the victim of homophobic physical violence in the early years of Toronto's gay rights movement. He is only out to trusted colleagues, and doesn't come right out and say it - it is assumed, guessed at, and gossiped, and if he trusts the person who is guessing, he will simply not deny that he is gay. Brandon feels very strongly that it is unsafe for a teacher to be out to students (and thereby parents). Brandon has been a permanent contract teacher for thirty-five years.

- Marie is a twenty-seven year old lesbian resource teacher. Her narrative can be summed up in one word: Unapologetic. When Marie started at her school five years ago, she was told to remain closeted. Administration was afraid of parent backlash, and colleagues were homophobic, which made the environment oppressive for her and for any LGBTQ students. Her school lacked diversity and it lacked understanding and acceptance of differences. Marie felt anger and frustration for her school, and once she was given a permanent teaching contract, she decided to always come out to any students who asked, regardless of being advised not to.

- Sam is a fifty-six year old gay Long Term Occasional and supply teacher. His experiences are framed by his social context: he grew up during the time of the Stonewall Riots, and he lived (and currently teaches) in a Northern Ontario community that he refers to as working-class and narrow minded. For Sam, being a gay teacher is tenuous – he is always

concerned that he will encounter prejudice and discrimination, and he attributes his inability to secure a permanent teaching contract to homophobia. Sam has been teaching for twelve years.

Negative experiences with mostly positive perspective

- Rose is a fifty-one year old lesbian grade seven and eight teacher. Rose has seen homophobic bullying and inequity in her school, but administration has been supportive in combatting it. Rose tackles equity issues head on, and ensures that her school has a large selection of diversity and LGBTQ resources for students and teachers. Rose focused on supportive stories, and although she had many negative experiences, she brushed them off as less important than the success stories. Rose's narrative can be summed up into one statement: determined to challenge the status quo and teach anti-oppressive education, despite negative experiences. Rose has been teaching for thirteen years and, after relocating, is currently supply teaching, but her Ontario teaching experience was on permanent contract.

Mostly positive experiences with negative perspective

- Kelly is a twenty-eight year old Queer identified grade four and five teacher. She has taught at a different school every year for five years, and this has provided her with insight into the importance of context in feeling able to come out. Attaining confidence and pride has made it easier to come out in the workplace, but she is still not out to students because of fear that it will change the respectful relationship she has with them. Kelly regrets not feeling able to come out to students.

- Carol is a forty-two year old lesbian grade five and six teacher who has been teaching for eleven years. She works in an accepting, diverse school environment with several other lesbian and bisexual teachers on staff, but still feels like she can't be out to students because of an underlying fear of parent backlash.

Mostly positive experiences with mostly positive perspective

- Georg is a forty-five year old Bisexual and Queer identified teacher of grades one to eight. He considers himself as part of a first generation of teachers who can't lose their jobs because of being openly LGBQ in the workplace, and he believes that this provides the freedom to be very out at school and to ensure that students are taught acceptance of diversity. Georg is active with equity initiatives, he is comfortable being himself at school, and he believes that Ontario elementary schools are constantly improving their approach to diversity and equity. However, he is aware that other LGBQ teachers do not always have such positive experiences. Georg has been teaching for fifteen years.

- Diana is a thirty-eight year old lesbian grade five and six teacher who has been teaching for fourteen years. She works in an extremely supportive work environment and feels safe and free to be out to everyone, although knowledge of how negative these experiences *can be* for others outside of Ontario (and even other parts of Ontario) resulted in caution and nervousness around being out to students and parents. The support from colleagues and administration, however, has helped her to overcome her fears and be out.

- Paula is a thirty-eight year old lesbian grade four and five teacher. She has had mostly positive experiences being a lesbian teacher, and she attributes this to being at a school with several lesbian and gay teachers on staff. The work environment is supportive, and she feels safe to teach about diversity. She harbors some fear about coming out to her students (and is not out to them yet), but she attributes this fear to her general non-confrontational personality and not wanting to put anyone on the spot by hearing news that might shock them. She feels supported by administration to challenge any homophobia she sees in the classroom or on the playground,

and she has taken on the role of equity representative for the school. Paula has been teaching for ten years and has a permanent contract.

- Theresa is a fifty-three year old lesbian grade two teacher who has been teaching for twenty-three years. She teaches in a diverse community and many of the students at her school come from families that are experiencing poverty, hunger, and drug abuse. Theresa believes that her students are well equipped to learn about sexual orientation and gender identity because, compared to everything going on in their lives, these topics are not a big deal. These students may be less sheltered than students who live in middle-upper class, suburban, conservative communities, and this makes them more accepting of differences. Theresa has supportive colleagues and administration which has also made her experiences more positive.

Table 1. Basic Participant Demographic Information

Variable	N	Notes
Gender Identification		
Woman	9	
Man	3	
Gender Fluid	1	Identified as a feminine woman during interview, but gender identity changes
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian	8	
Gay	2	
Queer	2	
Bisexual, Queer	1	Provided more than one orientation
Ethnocultural Background		
White/Caucasian	12	
Mixed	1	Japanese/Canadian

Table 2. Specific Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Years Teaching	Grades Taught	Employment Status	Degree Out
1. Georg	45	15	1-8	Permanent	colleagues, admin., some students indirectly
2. Diana	38	14	5-6	Permanent	colleagues, admin., students
3. Kelly	28	5	4-5	LTO	colleagues, admin.
4. Carol	42	11	5-6	Permanent	colleagues, admin., some students indirectly
5. Paula	38	10	4-5	Permanent	colleagues, admin., some students indirectly
6. Elizabeth	29	3.5	Resource	Non-permanent Resource	few trusted colleagues
7. Marie	27	5	Resource	Permanent Resource	colleagues, admin., students who ask
8. Loise	50	19	7	Permanent	few trusted colleagues
9. Rose	51	13	7-8	Was permanent, now supply	most colleagues, admin., most students indirectly
10. Jet	56	30	2-4	Was permanent, now resigning	colleagues, admin., students who ask
11. Brandon	61	35	5	Permanent	few trusted colleagues
12. Sam	56	12	K-12	LTO and Supply	most colleagues, admin., most students indirectly
13. Theresa	53	23	2	Permanent	colleagues, admin., students who ask

Note: Because parents are not part of the daily work environment, coming out to parents happens on a more random, parent by parent basis. Coming out indirectly may include via rumors, gossip, or word of mouth, or student “fishing”, or guessing.

There was an expectation based on Wright's (2010) study that those who had been teaching for ten years or less or over twenty years would have more fear than those who had been teaching for eleven to fifteen years. While qualitative data from thirteen participants cannot be used to identify statistical patterns, it is interesting that those who were most closeted in this sample belonged to the least and most experienced groups. All participants who were only out to a few trusted colleagues or to colleagues and administration but not students had either been teaching for five years or less, or nineteen years or more. Wright (2010) found that those who had been teaching longer were less empowered by the Gay Rights movement, and in the present data, most of those who had been teaching the longest felt affected by growing up during the Stonewall Riots and witnessing discrimination in a less protected time ($n = 3$). Wright (2010) also found that those who had been teaching for less than five years felt that their jobs were more at risk because they didn't have secure careers that they felt could withstand accusations of being LGBQ. In the present sample, those who had been teaching for five years or less, or those who did not yet have a permanent teaching contract, expressed more concern over the risk that coming out would pose for their jobs.

The conservative or liberal majority attitudes and values of each participant's location were considered in the context of their experiences. This consideration was based on Norris (1992) and Wright's (2010) findings that LGBQ teachers are more afraid in traditionally republican ("red") states than traditionally democratic ("blue") states. While we cannot use this distinction as a variable to predict experiences, the conservativeness of the town teachers' were located in did come up as a factor in their negative experiences. Many of the teachers had teaching experiences in more than one community and school ($n = 7$), and they were able to describe differences between conservative and liberal areas. An area classified as conservative

was Barrie, a city where the Mayor closed the only LGBTQ bar/community venue and Christian religious prayer was delivered to students in several of its public schools. An area classified as liberal was Guelph, a university town with inclusive attitudes despite a lack of much visible diversity. It should be noted, however, that these interpretations are based on the personal experiences of participants (2 teachers felt this way about Barrie, and 4 felt this way about Guelph). These interpretations of geographically based social climate should be treated with caution before making generalizations about these cities.

Chapter 5: Results

This analysis will focus on three categories of inquiry: negative experiences, queer influence on pedagogical approach, and resilience. The data to exemplify these results is presented in the analyzed interpretations of participant narratives. Because raw narratives were often very long, moved between topics, and were broken up throughout an interview, interpretations present the condensed storyline (i.e. main point(s) of the narrative). Participant context was always carefully considered during interpretation in an attempt to represent the participant's intended meaning.

Negative Experiences

Oppressive environments. Results from this Ontario sample were consistent with the Australian and U.S. finding that elementary schools are oppressive environments for those who challenge the heteronormative status quo (Duke, 2007; Ferfolja, 2005; Hooker, 2010; Singer, 1997). All thirteen teachers felt this way about the education system in general even if they felt that their own experiences and their own school were different (in which case they felt lucky). The oppression of elementary schools is built into teacher training, and the dictum that a teacher's sexual orientation does not belong in the classroom is widely known. For instance,

when Carol was in teacher's college, a more senior lesbian teacher told her that her sexual orientation was not something to be talked about in the classroom, "so then [she] went into teaching and it was just understood that you just wouldn't tell the kids."

Harmful stereotypes and accusations from parents. The most commonly cited source of the oppression is fear of backlash from the parent community ($n = 7$). As Sam reports, "there are a lot of principals who don't want to deal with some angry parent charging into their office screaming and yelling because they heard or found out that [their child has a gay teacher]". Similarly, Loise blames the oppression and inequity in elementary schools on a "pervasive fear that [the principal or the board is] going to be attacked by the community, by parents, because they think that we're going to indoctrinate their children into a [gay] lifestyle." Complaints from parents hold more sway than simply taking up the time of administration; in fact, they can result in two significant outcomes. First, parent complaints can prevent schools and school boards from implementing equity initiatives:

Brandon explains that parents have a lot of power through individual complaints and by forming coalitions to protest curriculum changes at the Provincial level. "Teachers kind of have their hands tied in dealing with [sexual and gender diversity topics]." He recalls that even when curriculum mandates that such topics should be included in health classes, parent complaints have in the past stopped schools from delivering the mandated material. "Parents are the complete driving force behind the education system. They have too much say in it. ...It's all about getting re-elected... and that's why parents play such a large role. Because if the board allows that they're going to teach homosexuality in school, that is one major problem that's going to be remembered during the next election, who the trustees were."

Complaints from parents can also result in important personal consequences for teachers, such as when it leads to the removal of a teacher from the school:

One day, Jet casually came out to her grade 7 class. The students had asked what she did on the weekend, and she replied that she spent it with her wife and son. The class reacted with laughter and joking, and she went from having excellent rapport with them to losing their compliant behaviour; but this was only a component of the systemic homophobia and discrimination that was revealed the following week. The parent council had contacted Children's Aid Society to say that she had been physically and verbally abusing the children. After a twenty-six year teaching record with very positive performance grades, this allegation came out of the blue. Jet then endured three weeks of daily in-class observation by the principal, followed by the relocation of the special education resource teacher to a desk in Jet's office for continued observation. The environment became progressively worse for Jet in terms of discriminatory behaviour from parents and students. "That's the first time based on homophobia I said *'I quit'*. And I've done that in my career how many times I've lost count, because of discrimination." Jet blames those in positions of power (e.g. principal) for their lack of response and support.

While the teachers could only speculate as to why some parents has such strong negative feelings toward sexual orientation and gender identity curriculum and LGBTQ teachers, two stereotypes were regularly blamed. The first stereotype, that LGBTQ people (particularly gay men) are more likely to be pedophiles, has been reported in previous literature (King, 2004, Rensenbrink, 1996; Schlatter & Steinback, 2010; Wright, 2010). Another stereotype commonly reported in the present data was that LGBTQ people have a "gay agenda", wherein they are trying to indoctrinate people into their "lifestyle", a stereotype also noted by Anderson and Kanner,

2011. The implications of such an oppressive environment include teachers feeling afraid to come out at work.

When asked why she hasn't come out to her students Elizabeth answered assuredly - "it's total fear". Elizabeth believes that the students would have no qualms with her sexual orientation, but she is afraid that coming out would create misunderstandings with the parents that would pose a risk to her employment. While she is aware that her employment is legally secure in terms of being terminated because of her sexual orientation, she is afraid that parents would find other ways of having her removed from the school, like falsely accusing her of pedophilia. Elizabeth contemplated her future plans for coming out at school. She is certain that she will not be coming out to her students in the near future, and this is mostly because of fear of parental backlash. She does wonder if she isn't giving parents enough credit, but she is not ready to take that risk.

Discrimination affecting employment. Elizabeth's story brings up a theme found among U.S. samples (Singer, 1997, Woods & Harbeck, 1992) – even when employment is legally protected from sexual orientation-based discrimination, LGBTQ teachers remain afraid that they could be let go on other, non-valid grounds (i.e. based on false accusations related to the common stereotypes), and they also fear that their work environment could be made so uncomfortable through harassment and suspicion that they would feel forced to resign. Loise shared several stories about how being a lesbian has affected her employment in the past, which has made her afraid to come out at her current school.

As a lesbian teacher in Canada, Loise feels "frightened. Very frightened. Especially in elementary." Loise talked about a time when she brought a grievance against a principal on the grounds of harassment of sexual orientation. Although her case was well documented and

involved many examples of the harassment, Loise lost her grievance and had to leave the school. She believes she lost because the arbitrator was a White, male, Christian, heterosexual who did not understand her rights or understand that discriminating against sexual orientation in the workplace was inappropriate.

Next, Loise talked about a teaching assistant she once had who told her that he didn't think gays or lesbians should work as teachers in elementary schools - that he found it completely wrong and sinful. This teaching assistant reported everything she ever said inside and outside of the classroom to the principal, and together he and the principal constructed a case for her removal from the school. Loise doesn't believe that she said anything that should have been grounds for her removal, and felt that what her teaching assistant reported to the principal was a manipulation of her words or sentiments in an attempt to provide justification for why it was inappropriate for a lesbian to be teaching elementary school. She posits, "We have a lot of people who are afraid of differences and we have a lot of people who are hateful... and they are often in positions of power." If these discriminatory people know something about a teacher that they disapprove of, they can make that teacher's life very unpleasant.

In the same vein, Loise shared a story about her friends – a lesbian couple who are both elementary teachers. Both women were successful teachers in Toronto, and had encountered no problems with being out in their schools. After more than a decade of teaching for the Toronto District School Board, they decided to move to Simcoe County for a more relaxed lifestyle. However, even with successful teaching careers behind them and many job opportunities in Simcoe County, neither had been hired after five years of applying. They eventually had to sell their Simcoe County property at a loss and return to Toronto. Loise tells this story to show that "if you're out before you get hired, you won't get hired".

Following her stories of employment discrimination, Loise shared that, regardless of Ontario's Human Rights Code, grievance hearings are "nebulous – [the Human Rights Code] doesn't apply in a classroom", and "insidious... no one can prove [discrimination]." Loise explains that part of the problem is that the victim stands alone as their own defense – “I was the one that had to do all the complaining, fill out all of the paperwork, stand up and say 'this is wrong, please stop'. No one else – and I was the victim. We could have all kinds of laws, but we still have to stand up and have them enforced.”

Sam echoed this sentiment: Sam believes that discrimination has prevented him from becoming a full time teacher. After twelve years of successful Long Term Occasional teaching positions and years of daily supply, he has been unable to secure a permanent position, and "it's always questionable as to why. As far as my income and my career and my employment, that's a pretty tangible [effect of discrimination]. But is it tangibly connected to me being gay, prove it." Sam believes that this kind of discrimination can persist despite anti-discrimination employment laws because it is too difficult to prove that the reason he hasn't been hired for a permanent position is that he is gay.

While only two teachers discussed the impact (or lack thereof) of anti-discrimination law, this does not mean that the law protected the other respondents effectively. The others who experienced discrimination or prejudice attributed it to school board politics (e.g. parent pleasing), or more internal causes such as unsupportive colleagues and administrators. This attribution may have been an effect of the availability heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973); that is, experiences with the school boards and negative interactions with colleagues and administrators may be more personal and emotionally charged and therefore come to mind as the most important reason for discrimination. Federal or provincial law may be considered less

personally and therefore be less available in the individual's thought process and less likely to be reflected upon in these personal narratives.

The closeted teacher's impact on students. Being oppressed and afraid to come out at work has unique implications for teachers – it impacts the students as well. One way this impact has been expressed is by showing students that being LGBTQ is something to be ashamed of. For example, Carol felt that the best way to teach children about respecting diversity is for minority teachers to be true to themselves, and practice what they preach. Carol then expressed concern that she was hypocritical by not directly coming out to her students, and was afraid that she might be indicating to her class that she was ashamed or embarrassed to tell them.

Loise also shared a story about how being afraid to come out at school could affect LGBTQ students. Her story was about a student who had been homeschooled because she was being bullied for being a lesbian. Her parents tried to reintegrate her into the public school system and she ended up in Loise's class. Eventually this student began to be bullied again and the parents again had to remove her from the school. Loise reflected, "I felt horrible that I couldn't protect her or make school a safe place for her. I felt really, really horrible about that one." During the height of the situation, a colleague who knew about Loise's sexual orientation asked if she would come out to the student so the student would know that it would be OK to be a lesbian. But Loise did not feel that this was true - in this school it was *not* OK to be a lesbian. Additionally, she did not feel safe enough to come out to this student; "I'm not going to hang myself out there like that", opening herself up to further discrimination.

The following story also shows how being oppressed from coming out can affect students. Marie's school is "parent pleasing", to the extent that the demands of the loudest parents will be prioritized, often to the detriment of students who need extra support (i.e. special needs

education, LGBTQ students). As a result, Marie has been encouraged to stay in the closet – “can you just sort of hush hush for a little bit, and then see how it rolls...” – to avoid “rocking the boat with parents.” Marie agreed to this until she was given a permanent contract, because she was concerned about job security.

The first time Marie came out to a student was a life or death situation. It came to the staff's attention that a student was looking up on the computer how to commit suicide, and he was found in a school bathroom in an emotional state. The vice principal “came up to me and she just looked really eager. In two minutes she basically said to me 'he wants to kill himself, he's gay, he's afraid to tell his parents, can you go to him and talk to him, maybe out yourself, because he feels like there is nobody in this world that would understand him, and he wants to go home and die tonight'.”

When Marie got to the student she overheard another teacher talking to him about how lucky he was to be gay *now*, when the social climate was so accepting. Marie scoffed at this claim because she understood that the current climate – in this school, even – was not accepting, and this heterosexual colleague could not understand that. Marie took over the conversation and said “we actually have something in common - I'm gay'. And then you could just see like, he totally lit up like, oh my god, you are?”. She talked to him about how things seemed hard right now and that people will say things that are ignorant but it is just because they don't know any better. She told him that she was getting married, and that things do get better. Marie became his go-to person for support, and she reports that he is now doing very well. She reflected on the fact that an administrator had asked her to come out when it was almost too late to help this particular student, when four years earlier it was recommended that she keep it to herself.

Colleague prejudice. In addition to the systemic oppression and discrimination, prejudiced colleagues can make negative experiences for LGBQ teachers. Colleague behaviours can range from ignorance and heteronormative assumptions to overt bullying. Colleagues have been described by some respondents as the most hurtful group to receive prejudice and discrimination from because of the isolating effects ($n = 3$). This finding was not expected based on previous literature that showed colleagues to be generally supportive their fellow LGBQ teachers' sexual orientation (Hooker, 2010, Jennings, 2005; Singer, 1997; Wright, 2010).

Georg feels that teachers are trained to be sensitive and accepting – “it comes up at a lot of staff meetings as part of the professional development” – but this training is geared toward building a safe space for LGBQ students, and doesn't prepare teachers to interact with LGBQ colleagues. Georg described an incident wherein a teacher defaced a poster that provided statistics on what percentage of colleagues were likely to be LGBQ – they “had written on it ‘*oh I don't think so*’”. In addition, Loise suggests that any inclusivity/diversity training that is mandated at teacher's college or in professional development (if any) doesn't go deep enough. People may be learning politically correct language that they need to stay out of trouble, but not understanding acceptance and inclusivity any deeper than that.

Jet became emotional when she talked about what it is like trying to socialize with homophobic colleagues. She wasn't invited to events, and she wasn't included in the lunch table conversation. She talked about blaming herself for what she was seeing and feeling. She thought she was doing or saying something wrong. On days where she felt the shame and the shunning the worst, she couldn't face her colleagues in the lunch room and would leave the school over her lunch break. But then, through treatment for depression and anxiety, Jet learned that her feelings were valid, and *her shame* turned into *their discrimination*. Jet refers to being shunned by your

colleagues as the worst part of discrimination in the workplace, because it comes from colleagues “either not understanding you, or not *wanting* to understand you, and the feeling is that they don't want to understand you because you're gay”.

The sentiment that discrimination can exist without being covertly expressed (i.e. through means that seem ambiguous – do they dislike me personally, or are they prejudiced?) is known as subtle discrimination, and is discussed in employment law literature as “unconscious application of stereotyped notions” which cannot easily be proved in a discrimination lawsuit (Krieger, 1995, p. 1169; Sturm, 2001; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). That is, an individual may know on a conscious level that “partner” is the correct terminology to use to avoid offending someone, but on an unconscious level they still maintain prejudice and may not understand *why* using inclusive terminology is important.

Subtle discrimination is also found in the social psychology literature, where it is described as persistence of prejudice without overt expression of negative feelings toward the minority group (Brown, 2011); for example, while subtle discrimination does not involve blatant acts of discrimination, a person's prejudice can lead them to maintain a status quo that disadvantages a minority group, or to ignore blatant discrimination rather than acting to prevent it (Brown; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). The discrimination respondents experienced from colleagues was usually subtle, but as these narratives describe, subtle discrimination can be just as hurtful as blatant acts of discrimination like threats of physical violence and false accusations leading to loss of employment.

Queer Influence on Pedagogical Approach

Minorities experience improves understanding of equity issues. Most of the respondents expressed the ideas that their experiences as minorities make them better prepared to

work with students who are minorities, and to teach about diversity in general ($n = 6$). This finding is consistent with Klassen and Carr's (1997) research on racial minority teachers in Toronto. Klassen and Carr found that while White teachers were more likely to believe that antiracist education was sufficient or no longer needed, racial minority teachers were more likely to believe that antiracist education needed to be improved, as schools remained discriminatory against racial minorities. The same study also found that the majority of White teachers believed the school board's employment equity policies were effective, and the majority of racial minority teachers believed it was not effective enough at providing equal employment opportunity (Klassen & Cass, 1997). Respondents who felt better equipped to recognize and deal with lapses in equity provided some reasoning for their heightened awareness: they are particularly sensitive to lapses in equity as such lapses often affect them directly. As Jet explains, "I'm a displaced teacher because of being Queer, so I understand my kids, my students, how they feel to be displaced because of marginalization. I get it, I get it."

Elizabeth has life experiences from the perspective of an ethnic minority and a sexual minority, and she also has a family member with physical challenges. She found that these experiences made her very aware and sensitive of equity and inclusivity. While she doesn't want the responsibility of *authority* on these issues, she does feel better able to identify the gaps in equity in schools.

Many of the respondents utilize their enhanced understanding of equity issues by spearheading diversity and inclusivity initiatives within their schools ($n = 7$). For example, they might ensure that available diversity resources such as educational posters and staff training documents are implemented in their schools, and they might challenge colleagues and administration who are not supportive of equity initiatives. A similar phenomenon was

uncovered in research with racial minority teachers, who are more likely to observe a need for improvement in antiracism education and in employment equity than White teachers (Klassen & Carr, 1997). Operario and Fiske (2001) also show that ethnic minorities who are strongly identified with their minority group are more likely to perceive discrimination versus those whose minority status is not an important component of their identities, so it is possible that the respondents who felt better equipped to notice and address discrimination were also more strongly identified with their LGBTQ group.

Kelly is on the equity and inclusivity committee of her school, and one year they developed a family diversity learning exercise using the book *And Tango Makes Three*. Every teacher was given a cross-section of different grades of students rather than just their own class, and they read the book on the overhead projector to their group. They were instructed to then have a discussion about what families can look like, and given that *And Tango Makes Three* is a book about same-sex parents, same-sex parent families was expected to be a key conversation piece. However, when the cross-sectioned groups went back to their original classrooms, Kelly was disappointed to hear that her class had only talked about step-families, or other, non-same-sex families. "...almost every single teacher in the entire school had glazed over the piece about sexuality and gender and anything like that". Kelly blamed herself for the lack of sexuality or gender identity discussion across the school because she realized that she hadn't explained to the teachers beforehand *how* to discuss these topics. Kelly experienced in discussion with her own class how positive the exercise could have been in terms of creating a platform to discuss sexual orientation or gender identity. "One boy said 'well my dad says it's disgusting', and then by the end of the conversation he was just kind of like 'well yeah, that's not very respectful to say that'. But he came to the conversation with this preconceived idea from his family that... it's bad."

It is important to support teachers who have experienced life as a minority – these respondents felt that such life experiences make them better equipped to teach about minority issues. Jet explained that being able to teach about sexuality and gender identity is part of a non-oppressive pedagogy which requires an actual understanding of what it is to be marginalized. “This equity teaching, social justice, whatever you're comfortable calling it, is your every day, non-biased, non-judgmental delivery to these blank slates who you're sending out, who are either going to carry on discrimination, or carry on your equity path.”

Responsibility to unlearn prejudice and the associated risk-benefit analysis. Some respondents believe that they should be held responsible for helping children unlearn prejudice like racism or homophobia that they may have learned at home ($n = 2$). Paula argues that this falls under the responsibility of teachers because teachers are sending their pupils out into the world, and being a racist, or being homophobic, will negatively affect them in the country and province we live in now. “...we live in Ontario... where there's no longer advantages to being someone who's hateful.” If we are in an environment where there is hate and ignorance and certain values need to be unlearned, Paula believes that teachers, and schools, need to try to have positive role models like teachers and teaching partners from marginalized groups. Paula believes that having such role models in schools will normalize LGBQ identities, and then acceptance of the diversity will become a reality.

Although some respondents mentioned the importance of providing role models to the students ($n = 8$), those individuals who become the role models are in a vulnerable position. As the present results have shown thus far, LGBQ teachers do not often feel safe enough in their work environment to come out and be that role model for students. So, LGBQ teachers find that they must navigate how their safety (from prejudice and discrimination) might be impacted by

how and what they teach. For instance, they have to weigh the risks and benefits of coming out to their students, of reading books to the students that introduce diverse families, and of taking advantage of teachable moments on the topic of sexual orientation or gender identity. This risk-benefit analysis is an ongoing process for LGBTQ teachers, and is affected by variables such as age of the students, cultural and political environment of the parent community, and supportiveness of administration.

Paula is always cautious about what she explains or how she explains things; “like any teacher, I make a professional judgment with who I’m talking to and how I’m talking to them.” In a large narrative of connected stories, Paula tried to express how she navigates the appropriateness of sexuality-related teachable moments. Her first story about this navigation was about a young girl who was a daycare peer of Paula’s daughter. This young girl approached Paula one day and asked if her daughter had two moms. When Paula affirmed, the girl began to question how she came to have her daughter – was it through adoption? Did she used to be married to a man? Clearly this young girl had the understanding that babies come from a man and a woman, but Paula did not know how to address the answer to this girl’s questions. She wondered if explaining donors would be too much science for the girl to understand, and she was also concerned that any response could potentially contradict the parent’s religious beliefs, and lead to a confrontation with them. Paula then contemplated where sex really comes into these types of discussions. A class discussion about her same-sex family would not be about sex, but about “identity...diversity and acceptance of differences.”

Respondents varied widely in how they allowed their queer identities to influence their teaching or their presence in the classroom. Some respondents seemed to use Woods and Harbeck’s (1992) identity management technique of self-distancing, indicating that their queer

identities had no influence at all in the classroom, and that it would be inappropriate if they did ($n = 2$). Others, like Theresa, are out to varying degrees with their students, allowing themselves to be direct examples in diversity education. In Theresa's case, her level of outness depends on what age group she is teaching. She is direct and forthright about her sexual orientation when she teaches older students (eleven and twelve years old), and with younger students (six or seven years old) she tries to "handle it in a little less direct way". This usually results in a more educational approach with less personal relating; for example, Theresa will bring resources like posters and library books to her school from union equity workshops that she uses to provide a general education to staff and students about homophobia. Theresa's school context is unique in that the students have such a high rate of poverty and family drug abuse challenges that someone being gay or lesbian is, comparatively, not a shocking piece of information. This may make the students (and parents) less sensitive or cautious about anti-homophobia education or a lesbian teacher. Additionally, Theresa believes that her students already possess knowledge about what sexual orientation entails, even in her grade two class.

Marie, while out to any students who ask, is cautious and concerned about false accusations based on the stereotype that LGBTQ people are more likely to be pedophiles (King, 2004, Rensenbrink, 1996; Schlatter & Steinback, 2010; Wright, 2010). Marie notices that this affects how she interacts with female students - she is always careful to avoid unfounded allegations by, for example, avoiding enforcing the school dress code when it would involve telling a female student that her shorts are too short. Marie recognizes that this is a challenge that male teachers (regardless of sexual orientation) have faced historically, and believes that the only reason a female teacher would have to fear these accusations is if she is a lesbian.

Resilience

Focus on positive. Although all respondents shared negative experiences, they often qualified negative experiences with something positive about their situation ($n = 9$). Such positive qualifiers were often related to the legal protection from discrimination that is present in Canada, or to those work relationships that *are* supportive in a generally unsupportive work environment. Another way that respondents focused on positive aspects was to make comparisons to more oppressive or discriminatory environments, like the Catholic School Board or the U.S.

Even though Kelly is not out to her students, she focused on the positive aspects of being a lesbian teacher in Canada. She talked about being lucky that she is safe, her job is safe, and that her job *would* be safe if she came out. She talked about her freedom to be herself in the future tense, as if she will soon conquer her fears of coming out and take advantage of the protection she has in Canada to make a difference in her students' lives. She is hopeful, saying that "I hope someday soon I will be able to put that frame on my desk with my wedding picture, or a picture of us and our kid whenever that comes, and I'll just be able to say 'Oh that's my wife and that's my daughter and that's my dog, and this is my life, now let's do language!'"

Diana said she felt supported, especially in comparison to other countries in the world. She also felt supported in the public school system as opposed to the Catholic School system. Diana expressed this comparison through a story from her time in teacher's college: a guest speaker from the Catholic School Board gave a lecture in one of her classes on getting a teaching job after graduation, and Diana remembered him saying "if you're gay you shouldn't bother applying." She remembered feeling stunned at this statement, and "shell shocked". However, she knew that this wouldn't be the same issue in the public board, where she would be working, so

she maintained her belief that the climate for LGBQ teachers in Canada is positive and supportive.

Supportive work environment. Having an inclusive, supportive work environment is important for employee wellbeing and influences an employee's ability to perform their job well (Mor Barak, 2008), and supervisor and colleague support has been identified as a factor in fear reduction for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). Respondents identified some key ingredients in a safe and supportive school environment. It is beneficial to have other out LGBQ teachers or administration in a school for two main reasons: other LGBQ staff provides support from the perspective of those who have gone through similar experiences, and it normalizes LGBQ teachers and reduces heteronormativity throughout the school. In Paula's school there are several lesbian and gay teachers, and because of this, heteronormativity isn't assumed anymore. Even new teachers to the school quickly catch on that you have to ask about "partners" rather than "husbands" or "wives". With little to no homophobia at her school, Paula theorized that the reason homophobia exists is fear of the unknown. If gay and lesbian people are out and visible and confident, it becomes much harder for people to hate.

Having the principal's support contributes greatly to a safe work environment. Principal support means that a principal prioritizes the safety and wellbeing of his teacher above appeasing the parents. It also usually means that a principal supports LGBQ people in general, outside of the employment setting. Sam's positive experiences have been in schools that have supportive administration. Supportive administrators are often allies to the LGBQ community because of personal relationships with LGBQ people. For example, one principal had a brother who killed himself because he was gay, so this principal had a better understanding of the struggles for gay people. Another principal had a best friend who was a closeted gay man, and so she had some

understanding of what prejudice could do to someone. Sam now has some schools that he has been working at for years and he knows that they are safe environments, and he finds comfort in these schools.

Diana's principal was always prepared for and willing to address any negative feedback from parents. The principal continuously reminded Diana that she would defend any diversity or equity programs or materials (like starting a Gay Straight Alliance or putting up posters from an equity conference), often stating: "if there's ever any issues with any of the parents you tell me".

Coming out. While there is still risk associated with coming out, doing so shows resilience and can have a positive effect on a person's well-being. Diana was completely in the closet for the first three years of her teaching career, and when she started coming out she felt a lot better about herself. She feels that she is an open person and would not want to have to "omit a huge part of my life and not be open at work... it's just such freedom to be able to be yourself at work. ...just to be able to talk about my partner... and talk about my wedding, because other people are talking about their weddings..." This is even more important to Diana because the teaching environment is very social, where it is the norm for colleagues to talk about their personal lives.

Some respondents reported the negative experience of hiding their partners from colleagues ($n = 4$). LGBTQ teachers can also show resilience by talking about their partner at work. Kelly talked about how empowering it is to be able to refer to a wife as opposed to a "partner," which is a vague term open to misinterpretation - "now that we're married, it's a huge difference..." Kelly feels that the institution of marriage adds validity to a relationship which might make it more acceptable or more real to others, or at the very least, means that she and her relationship are protected from discrimination by law.

Paula refers to her wife as a means of coming out, using the term "wife" in conversation at parent meetings. This unobtrusive way of coming out permits the parents to go home and process the information however they will, rather than being directly confronted with the information. Paula feels that directly coming out puts the recipient of the information on the spot, without giving them time to contemplate their feelings and react thoughtfully. Paula recognizes the benefits of legal marriage when coming out: "it's nice to be able to be married, to be able to use that language, because partner is still sort of ambiguous. *Wife*, they're gonna know..."

Confidence. Some respondents show resilience through their confidence in themselves ($n = 4$). Developing this confidence – to the extent that it can trump their fears – is part of a growing process. Kelly describes herself as becoming more comfortable in her own skin over the years, more proud of herself and of her partner. She has also normalized her sexual identity within herself, which seems to help normalize it for others. "They can take me or leave me and I'm ready for either... but I expect them to just take it." Rose was in her forties when she came out to her colleagues, and she thinks that "as you get older you don't care as much about what people think". She believes that she would have had a different mindset and been more nervous about coming out to colleagues had she come out in her twenties.

Being a positive role model. Some respondents find resilience in the knowledge that their presence in the school system provides children with positive LGBTQ role models ($n = 8$); that is, they are normalizing LGBTQ for all students, and providing an important level of understanding to LGBTQ students, helping them to feel less alone. When Jet reflected on the positive aspects of being a Queer teacher, she talked about bringing her partner to school open houses and Christmas concerts and watching the reaction of students who she knew could identify with them - who were either Queer, questioning, or had someone in their lives who was

LGBQ. She revels in the knowledge that she can be a positive role model for these students, and can hopefully make them feel less isolated.

Paula shared a story of how she acted as a role model. She had shaved her head for charity, and for pajama day was wearing superhero pajamas. One student from a different class asked if she was a boy. She explained to him that she was a woman and she had short hair and she liked superhero pajamas. This was a teachable moment for the student who learned a little about gender diversity - that boys and girls do not always fit into stereotypical molds. This is the kind of role modeling that Paula engages in - it doesn't have to involve coming out, actively educating about who the role models are and what makes them different - it can be as simple as being visible and letting the children ask questions, think, and make connections.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This sample of thirteen LGBQ teachers in the Ontario, public, elementary school system confirmed many of the findings of prejudice and discrimination described in research from U.S. samples. LGBQ elementary teachers in Ontario feel oppressed from coming out, particularly to students, and are often afraid that disclosing their sexual orientation at work will risk their employment. Although Canadian law specifies that it is illegal to terminate someone's employment because of their sexual orientation, these teachers are nevertheless afraid of being fired, and that other reasons will be fabricated in order to hide the fact that discrimination is the true motive. They are also afraid that they will be harassed until they feel forced to resign. For two respondents, this scenario was more than just a fear, it was a recurring experience.

The most commonly reported reasons for the prejudice and discrimination was backlash from the parent community. Parent complaints fuelled by stereotypes about pedophilia and the "gay agenda" were a powerful influence on school administration and school boards. Some

respondents reported that their employers prioritized avoidance of parent complaints over equity. The power that parents seem to have in the discrimination against LGBTQ teachers is consistent with the *taste for discrimination* theory described in the economics literature. Employers may discriminate in hiring and firing practices if they perceive that their customers are prejudiced against a certain demographic; the employer is concerned with productivity and in order for the institution or organization to be productive, the clients must be satisfied with those individuals providing the service (Elmslie & Tebaldi, 2007). Parents play the role of the customer of a school, who have a vested interest in the services the institution provides.

Although only four of the thirteen respondents were willing to come out to their students, even some who were not out acknowledged that they approach teaching through the lens of being LGBTQ. Therefore, a task LGBTQ teachers face is to find indirect or impersonal ways of bringing their experience and understanding as a minority into their teaching so that students can receive the benefits of a safe and inclusive learning environment. Such indirect ways of teaching with a queer lens can take the form of spearheading diversity and inclusivity initiatives or using teachable moments such as correcting student language, for example.

Despite prejudice, discrimination and the challenges of being authentic in the classroom while maintaining personal safety, many of the respondents expressed ways in which they maintained a positive outlook. For example, they would conclude stories of negative experiences with a positive qualifier, or compare their experiences to other, more discriminatory and oppressive experiences and environments. Resilience could also be seen in the finding or creating of a supportive work environment, coming out and being able to share their personal lives with coworkers, and having the confidence to come out without fear. The final way that resilience was expressed was satisfaction from being a positive role model.

These resilience themes that emerged among the LGBQ teachers are consistent with the ways resilience has been identified in the Black lesbian community and the transgender community in response to societal and workplace discrimination (Bowleg, Brooks, & Ritz, 2008; Hayes, Singh, & Watson, 2011). Also, respondents who gained satisfaction from being role models were not only role models for LGBQ students, but their presence, if out, seemed to help normalize LGBQ identities for all children and colleagues in their school. This belief in a widespread significance as a role model is consistent with the belief among racial minority teachers that their presence would have a positive effect on all students, not just those students who identified with the same minority group (Klassen & Carr, 1997).

Implications

This last form of resilience, being a role model, is linked to a major implication for this research. If LGBQ teachers can be supported in being out to their students, children would be exposed to these role models at an ideal age and in an ideal setting for the prevention or reduction of sexual prejudice. This argument is fully supported by research conducted from the perspective of Contact Theory. Contact Theory, developed by Gordon Allport (1954), has been used to explore how prejudice can be reduced through in-group members' interactions with members of the respective out-group. Several studies have found support for the effect of contact on reducing prejudice against LGBQ people specifically (Gentry, 1987; Heinze & Horn, 2009; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Herek, 1988). Similarly, Lance (2002) and Ripley, Anderson, McCormack, and Rockett (2012) tested the prejudice-reducing effect of contact in an educational (albeit college) setting, and found that LGBQ identified guest speakers or professors reduced sexual prejudice among the students. In addition to these various studies, a large-scale meta-analysis also revealed that the approach seems to have its largest effect on prejudice in the

context of sexual orientation ($r = -.271$; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Also, the younger the targets of reducing sexual prejudice are, the greater the effect: for children aged 1-12, the mean effect size for contact on reduced prejudice is $r = -.239$ ⁸, whereas adolescents ($r = -.208$) and adults ($r = -.197$) become increasingly less likely to experience reduced prejudice from contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The relationship between an LGBQ teacher and a young student may therefore be an ideal candidate for contact to reduce prejudice.

The results of this study show that despite some respondents' efforts to hide their sexual orientation from students, students seem to have enhanced sensitivity to even subtle non-normative characteristics (like a woman with a shaved head; see Paula's narrative, p. 51). If students perceive that their teacher is LGBQ but the teacher actively tries to hide this identity, students are more likely to adopt negative attitudes toward LGBQ people, whereas receiving direct disclosure of an LGBQ contact's sexual orientation (rather than hearing about it from a third party) is associated with more positive attitudes toward LGBQ people (Herek & Capitanio, 1996). A person who willingly and confidently comes out is sending the message that there is nothing to hide or be ashamed of, which bolsters the case for creating supportive environments for teachers to come out.

The long-term goal of the current research is to reduce prejudice and discrimination for LGBQ teachers. This initial exploration of teachers' lived experiences provides insight into the often hidden experiences of this demographic, revealing patterns of systemic prejudice and discrimination that the general public may not be aware of. Gathering information on inequalities is described as a necessary starting point for making change (St. John, 2013). This research brings to light the weaknesses in the school system that require change.

⁸ The effect sizes for LGBTQ out-groups and for youth in-groups may be small to medium (Cohen, 1992), but Glass, McGaw, and Smith (1981) explain that the true meaning of an effect size is relative to the effects of other tests of the same concepts, supporting the practical relevance of Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) findings.

Future Research

The next step for this particular research is knowledge mobilization. The information presented in this thesis needs to be transformed into more easily digestible facts and recommendations that can be shared with different audiences⁹. Recommendations can be shared with other LGBQ teachers which highlight the ways in which this sample successfully navigated their identities in their teaching approach and the ways they found resilience. Recommendations can be shared with heterosexual teachers and school administrators, informing them that they are likely to have LGBQ colleagues who are closeted and who feel oppressed and discriminated against. Recommendations can also be shared with school boards and policy makers, informing them that anti-discrimination policies are not working for LGBQ teachers, and that more needs to be done to enforce policies that make safe and inclusive places for all.

Future research should be done to measure the actual effects that having an LGBQ teacher has on students. LGBQ teachers need to be given the role of participant-researcher during a planned coming out to students. Student prejudice should be measured pre and post teacher disclosure, and after one school year with an out teacher. A reduction in prejudice would align with findings from contact theory research, and would support the right of LGBQ teachers to be out in their teaching environment without backlash from principals or parent communities.

Limitations

Narrative research is not affected by many of the same limitations as traditional research. For instance, our sample size (n=13) would be considered a limitation if the goal was to infer generalizable principles from the data; however, the goal was instead to thoroughly understand

⁹ At the time of defense of this thesis, these findings have been shared with the Upper Grand District School Board's equity committee in response to the board's call for research that could provide insight into equity needs in schools. These findings have also been shared at a Guelph-Wellington community conference, the Guelph Pride Conference.

the experiences of certain members of a very specific demographic. That being said, the lack of identity diversity in the sample (i.e. eight of thirteen were lesbian identified, no transgender identified, and no bisexual identified) can be seen as a limitation.

Another limitation is in the recruiting methods. Probability sampling would have been ideal, but would have involved making the recruitment notice available to every elementary teacher in Ontario. Without mass distribution by the union and without access to the schools, no way was found to conduct probability sampling. It was a limitation that participants came from targeted online recruitment and snowball sampling because only those teachers with certain social connections (online group membership, friends) were made aware of the study. However, participants were diverse in terms of age, level of outness, and level of engagement in equity and diversity school initiatives.

Despite these limitations, this research revealed important patterns of systemic prejudice and discrimination occurring within the public sector of the Province of Ontario. This information has previously been either unknown or hidden from public knowledge. In Ontario, Canada, where LGBQ rights are supposed to be protected, this research shines a much needed light on one of the remaining, hidden marginalized sectors of the LGBQ population.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter to Union Locals



Research Study Notice

Dear [union representative],

My name is Amy Gray and I am a Master's of Arts candidate in the department of Applied Social Psychology at the University of Guelph. I am conducting my thesis research on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) teachers in the public, elementary school system in Canada. I would like to interview a sample of these teachers.

This research has been approved by the University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board (REB #), and is hoped to be personally beneficial to many of the teachers who decide to participate. This is because sharing one's story and experiences, whether positive or negative, can help people feel empowered and understood where they may have felt oppressed or silence prior.

I am seeking help from unions to spread awareness of this study to LGBT teachers. If you are interested in passing along my research study notice, there are two options: the notice can be emailed to all teachers who are members of your union (either as a separate email or as part of a monthly newsletter or update), or a notice can be posted on your union's website. If you agree to distribute by email to all teachers, I would ask that you send it to every teacher, not only to teachers you may know to be LGBT.

I would of course be glad to discuss this study and my intentions as a researcher with you further before you make a decision to pass along the research study notice on my behalf. Also, if you would like to speak to my graduate advisor about my request, please feel free to contact him. The notice that you would be distributing can be found below, as well as contact information for myself and for my advisor.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration – I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Amy Gray
MA Candidate, Applied Social Psychology
University of Guelph
graya@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Serge Desmarais (advisor)
Associate Vice President (Academic)
Professor, Department of Psychology
s.desmarais@exec.uoguelph.ca
519-824-4120 x53880

Appendix B: Recruitment Notice



Research Study Notice

Are you an LGBT teacher of children between grades K-8 in the public school system? Would you like to share your experiences for a qualitative research study at the University of Guelph?

My name is Amy Gray and I am a Master's of Arts candidate in the Applied Social Psychology program at the University of Guelph. I am conducting my thesis research on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and any other non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender identifying teachers in the public, elementary school system, and I am interested in hearing your stories.

I am not a teacher and I have no connection to the teaching profession, but as a lesbian identified researcher I am aware of the prejudice, discrimination, silencing and/or oppression that occurs for sexual minorities in many different workplaces. The interviews will not contain any identifying information for your safety, and they will be analyzed in a way that considers your story holistically, keeping your experiences within their original contexts.

If you choose to participate in this study you will also receive \$25 cash to compensate you for your time.

This research has been approved by the University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board (REB# 13MY022).

If you would like more information please contact me. Please note that it is preferable for the maintenance of your own privacy to use a non-work email address for communications regarding this study.

Amy Gray
graya@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Serge Desmarais (research advisor)
s.desmarais@exec.uoguelph.ca
519-824-4120 x53880

Appendix C: Recruitment Card



Research Study Notice

Experiences of LGBTQ public
school teachers of grades K-8
For more information or to participate in
this qualitative research study, contact:
Amy Gray (Master's Candidate)
Email: graya@uoguelph.ca



Study Website: www.uoguelph.ca/psychology/teacher-experiences

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Experiences of Canadian, LGBQ Educators of grades K-8

You are asked to participate in an interview for a research study conducted by Amy Gray (MA candidate) and Dr. Serge Desmarais from the Department of Psychology at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to a Master's thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Dr. Serge Desmarais at 519-824-4120 x53880.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is designed to gather the experiences of those who teach grades K-8 and identify as LGBQ (or any other identity that is different from heterosexual). Teachers are invited to share their stories about being LGBQ, as well as their experiences either disclosing or not disclosing sexual orientation at school. Little is known about these experiences, and the better understood these experiences are, the better chance there is of changing or implementing policies and practices that positively affect the lives of LGBQ educators and their students.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Contact

Engage in initial email or phone contact and meet for an interview at a location convenient to you.

Interview

Be interviewed by the researcher at the scheduled time (will take approximately 40-60 minutes). The interviews will be conducted at a location of your choosing, either at your home, at an office at the University of Guelph, or in a public setting that is convenient for you and the researcher (e.g. rented private space in public building, outdoor, etc.). If you are not located within an easily accessible distance from Guelph, there is an option to be interviewed via Skype. In the instance

of a Skype interview, you would have the option of showing your video feed. Questions will be about school environment, personal experiences and opinions regarding being an LGBTQ teacher, as well demographic information such as number of years of teaching experience. The interview (in person or Skype) will be audio recorded.

Follow-up

You will be contacted once the interviews have been transcribed (i.e. typed) and given the opportunity to read the transcripts and confirm that what was captured in the interview is what you intended to say. Note that sending your transcribed interview via email is not secure, and you would have the option of transferring it using traditional mail or by hand delivery. You would be given up to 2 weeks to complete the review process. Also following the interview you will be asked if you would like to see a summary of the completed study, in which case an email address would be kept on file (accessible only to the researcher) until the summary is sent.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The subject matter addressed in the interview may be sensitive to some people and during the interview emotional stress may emerge, but all questions are optional. Note that work based email accounts are accessible to your employer. For your own privacy, it is recommended that you use personal email address for communication regarding this study. Also to reduce the risk of personal identification, please refrain from using identifying information such as school name, district, school board, etc. If you do share such identifiers in the interview, they will be removed at the time of transcription.

USE OF INTERVIEW DATA

The researcher will transcribe audio recordings of your interview and analyze it using a qualitative analysis computer software. The audio recording will be deleted once the interview has been transcribed, and the transcription will be stored on an encrypted computer. Themes and some non-identifying anecdotes will be used in a Master's thesis dissertation, a publication in an academic journal, and a conference presentation. The entire process will be completed by August 2014.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participating in this study will offer groundbreaking knowledge to the field of social psychology. Upon improved understanding of the experiences of teachers who identify as LGBTQ, academics will have tools with which to influence policy makers and implementers. Ultimately, a contribution to this understanding will be a contribution to the movement for equality.

In addition to the big picture benefits mentioned above, participating in this study will provide the opportunity to share stories of personal trials and tribulations which can be empowering or relieving.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

In gratitude for sharing your time and stories, you will receive \$25 cash once the researcher received your signed consent form. If you are interviewed via Skype, an e-gift certificate for \$25 to amazon.ca will be emailed to you. If you choose to end the interview at any point or do not wish to answer certain questions, this will not affect your compensation.

ELIGIBILITY

You must currently be, or have been in the past, a teacher in a *public, elementary* school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

The recorded interviews will be stored on an encrypted computer and will not be seen/heard by anyone besides the researcher. All identifying information (e.g. names of people and places) will be removed from the transcripts. The transcripts may be shared with select colleagues for input relevant to the analysis. You will retain the right to review your interview transcript and to provide feedback for edits to be made to your transcript. Transcripts and audio/video recordings will be destroyed five years after completion of the study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606

University of Guelph

E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca

437 University Centre

Fax: (519) 821-5236

Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study “Experiences of Canadian, LGBQ Educators of grades K-8” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

Name of Witness

Signature of Witness

Date

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Sub-questions (a, b, c...) are probes to be used to coax elaboration if respondent's answer has minimal content.

1. Tell me about the school you work for.
 - a) What are the students like?
 - b) What are your relationships with your colleagues and supervisors like?
 - c) How do you feel about how your principal runs the school?
2. Tell me about the community your school is in. You could describe it in terms of cultural, political, religious climate, and attitudes toward sexual orientation diversity.
3. Are you out at school?
 - *If yes:
 - a) In what capacity? (i.e. to whom?)
 - b) Can you share more about your experience with *coming* out?
 - c) Can you share more about your experience with *being* out?
 - *If no:
 - a) Can you tell me more about not being out at school?
 - b) Are there specific people or factors that prevent you from coming out?
4. Have you seen any anti-gay or related bullying in your school?
 - *If yes:
 - a) Can you elaborate on what you've seen or experienced?
 - b) How did you respond to it? Why did you respond in this way?
 - *If no:
 - a) Why do you think that is?
5. What is your personal view regarding teachers coming out to their students? (e.g. should they, shouldn't they, are there specific situations where it is more appropriate?)
6. What were your experiences in pre-service teacher training:
 - a) with regards to being lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer?
 - b) with learning to teach or address diversity and social justice issues?
 - c) what year were you in pre-service teacher training?
7. Demographic information:
 - a) How long have you been a teacher?
 - b) What subject(s) do you teach?
 - c) How old are you?
 - d) What is your sexual orientation or gender identity? What do your colleagues, employers/supervisors, and students think is your sexual orientation or gender identity?
 - e) Are you in a relationship? If yes, how would you define your relationship (e.g. married)?
 - f) Do you have children?
8. Would you be willing to be contacted for follow-up?