

Out of the Classroom Closet: Why Only Some Gay and Lesbian Teachers Are Out

by

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B. Sc., University of British Columbia, 1987

B. Sc., University of Victoria, 1995

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ABSTRACT

Canada and British Columbia have legislation in place to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. A growing number of BC school districts have policy protecting gays and lesbians. However, some gay and lesbian teachers still hide their sexual orientation. Organizational theory recognizes that formal rules do not define the organization. In-depth interviews with 13 gay and lesbian teachers indicate that they would rather not maintain their classroom closets; but that they needed to know that they would be safe coming out. The methodology followed the tradition of narrative inquiry by collecting stories. Initial recruitment was through email, print, and word-of-mouth advertising. An on-line form was used to filter prospective participants to include urban, rural, Muslim, Catholic, closeted, and politically active participants. The great silence with respect to gays and lesbians in the workforce, paired with a history of negative messages needs to be offset by the frequent and ubiquitous dissemination of positive messages.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to those who attempt to use formal organizational structures to include gay and lesbian people as full members of society.

It is wise to listen

Heraclitus (535 – 475 BC)

Chapter 1: An Overview

Educational administration ... involves not simply the formulation and implementation of reliable and neutral techniques of management but rather the active embracing of a political role involving analysis, judgment, and advocacy and the adoption of an active stance toward issues of social justice and democracy. (Bates, 1987, p.110)

The Mystery

It is 2009 in British Columbia (BC), Canada. My husband and I are legally married gay school teachers with adopted children. The adoption was encouraged by the rector and parishioners of our church. We are publicly open about our sexual orientation. I have danced with my husband at school dances. He has a picture of me on his desk. I am aware, however, that other gay and lesbian school teachers in BC hide personal characteristics that might reveal them as part of a sexual minority, or LGBTTTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, queer or questioning) people. This thesis investigates the question, “Why?” Why, given the positive personal experiences of acceptance, openness, and honesty that some of us enjoy, do other gay and lesbian teachers maintain the shame and effort required to hide this single characteristic? These questions are seated in the context of current Canadian society, bureaucratic educational organizations, and the tradition of academic research.

Queer

I use the terms “queer” and “sexual minority” where the concepts being discussed are not only applicable to the gay and lesbian participants in my research, but also can apply to anyone else whose being queers the boundaries of the sexual understandings of

society. In this context “sexual” does not refer to sexual activity; it refers to a person’s biological sex as assigned at birth in the socially constructed reality of the delivery room. A member of a sexual minority is one who has characteristics for which the person is likely to be oppressed because those characteristics do not align with the socially defined gender behaviours for that sex. The experiences of different types of queers are different, but there is commonality. All are subject to marginalization for an inability to align sex with traditional definitions of gender. I define the terms “queer” and “sexual minority” as synonyms but understand that the word “minority” gives focus to social justice issues, and that “queer” emphasizes the disruption of the association between sex and gender.

Context

In the Body of Knowledge

Tönnies (1887/1955) described the increased organization of society as part of the European transition from an agrarian to an industrial society where efficiency and punctuality (described as *Gesellschaft*) supplant community relationships (*Gemeinschaft*) as characteristics of human social functioning. Weber (1947) extended Tönnies’ observations about human behaviour into the calculated functioning within bureaucratic organization where decisions are made *sine ira et studio* (without anger or partiality). In such an environment, hiring, firing and promotions are based on competence, credentials and demonstrated ability to perform the task. At least this is the claim. Foucault (1978) points out that “relationships of force ... come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions” (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). Power is manifested not only in rational behaviours commensurate with the official organization, but also appears in small daily interactions between individuals in the unofficial organization

(O'Day, 1974). Ferguson (1984) describes how the unofficial organization can be used to continue the subjugation of women contrary to official policy and law. In fact, actions in the unofficial organization can be used against anyone who is not part of the dominant group, including homosexuals. From the perspective of gay and lesbian school teachers, their students, and anyone who understands the psychological and social cost associated with building the closet (the metaphysical place where homosexuals hide) (Sedgwick, 1991), it is necessary to end these oppressive organizational behaviours.

It is axiomatic to say that homosexuals are not the dominant group in Western society. There is current support and protection, however, for homosexuals by the official organization in the technologies of school district policy and Canadian law, as will be discussed below. An intention of this research project is to explore why the official tools are insufficient in resisting oppression in the experience of gay and lesbian teachers. Queer-positive policy of an organization, be it a corporation, school, school board, or government, can be used to combat and modify oppressive daily interactions, but this research project reveals if and how participants use these tools.

Some participants in this study take a Foucauldian perspective that such policies are manifestations of the inclusion of sexual minorities into larger society, not that they are tools for the oppressed in resisting the oppression directly. As Grace & Wells (2006) state, "Although marginalization in the Canadian context is being countered significantly, this exclusion is still evident." (p. 51). The paradox between personal oppression and official support exists.

In Law

BC today presents a particularly interesting intersection of geography and history with its substantial official support for queers existing alongside homophobia. In 1992, sexual orientation was explicitly named as an invalid basis for discrimination in BC (Human Rights Amendment Act, 1992; S. Janzen, personal communication, November 11, 2005). (Janzen was Director of Legislation in the Ministry of Education, which was responsible for the Human Rights Act. It was he who drafted the legislation that was later approved by cabinet and the legislature.) BC was among the first provinces in Canada to permit same-sex marriage on July 8, 2003 (Barbeau, 2003). The BC Vital Statistics Act has allowed a legal change of gender since November 7, 1973. In January 2004, the BC Vital Statistics Agency sent a letter to BC marriage commissioners directing them to perform same-sex marriages when asked or to resign their commissions. Both the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) and the BC College of Teachers (BCCT) have shown themselves to be active protectors of homosexuals (*BCTF members' guide* 2006; Hiebert, 2002). BC is one of the few regions in Canada that boasts a gay and lesbian teachers' organization (Carter, 2003). While some provinces may be less supportive, the federal government amended the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1996 to proscribe discrimination based on sexual orientation (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2007). In the years since, the Supreme Court of Canada has read this prohibition into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (*Egan v. Canada*, 1995 CanLII 98 (S.C.C.), 1995; *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002 SCC 86 (CanLII), 2002). This included the suit of one participant in this study against his school board for banning books that depicted gay and lesbian parents. This suit contributed significantly to the requirement that parliament

redefine marriage in a way that does not discriminate against homosexuals (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002 SCC 86 (CanLII), 2002; J. H. Carter, 2004; CBC News, 2005; O'Neill, 2003; Paskey, 2000). The fact that the school board attempted to stop the neutral portrayal of homosexuals in elementary school shows that these educational leaders understood silence as a powerful mechanism in preventing recognition and inclusion of this marginalized group.

Significance to educational leadership

By doing nothing, education leaders support the silencing and continued oppression of invisible minorities such as gays, lesbians and other queers. As Greenfield (1973) pointed out, organizations are based in human action. They are not independent, purposeful organisms making decisions independently of the people who comprise and control them. This research project is set in the context of BC educational organizations and the laws and policy that govern and structure them, including Canadian law. It is the purpose of this research to ask why the formal structures of these organizations support authenticity with respect to the sexual orientation of gay and lesbian teachers, but the population ostensibly protected by such organizational structures fails to take full advantage of such protections. Greenfield understood that organizations are driven by the values of the people in them; organizations do not have values themselves. Therefore, the study of organizations must include the study of values and the myriad of influences that affect every human interaction within those organizations. Because it is difficult to study every influence, educational administration is rife with abstraction and quantitative analysis of what can be numerically measured and analysed (Greenfield, 1973). This is inadequate when studying a partially hidden, and predominantly invisible population like

gay and lesbian teachers. Considering the array of influences and the role of values, the reasons many homosexual teachers hide their sexual orientation may not be the result of formal oppressive organizational structures, but because of values that these teachers hold and encounter every day in their interactions with other teachers, parents, students, and administrators. For there to be organizational change with respect to sexual orientation, there must be resistance to the homophobia and silence that exist in these individual interactions. For the research to be meaningful, it must use open-ended techniques that explore the experiences and thinking of the people involved. The organizational structures are in place; it is up to school leaders to use these structures to generate the deep change required.

Anderson (1990) argues that the management of meaning is a critical function of school administrators and that the positivistic nature of the dominant themes and methods of research in educational administration neglect the study of “invisible and unobtrusive forms of control.” (p. 30). Yet corporate leadership manuals such as those by Bennis and Nanus (1986) explicitly name the management of meaning as critical to the successful leader. Anderson argues that this neglect in the research prevents educational administration from having any significant positive effect on the condition of underprivileged students. He presents research that shows school administrators, by creating inequalities, to be more concerned with legitimating “their social allocative functions than in creating social change” (p. 41). Identifying myths and ignoring the obvious are not open to the measurable techniques of positivistic research. Anderson shows how school administrators avoid conflict and promote stability with the effect that they maintain the current construction of their organization and fend off any possibility of

change. Anderson takes examples from the “Black problem” (p. 39) in the United States, but the lessons are easily applied to the situation of LGBTTTQQ students and teachers in BC. By keeping silent on the issue of homosexuality, a career-oriented administrator avoids conflict with homophobes thus maintaining stability and the oppressive institutional silence. Anderson advocates for a research methodology and research questions that expose the invisible apparatus of power and bring voice to the silent oppressed.

Unless researchers in the field of educational administration find ways to study the invisible and unobtrusive forms of control that are exercised in schools and school districts, administrative theories that grow out of empirical research – whether quantitative or qualitative – will continue to perpetuate a view of school effectiveness that is unable to address in any significant manner the problems of their under-privileged clients. (p. 39)

My research questions and methodology are an effort to do both.

Research Questions

The situation of gay and lesbian school teachers in BC presents an ideal opportunity to apply the ideas of Anderson and Greenfield. Greenfield points out the importance of personal values in the organization with regards to how people make decisions based on their values. Anderson makes two important points: that creative, not positivistic, research methods are required to find out what the *de facto* processes of control in schools are; and that school administrators are more concerned with maintaining stability than with improving society, even in the context of government policy and legislation that advocate for such change.

It could be that BC school administrators are guilty of silencing discussion of queer issues in the way that some US school administrators render Blacks and Black issues invisible as described by Anderson (1990). To explore this idea, I went to gay and lesbian teachers in BC, some of whom were choosing to support the silence surrounding the existence of LGBTTTQQ people in our schools, and some of whom were active in promoting their own emancipation. Of these teachers I asked the following research questions:

1. What are the influencing factors on gay and lesbian teachers' decisions to be public or private with their sexual orientations?
2. How do gay and lesbian teachers decide to whom, if anyone, they reveal their sexual orientation?

I planned to get personal stories from the participants that I could translate into abstract ones. To answer these questions, I used a methodology involving diverse recruitment techniques and in-depth interviews.

The Methodology

According to C.W. Mills (1959), “the coordinate points of the proper study of man” (p. 143) are biography, history, and society. In this tradition, my thesis explores the intersection of biography of self-selected gay and lesbian teachers with history and society in their decisions to conceal or disclose their sexual orientation. Some gay and lesbian school teachers hide their sexual orientation while others are politically active in revealing their sexual orientation freely and speaking publicly against homophobia and heterosexism.

The study is restricted to gay and lesbian teachers for the simple reason of access. The list of research methodologies was limited by the same consideration. This is a notoriously difficult population to research (Croteau, 1996; Lonborg & Phillips, 1996; Niesche, 2003; Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005; Schneider, 1986; Ward & Winstanley, 2005). Future research should expand the population to include transgendered, bisexual, intersexed, and others whose mere existence blurs gender boundaries. Rottman (2006) points out that the gay movement tends to leave other LGBTTTQQ people at the margins despite the growth in inclusion documented by de Laurentis (1991) fifteen years earlier. While my list of participants only includes gay and lesbian teachers in BC, I respond to Rottman's critique where I can, given my participants.

To receive as much information as possible from my participants I used a narrative methodology in the tradition of Denzin and Lincoln (1995), and Kirby and McKenna (1989). Participants knew the nature of the study when they volunteered. They were given the research questions in advance. Each participated in an in-depth interview. After the interview, participants responded to follow-up questions. This method allowed me to delve deeply into the knowledge and experience of the few participants I was able to recruit. The participants provided me with detailed personal histories of their recent experiences in BC, and over decades of experience in school organizations in BC, Alberta, Ontario, and some of the United States.

The Participants

The participants represent a wide range of openness, varying from the activist who took his case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada to a young, nominally Catholic woman who assiduously vetted the transcript of our interview to ensure it did

not contain any suggestion of identifying information. Another participant is a Catholic school principal. Another is a Muslim woman who insisted her mosque allow her and her partner to perform the naming ceremony for their son in the mosque. One continuous theme that all the participants decried was the silence surrounding their existence. Each one identified the lack of neutral and positive information as a barrier to self and social acceptance. Some of the participants work against the oppressive silence. Others maintain their own oppressive silence and display behavioural evidence of internalized homophobia. Some enjoy the freedom that is now possible. Why each chooses a particular path, again, is the subject of this study.

Overview of the Report

The following chapters consist of a review of the literature (Chapter 2), a description of my methodology (Chapter 3), biographies of the participants (Chapter 4), a description and analysis of the interviews (Chapter 5), and finally highlights and recommendations (Chapter 6). In Chapter 2, I look at the academic literature as it pertains to this research project including the writings of authors who advocate for an approach to research that includes the full human experience, not just the measurement of the measurable divorced from the context of the lives of the people involved. I also survey the small body of literature that relates directly to gay and lesbian public school teachers. In Chapter 3, I present my methodology, describing how I was able to recruit participants who were difficult to find. I describe my interview techniques, and the theoretical support for such techniques. In Chapter 4, I present brief biographies of each participant. In Chapter 5, I examine the results of my interviews to reveal why some gay and lesbian teachers in some contexts feel safe to present an authentic identity while others in the

same or different contexts construct more mainstream identities. Finally in Chapter 6, I conclude with recommendations for application and praxis in research and in organizations, making suggestions to school administrators how to bring greater social justice and democracy to schools.

Ch 2 A Review of the Literature on Gay and Lesbian Teachers in School Organizations

Schools are organizations with the goal of educating the young to be the types of adults that existing adults want them to be. As organizations they are made up of diverse individuals with different personalities, biases, and degrees of power (formal or informal) and influence. The people in the school organizations are affected by and affect the creation of laws and policy. In this context any population can be marginalized and individual members of minority populations must make choices about how they cope with their environment. The situation of gay and lesbian teachers is especially interesting in this context because, unlike marginalized visible minorities who cannot hide but have family to support them, queers can often hide but often their families are hostile. This lonely situation makes them vulnerable to discourses controlled by the school principal, who can perpetuate the silence with respect to sexual minorities in school organizations.

Organizational Theory

Weber (1947) described the bureaucratization of society and its acting *sine ira et studio*. In such an environment hiring, firing and promotions are based on competence, credentials and demonstrated ability to perform the task. At least this is the assumption. Foucault (1978) points out, and O'Day (1974) provides examples of, how power is manifested in the small daily interactions between individuals. Ferguson (1984) describes how the unofficial organization can be used to continue the subjugation of women. However, the formal policy of an organization, be it a corporation, school, school board or government, can be used to combat and modify those daily interactions and subjugations by breaking the silence surrounding sexual minorities and by developing

bureaucratic tools which advocates can use to bring sexual minorities in from the margins. In fact, from a Foucauldian perspective, such policies are manifestations of the inclusion of sexual minorities into larger society.

Bourdieu (1977) describes schools as conservative institutions of social reproduction which effectively maintain and reinforce hegemonic power structures which both he and Foucault describe. Conflating their theories and observations, schools become sites of power wherein existing power structures and ways of thinking and behaving are enforced, taught, honoured and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1977; Foucault, 1978; Foucault, 1980). Twentieth century French schools were minutely bureaucratized to the point where all teachers taught the same lesson on the same day in some areas. In such an environment, teachers function as *les facteurs*, or clerks at the low end of a hierarchical bureaucracy performing tasks precisely how and when the managers dictate. Herr (1987) acknowledges that social reproduction occurs in schools in the United States with respect to heterosexism and gender: “One implicit role of societal institutions, such as schools, is to promote the pervasive ideology of heterosexism and thereby perpetuate clear constructs of maleness and femaleness” (p. 52). These arguments and observations about social reproduction will be applied to English Canada including BC, but first consider the paradox presented by the BC Ministry of Education.

Gay Rights and the Law

In the jurisdiction of British Columbia, Canada, legislation and policy have become less homophobic and more queer positive. They reflect slowly changing attitudes of Canadians towards homosexuals. On October 16, 1959 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) ran a programme titled “A psychiatric ‘problem’” in which the

featured experts stated that the problem of homosexuality is the way that homosexuals are treated, and that Canadian law should not punish private sexual acts between consenting adults. At the end of the program, the host, Ted Bissland, provided a conclusion that was the opposite of his experts. He concluded that the program had demonstrated that homosexuality may be a threat to the family (Bissland & Hill, 1959). This reveals the foundationless prejudice of that era.

In 1967, Everett George Klippert, from the Northwest Territories, was labelled a dangerous homosexual offender. His three-year sentence for engaging in sexual relations with other men was extended to indefinite preventative detention in a two-to-three decision because he was homosexual and therefore not likely to stop having sexual relations with other men (R. v. Klippert, 1967; *CBC news in depth: Same-sex rights: Canada timeline*, 2007; CBC News, 2005; Earle, 1967; McLeod, 1996). Politicians like Bud Orange, the Liberal MP from Klippert's riding in the North, NDP leader Tommy Douglas, and Liberal Pierre Trudeau, then minister of justice, were aggrieved by the ruling. In 1969, consensual sexual intercourse between adults of the same sex was removed from the Criminal Code of Canada. Klippert was not released for two years, even though there was no crime to prevent him from committing (*CBC news in depth: Same-sex rights: Canada timeline*, 2007; Kimmel & Robinson, 2001; McLeod, 1996). In this case the bigotry came from the courts that allowed him to languish in prison for two years after the change in law, illustrating that those with power need do nothing to enforce existing oppression.

In 1974, a gay couple attempted to marry in Winnipeg legally. They successfully moved through all the required stages from the publication of bans to the signing of the

marriage commissioner's register but the registrar of the Manitoba Vital Statistics Agency refused to register the marriage (Frum, 1974; Koymasky & Koymasky, 2004).

In 1992 the BC Human Rights Code was written and included sexual orientation in its list of characteristics that could not be used to discriminate (Human Rights Amendment Act, 1992; S. Janzen, personal communication, November 11, 2005). It passed without issue. This smooth start for legal inclusion was not indicative of the years to follow as anti-gay groups organized against the protection judges and legislators were beginning to provide to queers.

“While protection against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation has arguably been provided since 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada clearly confirmed sexual orientation as an analogous ground to other personal characteristics in 1995 in *Egan and Nesbit v. Canada*” (Grace & Wells, 2006, p. 53). At this time opponents of equal protection for sexual minorities were organized and effective in getting their message heard. “In July 2003, the government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien unveiled draft legislation that would change the definition of marriage to include the unions of same-sex couples” (CBC News, 2005). There was a great deal of contention. Two years later, on June 27, 2005, the House of Commons of the Parliament of Canada voted to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples with the passage of Bill C-38 into the new Civil Marriage Act in spite of a great deal of well-organized opposition (Panetta, 2005). On December 7, 2006, a new Conservative government tabled a bill proposing to re-open the same-sex marriage debate. It was defeated 175 to 123. Members from both sides voted against their parties (*CBC news in depth: Same-sex rights: Canada timeline*, 2007).

Interestingly, the new prime minister, whose campaign promise it was to bring the matter before parliament, did not appear in the House for the debate (Tibbetts, 2006).

From 1995 to 2006, Canadian conversation was rife with discussion of gay issues. In 1986, George Hislop's partner of 28 years died. He applied to receive pension benefits as the surviving spouse, but was declined because he was the wrong sex. Together with lawyer Douglas Elliott, Hislop launched a class action suit that spanned ten years, but which finally obliged the federal government to pay survivor benefits to gay and lesbian couples (Canadian Press, 2004; Martin, 2005). In 2001, Michael Leshner and others challenged Ontario's marriage laws as discriminatory (Scofield, 2002). In 2004, Michael Hendricks and René Leboeuf won their six-year court battle to be married in Quebec without having to wait for the federal parliament to redefine marriage (Daly, 2004). In 2002, James Chamberlain won his battle in the Supreme Court of Canada to permit depictions of same-sex parents in elementary schools in BC (Makin, 2002). Whether intentional or not, the publicity surrounding the case shattered the silence on the existence of queer people living pedestrian lives. Even Québécois priests spoke out supporting gay and lesbian people (Ha, 2006) and a Catholic student successfully fought to take another young man to the prom (Wente, 2002).

Arguably, the anti-gay lobby provided the greatest benefit of the debate. Controversy sells newspapers. Without the opposition voices, the discourse on gay rights would not have penetrated nearly as many Canadian households. While some of the discourse was hurtful to those who heard it, at least the troubled lesbian in rural BC was given language for what made her different and she found out that there were others like her. She also knew that they had survived adolescence and that the people in the

government were trying to help her. Despite the opposition, it was a message of hope that schools began to echo.

Schools

In 1997 the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) struck a task force on anti-homophobia and heterosexism in the schools (P. Clarke, personal communication, March 26, 2007). (Pat Clarke is Assistant Director of Social Justice Programs, Provincial Specialist Associations, Professional, and Social issues Division, B.C. Teachers Federation.) In 1999, the Alberta Teachers' Association included sexual orientation as a category protected against discrimination in its code of conduct. In 2003, School District (SD) #61 Greater Victoria passed Policy 4303 Discrimination that was predominantly concerned with the safety of LGBTTTQQ students and staff. It was the first school district in BC with a queer-positive policy. As is so often the case, it came as a result of a person of influence having personal contact with a queer person. Charlie Beresford, who was the school board chair at that time, has a gay son who went through the Victoria school system. Policy 4303 and its regulations were a result of her work to ensure that future generations of students would suffer less from marginalization due to their sexual minority status (School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria), 2003a; School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria), 2003b). People in nearby Vancouver felt the same.

The next year SD #39 Vancouver created policy that required active anti-homophobia campaigns (School District No. 39 (Vancouver), 2004), and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (2004) passed their policies on anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism. Since then SD #5 Southeast Kootenay (2006), SD #44 North Vancouver (2006), and SD #64 Gulf Islands (2006) have adopted similar policies. In this

environment of official emancipation, some LGBTTTQQ persons, specifically gay and lesbian teachers, live authentic lives making no effort to hide their sexual orientation. Some are politically active without fear of incarceration, dismissal or official sanction of any sort, although they live with concerns of unofficial repercussions and are ready to fight. Some work with constant vigilance to keep their sexual orientation hidden from friends, family and co-workers (Dankmeijer, 1993). The purpose of my study is to ask such individuals why they choose a particular degree of disclosure in their school communities.

In BC, socialization is explicitly part of the curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2001). The BC Performance Standards for Social Responsibility explicitly measure “valuing diversity.” However, the definition of diversity never explicitly names sexual minorities thus maintaining the silencing of LGBTTTQQ issues. On April 27, 2007, the BC Ministry of Education settled a human rights complaint from gay activists Peter and Murray Corren. The complaint alleged that the Ministry systemically promoted discrimination and discriminated against queer persons by deliberately excluding ordinary information about us thus maintaining our invisibility and the heteronormative hegemony that functions against us. After several years in front of the BC Human Rights Tribunal, the Ministry invited the Correns to assist them. In the settlement agreement (Settlement agreement between Murray Corren and Peter Corren (complainants) and Her Majesty the Queen in right of the province of British Columbia as represented by the Ministry of Education: 2006), the Correns were to review the curriculum of health and personal planning courses from Kindergarten to Grade 10, and review curriculum revision procedures to ensure that queer positive information is included and

heterosexism is reduced, if not eliminated. In other words, people at the highest level of the BC educational system are beginning to include information about sexual minorities. However, BC schools are not yet safe places for queer youth or teachers and still fit the profile of a social reproduction mechanism that is oppressive towards queers (*Being out: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender youth in BC: An adolescent health survey*, 1999).

In 2005 and 2006, Lorne Mayencourt, a member of the government in the Legislative Assembly of BC, put forward private member's bills, both titled "The Safe Schools Act" (Safe Schools Act, 2005; Safe Schools Act, 2006). The purpose of these bills was to require school boards in BC to enact policy explicitly protecting sexual minority members of their communities. Both bills died on the floor at the close of the session (Barsotti, 2007). In 2007, the government passed a bill which Mayencourt said will be used to provide the protection he sought. However, there is nothing in the bill or in the government press release (Perzoff, 2007) that supports this hope, thus perpetuating the silence. A ministerial directive to the school districts has instead required that "boards must ensure that ... their codes of conduct [include] one or more statements that address the prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the BC Human Rights Code" (Bond, 2007). This requires the school districts, which do not have supportive policy in place, to start amending their policies. Once the law is passed, a well-funded, sophisticated contingent of secondary students in small towns in BC would likely be more successful in using the courts to force their school districts to put supportive policy in place before they graduate. Unfortunately, there are two problems at work here. First, if they are in a district that requires such a policy, the students are probably safer by maintaining their

own oppressive silence. Second, there are probably very few students in rural BC with the cultural capital to launch such a court action.

Bourdieu (1986) describes cultural capital as having three states: embodied, objectified, or institutionalized. In each case cultural capital separates people into two categories: those who have it and those who do not. Those who have the cultural capital are considered better than the others and more worthy of social and economic gain. Embodied cultural capital includes knowledge, aesthetic understanding, manner of speaking, posture, gender, race, and, I would add, sexual orientation. Objectified cultural capital consists of concrete items that can be bought or sold, such as a microscope, a painting, or a wedding ring. In times and locations that forbid same-sex weddings, a wedding ring declares not only that the wearer has the right sort of sexual orientation, but participates in an honoured social institution. Finally, there is institutionalized cultural capital which consists of academic credentials and the like, which facilitate the conversion of embodied and objectified cultural capital into economic gain. There is a path that begins from embodied and objectified cultural capital bestowed upon children by parents who provide their children with the type of speech, clothing, experiences, and school supplies that teachers and administrators require (or admire). From that step, teachers and others in the school system provide the well endowed with high school diplomas or other institutionalized cultural capital that allows them to earn the money and status necessary to repeat the cycle. Of those who choose to base their professional careers in this environment, their role is to facilitate the transference and acquisition of the approved forms of cultural capital. Being queer is a cultural liability, and this socially constructed fact is supported by at least some school administrators.

Lugg (2006) points out that US school administrators are legal representatives of governmental bodies. A similar situation exists in BC because the BC School Act (1996) assigns legal duties to both teachers and administrators. The people who choose to have careers in the public education system are choosing to be part of that conservative system. Lugg illustrates this with examples showing that it is because they agree with it. Citing Fraynd (Fraynd & Capper, 2003), she describes a situation in which a lesbian school administrator is out for coffee with a straight, manly, female friend, who the administrator criticized for acting too masculine in public. As Lugg (2006) wrote, the administrator “continued to enforce majoritarian notions of sexuality and gender...[criticizing her mannerisms because her friend,] a non-queer, was not non-queer enough” (p. 45). In this criticism of her friend, the lesbian administrator participants in the subjugation and construction of herself through her support of the dominant regimes of truth.

The school administrator, described by Fraynd & Capper (2003) in the previous paragraph, is a lesbian enforcing the dominant regime of gender behaviour; she did not appear in her job as a school administrator *ex nihilo*. She arrived there after having passed through the school system as a student and teacher both receiving and participating in the dominant regimes of truth as all school administrators and teachers do. As expressed by Kohli (1999), taking a Foucauldian perspective, schools are

where the self is constituted through ‘official’ discourses. Schools are places where one learns what can be said and what must be left unsaid, what is acceptable to do and be – and what is not. Once the individual comes to know what to expect as ‘normal’ through the dominate regimes of truth that circulate in

schooling, she actually *constructs herself* – and is constructed – through particular speech acts that are the *effects* of these dominant discursive practices. (p. 323)

The school administrator, applying the language of Foucault (1988), practiced a technology of domination on her friend as the result of the administrator's own subjugation through technologies of the self that, in turn, resulted from technologies of power being practiced on her.

Even the most radical teachers who wish to remain within the system must function within its boundaries and be willing to participate in reproducing existing social structures in the behaviours and attitudes of their students. Furthermore, those who have successfully navigated up through the organizational hierarchy are those who not only have benefited from and are more comfortable with exploiting their cultural capital, but also control the discourse within the schools.

Barriers and Coping Strategies

One barrier faced by sexual minorities in becoming recognized for human rights initiatives is also the armour of some individual members of the group, our invisibility. Some of us can hide our sexual minority status. By hiding we have some control over the homophobia we are forced to endure, and in some environments personal safety and survival trump the advancement of a social agenda with its corresponding personal risk (Dankmeijer, 1993). The techniques for hiding and the degree to which they are applied depend on one's personality and the environment.

Those most concerned with maintaining personal integrity choose distancing (emotionally and socially keeping themselves apart), but it is a lonely choice that prevents queer teachers from developing close relationships with colleagues and students

(Ferfolja, 2005; Grierson & Smith, 2005; Griffin, 1991; Jennings, 1994; Juul, 1995b; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999; Woods & Harbeck, 1991). Griffin had two participants who went by different names in and out of school. Griffin, Woods, and Harbeck discussed participants who maintained rigid classroom personas to keep themselves well separated from students. Juul (1995a, 1995b) described several participants who lived great distances from the schools in which they taught and who limited interactions with staff outside of school. Pallotta-Chiarolli quotes lesbian teachers who complained to her about their homophobic principal, whom they gave as the reason for their remaining closeted at school. The goal in distancing is to prevent people from asking questions that would require one to lie rather than risk exposure to homophobia. Closely related to this is the judicious use of silence.

The heterosexist nature of society means that teachers are assumed heterosexual until some evidence to the contrary is presented. The exception to this is female PE teachers, who are often assumed to be lesbians (Woods & Harbeck, 1991). With the exception of female PE teachers then, a queer teacher just needs to say nothing to pass as straight. Ferfolja (2005) gives an ironic example where a lesbian teacher in a Catholic school told her principal that she was going to be in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade with the AIDS group for which she volunteers. The principal commended her for her charity and thanked her for letting him know in advance because the year before a male teacher had been dismissed after being seen in the parade. The principal appreciated being warned in advance, so he could be ready to settle complaints quickly and efficiently, and retain the teacher. One step from the equivocal use of silence is outright lying.

While no participants admitted to making plain statements such as “I am heterosexual” in any of the studies I read, there were several who switched pronouns when speaking of primary relationships (Ferfolja, 2005; Griffin, 1991; Juul, 1995b; Woods & Harbeck, 1991). An interesting variation of this was a lesbian PE teacher who explained to students that the reason she was unmarried was that “Prince Andrew is busy” (Woods & Harbeck, p. 151), and letting the heterosexist listener conclude that she is straight. An extreme version of misrepresentation is found in homophobic homosexuals.

The most famous case of 2006 of a homophobic homosexual was the politically influential, and publicly anti-gay, Ted Haggard, former head of the 30-million-member National Association of Evangelicals, a US Christian organization. Haggard hired the services of a male prostitute over a three-year period (Rocky Mountain News, November 2, 2006). It should be no surprise that gay and lesbian teachers are capable of the same. While no participant in any of the studies I read admitted to such behaviour themselves, they did admit to ignoring homophobic epithets, and to knowing other queer teachers who exhibit such behaviour (Dankmeijer, 1993; Dankmeijer, 2004; Ferfolja, 2005; Woods & Harbeck, 1991).

These strategies might be perceived as necessary by the individuals employing them, but they are an obstacle to the progress of the queer population as a whole. In remaining silent and hiding our queerness, we become complicit in our continued marginalization. Heterosexism, “the belief and practice that heterosexuality is the only natural form of sexuality,” (Buston & Hart, p.95) is pervasive (Burn, Kadlec, & Rexer, 2005; Buston & Hart, 2001; Cossman, 2004; Herr, 1997; Logan, 2001; Munoz &

Thomas, 2006; O'Connell, 2004; Petrovic, 2002; Woods & Harbeck, 1991). Hornsby (2006) defines heterosexism as the privileging of heterosexuality. Melillo (2003) defines “heteronormativity” as “completely rejecting the possibility that homosexuality is worthy of any consideration whatsoever, because it is not ‘normal’” (p. 3). The heteronormative stance together with the fact that heterosexuals often look like us, means that heterosexism is further entrenched in every discourse that does not explicitly name homosexuality, or gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, queer or questioning people. Therefore those who control the discourse in schools control the degree to which sexual minorities are visible, cultural attitudes in the school toward the sexual minorities, and the frequency with which sexual minorities are constructed as the objects of safety initiatives, suppression, or vilification.

Herr (1997) describes the construction of homophobia and heterosexism in schools through mechanisms of systemic exclusion and inclusion. “The former is the process of excluding positive role models, messages, and images of gays and lesbians, rendering them invisible. In systemic inclusion, when discussions regarding gays and lesbians do occur, they are consistently placed in a negative context, linking homosexuality to pathology or dangerous behaviors” (p. 53). The BC Ministry of Education and the Correns are working to correct this systemic exclusion. A major tenet of my study is to consider why some queer teachers choose to participate in and support this construction of homophobia and heterosexism when they have a choice and have significant tools in combating both inclusive and exclusive mechanisms.

Available tools including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Act, and applicable school district policies allow those affected to have

some voice in the control of school discourse. Teachers, or other influential persons, can use them to demand that school administrators act on policies by hosting workshops, providing Gay Straight Alliances (GSA), and posting signs reading “Homophobia Free Zone,” and generally breaking the silence. This in turn serves to modify the organizational culture as defined by various authors, i.e., the individual choices that principals, teachers and students make within this constructed environment (Bates, 1987; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Hargreaves, 1994; Owens, 2001).

Discourse Control and the Role of Administrators

For the gay or lesbian teacher, the educational environment must be perceived to be safe for them to be authentic (Bettinger, Timmins, & Tisdell, 2006; Campbell, 2005). Owens (2001) notes that behaviour is a function of personality and environment. Teachers live their careers in school environments. School administrators and teachers in BC have significant legislative and policy backing, but neither students nor staff see schools as safe places for sexual minorities (*Being out: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender youth in BC: An adolescent health survey*, 1999; Applebaum, 2003; Conrad, 2007; Grace & Wells, 2006; Griffin, 1991; Griffin & Ouellet, 2003; Herbeck, 2005; Janoff, 2005; Macgillivray, 2004; Parmeter, 1991; Tomsho, 2003; Warwick, Aggleton, & Douglas, 2001).

A recent example of discourse control suppressing the visibility of queers occurred in Victoria, BC, Canada, the home of the province’s first anti-homophobic policy. It was related to me by a source who wishes to remain anonymous. Schools in BC participate in a Black history week. The Black population of Victoria is 0.5% (Statistics Canada, 2007). The occurrence of homosexuality in the general population has been

measured by various researchers from 1% to 18.5% (Bagley & Tremblay, 1998; Billy, Tanfer, Grady, & Klepinger, 1993; Bogaert, 2004; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Marmor, 1980; Sell, Wells, & Wypij, 1995; Smith, 2003; Voeller, 1990; Wellings, Field, Johnson, & Wadsworth, 1994) with the lower numbers being measures of those who self-identify as homosexual and the higher numbers being based on sexual experience or occasions of same-sex attraction. A teacher in a Victoria elementary school asked if he could replace the Black history board with a queer history board at the end of Black history week. His new principal told him that he could not. He could put up a board on multiculturalism and bury queerness in among other items, but he could not devote a board to queer history. Under the previous principal, gay couples spoke to classes during classroom studies of different kinds of families. Principals do have choices.

Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, and Wirt (2004) describe why principals do not satisfy every demand placed on them. They use three words to describe the world of school administration: demands, constraints, and choices. Demands are what administrators (and teachers) must do to avoid negative repercussions. Positive LGBTTTQQ policy can be effective by demanding that school administrators support a gay straight alliance (GSA) and speak out against homophobic name calling. Constraints are what school administrators and teachers must not do. Policy can be used to articulate constraints. For example, a PE teacher could be specifically forbidden from calling the boys “girls” to imply they are weak and lesser persons failing their duty to support masculine heterosexual hegemony. Constraints also take the form of avoiding controversy. School administrators and teachers with career ambitions must avoid being

the object of complaints, which they fear result from advocating for sexual minorities (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999). Choices form the gap between demands and constraints inside which teachers and school administrators may be helpful or hurtful. They may choose to encourage their teachers to provide information about the minority sexual orientation of historical persons who appear in BC schools, or they may promote heteronormativity by silencing the information and those who would bring it forward. If, as Bates (1987) states, “The cultural policy of schooling is part of the struggle towards democracy, justice and a better world” (p. 112), then it behoves school administrators to “transform the culture of the school” (Fullan, 1991, p. 161) in such a way as to include sexually minoritized persons. While neither Bates nor Fullan explicitly considered sexual minorities in their writings, their concepts can be extended to the situation of any marginalized people. In fact, Nixon (2006) places gay and lesbian teachers in a special role in this democratic struggle towards cultural inclusion of queer people.

Nixon (2006) investigated the idea that gay and lesbian teachers should be recruited directly because their presence in schools “forces schools and other educational institutions to face reality in terms of continuing discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexuality” (p. 280). I interpret this to mean that teachers, administrators, students, parents, school board members, the Minister of Education, and others who manufacture and manifest the culture of schools would be forced to consider and change the practice of institutional heterosexism and masculine hegemony. This is not only advantageous to the members of the sexual minorities, but to the society as a whole.

When gay and lesbian teachers and administrators believe there is more advantage to presenting an authentic identity than a psychologically draining manufactured one,

they will commit more strongly to the success of their schools (Day & Schoenrade, 1997) and further the struggle towards valuing sexual diversity, work that can be traced back to nineteenth century German psychological scientists.

A Brief History of the Academic Literature

Hirschfeld (1868 – 1935), was a pioneer of sexology with his Institute of Sexual Studies founded under, and partially funded by, the Weimar Republic. He valued human sexual diversity. He formulated the doctrine of *Zwischenstufenlehre*, that is that all humans carry masculine and feminine characteristics at different levels of their sexuality and that these change over time. (In 1991, Wishik and Piece, proposed a similar model (King & Biro, 2006).) In 1897, Hirschfeld founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee for the repeal of the German law against homosexual acts. He wrote against the Christian view of homosexuality as sinful (Bauer, 2005). Freud (1856 – 1939), while not politically active in the emancipation of homosexuals like Hirschfeld, determined homosexuality to be an honourable sexual variation. He wrote, "It is... found in people whose efficiency is unimpaired, and who are indeed distinguished by specially high intellectual development and ethical culture" (Freud, 1905/1957, p. 139) and that homosexuals, or inverts, have "a right to stand on an equal footing" (Freud, 1917/1957, p. 304) beside straight men and women. Surprisingly the American Psychiatric Association rejected Freud's thinking and pathologized homosexuality. They placed homosexuality in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) from which it was not removed until version IV in 1974 (Barker, 2006; Socarides, 1978), the same year the *Journal of Homosexuality* was founded.

A review of the titles of the first years of the *Journal of Homosexuality* shows it to focus on themes of ego-dystonic homosexuality where the patient is unhappy about being a homosexual. This was in parallel with DSM IV, history, and public perceptions of homosexuals. With respect to homosexual teachers, the focus of academic writing tended to be on their legal position (Honig, 1978; La Morte, 1975; Merron, 1976; Ostrander, 1975; Rizzi & Jacobs, 1978; Trent, 1978). Griffin (1991) found “fewer than ten studies focus specifically on the professional experiences of gay or lesbian educators” (p. 168). Of these, she found a striking consistency of responses:

Gay and lesbian educators believe that a strict separation between their personal and professional lives is required and that to be publicly “out” at school would cost them their jobs. Thus, they describe themselves as constantly vigilant about protecting their secret identities, and the energy required to maintain this false public façade takes a tremendous psychological toll. This fear affects relationships with colleagues, students, and parents, creating a sense of isolation for the educator. Finally, these teachers experience frustration about changing the public’s negative image of lesbian and gay people to match their own sense of themselves as worthy people and good teachers. (p. 168)

This describes my own experience as a gay educator in BC at that time.

In the years 1988 and 1989, four important documents were published in the United States.

The National Education Association added sexual orientation to their code of ethics in 1988. The Children of the Rainbow curriculum and ensuing battle increased media attention to these issues. Seattle produced its Safe Schools Report

(1988) detailing the tremendous amount of abuse suffered by gay youth in schools and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1989) came out with alarming statistics about youth suicide, show that gay youth committed over 1/3 of teen suicides. (Jackson, 2001, p.8)

A side effect of the attention on gay youth was attention to gay and lesbian teachers, which burgeoned in the 1990s.

Contemporary Studies on Gay and Lesbian Teachers

I do not want to imply that there is a large body of literature dealing with queer teachers. There is not. It is even smaller than the body of literature on queer students. ERIC is the Educational Resource Information Center index. It contains more than 2,200 digests along with references for additional information and citations and abstracts from over 980 educational and education-related journals. Searching ERIC on March 1, 2007 yielded the results illustrated in Table 1. Clearly, sexual social justice issues are at the bottom of the list in educational research.

Table 1
Results of searching ERIC

Search terms	Number of Articles Found
homophobia AND student	304
homophobia AND teacher	165
homosexuality AND student	804
homosexuality AND teacher	360
race AND student	7833
racism AND student	1477
chemistry AND student	5565

Being out: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender youth in BC: An adolescent health survey (1999) surveyed 77 LGBT youth aged 13 to 19 who were involved in LGBT youth groups. While most participants (53) lived in or near metropolitan Vancouver, the survey included 24 participants from elsewhere in the province. Teachers and the educational system did not present well. Forty-nine percent of those surveyed said they had heard homophobic remarks from teachers. Of those youth who had come out to teachers or counsellors, they reported that some of these professionals (13% and 7% respectively) reacted in a rejecting way. Since the youth likely chose teachers and counsellors whom they thought would be accepting, it is startling that any would exhibit rejecting responses. A strong majority of teachers and counsellors were accepting at 70% and 72% respectively. The others were perceived as neutral. Participants were safer outside school than they were in school on measures of verbal harassment, threat of assault, and physical assault. In fact, the youth surveyed experienced approximately twice as much physical assault in school (17%) as outside school (9%). It is no wonder that lesbian and gay teachers choose to remain closeted in such an environment even while they and their colleagues have a duty to change it.

Not only is the environment hostile, but disclosure of one's minority sexual status can be an illocutionary speech act as defined by Austin (1962). An illocutionary act is "the performance of an act in saying something" (p.99). Applying this concept to disclosure, uttering "I am gay," does not make me gay. In that sense making the statement is a mere locutionary act, but it does make the speaker out. Being out is different from being closeted: it can be a change of psychological and social status. Therefore,

disclosure is illocutionary when it results in a change of status for the speaker. Griffin identifies how some people manage the illocutionary act.

Griffin (1991) included 13 lesbian and gay teachers in her participatory research project. Her work is important in several ways. She does not frame her participants as powerless victims of a heterosexist masculine hegemony as did some of her contemporaries (Jackson, 2001). She acknowledges the existence of the hegemony and systemic support for it, although a glaring omission in her research, and all the other academic literature I reviewed, is recognition of the school dance as a blatant heteronormative institution. She describes coming out as a process equivalent to the development from separation from to integration with the school community. In this process she identified the following six developmental stages in her participants.

1. Totally closeted
2. Passing
3. Covering
4. Implicitly out
5. Explicitly out
6. Publicly out

Griffin's study suggests that to be a fully developed and moral person, a gay or lesbian teacher must be publicly out.

Dankmeijer (1993) responds to this implicit judgement that to be a fully developed and moral person, a queer must be publicly out. Dankmeijer conducted a study on gay and lesbian teachers in the Netherlands. He takes issue with the idea that homosexual teachers are the only people in the educational system constrained by

heterosexist hegemony and are not free to act. He says that everyone is constrained, whether LGBTTTQQ or not. Following a recognition of Bourdieu's contribution, Dankmeijer writes "The school not only reproduces 'heterodictated' values, but it also defines who is powerful and who is powerless, and it teaches how to behave in prescribed societal situations. Putting it another way, the school itself is part of societal control, and there is no question of being free to act in such a system" (p. 97) Furthermore, says Dankmeijer, the teacher must survive the school day by balancing its demands against personal health, as well as satisfying her own interest in teaching the pupils.

Dankmeijer (1993) found that the identities constructed by lesbians and straight women were the same among his participants. They were focussed on teaching and the classroom groups. The men tended to make performances in their classrooms. He divided his gay male participants into three types: gay, camp, and "normal" men. The gay men talk about oppression of homosexuals, wear badges, and are politically active. The camp men were camp and funny with students and colleagues, bending gender roles, and felt that they should be accepted as they are. The "normal" ones resent being labelled gay and play down this aspect of their identity. They are less offended by homophobia than straight colleagues are. He concludes that publicly identifying as gay is not the best way to achieve emancipation because it is only appropriate for the type "gay." He takes issue with activists who try to convince everyone else to come out publicly. Instead he suggests that the activists focus their energy on altering policy, laws, and societal attitudes to create an environment in which there is no need for anyone to have to deal with homophobia. Like Griffin, Dankmeijer presents his participants as rational persons making clear choices.

Harbeck is more typical of the period. Harbeck was involved in three facets of the special 1991 edition of the *Journal of Homosexuality* called *Coming out of the classroom closet: gay and lesbian students, teachers, and curricula*. She was guest editor, provided a summary of her research on the legal standing of homosexual teachers in the United States, and co-authored a new research piece on lesbian physical education (PE) teachers with Woods. In “Living in 2 Worlds,” Woods and Harbeck (1991) analysed the identity management strategies of 12 lesbian PE teachers somewhere in the US. (I assume it was in the US because the journal is published in the US, but the authors never say where they conducted their research.) A common theme in the literature about gay and lesbian teachers is succinctly stated by Woods and Harbeck in their findings. “A love of teaching coupled with the fear of professional repercussions often outweighed a participant’s need to be open about her lesbian identity” (p. 148).

Woods and Harbeck (1991) also articulated the identity management strategies employed by the participants, giving me vocabulary to use in my own research. The strategies employed deception and lies including pronoun switching, self-distancing from others, and self-distancing from issues of homosexuality including counselling gay students. The participants lamented their having to employ these strategies. Occasionally, participants engaged in behaviours that would risk disclosure. These were usually premeditated, and “fell into three categories: (a) obliquely overlapping personal with professional, (b) actively confronting homophobia and supporting gay and lesbian students, and (c) overtly overlapping the personal and professional lives” (p. 155). The participants in this study experienced homophobia “on both external and internal levels” (p. 160). It is a significant flaw of this study that no social context was given. The stories

of the participants suggest a pitiable existence from which they seem powerless to escape or to correct.

The stress of remaining closeted was directly studied by Juul (Juul & Repa, 1993; Juul, 1995a; Juul, 1995b). Over the next few years Juul, seemingly in response to Woods and Harbeck, produced three quantitative research papers on the relation of openness to job stress among LGB school teachers in the US based on surveys he conducted in 1992. It is noteworthy that this work expands the subject of research on queer teachers from exclusively gay and lesbian to include bisexual, although transsexuals still do not appear. The purpose of the 1993 study “was to improve and enrich our understanding of how the disclosure or non-disclosure of a lesbian, gay male, or bisexual teacher’s sexual orientation at work influences his or her perceptions of job satisfaction and job stress” (Juul & Repa, 1993, p. 6). Juul utilized a theoretical framework wherein participants are assumed to struggle to balance their personal identities with group identities as teachers, which are assumed to be heterosexual. This dissonance was expected to lead to stress and reduced job satisfaction. The framework also assumes that complete consonance is not possible because “public respectability is a component of social identity” (p. 7) predicting that greater self-realization results in greater social estrangement. However, what Juul found was not surprising. “Those teachers who were more open about their sexual orientation at work displayed significantly greater job satisfaction” (p. 14). In 1995, Juul revisited his data in *Boys, girls, and others* to examine differences between the affectional identity groups: lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. As might be expected due to the complicating factors of gender and lack of a group identity, lesbians and bisexuals experienced more job stress than gay males. This concurs with his earlier finding that gay

males were more likely to be open about their sexual orientation. The lesbians experienced the greatest job satisfaction. Juul conducted his third analysis of the data in that same year in *Community and Conformity: A National Survey Contrasting Rural, Suburban, and Urban Lesbian, Gay Male, and Bisexual Public School Teachers*. He found that 60% of rural respondents were lesbian and that rural respondents showed the greatest job satisfaction, in keeping with his previously stated finding. Despite the apparent contradiction, his analysis also showed that rural and suburban teachers are less accepting of their affectional identity and are more fearful of exposure. Also, despite the greatest reported degree of job satisfaction, rural teachers experience the highest number of deaths due to AIDS and expressed a higher rate of depersonalization from students, a higher rate of emotional exhaustion, and a lower sense of accomplishment from teaching. Juul has made two significant contributions with his studies: he included bisexuals in the research of queer teachers, and he used a large sample to support the conclusions of theoreticians and other researchers in the field who have used much smaller sample sizes. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, this is a notoriously difficult population to research. Juul has done an admirable job acquiring a sample large enough that it could be considered representative and cautiously generalizable. Previous to his research, studies of queer teachers considered only gays and lesbians. By the end of the decade, there was a broader definition of the field.

Pallotta-Chiarolli's 1999 autobiographical work is significant because (1) it is not American, (2) it agrees with the findings of Americans, and (3) it includes a broader definition of the subject area. It includes consideration of not only gays and lesbians, but uses the term "multisexualities" to encompass all sexual minorities in such a way that

allows for unknown or unarticulated sexualities or even Magnus Hirschfeld's *Zwischenstufenlehre*. King and Biro use the abbreviation LGBTQ in their 2006 study, but even this requires clear, fixed definitions and, other than the inclusion of "queer," does not allow for a queering of definitional boundaries like *Zwischenstufenlehre*.

King and Biro (2006) apply their own model of sexual identity development in the workplace. It is a sophisticated model in that it does not view coming out as a linear process of predictable stages, but a more complex process of perspectives which mutually interact. Here is a very brief summary of a grouping of the perspectives. Each perspective can be infused with conflict, angst, and joy.

1. Recognizing that LGBTQ exists, and developing strategies for dealing with this
2. Coming out to yourself
3. Coming out to others
4. Valuing and embracing different journeys

They apply this model to scenarios in which an individual must deal with coming out in the workplace, and recommend a transformative learning mechanism by which these scenarios are presented to small groups in employee training sessions to discuss how the protagonist in each scenario might deal with the situation presented. This technique would be excellent for schools on professional development days. One effective step in alleviating the plight of LGBTQ students and teachers is to reduce the heteronormative interactions of the teachers and administrators with each other and with students. This is precisely the type of workshop that is mandated in one of the latest of the BC school district policies which advocate for sexual minorities (School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay), 2006).

The fact that this article was published in 2006, and that the district policy was passed in the same year, shows how official BC is working well to be inclusive of LGBTQ persons. As well as the work of the BC Ministry of Education described above, school districts are engaging in the work of inclusion. SD #5 had their first workshop scheduled for March 2007. It was for administrators. SD #27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin) had meetings in February 2007 to draft a supportive policy for sexual minorities.

Despite the official support for inclusive action on behalf of sexual minorities, schools remain bastions of homophobia and heterosexism. In light of these advances both inside and outside of education, Grace and Wells (2006) provide an analysis of why school culture still lags behind other sites of human interaction with respect to acceptance of sexual minorities. Teachers and administrators, including queer ones, make conservative decisions founded in fear and caution where amelioration of real and imagined conservative forces supersedes ethics, leaving queerness in darkness, silence, and invisibility. Students have taken up their own cause by running their own GSAs, despite the difficulties they face in finding teachers or administrators to sponsor them. Grace and Wells give the following reasons for the recalcitrance of the professionals, including queer ones, to assist.

They are part of the school's sexual minority population, and they fear the repercussions of being out and visible in their workplaces. They could also fear becoming role models for sexual minority students because of those in society who would conflate this role with being a recruiter to some misconstrued queer cause.

They are heterosexual allies, but they are afraid of being perceived as nonheterosexual.

They lack the training needed to handle issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

They blame sexual minority students for being too vocal and visible about their sex, sexual, and gender differences.

They let personal moral beliefs interfere with their professional responsibility to engage in a public ethical practice that meets the needs of sexual minority students.

They are homophobic and perpetrators themselves, actively targeting sexual minority youth. (p. 55)

For those who wish to live authentic lives, queer students and teachers perceive school administrators and parents as the primary barriers to change and acceptance (Grace & Wells, 2006).

In the following chapter, I describe my role in discovering similar and novel perceptions among a BC population.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Methodology chapters typically set out to summarize the type of research conducted, the methods used, and how participants were recruited and selected for the study. In the case of this research study, the nature of the participants themselves, my own experiences, beliefs and background as a queer teacher and the nature of the questions under investigation added to the complexity of choosing the methods and of the data collection processes. As a result, in this chapter I attempt to capture as much as possible the ways in which the nature of the investigation shaped my methodological decisions. This means that a description of events and methodological problems will be interspersed between discussions of methodological concepts and approaches taken by other queer scholars, so the reader can be fully informed about the reasons for the way this research unfolded.

I will start with a general overview of narrative methodology, the primary investigative tool for this study, and then move to discuss issues of recruitment and subsequent implications for this study. I end with a description of the interview process itself before providing details on the form of coding and analysis used.

Queer Friendly Research Methods

I needed a research methodology to capture the breadth and depth of the reasons gay and lesbian teachers have chosen to be either 'in' or 'out', given their social, political and cultural contexts. I needed a research method that would assist in making sense of their experiences, to record them effectively, and to report them back in ways that elucidate my readers. The method had to allow me to probe the depths of their

experience, and my own, particularly when it came to examining the influences and issues involved in deciding if it was safe to come out in their careers. Such methods also had to preserve the safety of participants; for many gay and lesbian teachers the dangers of being outed could be significant in both their personal and professional lives. Later in this chapter I will describe the efforts I took to protect individual identities and assure anonymity. However, I also wanted my research methods to be ones that could be used to detail the ways in which school administrators, and their tools of policy and discourse control, enabled or constrained gay and lesbian teachers' sexual identities and their ability to be out and gender non-conforming. If educational administrators are to be truly just and transformational agents, they must become more intimately aware that their speech and actions, or lack thereof, affect the participation of their queer staff in their school communities (Anderson 1990, 1998; Anderson & Grinberg, 1998; Greenfield, 1973, 1974, 1978; Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993).

As Pallotta-Chiarolli (1999) described, after conducting a multicultural workshop for the staff at one school, when she introduced the topic of sexual minorities, school principals play a critical role in determining what is acceptable to be discussed in schools. They determine how or if schools and teachers will take on issues of homosexuality.

Suddenly there were fifty solemn faces: uncomfortable, shifting, sideways glances to each other. A voice boomed at me from the front row, "You can't possibly expect us to do this. Multicultural education is not about multisexuality." The speaker was an administrator, superior to most of the others in the group. She had been very helpful all morning, initiating discussions and calling upon some of the

teachers to talk about their "good classroom practices." All eyes now turned to her.

I began, "Could you explain . . ."

"No, YOU explain why you're doing this," she interjected. "There is no way I will address homosexuality, or expect MY teachers to address homosexuality with our predominantly ethnic populations." (p. 186)

In this story, the administrator did not stop the workshop from proceeding, but she did clearly communicate that, with respect to homosexuality, teachers in her school "dare not speak its name" (Douglas, 1894, p. 21). After the session, a lesbian staff member thanked Pallotta-Chiarolli for trying to break the silence that this staff member and like-minded colleagues were compelled to endure and maintain every day.

Ending the Silence

In this study, I asked gay and lesbian teachers to break that oppressive silence by describing their experiences as gay and lesbian teachers. This produced narratives for me to examine through the lens of my own experience as a gay teacher, and as one trained in the academy of physical and computer science. As a gay teacher, I listened sympathetically as my participants told stories about the pain of anti-gay language and bullying, and rejoiced with them when they told of standing up for gay rights.

I have had to overcome my fear of personal bias in this research project. As one trained in the field of chemistry, we write about what happened, not what we observed, as though what we record is the only thing that happened, without noticing that what we write is what we care to record, rendering all else irrelevant. Yet If I used such a methodology with this study, I would miss too much. Besides, I recognized that I could

also use this study to further my goal of improving the lives of all gay and lesbian people, including the lives of my participants. To satisfy all these criteria, I used a narrative approach.

Narrative Methodologies

There does not seem to be a generally recognized definition of narrative methodology or narrative inquiry. Chase (2005) says that “qualitative researchers now routinely refer to any prosaic data ... as narrative” (p 651). A discussion ran in *Narrative* (Rudrum, 2006; Ryan, 2006) defining narrative for the purpose of their discipline, which is narrative writing, but the discussion spills over into the realm of narrative inquiry and the lack of definition there. Chase constructs a workable definition: “Contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterized as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (p. 651). It is this definition that I use to define my research project as narrative inquiry.

With a narrative approach, based in the emancipatory traditions of scholars such as Kirby and McKenna (1989), Chase (1995; 2005), and Clandinin and Connelly (1987; 1999) and supplemented by the techniques of Denzin & Lincoln (1995), I was able to use a well documented and affirmed social science research strategy that could grant dignity and honour to the participants by allowing them to speak in their own words and by having those words and their voices represent their own legitimate epistemological stance. A number of authors have also argued that the narrative stance provides voice to

the marginalized (Applebaum, 2003; Conley & Colabucci, 2001; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Jennings, 1994). In her examination of narrative inquiry Chase (2005) says that “a central tenet of the narrative turn is that speakers construct events through narrative rather than simply refer to events” (p. 656). Thus, it is not just any voice that is given to the marginalized, it is a voice spoken in their own words, and determining for themselves what is important and just.

A goal of my research was to expose the complex influences that affect the decision of whether or not to come out, so I used a methodology that allowed for me to attend to the words of participants. In this way I planned to reduce the degree of filtering of information that occurs during an interview. By focussing on a few individuals in different categories of disclosure, I documented the large number of considerations that each participant made in arriving at the decision to come out or to remain closeted, and to what degree, in different situations for these individual participants among the population of gay and lesbian teachers.

The Population under Study

I interviewed retired and working gay and lesbian public school teachers in British Columbia, Canada. The specific focus of the study involved the decision of participants to disclose or hide their sexual orientation. The history of this population in the Western world is that we had to hide our homosexuality to avoid reprisals (Conley & Colabucci, 2001; Griffin, 1991; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Jennings, 1994; Sedgwick, 1991). I assumed, in this research, that some members of this community continue to hide their homosexuality while others do not.

This study follows particular language involving disclosing or hiding one's homosexuality. Being "in the closet" or "closeted" is hiding one's homosexuality. "Being out" is being open about one's homosexuality. However, being out or closeted is also situational (Dankmeijer, 1993, 2004). It is possible, for instance, to be out to one's siblings but not to one's parents. As described on page 33, Griffin (1991) provides a more detailed set of categories, to which King and Biro (2006) made further refinements (see page 38).

The purpose of my research was to reveal the details of the decisions of participants to disclose or hide their sexual orientation in their school communities, and to what degree. Thus, a participant is not classified as a "covering" individual, but rather choices are made based on situations as in "covering in the classroom" or "explicitly out in the staffroom". It is these situational decisions that I examined with the participants I was able to recruit, while attempting to make use of my own experiences in a way that contributes to, rather than detracts from, the rigor and credibility of this study.

Situating the Researcher

I am also a member of the population under study. My own social and meta-cognitive history helped with the design of this project. In the 1990s I taught in rural and in Roman Catholic schools. In rural schools, I used strategies that enabled 'passing' in school and socially, while in the Catholic schools I was 'covering' in the classroom and to most staff, but explicitly 'out' to some colleagues after a few years at the same school. In addition to ideas gathered from the literature cited above, my memories of these times influenced the design of this entire research project including the three-pronged recruitment process: email, print, and personal communications.

A Three-Pronged Recruitment Process

Like Ward and Winstanley (2005), I found that “one of, if not the major, complication in carrying out [my] research into sexual minorities in organizations is that it [was] difficult to get people talking about the subject at all” (p. 454). While preparing this thesis, I contacted six school district administrators about their policies regarding queer members of their organizations. I received only one response; it was brief but helpful. In keeping with this initial probe, I met difficulty recruiting participants representative of all of Griffin’s (1991) categories of disclosure. If the subject is difficult to talk about at all, it is more difficult for those who are attempting to hide. A significant number of authors (Croteau, 1996; Lonborg & Phillips, 1996; Niesche, 2003; Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005; Schneider, 1986) and my lived experience provide evidence-based or theoretical predictions of the difficulty of researching this population. Niesche (2003) asserted that homosexuals with leadership aspirations have an even greater motivation to hide their sexual orientation. He even states that “by refusing to ‘come out’ and face harassment, one may retain an inner respect and empowerment” (p. 46). It illustrates the need for a comprehensive and sensitive recruitment process to mitigate the motivations of power and fear in keeping homosexuality hidden. This need to hide one’s homosexuality indicated that only through publications directed at all teachers would I be able to contact the most closeted individuals. Therefore, I advertised in *Teacher*, a publication of the BCTF, as well as using email and word of mouth.

Even though I conducted in-depth interviews with a small number of participants, I still wanted to choose from a large number of candidates in order to have interesting,

illustrative and articulate participants. I also did not want a study of my friends and acquaintances because I wanted to hear and include voices of people who do not think and live as I do. Although I am public and politically active, for this study I needed to include people who are not. Lonborg & Phillips (1996) state the problem well:

Historically, research on gay and lesbian people has been hampered by problems associated with sampling. To begin with, research on gay and lesbian career development often relies on very small opportunity samples, presenting a serious threat to the validity of their findings. Also, much of the information we have about the psychological and career development of sexual minorities is gleaned from research in which participants are readily willing to identify themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Often, participants are recruited from gay- or lesbian-identified student organizations, community groups, or social networks. This use of opportunity, or nonprobability samples, typically reduces the degree to which the sample is representative of the larger population of gay, lesbian, and bisexual men and women. Unfortunately, these data are also confounded by the issue of disclosure; consequently, it is difficult to generalize findings to those individuals who are not yet “out” to themselves or to others. We cannot necessarily assume that the career-related beliefs and experiences of those who are out are highly similar to those who remain very closeted. (p. 184)

In the context of my academic background, I had to work at accepting rigor as a substitute for reliability and completeness for statistical validity, but to do so without dismissing what is useful from that tradition. In fact, my recruitment materials directed

people to an on-line form (see Appendix A) taken from the tradition of pen-and-paper surveys.

Riggle et al. (2005) identify the value of on-line surveys for studying sexual minorities because they provide the participants with genuine anonymity and are more inviting to a “less visible and decentralized population” (p. 1). Following their advice, I incorporated an on-line survey in my recruiting program. However, as I wished to restrict participation to BC public school teachers, I did not advertise the site in the general queer cyber community, but only through directed email and print.

Riggle et al. (2005) found that the results of on-line surveys are comparable to those of pen-and-paper surveys. They also note that gays and lesbians probably make up a slightly larger percentage of the on-line population than the general population. While recognizing Spears’ and Lea’s (1994) objections that computer-mediated communication (CMC) does not provide the anticipated equalization of power structures, I chose to use CMC because of convenience and the geographic size of BC. Furthermore, the participants in this study belong to the same power class and enjoy very good access to Internet-enabled communication technologies. Therefore an on-line recruitment survey was appropriate.

I began recruiting with an email campaign (see Appendix B), which was followed by print advertising (see Appendix C). The email campaign was provided as a free service by GALEBC (Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia). The print advertising became a sizable personal expense. In both cases, respondents were directed to an on-line, survey-like, form where they were provided with a telephone number to allow more closeted individuals to contact me anonymously. During the recruitment

campaign, I carried with me a paper copy of the on-line form (see Appendix A), so I could ask the recruits the same preliminary questions as found on the form, and record their answers.

No respondent used the phone number. All who responded to the print and email advertisements provided sufficient information through the on-line form to allow me to contact them, even those who were closeted at school and to family.

GALE BC has a history of supporting research such as this. As a member, I occasionally receive a request to participate in research studies. This provided my main source of participants. The organization sent out an email message to its members directing interested persons to the on-line form. To enable a deeply closeted teacher to participate comfortably, I included my contact information. In this way, someone could participate without providing any personal information. Face-to-face, telephone, or email interviews could be scheduled and held without my ever knowing the identity of the participant. In the time allowed, this method recruited participants who were either implicitly or explicitly out in their schools.

To recruit participants who were less 'out', I advertised in *Teacher*, a newsmagazine distributed to all 59,000 members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). It was difficult to recruit individuals who attempt to pass as heterosexual, so this print campaign was required. To reduce costs, the advertisement briefly described the project in interesting language and directed people to the on-line form. It resulted in only one participant.

The third method of recruitment was through personal contacts. When speaking about this research project in class, at work, or socially, a number of people offered to

introduce me to potential participants. I asked my personal contacts to deliver my recruitment package and contact information to the potential candidates. I did not aggressively pursue this method because it provided the least professional distance and was likely to include candidates most like me. In fact, this method provided my oldest and, arguably, most closeted volunteer, someone whose ways and experiences differed markedly from my own.

With the long duration of the recruitment process (seven months), it was neither practical nor respectful to complete recruitment before beginning the interviews. Therefore, I selected some volunteers to participate a few months into the recruitment period.

Unfortunately, as Lonborg and Phillips (1996) point out, any of the methods described above are only representative of their participants and of the type of people who read queer publications and who volunteer to participate in surveys. I made no effort to be representative or probabilistic. My sample size was small, representing only the participants themselves, but including fine detail of the issues involved in deciding to be public or private with one's minority sexual orientation in various situations, particularly in schools.

Selecting the Sample

At the end of the lengthy recruitment process, I selected 13 of the 14 people who volunteered to participate. This was more than I originally intended to interview, but I wanted to include a variety of profiles based on gender, community type (rural or urban), and closetedness. I based the profiles on their responses to the on-line recruitment form for those participants who completed it. For others, I simply asked them or the person

who introduced us. The first to volunteer were publicly out political activists who wanted to support this type of research, and through which they could report the findings of their experiences. Five months later, I was about to close my recruitment when more closeted participants responded to my advertisements along with one person whose profile was very similar to those already participating. I included all but that one person. My final sample was driven by interest in the diversity of stories.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative

The Interview Context

Influenced by many authors (e.g. Anderson, 1990; Brubaker, 1984; S. E. Chase, 2005; Greenfield, 1974, 1978; Kirby & McKenna, 1989), I chose to allow the participants to describe their stories in their own voices as much as possible. This served many functions. One was to honour the participants as competent persons able to speak for themselves. This was an important contribution that I could make to the people who gave their time to assist me in my research project. This also honoured members of a historically disenfranchised group, thus helping to mitigate a historical wrong. Some participants asked me to use their real names; some chose pseudonyms. Those who asked me to use their real names, particularly James Chamberlain, wanted to make it clear that being gay or lesbian is not something that should be closeted, and did not want me to use pseudonyms to hide them from people who already knew them. They were participating to provide positive examples of happy homosexuals, and were not interested in having me re-closet them.

Participant checks also contributed to the well being of the participants by causing them to reflect further on their decisions with regard to coming out. Since the participants were school teachers, it was reasonable to expect that they would be skilled in English. Before analysing the data, I sent each participant the transcript of his or her interview to check and change, so the words with which I worked accurately reflected what the participants intended to say, but did not reveal information they did not want published. These checks also facilitated follow-up questions.

When I sent participants the transcripts of their interviews, I embedded follow-up questions in the body of the transcript, as well as in the covering email. In this way, embedded questions were seated in their original context and encouraged the participant to respond accordingly. Questions that did not rely on context were dealt with separately.

As stated earlier, this is a difficult population to research because so many of its members hide their membership. Although I anticipated that the more closeted participants would not want the continued contact of participant checks, I found that the most closeted person provided the most thorough check; she carefully removed any text that would hint at her identity. However, even this participant did not take advantage of the anonymous method of communications I had devised.

To allow for anonymous participant checks, I was able to have the transcripts on a private Web site available only to the participant and me. The password would then be given to the participant during the anonymous telephone interview. This way the participants could receive the transcripts anonymously and mail them back to me by regular post with no return address, but no participant took advantage of this. In fact all participants provided me with their real names and contact information.

All participants lived in Vancouver, Victoria or a small BC town of 20 000 people, 800 km from Vancouver. Interviews were conducted in the participants' homes in Vancouver or Victoria, my home in Victoria once, a restaurant in Victoria once, by telephone, and once in a Vancouver restaurant for the small town resident. In other words, interviews were held wherever the participant would be most comfortable talking and likely to tell the most instructive stories, but with consideration for my travel time and expense. I had a carefully constructed interview process that I abandoned during the first encounter.

Structure of the Interview

Before the first interview, I constructed a set of open-ended questions that I could use to help the participant talk about different times in their lives when their sexual orientation was an issue. The first participant interpreted these as survey questions and answered each one directly and briefly. I found this approach awkward and unproductive. The interview ground to a premature halt without one interesting narrative, so I explained the research methodology and my research questions. I explained that I was looking for stories related to the research questions, and asked if he had any events in his life that were relevant, and then he started to talk. This way I discovered that the participants who volunteered to participate had points that they wanted to make and stories that they wanted to tell. I had to record their words and allow them to tell their stories. In subsequent interviews with other participants, I did not bother with the questions at all. I started by explaining my methodology, made a few jokes, read out my research questions, and enjoyed the resulting stories that the participants provided.

Each participant wanted to talk. They had stories that they wanted to tell. This is probably why they volunteered to participate. I was surprised by the uniformity of the duration of the interviews. Each interview took approximately one hour, and every participant invited me to call or email him or her with follow-up questions. The stories ranged from James Chamberlain's celebrated experiences with the Surrey School Board during his challenge to their book ban, to the intimate family bickering described by the young woman who carefully modified the transcript of her interview to remove any reference that could lead any reader to guess her home town, family, or identity.

After each interview, I transcribed and emailed the text of the interview to the participant. As well, I embedded questions in the transcript in an alternate font where I thought more detail would be helpful. I also included follow-up questions in the body of some of the emails. The participants were quite attentive to the details of the transcript, but not to the follow-up questions. If they acknowledged the follow-up questions at all, it was only with brief answers. Once each participant check was complete, I started with the data analysis.

Data Analysis

While generating the transcripts and cycling through participant checks are part of data analysis, in this section I describe the next steps in the process. Following the participant checks, I selected text from the transcripts that illustrate the stories I heard. I read through each transcript highlighting quotes and copying them to a spreadsheet where I added my comments beside each quote. After examining two interviews in this way, I created a list of themes that were apparent in the quotes I had highlighted or themes that I expected to find later. I returned to these first interviews, classified the quotes as

belonging to the different themes, adding to the list of themes and reclassifying quotes along the way. At one point I had 45 themes in my list. After extracting quotes from all the interviews, I read through the quotes and reclassified them into broader themes to reduce the number of different themes. This resulted in a much shorter list of 15 themes. The participants had a lot to offer, and I wanted to capture it all essential information.

Summary

In order to capture and explore a rich understanding of the factors that influence the decisions of gay and lesbian teachers to divulge their sexual orientation to different people in the school community, I explored several methodologies for recruitment, data collection and analysis. My background is in the physical sciences, so I considered quantitative methods. However, research into sexual minorities is hampered by the social stigma attached to us, so quantitative methods could not be valid. Furthermore, there is no large, existing body of knowledge upon which I could draw to create valid measurement instruments. My research here is foundational, so I needed to build foundations by capturing as much detail as possible and let future researchers pick through the detail for small measurables they could quantify. I explored qualitative methods, and the one that I determined to be most appropriate for building a broad understanding was narrative inquiry. This method allows me to capture the full stories of my participants, including the context of their decisions, which is exactly what I required because the social and psychological context of deciding what factors influence the decision to hide their sexual orientation or to reveal it and to what degree, was exactly what I wanted to explore.

Chapter 4: The Participants

Introduction

The voices and stories of the participants form the core of this study. The participants include 70-year-old Garfield who fought against racial segregation in the US, but has still not told his family that he is gay. Tom at age 62, had just retired at the time of our interview; he talked about sources of information that were important to him. EJ was forced into retirement, but he completed his career by writing BC's third anti-homophobia policy for a school district. Gio, 58, was already retired. He told stories of needing to be perceived as a good person. Peter, aged 51, was two years from retiring; he struggled with his decision to remain closeted at school. Jack is a middle-aged principal in a Catholic school living a celibate life since the annulment of his marriage. Rick, aged 43, is a teacher-librarian raised by a judgemental, overbearing grandfather. James, 45, began a controversy with the Surrey School Board that involved the Supreme Court of Canada. Paul, 35, a former principal, now teaches ESL in a private preparatory school, and comes out to his classes to demonstrate the open nature of Canadian society. Ti, 39, is a Muslim woman who has a son with her wife, and had him named in the Mosque. Debbie, age 35, is a Catholic girl who used drugs and men to avoid her own sexual orientation. Thibeault's partner helps at school functions with Thibeault, but Thibeault, age 35, never talks about being gay at the elementary school where he teaches. Jennifer, 29, talks frequently at school about being gay. There were 13 participants in all.

Garfield

Garfield was born in Canada during the Great Depression. He "grew up as a feminine flower." He was a baton twirler and a tap dancer. He was "tight" with his

mother until her death. His father was an aggressive man who played football and lacrosse. He was not happy to have “Sweet Sue” for a son. He gave Garfield a doll for Christmas one year thinking that would straighten him out. On the day father came home from WWII, Garfield had to hang up his tap shoes, and start trying to live up to his father’s expectations for a son. It did not work. Garfield was not that sort of boy. At about age 13 he had a gay friend. The two boys did things separately from the other kids just because they had the same kinds of interests.

When Garfield was 14, his family moved to California, where he completed public school and attended university. Growing up in California, Garfield heard strong and regular homophobic messages. Men were arrested for picking up plain-clothes police officers in parks. Men “sitting in a bar just being friendly, putting an arm around someone, no kissing, no groping, and [were] arrested.” He remembers the standard practice of police raids of gay bars that were staged just before every election for police chief.

At university he got involved in the civil rights movement, and he met Andre. Andre went to medical school and Garfield followed him and taught in Nashville, Tennessee. They visited each other’s parents. They were considered very good friends, like brothers. Garfield still refers to him as “my friend” and “my doctor,” but not “lover” or “partner.” At that time men who were together were seen as very good friends who spent a lot of time together. People did not talk about their sharing a bed. When Andre graduated they returned to California where they bought a big house with a swimming pool and a fireplace in the bedroom. The families visited back and forth, and the nieces and nephews spent weeks at a time with their uncle and his friend. Andre and Garfield

remained together for 11 years, but the nature of their relationship was not discussed with Andre's family until his death years later, and never with Garfield's family. Garfield still exchanges Christmas cards with Andre's mother who refers to him as her son. In 1976, Garfield moved to Victoria to take up a teaching position that lasted until his retirement. Currently he is making an application for his new "friend" from Thailand to come to Canada. He wrote on the application form that his family does not know that he is gay hoping that would facilitate the application process.

Tom

Tom edited his own biographical sketch. After reading a draft of this thesis, Tom asked if he could replace his pseudonym with his real name and add to the sketch I prepared. What follows is his sketch, completed by him.

Tom is a recently retired 62-year-old teacher. At his own request, he attended boarding school for Grade 9. He recalled that one of the older boys liked to show his erection in the showers and talk about the girl he "did" the night before. Another boy called Tom "femmy," which he didn't understand, and still perceives as having been unwarranted. He returned to his local Calgary high school the next year. As he became more aware of his sexual difference, he surreptitiously sought information. In Grade 10 he found five clinical books on homosexuality in the Calgary public library. They suggested to him that his sexual orientation must be a sort of illness. About this time, 1968, the government in Canada removed the prohibition against homosexual relations from the Criminal Code. Tom said neither this event nor the 1972 passage of the Alberta Individual's Rights Protection Act affected him with its lack of protection for homosexuals, affected him as he had yet to come out of the closet. He was becoming

aware, however, that issues around homosexuality were rising to the surface in Canadian politics.

At university he was not involved with any gay organization, although he recalled that a gay club existed at the University of Calgary by 1970. He had yet to encounter any gay role models. At about age 21, he had his first sexual encounter, which was entirely unexpected as it was with one of his father's employees. This new friend was also coming out, and he took Tom downtown to show him the Calgary gay bar. To get in, they had to knock on a downstairs door. The doorman opened a slot in the door to ask them some questions before admitting them. They said they were friends of Dorothy and were let in. It was uncomfortable for Tom, but intriguing. He did not usually go to bars of any kind, so was glad to be there with an experienced friend. He saw transvestites, and was a little shocked that the bar existed and had been operating for many years.

Tom met a man at the bar, became immediately involved, and they rented an apartment together. Three weeks later he discovered his boyfriend with another man in their bed; Tom moved out the next day to a quickly rented bachelor apartment. At about this time, Tom discovered the Toronto gay publication called *The Body Politic*. It gave him the information he needed to realize he was not alone and not "sick", that there were others like him, and that it was possible to live a productive, happy, and healthy life. However, he only disclosed his sexual orientation to his family and close friends on a need-to-know basis. When he started teaching he did not disclose to anyone in the school community.

Social conditions in Alberta did not promote any discernible tolerance towards homosexuals during the 1970s, and Tom was living and working in his home city. He

did, however, confide in more and more colleagues after becoming involved with the AIDS Calgary Awareness Association during the late 1980s. He became aware of the political struggle the gay community faced against the intolerance of many Albertan politicians and publications, which were making outrageously homophobic statements. Tom told his dentist, lawyer, and doctor that he would not continue using their services if they continued to display the magazine *Alberta Report* in their reception areas. Gay rights were used as a political football by the socially conservative Klein government. Tom never considered disclosing his sexual orientation to his students in this context; he sincerely felt he could lose his job. It was only after the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its decision in the case *Vriend v. Alberta* (1998) that he breathed more easily.

Tom encountered both sympathetic and unsympathetic principals during his career. Although there were always several gay teachers on the staffs of the large high schools where he taught, most were closeted. Tom's recent and brief experience at a Victoria, BC high school did not result in any changes in his approach to disclosing his sexual orientation: he only referred to his orientation with colleagues who earned his trust. His Victoria school had a GSA (gay straight alliance); he encouraged its staff sponsor to continue the struggle, and then Tom retired.

EJ

EJ is close to Tom in age. He retired a few months before our interview from a secondary school in a small town in BC where he still lives. He was first hired by the school district as a child care worker in 1975. He lived the life of a confirmed bachelor. Almost two years before he retired, he came out to some close friends. Shortly after and without knowing that EJ is gay, a distraught parent consulted him. Her 15-year-old son

had just come out to her, and she feared that his future would be one of drugs, promiscuity, and AIDS. EJ told her that gay people can have very nice lives and that EJ himself was evidence of that. It was only his second disclosure. EJ kept his classroom open at lunch for kids who had nowhere else to go. After his disclosure to the mother, and eventually everyone else in town, his classroom became more popular as a safe haven at lunch time. EJ provided daily telephone and email counselling to the mother for a week, at the end of which she made a “threatening” remark in an email, which EJ took to his local union representative. The staff representative met with EJ to give him “an hour long set of comments and accusations.” When EJ attempted to speak, the staff representative responded with “Shut up or this interview is over.” EJ took early retirement and began a human rights complaint against the local union representatives. In his final year he was the principal author of BC’s third school district anti-homophobia policy.

Gio

At age 58, Gio was already retired from teaching secondary school. He attended Roman Catholic schools. He understood that the only good form of sexual expression was within a heterosexual marriage. One day in high school, Gio

was just standing in a classroom during lunch hour. We used the classrooms during lunch. After lunch we were just standing around joking and one of the guys just looked at me and said, “homo” in a really negative way to me, and I just remember that everyone just looked at me, and I guess nothing got said. I did not say anything. I just looked at the person and just tried to continue on as though nothing had been said, but tried to be just distracted. I can’t remember exactly what I did. I think I tried to get out of the room fairly quickly, but I was a great

actor. I was a really good actor. Never would I let anyone even know that they had pushed a button. I was so good at it because I had practiced it for so long. Even by this point, I was in grade 12, so I had had about 5 years of practice of hiding, and that was one of the tricks of the trade, to act in a way that basically indicated that I am as straight as anybody is, but I remember that really impacted for a long, long time. I was pretty stressed out. Of course, then, not having anybody I could talk to, or even say anything to. I was not going to say anything at home, and I was not going to say anything to a teacher, so you are left feeling alone and really targeted.

At university he saw the advertisements put up by the gay club, but did not attend any of the events. He was going into teaching, and felt he needed to project and be perceived as a good and healthy person, and that gay was not part of that persona. Even as a young teacher in south-western BC, he did not go to the gay bars or baths in Vancouver in case he was seen by a colleague, parent, current or former student. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s he threw himself into his work and had no personal or social life. It did not even cross his mind that he would come out to anyone in the school. He had never heard of anyone else doing so, and rarely heard about LGBTTTQQ people.

In the late 1980s, he heard more in the popular press and even heard about gay teachers. In 1990, he finally came out to someone who knew him.

I was a vice-principal at the time and I knew that this teacher was gay. I found that out by hearing somebody say it. The teacher was a really good person. One time we happened to be working on something together, and I knew that I was

going to talk to this person. I did. It ended up being that the very first coming out experience for me... He is still in teaching. He is significantly younger than I am. He is one generation below me. He was the first colleague that I came out to. I trusted him. He had integrity. He was a very wholesome person. I felt comfortable, totally comfortable. That person did help me a lot. It gave me someone to talk to all the time. It was shortly after that I travelled. It was one of that person's suggestions. He said, "If you are so uncomfortable here, and I understand why you are, why don't you travel somewhere and when you travel go to a gay bar? Go down into their community areas, their bookstores, their places because you won't do that here." And I did. It was great. [Laughs] I started to get into a zone where I was comfortable. I guess in the school setting that was one person. There were two others who I knew were gay. I did open up to them. I told them that I was not out to anyone but a few people that I knew were gay, and they were ok with that. They were cool. I was increasing my comfort zone by being able to talk to some colleagues that I had, but beyond that, until I retired, two very close friends, they were female, I came out to them just around the time that I retired.

Peter

Peter was 51 at the time of our interview and two years away from retiring from teaching Grade 1. He alternated between arguing for and against his decision to remain closeted. When supporting his decision to be closeted he described it as a necessary evil because the immigrant families in his catchment area are homophobic and he does not

“want to make waves just before I retire.” Each time he said this he disparaged the decision using the words “chicken-shit” and “cowardice.”

He grew up in public; his father was an Anglican bishop. “Being high profile,” he recalled, “doesn’t encourage you to be anything other than the good boy, to conform, to follow the rules, to smile at all the right moments and just not embarrass your family.” He attended an all-boys school, where sports were emphasized. Peter was not athletic, so hiding was the way he survived. He began teaching in the 1970s, when there was no precedents or support for being out.

In later years, he was on television as a gay person, produced an hour-long gay radio program, and was stage and in writing as a gay person. Peter has a 35-year-old gay colleague who teaches Grade 5 and uses the children’s book *Heather has two mommies* (Newman, 1989) in his classroom and includes gay and lesbian parents in his unit on same-sex families; his partner attends staff parties and volunteers at the school. In reflecting on this, Peter realized that he underestimated his community.

Jack

Jack is a 50-year-old principal of a Roman Catholic elementary school. His superintendent was about to fire Jack for being gay, but Jack knew his rights. The chancellor of the diocese already knew of Jack’s being gay because the chancellor was on the marriage commission that granted Jack and his ex-wife an annulment of their marriage due, in part, to Jack’s sexual orientation. Jack recognizes that “the state of being gay is officially acceptable, but that the state of having a gay relationship is not. I would not care to lead a double life in a situation like that. I can leave my job.” In the meantime,

Jack lives the model life of a gay Catholic: chaste and dedicated to the work of the Church.

Jack has been struggling with his sexuality since he was 15. He was teased and physically tormented in school for being effeminate. In November of his first year of university, he began as an apprentice in the shop where he got his hair cut, welcoming customers and washing hair. The drugs and open sexuality at the Christmas party were threatening to Jack, so he quit the next day, saying, "I can't work here; you people are all gay." He took a job at a cafe, which, ironically, had a large ratio of loud and proud gay staff. He came out later at university, but subsequently determined that he liked women as well and classified himself as bisexual. At 32 he married a woman but the marriage was "a disaster." The annulment caused Jack to reflect on his life, and the amount of dishonesty in it. Today he openly admits that he is gay. He has the knowledge, the arguments, and the psychological strength to fight for his job, but he is also prepared to resign if he takes a partner.

Rick

At 45, Rick was also formerly married. He was orphaned and raised by his grandparents. He attributes his dating women, getting married and other constructions of his closet as a result of being raised by a bigoted, judgemental grandfather. His grandfather freely demonstrated bigotry, and disparaged any suggestion of deviation from gender norms. He declared long hair on men immoral. Early in life Rick knew he had orphan's benefits that would see him through university and give him a better life, but that he would have to remain with his grandparents until university graduation. Rick decided not to test if his grandfather would house a homosexual, and his artifice of

heterosexuality became so entrenched that he married a woman and maintained his closet until his grandfather's death. At that juncture, Rick examined his life and felt he could finally afford to, and must, deal with life more honestly. Today Rick has 50% custody of his daughter. He works against homophobia in schools. He and his husband live near the school where Rick is a teacher-librarian. They both volunteer on parent (PAC) and district (DPAC) advisory committees, and have become well know as community supporters who happen to be gay.

James

James Chamberlain, also 45, is a very high-profile gay Canadian. He is the Surrey librarian who began the case that appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada over the issue of whether three books that depict same-sex parents would be permitted in Surrey schools (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002). He asked to participate in this thesis, not only to support research on same-sex issues, but also because he wanted to make statements like the following. "I think it is really important to be out in teaching to be a positive role model for kids. It also sends an important message to our colleagues that we are not living in fear, that we are not ashamed of who we are." He asked to have his real name published.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the use of pseudonyms is common practice in studies involving human subjects. In this study, however, there is a mix of real names and pseudonyms. Other than James, I have not identified which names are real and which are pseudonyms in keeping with the wishes of each participant and to help maintain the privacy of those who chose to use pseudonyms. James was adamant about not using a pseudonym. A pseudonym allows the participant to hide. James was clear that he was

participating in this study to assuage the historical shame associated with being LGB, and he wanted to show that it is not shameful to be known as LGB. To honour his request, I make the following two statements (a) the James of this study is the James Chamberlain who is a teacher-librarian in Surrey, BC, and fought against bigotry in his school district in the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997, and (b) there is no shame in being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered. Participants who used their real name wanted to be identifiable to those who already know them, but did not want to enable others to find them in a phone book.

Paul

Paul, 35, also provides a positive role model for students, but in the senior grades of an expensive university preparatory school. In fact, Paul has fun being out and coming out, especially with the foreign students who giggle at his disclosure. “I tell the kids, ‘My dad was not homophobic, until he met my husband.’” Paul is a strong athlete; he makes sure to play in every staff-student game to dispel the myth that gay means weak, but there was a time when Paul hid his homosexuality. He had to learn that being out would not ruin his life, and he had to learn how to come out. Today when someone asks about his wife, he tells them he has a husband and talks about him.

In 1990, at the University of Toronto, a member of Paul’s social circle came out and “got a rough time.” Paul stayed in the closet, and regrets it. Within a few years he became a principal in Ottawa. By then he was out in his private life, but he was still not comfortable with his sexuality, and still closeted in the educational community. He recognizes now that he did not know how to come out. He did not have the vocabulary, experience, knowledge, or desire to explain or defend his sexual orientation. He also

feared repercussions in his career because of the misconception that gays are pedophiles. It was uncomfortable. He was 30 and sick of lying. He met Jean, the man who is now his husband and who taught Paul to accept himself. Jean was offered a job in Victoria, so they left Ottawa for Victoria, got married (once it was legal), and continue to enjoy their open, honest, and productive lives together.

Ti

At 39, Ti could provide lessons in coming out and myth breaking. She is very close to her family. She disclosed to them so that they could continue to be part of her life. She also had to have them accept her, her partner, and their child, whom Ti carried after in vitro fertilization. During the pregnancy Ti and her partner, also a teacher, participated in the Roots of Empathy program that pairs a newborn with a classroom. In this case, the baby and her two moms visited both their classrooms. Ti and her family are Muslim, but her partner is not. Ti arranged to have the child named in the mosque with the consent and support of the elders. Ti said that after the naming ceremony “one of my uncles, who is quite religious, said to me that it made him proud to be Ismaili that day because he saw how open and truly welcoming the community leaders had been.”

Debbie

Debbie, age 35, did not make such healthy choices in her coming out. She was one of eight children in a traditional Catholic family in a mill town; they went to mass on Sundays; she attended Catholic schools; and they were anti-gay. She spent her first adult years moving frequently, taking drugs, and having sex with many men in an effort to hide her homosexuality from herself. It didn't work. Eventually she met Alexandra and fell in love, and Alexandra is helping her through a slow process of accepting herself.

As one of the youngest of six siblings, she was exposed to teenage homophobia that was freely expressed throughout her childhood. At age 12, Debbie had her first sexual experience with a girl with whom she had been friends since age four. A few days later she tried to discuss the experience with this friend, but her friend said, "We are Catholic... Don't talk to me about this again... Our parents are friends and they can never know." After that the friendship broke up. Debbie once asked her parents what it meant to be gay. They told her that "You can't be hateful towards gays; you have to feel sorry for them, but you can't associate with them, and you definitely can't be gay." During high school Debbie did not date. She went to a lot of parties and did a lot of drugs. After high school she moved frequently; she lived and taught in cities all over the world; and she did more drugs. She also became sexually promiscuous with men, as though that could change her sexual orientation. She was beginning to realize she was lesbian, so she worked harder at masking it, but her twenties were ending, so she felt it was time to settle down.

She settled in Vancouver as a teacher in a special needs school with several assistants. During Debbie's address to 125 members of the school community at the beginning of the school year, Alexandra walked in late. Debbie lost her place in her speech. Now they are a couple.

Debbie's family uses her apartment as their Vancouver accommodation. Debbie was not out to them, but she and Alexandra were inseparable. When family stayed, Alexandra did not, but the women fought about it every time. During one such weekend, the brother who stayed Friday announced he was also staying Saturday. Debbie phoned Alexandra and they fought. Debbie hit her psychological limit, burst into tears in front of

her brother, and disclosed. Her brother was happy that his sister had found someone to love who loved her and that she could finally settle down. He gave her good advice and comfort. It started Debbie's coming out to each of her siblings and her parents. The process is not complete, so Debbie carefully removed all personally identifying references from the transcript of our interview.

Thibeault

Thibeault, now 35, could not remember a time when he did not know he was gay, but he has always been cautious about disclosure. His first teaching job was in a large secondary school in an area of BC with a large influential population of Christian fundamentalists. He had older colleagues who were out, but he was not ready to be out himself. Today, he is quietly out. He does not hide his homosexuality. In fact, his partner sometimes helps chaperone at school functions and trips, but neither does he discuss it. He teaches English and still struggles to decide if he should tell the students that particular authors are gay.

Jennifer

At 29, Jennifer was the youngest participant. She conducted her MA research on introducing anti-homophobia training in elementary and secondary schools. In high school she believed she was heterosexual. In university, she fell in love with a woman, and told her parents. Her Unitarian parents were supportive. Jennifer is grateful to her mother for disclosing Jennifer's sexual orientation to their social circle. Jennifer did not know how to come out to people in their 40s to 60s, but her mother just talked about Jennifer having a nice girlfriend. When Jennifer came out to her grandmother she wore a skirt and chose her words carefully. Grandma was incredulous. "But you are so happy,"

she said. Throughout her certification/MA program Jennifer was out to those with whom she worked. She did not come out right away in her first teaching job however.

Jennifer's first teaching position was in a neighbourhood where the parents are mostly professionals: doctors, lawyers, and architects. Even still the children had no gay role models. From when she was at university, she wanted to be out in school and be that role model for the children. In the staffroom, she heard anti-gay talk, which strengthened her resolve and underscored the need for education to be in place so that her school district's LGBTTTQQ supportive policy would be translated into practice. She approached her principal who was supportive, and Jennifer began disclosing to colleagues by talking about her girlfriend. This stopped the homophobic conversations in the staffroom without confrontation. She is now out in her own classroom and talks about different kinds of families in other classrooms in her school.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

The voices of the participants form the core of this study, providing stories from their lives and experiences that illustrate what is commonly known to students of queer studies, but they also deliver some surprises. They describe their fears of the illocutionary nature of coming out and explain why it was important to come out and be out. They describe why they felt that they had to deliberate about coming out and why it was such a difficult decision; some were not able to reconcile the decision. They speak of their families, other social structures, and the importance of safe spaces where they can relax, where silence is not a negative message, and where supportive messages about being gay and lesbian help counter the pervasive negative messages from so many sources, particularly their families. They also dispel myths about all rural and Islamic communities being dangerous places for gays and lesbians. There were 13 participants in all.

Stories of negative messages and negative experiences occupy many pages of this chapter. This will have the effect of diminishing the message that many participants convey about the benefits of being out as opposed to being in the closet. Stories describe events that participants identified as interesting enough to tell me. They did not narrate the mundane moments of their lives when they were not actively hiding, declaring, investigating, or dealing with their sexual orientation, but these are the moments that make up most of our lives; it is for these times that participants state that living authentically is preferable to living in a closet, and why coming out is illocutionary.

Coming out as illocutionary

To be illocutionary, coming out has to result in a change in social status. The phrase, “I will” in the marriage ceremony changes one’s self perception and the way others treat the speaker in different situations. For gay and lesbian teachers who are not known as gay or lesbian, speaking the words “I am gay” or “I am lesbian” destroys the speaker’s metaphysical closet in the social context and reveals an authentic identity that does not require the moment-by-moment maintenance that the closet requires. Therefore coming out is illocutionary in the sense that it changes how one presents oneself to the world, and often how the world treats the speaker because of the disclosure. For example, when Ti told her aunts she is lesbian, her aunts stopped trying to find her a husband.

I eventually told my aunts, with whom I am close, because they were starting to get worried that I was 25 and had no boyfriend and, oh my God, wasn’t married. They kept trying to set me up with eligible young men who they knew, so I decided I had to tell them because the situation was ridiculous, so I came out to my aunts.

Sometimes closeted gay and lesbian teachers are afraid that coming out will be a negative experience. For example, Gio said, “You just imaged all these worst case scenarios of what might happen to you.” He described fears of parents removing their children from his classroom, or having his name appear in letters to the editor speaking against him, or a principal who might undermine his contribution to the school. In cases like this, the fear is not only that the act of coming out is illocutionary, but also that coming out will have negative repercussions.

The coming out experiences of the participants who had done so were that the experience was usually not illocutionary. Rick characterized the typical response he receives as taking the form of “Yah, so.” However, Rick has had one significant negative experience in that a brother no longer speaks to him.

EJ also experienced the illocutionary nature of coming out as contribution to his school community in an unexpected way. EJ stayed in his classroom at lunch time to create a safe space for students during this unstructured portion of each day. Typically, he had six students who ate lunch in his room. Other students would drop in to use the computer, talk with EJ or pass through. After coming out, EJ had approximately 30 students in his room at lunch each day. His coming out had not only changed the view of the student body towards him, but it appears to have given him an aura of safety that attracted many students. Otherwise, EJ describes coming out as follows.

“Oh cool.” I mean that was the reaction. In two years, in that whole period of time, with one single exception, there has not been one note left, not one comment made, nothing, zero. Absolutely no negative reactions at all from students.

Jack had a situation that showed his revelation as illocutionary when he was still a classroom teacher, but the negative repercussions were mostly mitigated by his being well informed. When the school principal learned of Jack’s public disclosure of his sexual orientation, the principal called Jack to a meeting to discuss the possibility that Jack might have to leave his position as a teacher in his Catholic school. Jack told the principal that the diocesan chancellor already knew of his sexual orientation, that he led a life exemplary of current Vatican teaching on how homosexuals should live, and that he would not leave easily. In this situation, there is an interesting interplay between parts of

the official organization that illustrates how troublesome a person with power could be even when that person is acting differently from higher policy and decisions. In this case, Jack was well-informed, but it is a simple matter to extrapolate this to a situation where the character cast in Jack's role is less informed or more timid. Such a character might quietly hand in a resignation, which would have been contrary to the desires of those with higher levels of control in the official organization.

It is this sort of speculation that some gay and lesbian people use in their decision to remain closeted at school. As Thibeault said, "With a new set of parents it is hard to know until you come out and see what their reaction is going to be." Peter decided to avoid the potential of confrontations with parents and others by not coming out, even though he repeatedly denounced that decision throughout our interview:

[My sexual orientation] has never come up. I have never brought it up. No one ever asks. No one makes an issue out of it. I assume that people know at the school, but no one asks, and I don't make a point of pushing it on the conversation. I am not pleased nor am I proud of this. I wish I had the courage of my convictions and were more out at school. In a way I would love to be out at school so they could see that gay relationships are just another kind of family. But at this stage in my career, I just don't want to risk it.

You don't want to leave with a bad taste in your mouth.

It is a chicken-shit position, frankly. I am not, as I say, proud of it. But my work is so important to me. I have had a career that I have just loved, and I am afraid to make waves at the end.

Peter anticipates that his coming out will cause problems in the last years of his career, “I am afraid to make waves.” As Gio noted, “You don’t want to have anyone look at you as if you are evil... You want to come across to everyone as a good person.”

Thibeault, too, wants to be perceived and judged for his teaching. He does not want his coming out to be illocutionary. He wants his sexual orientation to be a characteristic that does not negatively affect his standing in the community or to be a lens through which members of the school community always view him, even positively. He said, “Whenever I go to a new school, my thought is always, ‘My name is Thibeault and I’m a new teacher here.’ Rather than, ‘My name is Thibeault, and I am the new gay teacher here.’”

A few participants come out to students as part of a pedagogical strategy to dispel stereotypes and build acceptance. As part of ESL classes on Canadian culture and acceptance of diversity, Paul tells students that he is gay, and married to another man. Paul then uses his athletic prowess in student-teacher sporting events to demonstrate that not all gay men fit the stereotype of being un-athletic. Jennifer, likewise, has used her coming out to affect both students and staff. She describes her experience with students this way:

Some people say [especially during my class presentations] that they don’t know any gay people, so [anti-gay talk] does not hurt anyone. I always use that point to come out because I say that in this class you know at least one person who is gay because you know me and that person is me. There was not a lot of fuss from the parents or anything. I had some parents come up to me and say they were glad that I had done it.

With staff, she said that “Once [they] knew that I had a girlfriend, they were very supportive and very nice, and the stereotypes stopped.”

In fact, only Jack, who is out and a principal of a Roman Catholic school, was able to provide evidence against coming out. He cited the Delwin Vriend case in Alberta (Counsel for the Department of Justice Canada, n.d.; Vriend v. Alberta, 1998). Vriend was a laboratory coordinator at King’s University College in Edmonton. He was dismissed for being gay. His attempt to take the case to the Alberta Human Rights Commission was refused by the commission, which said that homosexuals, as a group, were not protected from discrimination in Alberta. The case proceeded through the court system to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada found in favour of Vriend. The premier of Alberta, Ralph Klein, considered, but did not use, the “notwithstanding” clause of the Canadian Charter of Rights to permit Alberta to continue to discriminate based on sexual orientation.

The participants each described their reasoning for and against coming out. Each anticipated that coming out had the potential, even the likelihood, to be illocutionary with a negative change in social status. This is one reason, it would seem, that some gay and lesbian teachers hide their sexual orientation in BC in the early twenty-first century. Those participants who were out to students and staff at the time of the interview, expressed overwhelming psychological benefits in being released from the burden of repeated construction and constant maintenance of the metaphysical closet through separation, secretiveness, and deception. While participants reported isolated negative responses to having their sexual orientation generally known, they all said their lives, lived authentically are better.

In contrast, of the participants who maintained closets, Garfield berated himself for doing so, and Peter identified the decision as distasteful. To assist Garfield, Peter and others who struggle with this question to settle on a decision they find satisfactory, I now examine reasons participants gave for divulging their sexual orientation, after which I will explore what is probably the most significant reason gay and lesbian teachers hide their sexual orientation.

Reasons to be out

All participants reported that it was better to be authentic about their sexual orientation, and reported different reasons why it is, or would be, better, not just for themselves, but also for students and other teachers. As James said, “I think it is really important to be out in teaching, to be a positive role model for kids. It also sends an important message to our colleagues that we are not living in fear, that we are not ashamed of who we are.” A continuous theme among participants, regardless of their degree of disclosure, was the moral conflict caused by hiding their sexual orientation. In safe environments, they tended to view the closet as immoral because it requires dishonesty, and deprives their students of a positive role model. As Paul put it, “I got tired of lying.” Paul, and also Debbie, described how being out is personally affirming for them, as well as benefiting the students and other teachers. Paul describes this affirmation as “empowering.”

When there are opportunities for me to be involved in activities that are not stereotypically gay, I do them. I am very aware of the students’ stereotyping gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals, and so whenever there is an opportunity to be involved in something that shows the opposite, generally it is sports related;

then I am all there. I have found that very empowering because I know there are students who have said things like “He doesn’t look gay.” I can’t take all the credit for that, but it is helpful. There is always a little of that in the back of my mind, and I want to know, “What did you learn from that?” when I am talking about stereotypes. If I can show that their stereotypical views are not necessarily useful to them, I have just helped someone.

Paul gives us reasons to be out. Debbie gives us reasons not to be closeted.

My technique for dealing with stuff was to be a big avoider. I would always just run away, or be partying or on drugs, or be really promiscuous and go the other way with men, with a lot of different men, a lot. Maybe I was hoping that that was going to fix it. I don’t know. I went through five years when I was very promiscuous. I think I was trying to make myself feel like I really loved it or something. I was actually over the top in terms of being sexual and stuff, and it was very weird to look back at, but maybe not that weird considering what was going on in my head.

Now that she has accepted her sexual orientation, Debbie’s relationships have improved dramatically.

Debbie is in a primary relationship with Alexandra, but hiding her sexual orientation was damaging their relationship. Members of Debbie’s family often stay over weekends. Eventually the psychological stress of hiding her relationship became so great she broke down in tears one such weekend.

Alexandra always said, “I want to live openly and honestly with you.” That being said, she also said that she was willing to wait for me until I was ready, but that

was a struggle for us because my family seemed to be showing up on a regular basis all of a sudden. It wasn't like I only see them once a year for two days. I mean I have a big family and they show up at all different times of the year. It kind of hit a point when my brother was in town and I called her up. We had a fight every time someone from my family was in town because it was like the struggle of my saying, "No, I am really not embarrassed by you. It is my trying to figure things out and feeling comfortable and confident with who I am." That she kind of understood. She was trying to be supportive, but at the same time dealing with her own issues. It was difficult. We had this argument on the phone that one night when I called her to say "My brother is staying another night so I can't see you at all this weekend." She got upset. We got off the phone. My brother was sitting there. I was in my bedroom and he was in the living room. I remember that I just burst into tears because I was just finding it such a lot to hold in. I was living this whole other life that nobody knew. I couldn't take it anymore, and I just kind of blurted it all out to him. He was the last person on Earth that I thought would be supportive and he was incredible. I just said, "Look. I have to tell you something. I hope you don't hate me. I hope this doesn't change anything. I am the same person." I did this whole big song and dance. He's like, "Look. Just tell me. It is not going to be a problem. Whatever you are going to tell me, it is not going to be a problem," so I did.

I said, "I'm in a relationship with a woman, and I'm really happy, and I can't keep going on like this."

He just said, "OK."

I said, "That's it."

He said, "It's OK."

I said, "You are not shocked."

Then he said, "Deb, no, I am not shocked."

I said, "Why do you say that?"

"Well, it's your lifestyle choices and the things you have done. I can't say it hasn't crossed my mind. You need to be happy with your life, and be who you are, and be honest with the people around you. Once you put it out there, the issue is no longer yours, it's theirs."

I was totally blown away by him. He was fantastic. He continues to be that way. We talked about it that one time and it really has been a non-issue since. My partner and I went down and stayed with them over the holidays. His wife has been wonderful. We really haven't had much of a problem. That has been great because then I slowly started to tell other family members. It has taken a long time. My parents just found out a couple of months ago. My last couple of siblings just found out not that long ago. One of them had a really hard time with it. I was glad one of my brothers told my other brother. I did not want to go through and tell every single person: it would be emotional and exhausting. The one brother who the brother told had a really negative reaction to it, and got quite upset on the phone with my brother for telling him. He basically said that my brother was lying. He had this really bizarre reaction. This is my one brother who stayed really rigid in his beliefs. He teaches in a Catholic school. He and his wife are very active in the church. I don't want to always blame religion because I

don't think that is the case, but I think so for him. He kind of made some remarks to me when he did call me. He said, "You know I understand this is who you are." Then he said, "I am sure that in time I'll slowly learn to embrace you again and your lifestyle." I was like, "Oh man. How bizarre. Give me a break. You know me. You were raised with me." I think the nice thing is that my confidence is up, so now I am kind of at the point where I can say, "Don't be such an idiot. Right? I'm your sister, and nothing has changed." He kind of said some funky stuff. He said some nice things and some funky things all at the same time because, I think, he is struggling with it. I've tried to cut him some slack and not talk to him too much right now until he fixes it. My sister said he has been really good. He is fine with it now, but he needed some time to process it and realize he was being a bit ridiculous with all of it. So that is it, I think he is better. Hopefully I'll talk to him soon. I got a really nice letter from his wife. That was good, and she seems fine. In terms of my family, I have one sister who does not know. She and her husband, they have kind of an evangelical church. They have very strong beliefs around it. They are sort of the anti-gays of Canada. I had quite a good relationship with her children growing up. She has six children. I am quite close to them, so I am a little bit scared to tell her because I think it is going to change a lot of our relationship and my relationship with her children. I'm nervous. My other siblings and my parents keep saying that it's got to be done, and we are here to support you.

Debbie's unhappy situation pushed her into divulging her sexual orientation to her family. Her coming out to them turned her fear into a deeper and more honest relationship with her family. Ti's situation (see page 69 of Chapter 4) was similar to

Debbie's, but in a Muslim context, and Ti planned her way to the same happy situation into which Debbie was eventually thrust: a situation where her relationship with her family became honest and deeper. Coming out benefited personal relations in the lives of these two women, but it can also have benefits elsewhere.

Teachers assume a social role instructing the young, in not only reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also in social norms such as honesty and care for others. Jennifer pointed out that by hiding their minority sexual status they deprive their students of role models to combat the homophobic comments that are too common and tend to go unchallenged.

There are so few role models and positive images of gay/lesbian/bisexual people, that it's huge if you have a gay teacher. It cuts down on all the ignorance and stereotyping. In terms of my being gay, kids need positive role models. In fact, Jennifer says it is a teacher's professional duty to alleviate the stress of growing up. This places a special burden on gay and lesbian teachers.

A teacher has a professional duty to take on the discomfort and not leave these kids in classes feeling uncomfortable and terrible. Instead of leaving the discomfort with the children, teachers need to take it on. Teachers need to educate their kids about gay and lesbian people by telling them that gay and lesbian people are in their neighbourhoods and families. It is another way of reducing ignorance.

The tools used in constructing closets include dishonesty and selfishness, which are arguably justified if there are risks to personal safety. The construction of the closet sometimes means lying, telling people that you were sick at home on the weekend like

Peter did, when he was really at the drag show, or at the beach with your girlfriend, as Debbie did. The closet also requires selfishness, as Jennifer identified, because it means removing oneself as a role model for students who are queer, in the broadest definition of that word. It can also mean performing heterosexual mating rituals such as dating and marrying as Rick did, making another person an instrument of the lie one tries to project.

Acts of deceit and selfishness caused moral conflicts in the closeted participants I interviewed. Fear and habit were the reasons they gave for continuing in this psychologically difficult place.

Fear

The theme of fear appeared in all the interviews. Participants cited it as the reason for not being out. In response to my query about what keeps him from disclosing, Paul answered with the single word “fear.” However, participants were unable to cite recent justifications for their fear. The fear was based in the fear of the unknown, the habit of being afraid, or historical events. Garfield explained his current maintenance of a closet as the habit of his long life. Although he recalled instances from the 1950s and into the 1970s, he dismissed these as happening too long ago to matter, and his closet was a matter of unjustifiable fear. Rick said he had a sibling who no longer spoke to him. Ti and Rick both mentioned the Surrey book ban as evidence that Surrey was not a safe place for queers. The teacher at the center of that 1997 controversy is James Chamberlain, a participant in this thesis, who is not afraid to disclose publicly.

The fear identified here is situated in the participants who function professionally in the heteronormative context of schools. These people are in development themselves. Between the time of our interview and the final version of this thesis, one participant

asked that I replace his pseudonym with his real name. As King & Biro (2006) described, coming out is not a linear process, but a series of perspectives that one takes in different contexts depending not only on the degree of self acceptance at the moment, but also the external environment and other aspects of one's nature. Debbie and Ti are women of similar age. Both come from involved families with whom they wished to maintain strong relationships. Debbie hid her homosexuality to retain her connection with her family. Ti disclosed hers to retain her connection with her family. Both women were at risk of losing their families by disclosing, but Debbie had heard negative messages from her siblings, parents, and Catholic school teachers all her life; Ti did not. Both families were heteronormative, but Debbie's was also homophobic, and retarded her ability to accept herself as a lesbian. This makes her more sensitive to fear from the reprisals she could suffer as a result of being gay. It makes her less likely to fight against such reprisals because she was trained that homosexuality is a flaw. To use the language of Foucault (1988) and Kohli (1999), her family and church had employed technologies of domination producing in her technologies of the self that she used to enforce her own subjugation thus constructing herself as a deeply flawed person in need of correction and discipline. Fear is a technology of the self that Debbie and others used to maintain their own subjugation. At the time of our interview, she was ending a chapter in her life in which she was reconstructing herself, not as subjugated, but as a happy lesbian, and finding that she is mostly safe to do so.

It is safe for some gay and lesbian teachers to have other people in their personal and school communities know that they are gay or lesbian. There are now examples in the popular media and parliament of out gays and lesbians. Given this, it is easy to see

why Garfield and Peter express such dysphoria over their decisions to remain closeted. Garfield, who was a civil rights activist in the US during the time of Martin Luther King Jr., said “I don’t want to make a big deal about standing up for [Black rights], but why can’t I stand up for myself and say I’m a queer?” He was near tears at this point in our interview. Garfield was once fired for his outspokenness against racism, but still does nothing for gay rights, not even discussing his sexual orientation with his sister. For Garfield, it is his habit of many years that he seems unable to break. Garfield described the technologies of domination his father and other men in his family used to belittle his effeminacy and encourage “manliness.” This has resulted in the kind of complex coming out predicted by King & Biro (2006) where Garfield is out to almost everyone who knows him except his family; he has constructed himself to apply the “governmentality” (Foucault, 1988, p. 19), which subjugates his homosexuality and he calls “fear,” only in the context of his family.

Peter also repeatedly questioned his not coming out more and being more involved in promoting acceptance of LGBTTTQQ people with even stronger language. “I am not proud of this. Perhaps it is not my task in my life and this point in history to do this. It is the next generation who needs to do the final work on this. I say that and it still feels like a chicken-shit thing to say.” Peter was especially well-spoken and calm during most of our interview. It was surprising to hear him use this kind of language, and he used this same language to repeat the same conflict several times during the interview. It appears that he does not believe there is anything now to fear, but that he still feels the fear which he is unable to overcome. In his own words, “You do get caught in social patterns that are hard to break.” This succinctly described why Gio, Garfield, and Peter

still have trouble disclosing, and makes EJ's disclosure all the more surprising since they are approximately the same age with approximately the same number of years of social pattern setting, but, of these four, it was only EJ who was content with his decision to be out or not.

In trying to find rational bases for their fear of coming out, I questioned these three participants, and the others, about what they think might happen if they disclosed. Gio said, "I probably still have the fear that if parents or students or even colleagues knew that I was gay that I might be shunned or that I would have more stress than that job already gives you." Later he reflected on his fear saying, "You just imagined all these worst case scenarios of what might happen to you. They are ridiculous now that I look back at them, but at the time they were very real." The conflict in the closeted participants was clear; they have successfully absorbed homophobic technologies of domination making them technologies of the self, but the constant re-enforcement through pervasive heteronormative discourse is waning. In turn, this results in internal conflict during our interviews as they simultaneously reflect on their hiding their sexual orientation and on the current dominant (and minority) treatment of gays and lesbians.

Jack, the out Catholic principal, made a point about overt and covert issues. "There might be a group of people with strong convictions that it would be a problem with." As principal it would be Jack's duty to deal with them, which would take time away from other duties. Unless he sees his dealing with homophobic groups as socially and ecclesiastically beneficial praxis, he will see meetings related to his sexual orientation as being exclusively about him, and not valuable to the students in his school,

i.e., a waste of time. He also recognizes the power and danger of covert issues despite the support communicated through larger organizations.

It is allaying the fear through these indicators [positive portrayal in information and entertainment media, legislation, policy, regulations, etc.] saying, 'It is OK.' Then on the other side, the fear that, even though [legislation, policy, and regulations] are already in place, people's attitudes may not have changed. How do you fight exclusion or the cold shoulder through legislation?

Jack is ready to fight, and has the knowledge and position that would allow him to have a significant impact. His thinking about how issues around his sexual orientation might arise equips him for the conflict.

In anticipation of complaints about her sexual orientation, Jennifer does two things. "Parents know me as an energetic happy teacher and I love my students and I love my job and, because I have a good rapport with the parents, it went over. I also know all the arguments for why it has to be done if I had to defend myself." Jennifer makes sure she is an excellent teacher, and she knows how to defend herself. She prevents problems by building up an excellent reputation as a teacher, and she, like Jack and James, has learned the tools of the official organization in case she has to use them. In these cases, fear of anticipated events has given the participants strength, but I was also interested in the basis for the fear.

I asked participants what they had experienced, seen, read about, or heard that would make them afraid to disclose their sexual orientation. Garfield related stories about bar raids that he experienced in the USA in the 1950s. He recalled that Hollywood female impersonators were not allowed to be in full drag, and how these, and other messages,

said “be careful.” Debbie, although about 40 years younger than Garfield, is also very cautious in deciding to whom she comes out, and has had some significant anti-gay training.

Debbie recalled that “growing up I heard a lot of messages. I grew up in a really small town too, where it is a scary thought to be the odd man out. That did not appeal to me at all.” Her experience was that gays and lesbians were vilified. She did not know that gay and lesbian people can have happy, productive lives. She only knew queers to be the subject of ridicule and derision. She had no role models for what life as a lesbian could be like, no teachers, actors, or relatives. She only knew that everyone in her life distained homosexuals. The outcome of her first exploratory sexual experience reinforced the homophobic message.

When Debbie was 12, she had a sexual experience with her best friend that resulted in the failure of the relationship.

Emotionally, it was a little bit mixed; then there was fear, I think. It was mixed because she was the first person I had ever had a sexual experience with, and I really liked her. I talked about that experience with her afterwards, and asked her what she was thinking about since then, and explained to her that it had a different meaning for me. She said that she just did it because she wanted to know what it was like and that she was now interested in boys and that it did not mean anything to her. Then she said, “We are Catholic,” and “Don’t talk to me about this again,” and “Our parents are friends and they can never know.” All that came from her, and then I got scared and decided that she was right and that this was not

something that my family could handle, or that anybody could handle in my circle of people.

The friend insists on silencing any hint that she is lesbian, or had a lesbian experience.

She articulates that she is heterosexual, that heterosexuality is good, and only heterosexuality is supported by their families and their church. It repeats part of what Debbie`s parents told her, “You cannot be gay.” Debbie points out that the homophobia and heterosexism manifested themselves in these conversations to the detriment of many years of her life. Sometimes such power manifests itself through official organizational channels, as with EJ, and gives credence to the fear of coming out.

EJ disclosed to a mother to reassure her. She sought his counsel after her Grade 10 son declared his homosexuality. EJ had never disclosed to anyone outside a very small circle of close friends before, but felt the time was right and the mother needed to know that her son could have a nice, regular life. Several weeks later, with EJ`s popularity increasing among the students, something went amiss in the mother`s thinking and among the son`s friends. The son seemed not to be involved. The following story shows that it is not always safe to have one`s sexual orientation generally known.

In September, I contacted the mom. I went to her school. We talked quite a bit.

We talked or emailed every day that week. Every day it was, “We will have a meeting with the kid.” Then Friday morning I got an email that was threatening, and I took that to my staff rep. She and the mom met on the Sunday. I met with the staff rep before school Monday morning.

It was not a staff rep meeting. I was a staff rep for 20 years. At a normal staff rep meeting there is an interchange. It was a monologue. If I tried to interrupt, the

staff rep leaned over and shouted in my face, “Shut up or this interview is over.”

That was the tone of it. It was an hour-long set of comments and accusations.

Then the staff rep built a little mini lecture into any staff meeting I was in. The lectures were about a teacher crossing the line with a student, a teacher engaging in improper conduct, so everybody on staff heard the message, but no one on staff did anything about it, except for a handful of people whose behaviour towards me changed significantly. I think she was trying to get somebody to report me, and cause problems without her having to take responsibility for it. She could always say, “Oh well, you misunderstood me. I wasn’t taking about [EJ].”

Despite this conflict, which drove EJ to retire a year early, he maintains that his coming out has improved his life and the life of the school, but that this situation with the mother has been a very difficult and unnecessary part of the process. It has also been costly to EJ because he has had to defend himself not only against the accusations of a distraught mother, but also against the union in the person of the local representative who is supposed to represent his interests.

As mentioned above, Jack is prepared for conflict. He had, and expects to have, challenges brought forward by reactionary elements within the Roman Catholic Church. He educated himself about the official teaching of the Church and is known by the diocesan hierarchy to be gay. When he was a teacher, he provided room and board for university students, and had to evict one of them. In revenge, the former boarder wrote an anonymous letter to Jack’s principal saying that Jack is gay. The principal’s response to Jack was

‘I don’t know if you can work in a Catholic school and be gay.’ Fortunately I had made it my business to research the rights and responsibility of a gay person working in a Catholic school, so I said, ‘Well of course I can,’ and he began to educate his principal on the rights and responsibilities of a gay teacher in a Catholic school. Like Jennifer and James, Jack knew the standing of the official organization and the tools it had available to him to protect himself from reprisal. However, he still had to take the time to study, learn, and be emotionally ready to take on such a fight. His knowledge and fortitude were the armour he was required to wear to keep himself safe from irregular attacks. These three participants all show that they are happier, more effective educators being out and dealing with the occasional conflict than spending every moment maintaining their closets. James is the most famous of these.

It is difficult to separate where James has suffered action against him because of his being gay, and where action was a result of his ardent work promoting the free dissemination of gay-positive information in the schools. His meetings with administrators, lawyers, and school boards were not a result of his being gay, but part of his work against discrimination. There were even picketers outside the school.

In 1999, my school was picketed by parents, not from my school but from other schools. That was a trying couple of days as well. New parents were bringing in their children for kindergarten orientation and the picketers were trying to convince them to take their kids elsewhere. It backfired on them. It ended up being that a whole bunch of parents got mad and enrolled their kids at my school because of the picketers.

However, James had parents remove children, and attempt to remove children from his classroom because he is gay. He took his school board to arbitration over this, and won. Administrators all over the district are now aware that they must not honour a request to have children moved to another classroom to avoid a gay or lesbian teacher. The local newspaper prints letters against him that are a mix of policy arguments and vitriolic *ad hominem* attacks accusing him of paedophilic desire and of recruiting unwary children into homosexuality. Through all of this James contends that, compared with his life in the closet, this life is better. To maintain his closet, to avoid appearing gay, he had to be vigilant every moment and remember to say the right thing in the right way and move his hands, head, and face the right way at every moment of every day.

As described above, Rick was well practiced in hiding and concurs that life without the closet is better. He also provided me with an example of suspected homophobia of the type that caused Jack to ask “How do you, through legislation, fight exclusion or the cold shoulder?” In this example, a colleague repeatedly sent her class to James’s library without pencils. Pencils were needed for the learning activities Rick planned. The library policy is that children are to arrive with their own pencils. Rick spoke to her a number of times about this and his desire to teach the children personal responsibility. Eventually James asked the principal speak to the teacher about teaching children personal responsibility. By itself, this is not necessarily an example of homophobic action, but the teacher also was heard to utter anti-gay comments, was unusually cold mannered towards James, and was the only teacher in the school to send pupils to class without basic tools. We will never really know if this teacher was behaving homophobically, but it illustrates the type of action that bigots can take to make

life difficult for those they disdain. These subtle ploys and behaviours tended to be the actions that participants in this study feared the most.

Some participants have experienced homophobic persecution, but all the participants understand the fear of persecution as the motivating factor for maintaining the classroom closet. The participants who remain closeted to their students or others find the situation displeasing and unjustifiable as a result of subjugations resulting from continued use of technologies of the self. Whereas participants who no longer maintain the closet, whether they are active in promoting equality for sexual minorities or not, find their lives happier, their fears are rarely realized, and that they are better teachers and members of their communities. As described in Chapter 2, this finding demonstrates the point made by the experts on the 1959 CBC television broadcast, i.e., it is not homosexuality that is the problem, it is the way that society treats the homosexual that creates the difficulties (Bissland & Hill, 1959). Yet, even the host of that programme used the forum to declare that homosexuality was a risk to Canadian society. Negative conclusions can be promulgated even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

How negative information is communicated

Negative information is communicated by diverse mechanisms often with unintended effects. Participants described school as directly delivering negative information to students and teachers. Of course the vulnerability of the student is very different from the power held by teachers, so I will not conflate the experiences, but I will address them as incidences occurring within school communities.

Other organizations cited by participants as providing, or supporting, negative information were religious communities and families. As expected, participants described

popular media as providing some examples of negative information about gays and lesbians. However the participants, particularly Jack, described popular media as having a more positive effect, as opposed to the negative effects of family. Family provided a great deal of negative information and the mechanisms by which that information was delivered will be discussed at the end of this section.

Negative Messages from the School Community

After the family, school is arguably the most influential social structure that directly affects people's self opinion and the manner in which they proceed through life. Peter looked at another boy in the shower once in Grade 8, and still feels the strong negative feelings he experienced as a result of the homophobic treatment he received.

When I was in junior high and high school, when I was becoming aware of my sexual feelings for other boys, it was suicide to express those feelings in any way. I remember, in Grade 8, being caught looking at another boy in the shower. I was not staring, I don't think, just incidentally glancing. Another boy noticed this and started to taunt me about it. That was just devastating. I have a very vivid memory about it, so it has obviously stuck with me.

Peter subsequently hid his sexual orientation as well as he could. For some people like Jack and Garfield, it is simply not possible to hide.

Jack is one of those men who does not need to say they are gay. His body language and manner of speech are widely considered effeminate. Other boys used Jack as a mechanism to communicate that being homosexual is bad. Jack said "when I went to high school in the 70s, there was very strong homophobia among pubescent males... I got called 'fag' all the time." He was even beaten regularly.

There was one guy I remember in Grade 8 outside our industrial education room. There was a short flight of stairs and he used to launch himself off the stairs every day and punch me in the arm and call me a fag. I had huge bruises all over my arms, but I would just look at him [scornfully] like “Who are you?” and not let on that it bothered me at all. That was typical.

Not only did this student indicate to Jack and all bystanders that his difference was so aberrant that he deserved to be beaten, but also the complicit silence of the teachers and administrators reinforced the opinion. The participants, all gay and lesbian teachers, who were once gay and lesbian students, do not report intervening against homophobic behaviour until after 1990. Gio, for instance, did not start speaking against homophobia in a corrective or instructive way until his last two years of teaching. He did not feel it was safe or appropriate, even as a teacher, until then to speak out against the harm being done.

Even in my last years in the school system I would hear kids in the halls saying, “That’s so gay.” That expression is quite recent. Before that you would hear “fag” and “queer” in a very negative way when you were dealing with the school system. You would hear that all the time. When I heard things like that I would go into a corrective or talk mode and say something that [that sort of talk] was discriminatory and those were discriminatory remarks.

However, Gio never felt safe enough to identify himself as one of the people being discriminated against. In fact, the pejorative use of language related to being gay affected Gio’s decision to remain closeted to staff as well as to students.

Here Gio describes his response to anti-gay jokes and how they directly affected his decision to remain closeted:

One of the things that used to make me cringe the very most was when the gay jokes came up and when [they said] things about gays that were silly. I would feel really, really uncomfortable. It made me realize that when I was with 3 or 4 people that nobody suspected anything of me, so I think that reinforced my staying hidden in some way.

Here Gio is acknowledging that he is willing to remain the subject of ridicule as long as the speakers do not know they are ridiculing him. He also reveals the heteronormative context of professional teaching identities in his relief at being perceived heterosexual and part of the heteronormalizing process. My experience is that gay jokes have all but disappeared from BC staffrooms. (Often I am known to be gay to the staffrooms I visit, so this probably reduces the number of gay jokes told when I am present.) This does not mean the adults in the school community have all become accepting of their gay and lesbian colleagues and pupils just that this mechanism of marginalization has diminished.

In Jennifer's first year of teaching she heard "a few homophobic comments that were around about gay men and stuff" in her staffroom that function, whether deliberately or not, as technologies of domination against gay men and other queers. Paul founded a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) in his school and was directly challenged by some of his colleagues about the need for it. His challengers used words such as "Why is it necessary to bring it up all the time?" Paul speculated that they were uncomfortable because they did not have the language and experience to discuss such issues with students, so the message they conveyed was that they wished we would just stay in the

privacy of our closets and confessionals, and not upset the heteronormative aspects of teaching.

Negative Messages from Religion

Religion has been used as a tool to provide education, health care, charity for the poor, and political mediation, but it has also been used to oppress. Ti is Muslim, specifically Ismaili. She and her wife named their son in Ti's mosque. She provided a Foucauldian insight into how religion is used as a vehicle for oppression. It is Foucauldian in that she sees religion as the context or mechanism of the power exercised by one person on another, not that the religion has power and is applying its power over people.

People use religion to say that whatever book they use says [being queer] is wrong, and who you are is wrong. Even the fact, that when I wanted to have this [naming] ceremony, I had to talk to someone to talk to someone to talk to someone and then back again to [have them] say, "OK, we'll do it."

At work here is the need for Ti to beg for inclusion in her community. In the previous chapter, we saw Ti's mosque formally welcome her, her wife and their son into the community, but Ti had to do some assertive investigation to determine that she and her family were welcome and make a formal application to extract that message from them. Until Ti asked the question and had the question asked through her mosque's hierarchy, the message the community sent was not forthcoming. To Ti, the silence on this issue was like a closed door; it implies you are not welcome, but you have to knock to make sure. Given the desire of her father to keep her wife and son secret, it suggested to Ti that

the broader Ismaili community might not welcome this news either, which was what Debbie experienced in a Roman Catholic context.

Debbie, along with her six siblings, was sent to Roman Catholic (RC) schools where she received only negative messages about being gay.

Within the Catholic schools, I remember the whole discussion about why it is bad to be gay. They don't really have an explanation for you other than it is just bad. It is just wrong because it is not what God wants us to do. I certainly heard that. ...I also remember asking my parents what it meant to be gay and they said that it is not ok to be hateful, but it was not ok to be gay. You can't be hateful towards gays; you have to feel sorry for them, but you can't associate with them, and you definitely can't be gay... I would say I only heard negative comments growing up until I went to college.

Debbie heard that gays, and therefore lesbians, and, we must assume, other LGBTTTQQ people, should be marginalized. They were to be considered others and not members of the group. The implicit message is that Debbie should want to be part of the RC community, and to be gay would be to separate herself from the community. It is a message that Jack experiences from the teachers in the Catholic school where he is principal.

As described elsewhere, Jack is well informed and protects himself against bigotry by knowing the official Roman Catholic stance on homosexuality and homosexuals, and using this knowledge to protect his job and career by living within these confines. However, he still experiences negative messages from his staff, noting that when he "talked to [his] coworkers, that, even though, according to Catholic

theology, there is nothing wrong with the state of being gay, [he] can sense that they are uncomfortable with it. Their discomfort produces a similar message as the implied instructions from Debbie's parents, i.e., not to admit being gay or lesbian. When Jack discusses same-sex issues with colleagues, their body language, and lack of participation communicate a distaste or awkwardness with the subject.

Negative Messages from Families

The participants' families also sent negative messages. The unanimous experience of all the participants in this study is that their families provided exclusively negative messages about being lesbian or gay until disclosure. Not one participant could recall one incident where a parent or sibling said anything positive before the participant revealed his or her sexual orientation. Because of the uniformity of experience of the participants, I can speak of them as a group in which I include my own experience.

Participants said that their families did not speak of LGBTTTQQ issues much, but when they did the message was negative. When the participant's family was mostly silent on LGBTTTQQ issues, participants were left to guess what their families' attitudes towards them would be. Peter's father, for instance, made clear statements against gay sexual intercourse. Debbie watched her parents and siblings enjoy or allow homophobic jokes, and her parents told her she must not be gay. At no time did any parent give any assurance that they would love their child regardless of his or her sexual orientation. Certainly the opposite message was sent by Rick's grandfather, and in other families it was implied by acquiescence to homophobic messages sent from other sources.

Rick was raised by an acquiescent grandmother and a grandfather who spoke derisively about anyone who varied from his narrow scope of social roles. Garfield's

father was perturbed when his son did not spend his leisure time practicing established gender roles. Peter's father had established ground rules for sexual behaviour that did not consider gay relationships, and like the maternal figure in Rick's and Garfield's lives, his mother was silent. Debbie received messages from siblings that reinforced what she learned from school and her parents.

When Debbie was a child, her siblings were adolescents. They made homophobic jokes and spoke derisively about lesbians and gays. Debbie "heard a lot of their negative stereotypes and terminology about dykes hating men, fags hating women, all that kind of stuff, and it would come out in a very teenage kind of way," simplistic and judgmental, but Debbie "was a really young kid, so [she] was not processing that this was not ok for them to be saying that." In fact, she accepted what they said as meaning it was bad to be gay or lesbian, and that she should never identify herself as one lest she be targeted by the older children in her family. Her parents also permitted this type of language and discussion to occur uncorrected as though they were in agreement with the messages. This put Debbie in a very lonely place in her large family as she perceived that it was necessary for her not to speak of the type of love she sought.

Debbie's perceived need to hide her desired love drove her to suppress it through the use of illicit drugs, heterosexual promiscuity, as well as lying to her family about what she did outside of work. The psychological dysphoria that she endured eventually ruptured and began to unravel in the story related earlier. (See page 69.)

Debbie took solace and power from her brother's words, "Once you put it out there, the issue is no longer yours; it's theirs." It is the same sense that Paul took from my husband's saying about homophobic others, "Your views are not my problem." Debbie's

brother put it in context simply and succinctly by clearly stating Debbie's needs for happiness, authenticity, and honesty, and by placing the psychological burden on those who see Debbie's sexual orientation as an issue. However accepting most of her family are now, Debbie was required to risk rejection and act against the consistent negative messages she had heard from them all her life. In contrast with Debbie, Ti heard very little from her family about LGBTTTQQ people and issues until she came out; then she received negative messages.

Ti's family did not send the large number of negative messages that Debbie's family did. They were mostly silent, but they were also a family where people talked and were actively interested in each other's well being. Ti's father spent time discussing careers and schooling with her. Her aunts spent time looking for husbands for their niece. Ti wanted to remain part of this atmosphere of love and familial concern as she took a wife and had children, but the Koran does not speak well of homosexual relations, and the tradition of the Ismaili community does not include stories of honoured lesbians. This was the environment in which Ti decided to disclose her sexual orientation. She began with her widower father, and the negative messages began.

When Ti recognized that she is a lesbian, she struggled with the question of whether or not to tell her father and the rest of her family. When she found a permanent partner and they discussed children, it became apparent to Ti that she would have to separate herself from her family, and the Ismaili community generally, or she would have to disclose. She told her father first. His response was to ask her not to tell anyone else. He was afraid of what the family and the rest of the local Ismaili community would say. His motivation was not based on the moral or physical health of his daughter, but rather

on the fear of gossip and the negative effects it could have on Ti's career and family life. Ti's father recognized that the problem with queer people is not the queer people, it is the way other people treat us. Nonetheless, Ti's father was adamant that she should hide her sexual orientation as though it were shameful. Later, when Ti became pregnant, she told another relative first. Even though the news was already out, her father tried to suppress even that information.

My father felt betrayed that I had not come to him and talked to him about my pregnancy first, and he worried about what everyone was going to say. "Maybe we don't need to tell everyone," he said, and he didn't. He didn't tell a lot of his family that I was pregnant. I happened to be at a function when I was very obviously pregnant, and one of the people there said, "What! OMG. How come your dad has never said anything?" He kept it sort of quiet. I don't know if he was embarrassed, or if he did not know how to deal with it or what to say.

Regardless of what he thought, Ti's father sent the negative message that Ti's private life was shameful and ought to be hidden even if his difficulty was that he did not know how to speak about Ti's primary relationship and pregnancy.

According to Paul, parents and others in guardianship roles do not speak because they do not know how, with the result that they appear to reinforce the negative messages of the jokes and disrespect shown for LGBTTTQQ people by others. In fact, Paul identified this as a difficulty in his own coming out: he did not know how to speak about his sexual orientation to others, or even think about it, in language other than the language of jokes and discrimination. Peter negative language that his father used and experienced the silence and separation it produced.

Peter's father was an Anglican bishop. He said that sexual intercourse belonged only within the confines of marriage. Since same-sex marriages were not performed, there were no circumstances under which homosexual contact could be permitted. In Peter's household there was no room for differing opinion nor did his family discuss current events. There were *ex patre* pronouncements and obedience. It was left up to Peter to implement his father's decree that he could never have sexual relations. This environment also inhibited Peter's enjoying and learning how to have intimate relations. He never omitted important parts of his personal life from discussions with his parents. In this family the negative message was explicitly communicated by the father and supported in silence by the mother. In many ways, this paralleled the experiences of Rick and Garfield.

Garfield's father was not home much, which Garfield liked. He was a disappointment to his father because his father wanted a manly son who played football. Garfield was not that sort of boy. He enjoyed tap dancing, and his mother supported him in this pursuit as long as she could. Eventually his father found out about the dancing and, said Garfield, "I hung up my tap shoes." The message from his dad was clear: conform to the established gender roles.

These few examples show how children receive negative messages from their families about being lesbian or gay. Messages can be spoken clearly and directly. They can be implied by silence that suggests acquiescence to negative messages coming from other sources. They can be implied by silence on queer issues while demonstrating bigotry with respect to other topics while saying nothing about loving one's children and siblings, whether they are gay, lesbian, transgendered, questioning, or straight.

Sources of Positive or Neutral Information

The sources of positive information about queer issues include accidental social contacts, television shows, conversations with other queers, books, and news media reports of the passage of queer-positive policy, legislation, and court decisions. Accidental social contacts comprise the most significant source of affirming information for all participants.

For the older participants, who are men, there were only two sources of positive information named as available to them in the 1950s and 1960s: magazines, and accidental contacts. According to Tom, *Physique* and *Tomorrow's Man* were homoerotic magazines of the era. Participants described the emotional stress they experienced in purchasing the magazine, and the methods they used to keep their magazines hidden from family and friends. However, these participants found a small affirming world in their magazines. Tom said that the magazines never promoted political activism or even used the word 'homosexual' or any synonym. They were print environments in which homosexuality was assumed and welcomed, in stark contrast to the rest of their lives.

All participants described accidental, personal contacts as the most important source of positive information. For one participant, it was having a school friend with similar interests; eventually, he discovered that included similar sexual interests. For Debbie it was becoming friends with a gay man and his partner that caused her to "re-re-evaluate" her life, a process that was confirmed a year or so later when she met a lesbian couple who have been supportive to her ever since. For Peter, it was getting invited to his first gay party:

I remember going to my first large party where there were a lot of gay men. I remember being so surprised at just how normal and funny and warm and smart and witty virtually all the men in the room were. I remember thinking, “These people don’t look psychologically damaged. They are really ok. They seem confident. They seem content in their own skins. They are really just ok. This whole coming out and being gay thing is really not going to be so bad.”

Peter was surprised that the men at this party seemed fine. Until arriving at this party, Peter believed his life would be difficult and unhappy because no queers had happy lives.

Paul is approximately 20 years younger than Peter. He attended university in the 1980s, when gay clubs existed on campus, but Paul was afraid to exploit this resource. As an athlete going into teaching, he felt he could not afford being identified as gay. Coming out was a long struggle for Paul. He is remarkably articulate and clearly identified three positive influences as will be explained below. They are (a) role modeling, (b) my husband, and (c) the man who became his husband.

Like Peter and Debbie, Paul found that knowing other gay people who had happy lives was not only affirming, it also assuaged fears of marginalization and informed him that being gay or lesbian did not consign him to a miserable life.

I met some people who were out and gay and living their lives and it was no big deal, to me that was the big one. “You mean you don’t have to defend yourself, you don’t have to prove anything? You don’t have to explain all the time?” The answer is “No, you don’t. Just live.” So that was HUGE. I had no exposure to people like that before. I had no gay friends, so that was big. I thought, “Wow. That is what I want. I don’t need this.” I was 30 at the time.

Paul recognized these people as role models, as were the men at Peter's first gay party, and Debbie's gay and lesbian friends. They showed these participants how to live; they modeled well-adjusted lifestyles that these three participants had previously thought were unattainable to them. However, Paul still felt it was his responsibility to deal with other people's homophobia. He attributes my husband Murray with setting him straight.

Paul found that he had trouble dealing with his sexual issues partly because he did not have language that allowed him to process his issues. He met my husband who gave him some language that Paul still uses, "Your views are not my problem; they are your problem." It is that same sentiment as conveyed to Debbie by her brother who talked about living life authentically and not letting other people's opinions be the problem. As Paul said,

That image and language is a tool that you can pick up and grab onto. You keep it with you to use how, and for whatever the reason is you feel you need, to defend yourself. When I heard him say that, I thought, "That makes a lot of sense." That is quite valuable. Now things have come full circle and people come to me for advice.

Paul can now give others the language he used to inform his understanding of himself and his place in Canadian society. He acknowledges language as an important part of his self-acceptance. It is also part of the acceptance of LGBTTTQQ people as part of the mosaic of Canadian and world society. It is important that people can discuss sexual minorities using language that is neutral rather than pejorative, and does not continue to normalize homophobia. The other person Paul identified as a significant source of positive information was the man who is now his husband.

In meeting the man who became his husband, Paul discovered that the sexual life of a gay man did not have to be indiscriminate or promiscuous. “I did not realize that that relational piece was as wonderful and possible and giving of a sense of permanent and personally changing love. I did not know that existed in the gay world.” Having experienced this personal change, Paul says that now he accepts his sexual orientation as a personal characteristic that has taken him to a very happy life with his husband. He says that this puts him in an excellent place in his teaching where he uses himself as a role model and is able to dispel false gay myths and stereotypes. His educational goal is that succeeding generations of gays, lesbians, and others, have the language and skills to recognize themselves as valuable people with hope for their futures. According to other participants, the current news and entertainment media also assist with this process.

Participants describe the presence of gay characters in popular movies and television programs as indicating that society was ready for them to come out. Jack said that one important moment in his self-acceptance “was Ellen [Degeneris]’s coming out on her TV programme. It was very significant for me, not because of Ellen or her show in particular, but it was an indication to me that North American society had come to a point where they could be openly tolerant about homosexuality. That was a big determinate for me.”

This is the same message that Jack and other participants take from gay-positive legislative changes and court decisions as reported by news media without negative editorial comment. Whether it is a fictional situation comedy on television, a positive court decision, or an amendment to the Canadian marriage laws, the participants who addressed these phenomena interpreted the message similarly, that North American

society, especially Canada, had become a safe place to be lesbian or gay. Jennifer said that the professional duty of teachers is to deal with the discomfort of addressing sexual minority issues. In her words,

I know it is an uncomfortable topic, but it is better for a teacher, who is a professional, to take on the discomfort rather than leave these kids in classes, who are gay or not, who are being teased and being made to feel uncomfortable and made to feel terrible. Instead of leaving the discomfort with them, take it on as a teacher and say, 'This has to stop. This is not how we treat people.' Educate about gay and lesbian people and that they are in your neighbourhood, and that they could be your aunt or someone in your family or your cousin or anybody. It is better for the teacher to do that. It is our professional duty.

Paul stated that the teacher also provides language for people to be able to speak about LGBTTTQQ issues without being disparaging or uncomfortable. This language can be delivered by direct instruction or by including books in the classroom that include queer characters and gender non-conforming characteristics of historical persons. Jack, in particular, named books as a significant source of positive information, and brought one to our interview.

Jack brought the book *Spiritual Direction for the Gay Person* by the Jesuit priest James L. Empeur (1998) to our interview. Jack described his experience with the book as follows.

I read a religious work by a Jesuit, who said that being gay is a gift from God because in homosexual persons God shows an aspect of God's self that God is not able to show in heterosexuals. That was the first time that I had ever heard a

religious statement that portrayed homosexuality in a positive light, and it literally changed my life.

This provides another example of where gays and lesbians are required to search and hunt for positive information, and each source of positive information is cherished, as this book is by Jack.

Age

Several participants recognized age as a factor in why some gay and lesbian teachers are out and others are not. The participants in this study reflected what would be predicted by Grierson and Smith (2005), i.e., that the younger participants tend to be out in more situations than the older participants are. (EJ was a notable exception having disclosed in his rural school community after his 60th birthday just two years before his retirement.) I will briefly recount the thinking that Garfield and Peter used to explain their being closeted. It will be brief because they succinctly identified the causes: habit and fear.

Peter said, “You do get caught in social patterns that are hard to break.” Peter has maintained the habit of hiding his homosexuality for over 50 years. Garfield did the same for over 70 years. They had established responses to the Monday morning questions about the weekend. They had established distances in relationships with their co-workers to exclude conversations about their private lives. Garfield has an established pattern with his remaining family, his sister, that he cannot break.

I lived with my doctor for 11 years. We had a house. My two nieces and nephew would spend spring break with us and use the swimming pool and make cookies and things like that when they were growing up. When my niece was here a

couple of years ago, she made friends with my tenant in the apartment attached to my house here, and she went down to visit him. He is gay. She asked him, “Is my uncle homosexual?” My tenant said, “No, but I am.” So I am sure my nieces and nephew had discussed it with my sister because it is very strange for a man of my age and tastes to be straight.

It seems that his family knows he is gay, but his sexual orientation is not a question that any of them discuss with him. Garfield himself explains why he has not made the illocutionary utterance of coming out to his sister, “I suppose it is fear.” Then he related stories about pre-election roundups of gay men in parks and bars in California that occurred 50 years before. Then he returned to the topic of his sister, saying,

I want to tell my sister. I have wanted to tell her for a few years. She will get here. She will probably bring a friend with her. They all know, I am sure, but I won't do it. I won't get over that wall. I will say to myself, “Well, we are both older now. We enjoy each other's visits. We enjoy each other's company. Things have gone along this far. Why bother?”

He holds the fear of having an awkward moment or spoiling the visit, which could lead to fewer visits, or no more visits.

When I asked Peter to explain his decision to remain in the classroom closet, he described his decision as cowardly, but he uses the same reasoning that Garfield uses to describe his reluctance to speak about his homosexuality with this sister, and, like Garfield, he went decades into his past to justify his fear. In a follow-up email, I pressed Peter to rationalize his fear, and this was his response.

I'm realizing as I write this that I simply made the assumption at the beginning of my career in the 70s that being openly gay at school was a bad idea, especially with immigrant communities. And having made the assumption, I spent my career quite firmly in the closet. The two things – assumption and closet – mutually reinforced one another. “I assume that the community will not accept a gay teacher, so I should therefore not be openly gay.” “I am not openly gay at school because that is a risky proposition, at least, so I assume.” Strange are the games we play with ourselves in a search for safety.

This resonates with EJ's decision to come out. EJ decided to come out after someone else in the school community decided to come out. The other person was a secondary student, but he did come out and he did not suffer because of it. The other factor that broke through EJ's habit of being closeted was his compassion for the distraught mother of the student. She believed her son's life would be miserable; EJ said her son's life could be happy one. “Look at mine,” he said. Peter has never had a moment like this that is stronger than his habit of maintaining his classroom closet. Garfield has never had a moment that is stronger than his pattern of not speaking with this sister about his sexual orientation.

Rural Perceptions

A stereotype that was articulated by two of the urban participants is that rural people are homophobes, and that it would be unsafe for gay and lesbian teachers in rural environments to be out. While not a substantial theme, it is important to dispel a stereotype and to increase our understanding of the different situations in which gay and lesbian teachers, and other LGBTTTQQ people, live. EJ came out to his school community

in a small town. He is now retired and still lives in that town. He does not regret coming out there. Here are a few lines from our interview that encapsulate the largely positive nature of EJ's public disclosure:

EJ: I was close to telling people. I think it took somebody asking. For the past 2 years, since Jan 2003 I told the first group of students and then another group in May. They were part of a peer support group that I started up. From then on it has been public in the school. Last year there were actual kids who came and asked me directly. All boys. All grades 7 & 8. They were new to the school. I think the 9s had heard.

DL: What kinds of reactions did they have?

EJ: "Oh cool" I mean that was the reaction. In the two years in that whole period of time, with one single exception, there has not been one note left, not one comment made, nothing, zero. Absolutely no negative reactions at all from students.

People in rural communities receive the same schooling as in urban environments. The teachers are educated in the same places. Rural people read the same newspapers and watch the same TV shows. EJ does not say it is safe to come out in every rural community in BC. However, we know that in his town coming out has been a positive experience that he recommends.

Summary

Disclosing one's sexual orientation as gay or lesbian is a deliberate act. One is assumed to be heterosexual unless there is evidence to the contrary. Participants described the fear that motivates them to consider hiding their minority sexual status by

building and maintaining a metaphysical closet in which they hide those aspects of their lives they do not wish to reveal. They also described the reasons to disclose their sexual orientation and live and project authentic identities to their school communities.

Therefore, declaring one's sexual minority status has aspects of being illocutionary because it changes the social status of the person who has declared himself or herself to be a member of a minority that is often invisible, largely ignored, and frequently marginalized.

The biographies of the participants provide the reader with a means to identify themselves with the participants and to set the stories of the participants into the context of their lives. Some common themes appeared in the interviews: reasons to be out, fear, how negative information is communicated, and sources of positive and negative information. There were themes that were less common, but that deserved mention because they (a) contribute significantly to our understanding of the relationship between age and coming out, and (b) they help to dispel the weakly supported stereotype that rural communities are unwelcoming to gay and lesbian teachers.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Sexual abnormalities should not be ignored in a conspiracy of silence. Even sexual minorities have certain rights.

Magnus Hirschfeld in his address to the Third International Congress for Sexual Reform on a Scientific Basis and the Second Congress of the World League for Sexual Reform (WLSR), London 1929

Answering the research question: Why are any gay and lesbian teachers in the closet in BC today?

This thesis began with my questioning why, in the social and historical context of British Columbia today, with all the legislative and policy protection afforded gay and lesbian teachers, any of us choose to remain closeted to our school communities. My assumption was that maintaining a closet requires effort because teachers speak of their personal lives at school. The participants in this study described what other researchers found, that it does take a significant amount of work to maintain that closet. Both groups confirmed that teachers do talk about their personal lives at school. A short answer is possible, but a deeper explanation is now available.

The short answer is fear: some gay and lesbian teachers are afraid of what might happen to them if other members of their school communities know they are queers. The longer explanation emerged when I asked about the kinds of repercussions they feared. Older gays and lesbian teachers might recall police incidents and laws from 30 and 40 years ago that initiated their fear. Homophobia can be a source of social ostracism within the school organization with the resulting exclusions from teacher or administrator committees formed by mutual consent of the members. In schools these committees can initiate and be responsible for large projects such as the school garden, field trips involving more than one class, or determining what grades are taught in what schools.

Ostracism can also result in the failure of committees set up in accordance with school or district policy such as a school committee where members neglect to attend because they have to work with a lesbian. Parents sometimes try to take their children out of a gay teacher's class. While they are not permitted to move pupils from a classroom when the reason is the sexual orientation of the teacher, principals might consent to the demand to avoid having their time consumed by homophobic parents. Gay teachers have to accept this form of rejection or go to arbitration. Arbitration requires a supportive union representative; this presents another potential occasion for discrimination. However, neither closeted nor open participants described these as sufficient reasons to be closeted because the discriminatory incidents were rare relative to the frequency of personal behaviours that must be modified to maintain the closet.

One participant explained why one would remain closeted despite feeling that it was unnecessary. He said that one "gets caught in social patterns." Among my participants, I found that the longer one acts within that social pattern and the more deeply it is entrenched, the more difficult it is to change. Sometimes, the change requires a significant event in the person's life to give him or her sufficient motivation to break a deeply established pattern. Whether the pattern was deeply established or not, I saw that coming out requires knowing that it will be safe, or at least safe enough that the comfort achieved outweighs the risks of being out.

The participants did not describe the risk of betrayal of a relationship as a factor in remaining closeted, but it could still be a factor. When people form relationships with others based on a set of incorrect understandings, they are sometimes afraid to reveal contrary information especially if that new information conflicts with the existing

understanding. The revelation of the new information could undermine the trust of the relationship. By coming out in such a circumstance, a gay person not only shifts from being accepted as a member the dominant heterosexual group to the marginalized gay group, but also to being a person who has been fearful and dishonest. This has the potential of immediately and substantially diminishing a person's social status, a significant blow after years of respect and acceptance. He or she might also fear losing friendships as much for dishonesty as for being gay without ever knowing which it was. As time passes and acceptance of queers grows, the fear of being known as gay might be replaced by the fear of being known as cowardly or dishonest with consequential loss of relationships. This suggests that gay and lesbian teachers currently in the classroom closet must assess not only if it would be safe to be known as queer, but also if they have missed the optimal moment of revelation.

Messages that indicate that lesbian and gay teachers would be safe to reveal their sexual orientation appear in various forms, and were perceived by participants as social indicators of acceptance. Participants identified television programs, federal and provincial legislation, court decisions, and school district policy as important indicators. They also identified accidental personal contacts as being very important. The interpretation of television programs and the other mechanisms identified by participants as social indicators suggest that the more frequently large organizations employ such mechanisms, the more comfortable individual lesbian and gay teachers will be in revealing their sexual orientation. This could have a cascading effect by providing models to students indicating that what matters to being a teacher is the ability to do the job, not one's sexual orientation. For parents of gay and lesbian students, this indicates

that their children can have happy lives and good careers. To gay and lesbian students it says the same, and it says that being gay or lesbian is not a characteristic of which they should be ashamed. To others such indicators communicate that being gay or lesbian is not an impediment to competency, and can even be an asset. For students that go on to be employers, a positive attitude enables them to hire based on competence unbiased by heterosexism.

In general terms, I found that some gay and lesbian teachers remain closeted in BC because, initially, they hide their sexual orientation out of rational fear, and continue to hide their sexual orientation because they have not been convinced to change a pattern of behaviour that has proven successful.

Additional Findings

One of the advantages of using open-ended interviews for data gathering was that I was open to the opportunities for increased understanding of topics tangentially related to the core research question. In this section, I briefly repeat these other findings. For detailed description, see the previous chapter.

Dispelling Two Misconceptions

Before conducting my interviews, I perceived that there is no place in Islam for gays or lesbians. Another perception voiced by several participants is that people living in rural communities are homophobes. Both of these conceptions might be true in many Islamic and rural contexts; they might even be true in most of these contexts; we cannot generalize from the two cases presented in this thesis. The two cases here, however, show that there are at least some places in Islam and rural life for some lesbians and gays.

Misconception 1: There is no place in Islam for queers.

There are places in Islam for queers, but it is not a simple matter to uncover them. The Koran has nothing positive to say about queers or queer sexuality. Stories about Muslim fundamentalists kidnapping and killing Westerners frequently appear in the news since the attacks on the United States by Muslim fundamentalists on September 11, 2001. However, not all Muslims are fundamentalists with an archaic and inflexible understanding of right and wrong. Not all Muslims and mosques support the marginalization of queers, even when the elders are silent on the topic. Ti, a participant in this research, challenged the silent exclusion of queer life from her mosque. Her elders recognized her wisdom and, not only granted her request to have her child named in the mosque, but also welcomed her partner into their community. Islam, like Christianity and Buddhism, is made up of many people following different traditions and schools of thought. Some of these traditions are rigid and resist change. Some are flexible and, in the case of Ti's mosque, welcomed a change to their understanding of right and wrong with respect to intimate human relationships.

Misconception 2: Rural life is no place for queers.

Another myth I encountered is that new queer teachers should not apply to work in rural districts because rural people are anti-queer. EJ, the rural participant in this thesis is a gay man, out in his classroom, and now retired and living in the same rural community. There is some disjunction between his stories and his statements. His stories include homophobic attacks, but in his statements he says that the occasional difficult moments he faced for being gay, were more than compensated for by the new contributions he made to his school and by the peace he gained in living authentically. EJ

advised new queer teachers to ask if they would be marginalized or attacked because of their sexual minority status that before moving to a rural community.

Sources of Positive Information

The number and form of sources of positive information has grown since the days the participants were adolescents. Accidental social contacts were the commonest then, and those are rarely available to pubescents. When Tom was in Grade 10, he tried to learn about same-sex attraction. He found five clinical books in the Calgary Public Library. There is more in the public libraries now, and gay characters and talk show hosts appear on TV and in comics.

Participants viewed popular entertainment such as television shows in the same way they viewed queer positive legislation and policy, i.e., as indicators of social acceptance of gays and lesbians. No one said that she was happy to see her life represented in entertainment media for a change. No one said that he would use the antidiscrimination policy to protect himself from marginalization. In fact, Jack maintained that one cannot use policy to protect against “exclusion or the cold shoulder.” However, participants interpreted protective legislation and policy, like the existence of popular gay characters and entertainment personalities, as indicators that gay and lesbian teachers are less likely to suffer today for their sexual orientation being known.

Family

Each participant described his or her family as providing exclusively negative messages about being gay or lesbian until the participant came out. After coming out most family members were accepting. There were differences in the degree with which the message was delivered, but it was the only message any participant heard from his or

her family during formative years as a child and later, as an adolescent, coming to terms with being queer. Not one member of any participant's family ever said that they would accept a lesbian or gay son or daughter or cousin or niece until after the participant took the courageous step of coming out in such a context. Some of the parents said that it was bad to be gay. Some said that only sex within marriage is acceptable. Some mothers acquiesced while their husbands enforced gender conformity. Parents laughed at gay jokes. No relative ever said to any participant, "I will love you if turn out to be gay or straight."

Cultural capital, social reproduction, subjugation, and the heteronormative context of professional teaching identities

As discussed in Chapter 2 (page 20), cultural capital provides a person with social advantages that assist that person acquire social and economic status (Bourdieu, 1986). In contrast, I identified homosexuality as a cultural liability, and later discussed the work of the Correns with the BC Ministry of Education to name homosexuality in BC classrooms. By inviting the Correns into the Ministry, the Ministry recognized that silence regarding homosexuality is part of our subjugation, and that schools are heteronormative institutions, which require systemically supported effort to change. Teachers and school administrators, who continue this silence, participant in this subjugation, and some of the gay and lesbian teachers in this study knowingly participated in the silence, and thus, either wittingly or not, participated in their own subjugation.

After Bentall's panopticon as considered by Foucault (1979), the successful degradation of homosexuality in a watchful society produced homosexuals who were, and are, so scared to be identified as homosexual that they participate in the subjugation

of homosexuals, including themselves, to avoid being identified as homosexual. By doing so, they avoid the losses that result from having the social liability of homosexuality. By participating in heteronormative institutions like marriage, as Rick did, they can access the embodied cultural capital of heterosexuality and the institutionalized cultural capital of a marriage license. Schools are sites of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986), and homosexuality is a social liability that teachers and administrators hide or demean, and encourage others to do the same. Participants in this study say they did not begin to stop participating in this subjugation until 1990 (see page 97). Participants did not start disclosing in 1990; they identified the dominant teaching identity as far too heteronormative then. In fact, they still identify schools as strongly heteronormative and that being gay or lesbian is a liability that separates them from students and colleagues, while a heterosexual identity is bonding.

Comments on Recruiting and Methods

As soon as I began considering doing research that would include closeted LGBTTTQQ teachers, I knew that I would have to overcome the challenge of recruiting them. One of my approaches was to limit my scope to gay and lesbian teachers. I was determined to include both closeted and out teachers though, so I devised a staged recruitment process employing different techniques. None of the texts or papers I reviewed provided guidance on recruiting participants who must hide the characteristic that would make them a participant, so I drew from my own experience. I had received requests to participate in research through GALE BC, so I knew this was one avenue available for recruiting. I work as a consultant in the information technology (IT) industry, so on-line forms came to mind immediately and were supported by Riggle

(2005) as effective with studies of gay men in some circumstances. However, no one documented a method that could be used to provide complete anonymity to a participant while gathering all useful information, so I was forced to invent one. The following subsections provide some detail of my methods, but see Chapter 3: Methods for complete details.

Stages of Recruiting

To recruit participants fitting different profiles of age, sex, teaching area, grades, location, and closetedness, I used the following staged approach.

1. Email through GALE BC: The Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC maintain an email list to which I sent my first request for participants. This gathered some out participants.
2. Print advertising: I placed one advertisement in *Teacher*, which is a magazine distributed to all public school teachers in BC. This gathered no participants.
3. Word of mouth: Still having no closeted participants, I began asking friends and acquaintances to pass around my request for participants. This collected one participant who is quietly out, and a retired teacher who was not out at work or to family.
4. Repetition: It is an axiom of advertising that repetition increases the effectiveness of an advertisement, so I had AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI) resend my call for participants. This acquired the remainder of my participants.

At this point I stopped recruiting. I had both closeted and out gay and lesbian teachers of different profiles. I accepted more participants than I had originally intended.

Originally I intended to include only three to five participants. However, after interviewing my first participants, who were male, other teachers volunteered who included activists and women. After interviewing them I accepted that I would only have out participants. Then the closeted participants volunteered in a delayed response to the second email, and I had 13 participants.

Participant Selection

I anticipated having more out recruits than I wanted to interview, so I needed to be able to gather preliminary information to allow me to decide which volunteers to accept. I also wanted to preserve the anonymity of anyone who wanted that. All advertising directed recruits to an on-line form. The form not only collected contact data and the other data I needed, but also provided my contact information. This allowed a closeted person to contact me without my ever knowing the identity of the person. Even the most closeted participant provided her full contact information, and responded to the other items in the questionnaire, as did most other volunteers. (See Appendix A: The On-line Form.) Recruits who were not invited to become participants were sent an email thanking them for volunteering.

Interview Methods

BC is geographically large with a population concentrated in the south west, particularly Vancouver. I live in Victoria. Most participants live in Vancouver and Victoria or near Vancouver. To conduct face-to-face interviews, I travelled to Vancouver three times. I also conducted several interviews by telephone.

At first I was hesitant to conduct interviews by telephone. I did not think I would get the same depth of information because I would not have access to body language. My

first telephone interview was at the suggestion of the participant. I did not notice any difference in the quality of the telephone interviews; I feel that this is because the participants were well spoken.

For my interviews, I prepared a list of questions to assist the participant in telling relevant stories. However, the first participant perceived the questions as being survey items and responded to each directly and briefly. I discarded the questions. I explained narrative methodology more carefully and presented him with my research questions. This was successful. For all other interviews, I just explained the nature of narrative inquiry and gave my research questions.

Follow up

I followed up on interviews by email. The email included not only the follow-up questions in the body of the email, but also a transcription of the interview with other follow-up questions embedded in the transcript. This allowed the participants to see the questions in context and respond appropriately. All participants responded to follow-up questions when asked, but did so briefly. If a deeper response was desired, I would have arranged a second telephone interview.

Recommendations for Action

My research shows that there is not much information about gays and lesbians, and almost nothing about gay and lesbian teachers. Frequently the information is negative. The experience of my participants is that their families provided exclusively homophobic information until the participant came out. Then the reactions varied, but were usually positive. Participants heard rare but positive information from Canadian governments and governmental organizations such as school boards. Sexual minorities

are frequently invisible minorities, so governments should actively and continuously act to reduce marginalizing queers. Parents, school administrators, and teachers should do the same. Those involved in teacher formation and delivery of curriculum should also actively work to demarginalize sexual minorities, including gay and lesbian teachers. Given that the zeitgeist of the developed world is ready to discuss, and in many locations accept, members of sexual minorities as full members of their communities, I perceive that the time to act on these recommendations is now.

To Parents

Parents should proactively tell their children that they will love them whether they are queer or straight. Parents should use anti-gay epithets and queer jokes uttered by others as opportunities to correct their children and teach them that it is acceptable to be queer. Siblings and other relatives can do the same.

To Government

Governments in BC already have legislation and policy prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. I leave it to others to determine where more such policies should be created. My recommendations are based on increasing the discourse and unofficial acceptance of queers. Federal, provincial, state, and municipal governments should assist this effort with proclamations recognizing days such as Gay Pride Day, the Day of Silence, and AIDS Awareness Week.

To Educational Bureaucrats

In some jurisdictions, such as BC, curricular requirements are provided to teachers in the form of guides that include suggestions for presentation and details of

content. Where historical figures are described, those descriptions should indicate which people belonged to a sexual minority and name it. This not only provides the information to teachers, but it shows that describing a person as gay or lesbian is not a shameful characteristic that should be hidden.

Sexual education should deal with homosexual equally with heterosexual interactions using language that does not assume male-female sexual interactions are the only kinds. It is not enough to name gay and lesbian relationships in a single teaching unit and then ignore them in the rest of the sexual education curriculum. Doing so marginalizes homosexuals by enforcing a culture where heterosexuality is advantaged while all other forms of sexuality are presented as foreign.

Ministries of education and their equivalents should produce and disseminate documents on same-sex and other queer and gender issues. While the documents themselves should have value, the greater value is combating the silence and invisibility of this human rights issue through the frequency of reminders to include these issues.

To School Administrators

School administrators are well positioned to help demarginalize their queer staff and students. School administrators should assist in the development of their queer staff and students by providing access to works of both fiction and non-fiction in the libraries. In middle and high schools, librarians should assist the private use of these books by locating them in a more secluded section of the library. Librarians must accept that many of these books will be stolen and they should replace them quickly. School administrators should place posters declaring the school to be queer friendly. Posters reading “Homophobia Free Zone” and “All Families Welcome” are currently popular in Victoria.

School administrators should provide cultural competency training to provide themselves, staff, and students with the language to discuss issues, including school dances, inclusively, and with the ability to identify heterosexist and homophobic discrimination. School administrators should declare that same-sex couples are allowed to dance together at school dances. These recommendations should be entrenched in policy that includes anti-discrimination language with clear disciplinary action. School administrators should encourage teachers to tell students that a historical figure is gay or lesbian when such persons are encountered in course work.

School districts should have a policy that directly addresses treatment of sexual minorities as a human rights issue. This gives credence to members of the organization who wish to address the marginalization of queers, discourages homophobia, and assists in combating the silence and invisibility of this human rights issue. Good policy contains requirements for action stating what school administrators and teachers *shall* do, rather than what they *may* do.

School districts should have a district staff position for (a) implementing anti-discrimination policies, educating administrators, staff, and parent groups on sexual orientation and gender issues, (b) finding and developing classroom resources, (c) ensuring students have access to gay positive resources in school libraries, (d) being the face of the issue in the district creating safety for teachers who can refer questions to the person and not risk relationships with parents and students, (e) promoting the idea that fully accepting queers is a social justice issue for all people and not just an issue of a small group, (f) acting as a media contact, (g) helping organize school events including

those in high schools to prevent the teachers from burning out, and (h) maintaining the momentum of queer acceptance by keeping us in the discourse.

School administrators should ensure that the LGBT teachers are not the only ones addressing queer issues. It is my personal experience that straight teachers rarely address homophobia and heterosexism just as White teachers reliably address issues of racism. School administrators should impress upon teachers that these are issues of equality as much as racism and gender discrimination are, and should be addressed with at least the same frequency and effort.

School administrators should be clear with staff that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not an issue where personal conscience can release a teacher from being supportive or inclusive in any school that comes under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the Canadian or BC Human Rights Act.

To University Department Heads in and Deans of Faculties of Education

Teacher training programs should provide cultural competency training to provide instructors, staff, and students with the language to discuss issues, including school dances, inclusively, and with the ability to identify heterosexist and homophobic discrimination. People entering teacher training now are more likely than previous generations to have knowledge and language for dealing with queer youth and colleagues. However, we are in a period of transition with respect to the inclusion of queer persons in society, and, similar to anti-racism initiatives, queer initiatives need to be put in place in teacher training programs until the people affected are brought in from the margins.

Student societies should be encouraged to include queer themes in their newsletters. Advertising for social events should explicitly state that gay and lesbian members are welcome to participate fully, especially if the event is a dance.

To Teacher Unions

At both provincial (or state) and local levels, social justice committees should include an understanding of gender issues including LGBTTTQQ issues of gender non-conformity. Social justice committees should actively promote inclusion of queers and fight the hegemonic promotion of heterosexism and gender conformity.

To Colleges of Teachers

In jurisdictions such as BC teacher certification is administered by a college such as the BC College of Teachers. This includes setting educational standards for membership. Educational standards should require that new teachers receive training in identifying and correcting gender issues particularly heterosexism and homophobia. Colleges that provide regular mailings, such as the BC College of Teachers, should include sensitivity training materials, so that existing members receive this information.

To Teachers

As professionals with the duty to create socially responsible citizens, teachers should actively demarginalize queers. I suggest that teachers

1. Reflect on their own heterosexism and promotion of gender roles.
2. Take advantage of workshops that relate to LGBTTTQQ issues
3. Treat queer issues as they would treat any other social justice issue, but understanding that inclusion of sexual minorities is an immature social justice issue and some parents might try to block efforts at inclusion

4. Correct discriminatory language used by students just as they would correct racist language.
5. Use inclusive language
6. Say that a historical figure is gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirited, or transgendered when describing such a person such as Oscar Wilde in English, Tchaikovsky in Music, or Turing in Computer Science and Math.

Of all the professionals in the educational system, teachers are the best placed to communicate social values. Teachers should use this position to erase the margins separating queers and members of their families.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research project focussed on gay and lesbian school teachers in BC. The methodology allows the lessons learned here to be judiciously applied in other situations, but the applicability of this research should be investigated in other situations such as for transgendered teachers, LGBTTTQQ students, and LGBTTTQQ employees in other roles inside and outside schools and academia. The experiences of the acceptance of a gay teacher in his rural environment and a lesbian teacher in her Muslim community should be further investigated. LGBTTTQQ people are not gender conforming, so marginalization might be due to this as much as for sexual practices unfamiliar to members of the dominant culture. The question of root motivations for the marginalization of queers should be investigated.

One participant showed us that a gay teacher can work and live in a rural community. However, he is only one person in one community and he did suffer some hardship that is attributable to his being gay. Future research should determine if his

experience is unique in BC or a reasonable reflection of the experience of gay and lesbian teachers generally in the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and North America. Further research should also attempt to investigate qualities of communities that are predictors of acceptance and marginalization.

The recommendations made here are based on the stories of the 13 participants and my personal experience. Implementation of the recommendations (or other initiatives) should be monitored to determine which have the most beneficial effects, or if particular styles of implementation make a more significant difference, or if expanding the inclusion of queer discourse is sufficient in demarginalizing queers. It would also be informative to compare changes in the degree of marginalization of queers before and after implementation of demarginalizing initiatives.

Future research should also examine the transferability of the lessons learned by studying gays and lesbians to other queers such as bisexuals, transgendered people, and others who queer gender definitions. In this work, I have made modest attempts to assist in the transfer of the findings here to other types of queers. The lessons learned here should be examined in more depth for their transferability.

It is possible that gays and lesbians are marginalized not for our sexual practices but for our blurring of gender roles. Men who have sexual relations with women are conforming to gender roles. Women who have sexual relations with men are conforming to gender roles. Men who have sexual relations with other men disrupt the established gender rules for sexual behaviour, as do women who have sexual relations with other women. Gay men often have feminine characteristics, and lesbians sometimes have masculine characteristics, which cause them to disrupt gender roles throughout the course

of a regular day in the way they present themselves. Future research should investigate the degree to which this disruption of gender roles is the motivation for the marginalization of queers, including gays and lesbians.

Conclusion

Through this thesis I have made several contributions to the body of knowledge with respect to the persistence of the closet in which sexual minorities hide. I have done this by devising an assembly of recruitment and data collection techniques that allow for complete anonymity on the part of the participants while allowing for full participation involving in-depth interviews and follow-up. I have done this by studying stories from the lives of thirteen gay and lesbian school teachers who generously gave me their time and experience to parse, interpret, and pass along to you.

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Appendix A: The On-line Form

This is a text version of the actual on-line form. The actual on-line form used radio buttons for multiple choice questions and allowed the user to show and hide extra information. Where a number appears in brackets in the middle of a paragraph below, as in (1), this appeared in the on-line form as a hyperlink displayed as “show/hide.” These hyperlinks caused extra text to be displayed (or hidden). A number in brackets at the start of a hanging paragraph below indicates the text that would display by clicking on the corresponding hyperlink.

Thesis Contact Form

Thank you for considering participating in my research thesis.

This is the form that you fill in if you agree to participate.

Out of respect for those who might want their participation to be private, I will not describe the nature of the study here. For a description of the study click here to show/hide (1) a brief description of the study. For the full approved description, see the consent form. (Hyperlink to a new window.)

- (1) The study is called The educated closet: Why only some gay and lesbian teachers are out. It seeks to document what the reasons are that only some BC gay and lesbian public school teachers are open about their sexual orientation given the protection offered them under BC law and school board policies.

Please note that at this point, I am restricting myself to teachers of kindergarten to grade 12 in British Columbia, Canada. Both socially and in legislation this is a supportive jurisdiction for gays and lesbians, but some of us are still work at keeping our minority sexual status private. I want to document why.

If you are here, you got here because you followed a link in an email from the relevant teachers' group, or from an advertisement in Teacher Magazine.

Please understand that by filling in this form, you are telling me that I am allowed to use your survey data for this study, and that you agree to be a participant in the study. If, after submitting this form, you wish to withdraw your data, please contact me at (250) 514-5445 or dlecky@uvic.ca. Approximately five people who complete the on-line form will be asked to participate in an interview. Being an interview participant in this research

project means that you agree to tell me your personal story about your decisions involving the topics described in the email you received, or in the advertisement in Teacher Magazine. The time required to describe your decision and how you came to it, will be as lengthy as you wish to devote to answering the questions, and might involve more than one meeting with me. Therefore, please anticipate a time commitment of at least two hours. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic research. Typically, interview participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form at the interview. However, to allow for anonymous participation, verbal consent will be considered sufficient for anonymous telephone interviews.

If you are willing, I would be grateful if you would check over the transcripts of our conversations, and notes I might make about our conversation(s). It would be greatly appreciated if you would check over the summary of your story which will eventually be printed in my thesis. Of course this would take more of your time, and is optional. I am grateful for whatever participation you are willing to offer.

The only required part of the form below is the pseudonym. This is the name by which I will refer to you in my notes, and in the published document. You may choose any name you wish, including your own real name. All other parts of the form are optional.

CONTACTING YOU

Material in this section tells me how to contact you. All parts of this form are optional except the pseudonym. If you do not want me to contact you, please phone me at (250) 514-5445. This is my private cell phone.

First name:		Last name:	
Pseudonym(2):			
Mailing Address:		City:	
Province:		Postal Code:	
Email:		Phone:	

(2) This will be your name in my notes and in the published thesis or any other reporting that comes out of this project. You can use your real name if you like. If you pick your own pseudonym then you will be able to find yourself better in the final reports.

YOUR SCHOOL

Postal Code(3):		School	
-----------------	--	--------	--

		Population(4):	
		Grades in the school:	
Subjects Taught:		Grades Taught:	
		School Name or Pseudonym:	

(3) The postal code will tell me if you are in a rural or urban area. If you would rather not tell me your postal code, just enter "rural" or "urban." or "suburban" or "Cariboo" or "Nelson" or whatever gives me an idea of your geographical context.

(4) This study should include people from many different contexts including large and small schools. Please give me some indication of the size of your school.

YOUR DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION

I assume, since you are filling in this form, that you are willing to talk with me at length about your decision to remain private or public about the topic under study. These questions ask how much more fully you would like to participate. Sometimes people enjoy being more involved in the study, and that would be very welcome.

Are you willing to check the transcripts of our conversations? (5)	Yes	No	Maybe
Are you willing to check my notes of our conversations? (6)			
Would you like to check over my summarized version of your story? (7)			

(5) I have to make a transcript of each one of our conversations. Answer "Yes" to this question if I can send you the transcript and get you to check it over. "Maybe" means you don't want to give me an answer right now.

(6) I will also make some notes about our conversations that will help me write my paper. The notes will be about things you said that relate to your parts of the research or highlight some important or distinguishing point. If you would be interested in reading these or checking them over, answer "Yes" to this question. "Maybe" means you don't want to give me an answer right now.

- (7) My final thesis will include a summary of your story. If you would like to check this over and suggest changes, etc., answer "Yes." "Maybe" means you don't want to give me an answer right now.

DEGREE OF DISCLOSURE

I need to get a mix of people who are public and private about the topic under study. These questions will help me determine who I invite to participate. (8)

- (8) I want to know who you have told about your sexual orientation. Often a simple answer like "yes" or "no" does not really answer the question. The style of research I will use is "narrative inquiry." The nature of this research style is to capture your story in your words, so a long descriptive answer is more in keeping with this approach, but answer by whichever method you like.

Have you disclosed to any of the following?

	No	Partially	Yes	Comments or a more complete response
Your family				
Friends				
Colleagues				
Principal				
Students				
Parents of students				
Please describe who, if anyone, in the broader community knows, and to what degree.				

Appendix B: GALE Email

To GALE BC members and friends,

Department of Leadership Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria

The Educated Closet: Why only some gay and lesbian teachers are out

A research study undertaken by Duane Lecky, graduate student in the Department of Leadership Studies

Study details: This research is being undertaken as part of the thesis portion of a Masters in Arts.

The researcher seeks gay and lesbian K to 12 teachers willing to talk about their decision to keep their sexual orientation private, or to disclose it.

The purpose of this research project is for the participants to describe the details involved in these decisions.

Procedures:

If you wish to participate

1. Complete the form at <http://www.techaware.ca/thesis/survey.php> or phone or write to Duane. His contact information is below.
2. If you prefer not to be contacted, do not include your contact information on the form. Instead, please phone Duane at (250) 514-5445 a day or so after submitting your form. Otherwise, Duane will contact you to let you know if you have been selected to participate.
3. Four or five people who complete the on-line form will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview. One person will be asked who is very private about his or her sexual orientation. Another person will be very public. The other people will be in between.
4. If you are chosen to participate in an individual interview, you and Duane will arrange at least one meeting for you to talk about your decisions to keep your sexual orientation private or to disclose it in different circumstances. The meeting can occur by telephone, or face-to-face at some convenient location in BC. I love to travel, so do not hesitate to put your name forward if you live in some remote area. I used to live in Likely.

5. If participants wish, you may also be involved in helping with other parts of the study, such as checking the transcriptions of our conversations and helping to write the summaries of our conversations.

Confidentiality will be strictly ensured. After initial contact, subjects will be identified by a pseudonym of your own choosing and the final written study will not contain any identifying information about participants, unless you wish otherwise.

For further information, contact Duane Lecky, 250-514-5445 or dlecky@uvic.ca.

Supervisor: Dr. Carol Harris at (250) 721-7823, Department of Leadership Studies, U.Vic.

Appendix C: Print Advertisement

Gay/Lesbian

If you are a gay or lesbian teacher, I have some questions for you.

My M.A. thesis asks what reasons some people have for keeping their sexual orientation private while others are quite open.

If you would be willing to talk to me about your reasons for keeping your sexual orientation private, please do one of the following: contact me, Duane Lecky, at (250) 514-5445, dlecky@uvic.ca, or complete the form at <http://www.techaware.ca/thesis/survey.php> with your contact information. Then we will arrange a time for an interview either in person or by telephone. Allow at least two hours for the interview. The interview will consist of your telling your stories about influences on your decision to keep your sexual orientation private.

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic research. This thesis, supervised by Dr. Carol Harris (phone 250-721-7823), is in partial fulfillment of a Masters in Arts in Leadership Studies, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC. <http://www.educ.uvic.ca/epls/>.

Appendix D: AVI email

If you are a gay or lesbian teacher who does not tell people at school about your sexual orientation, I have some questions for you.

My M.A. thesis asks what reasons gay and lesbian teachers give for keeping their sexual orientation private from members of their school communities while other gay and lesbian teachers are quite open.

If you would be willing to talk to me about your reasons for keeping your sexual orientation private, please do one of the following: contact me, Duane Lecky, at (250) 514-5445 or dlecky@uvic.ca, or complete the form at <http://www.techaware.ca/thesis/survey.php> with your contact information. Then we will arrange a time for an interview either in person or by telephone. Most interviews last about 1 hour. The interview will consist of your telling your stories about influences on your decision to keep your sexual orientation private. If you want the interview to be completely anonymous, please phone and we can set up a telephone interview.

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic research. This thesis, supervised by Dr. Carol Harris (phone 250-721-7823), is in partial fulfillment of a Masters in Arts in Leadership Studies, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC. <http://www.educ.uvic.ca/epls/>.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form



PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria BC V8W 3N4
Canada
Tel (250) 721-7799 Fax (250) 721-6190

**Department of
Educational
Psychology and
Leadership Studies**

**University
of Victoria**

The educated closet: Why only some gay and lesbian teachers are out

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Why are only some teachers out?” that is being conducted by Duane Lecky.

I, Duane Lecky, am a graduate student in the department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria. You may contact me if you have further questions by telephone (250) 514-5445 or email, dlecky@uvic.ca.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Masters of Arts degree in Leadership Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Carol Harris. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-7823.

The purpose of this research project is to understand more clearly why some lesbian or gay public school teachers are open about their sexual orientation while others hide it completely.

Research of this type is important because it will help policy makers and social activists in their efforts to assist gay and lesbian teachers to become the best teachers and citizens that they can be. It will assist those who combat bigotry in all its forms. This research will document the conditions under which some members of the gay and lesbian sexual minorities feel it is in their best interest to suppress, obscure, or reveal their sexual orientation.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you responded to the public request for participants, and because you are a gay or lesbian teacher in the kindergarten to grade 12 school system in British Columbia.

You have been selected to participate in an in-depth interview. This interview will take at least one hour. There could be follow-up questions subsequently, if you allow me to contact you for this purpose. The method of research being used is a modified form of narrative research. This allows you, the participant, to say as much as you want about your choice to reveal or hide your sexual orientation in your school and community. Because you will be asked to discuss sensitive personal issues that might have ramifications on your safety, the location of the interview will be determined by you and the researcher. In some cases a telephone interview might be most appropriate. Where possible, you will meet face-to-face with Duane Lecky at a time and location agreeable to you.

Participation in this study might cause some inconvenience to you, including the psychological stress of discussing topics you might find difficult.

There are some potential emotional or psychological risks to you by participating in this research. To prevent or to deal with these risks, a professional psychologist, D. Hughes, is available in person in Victoria or by telephone at (250) 361-1319.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research are numerous. The benefit to you is to give you a chance to know yourself a little better. It also allows you to tell your story with the credibility of an academic study in a reputable university, and to tell your story with as much anonymity as you desire. The benefit to society is to give policy makers and social activists documentation to support their work towards equal rights for all. To the body of gay and lesbian academic literature, it adds the story of significant members of our community, which supports further study and support for the equality of gays and lesbians.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used without your consent. You may decline to answer any questions.

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will ask you if you wish to continue to participate each time we are in contact.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name and location will not normally be published. However, if you want your name published, Duane Lecky will be happy to use your real name in the final report.

Initial here if you want your real name published. _____

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by using a pseudonym, and by keeping tapes and transcripts in a locked filing cabinet. In the initial questionnaire you will be asked to provide a pseudonym for use in the study. Other records will use only the pseudonym. Records will be available only to me, Duane Lecky, my supervisor, you, and other committee members. Electronic records will be held on a computer used only by Duane Lecky; backups will be on CD stored with the paper records.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in Duane Lecky's published thesis, articles, the World Wide Web, Teacher Magazine, public meetings, and other means as available. Copies of the thesis and other articles can be shared with you in a mutually agreeable fashion.

Data from this study will be destroyed within one year of Duane Lecky being awarded his M.A. Paper records will be shredded. Electronic files will be erased.

I will record our conversations only with your explicit consent each time. I will make only audio recordings.

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Duane Lecky and his supervisor, Dr. Carol Harris. Their contact information is at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and his supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.