

“Do I really want to do this now?”

Negotiations of Sexual Identity and Professional Identity:

An Intergenerational Collaboration with Six Gay and Lesbian K-12 Music Educators

by

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In the case of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear—fear of contempt, of censure, of some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the visibility without which we cannot truly live. . . . For we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us.—Audre Lorde

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.—Desmond Tutu

ABSTRACT

LGBTQ research in music education has become more available and accepted in the past ten years. LGBTQ studies in music education have focused on how gay and lesbian music educators negotiate their identities, the role of music education in the lives of transgender students, and the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in music teacher education programs. Studies have been limited to a singular content experience, such as gay vocal music educators or lesbian band directors. Additionally, studies have not explored multiple generations of LGBTQ music educators. The purpose of this study was to explore the lives as lived of six K-12 music teachers. Six individuals, from various career points, various generations, and various career paths shared their stories with me. To guide my analysis, I considered the following questions:

- How do lesbian and gay music educators describe their sexual identity and professional identity?
- How do gay and lesbian music educators negotiate the tensions between these identities?
- What internal and external factors influence these negotiations?
- What are the similarities and differences among the participants of different generations?

Two large emerged from the analysis that provided a better understanding of the participants' lives: finding sexual identity and finding professional identity. Within those themes, smaller sub-themes helped to better understand how the participants came to understand their sexuality and professional identity. External factors such as social and family support, religion, and cultural and generational movements influenced the ways in which the participants came to understand their sexual identity. Participants desired to be

seen first as a competent music teacher, but also understood that they could have an impact on a student as a gay or lesbian role model or mentor. Sexual identity and professional identity did not function as separate constructs; rather they were interwoven throughout these lesbian and gay music educator's self-identities.

In order to connect the reader with the participants, I engaged in a creative non-fiction writing process to (re)tell participant's stories. Each story is unique and crafted in a way that the participant's voice is privileged over my own. The stories come from the conversations and journal entries that the participants shared with me. The purpose of the stories is to provide the reader with a contextual understanding of each participant's life, and to offer some considerations for ways in which we can engage with and support our lesbian and gay music educator colleagues.

This paper does not end with a tidy conclusion, but rather more questions and provocations that will continue the conversations. I hope this document will encourage thoughtful and critical conversations in the music education profession to help us move us forward to a place that is more empathetic, socially-just, and equitable.

DEDICATION

This study would not exist with those individuals who offered their life stories to me. I am incredibly indebted to them and their trust in me as a researcher and writer. To that end, I dedicate this paper to Kathy, Kevin, Nancy, Jerry, Callie, and Anna.

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CHAPTER 1

PRELUDE

“Sarah, I’m gay,” my high school friend told me as we rushed to class. I stopped and looked him.

“Okay. Are you sure?” I wasn’t sure how to respond. This was 1996. I didn’t really know much about gay and lesbian people. In fact, all I knew was what I saw in the movie *Philadelphia*, an emotionally gut-wrenching film starring Tom Hanks as a young gay man who loses his job because he is sick with AIDS. To me, this is what I understood “gay” to be, and I was scared for my friend. I also wasn’t particularly educated as to how one got AIDS, so my mind immediately went to the body lesions on Tom Hank’s character in the movie.

“Nah—I’m just kidding. I just wanted to see how you would react.” My friend responded.

I didn’t believe him. He had always been teased for being a little effeminate. He had lots of girls who were friends and dated girls. I always had a huge crush on him. However, he was into things that a lot of boys our age were not. He loved horses and was immensely musical. He was a singer and played in the band and had many lead roles in the musicals and plays. But, he also played basketball and was an avid hunter. He was one of my best friends, and I was scared for him. He is now happily partnered with another man, and still enjoys hunting.

I grew up going to church, and I don’t ever recall hearing homophobic remarks in my house. My family never really spoke about gay or lesbian issues in any sort of way. Something inside of me led me to believe that gays and lesbians were not treated as nicely as heterosexual individuals, but I wasn’t sure how to stand up for them. It wasn’t until a moment during a church youth group gathering that I found my voice.

One Sunday, or maybe Wednesday, everything about my relationship with the church changed. I do not remember the conversation or what led us to the topic, but I think we were talking about interpretations of the Bible, and our leaders were stating that the Bible was THE truth, and that what was in the Bible was THE word of God. Somehow, we got on the topic of homosexuality and how they perceived it to be “wrong.” (I think we were talking about sin and what was sin or interpretations of sin). I remember being appalled at the idea of trying to change someone to be straight, because in my mind, people were born the way they were. I *think* I remember saying that to ask someone to change their sexuality was ridiculous, that it would be like asking/telling me to *turn* into a homosexual. I *may* have gotten up and walked out of that conversation. Or else I just left really pissed. I can't remember that part. But I do remember that was the last time I went to youth group. I was incredibly distressed about the whole thing. (Researcher's journal, 10/17/2017)

In college, I grew more aware of gay men in the music program. Some of the men were very out and some were in the process of coming out. I don't recall going to school with any lesbians—or knowing of any lesbians at the time. We never spoke about LGBTQ¹ issues in my music education classes or my regular education classes. Gays and lesbians were also not present in our conversations surrounding music education.

During my teaching career I have become friends with many music educators who are gay or lesbian. I consider them dear friends, and it never crossed my mind, until I

¹ Because this study is limited to the experiences of participants who identify as either lesbian and gay, I will not be using the acronym LGBTQ to refer to them. It is important to note that some gay or lesbian individuals, as a matter of inclusivity, refer to themselves as members of the LGBTQ community. However, citing others' research, I will use the acronym(s) chosen by the authors. Some cited research does not include “Q;” thus “LGBT” may also be referenced. As gender and sexual identity continues to evolve, so does the acronym, from LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) to LGBTQAI+ (queer or questioning, asexual, intersex, and beyond).

became interested in LGBTQ issues, that their experiences as music educators might be different than mine. As I began to research and read the history of gay and lesbian music educators, I felt shocked and ashamed at my own ignorance. Despite my deep friendships, I realized that I was unaware of the many layers that these individuals must navigate throughout a day, in part because their histories and experiences had been excluded from my own education. The realization that an entire population had been completely excluded from my own professional education fueled this study and dissertation.

LGBTQ Issues in Music Education

Bergonzi (2009) challenged music educators to consider what it might be like to be a non-heterosexual teacher or student in a heteronormative high school music classroom. Bergonzi's article provoked strong reaction in the music education community; some individuals offered support while others condemned Bergonzi for suggesting that sexuality should even be a consideration in the classroom. Since then, researchers have begun to explore the ways in which gay and lesbian music educators negotiate their identities (Cavicchia, 2010; Furman 2012; McBride, 2017; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Palkki, 2014; Paparo & Sweet, 2014; Taylor, 2011). Others have explored the role of music education in the lives of transgender students (Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2016), and the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in music teacher education programs (Bergonzi, 2015; Garrett, 2012; Salvador & McHale, 2017; Taylor, 2016). These studies suggest that music is often considered a “safe space” for LGBTQ youth, but also include a caveat that youth—and educators—are also silenced by the heteronormativity that persists in music education.

Many people believe that music educators build strong relationships with their students through the emotional experiences of collective music making that extend beyond content knowledge (Countryman, 2009; Parker, 2010, 2014; Taylor, 2011). Music educators

often work with music students and their families for multiple years, and during this time, students and teachers may gain knowledge of each other's personal lives. Members of a school music community may describe their relationship to the program as being part of a larger extended family. Students may see their teacher as a confidant, and for some, as a mentor or responsible adult who may take on a parental role. Through these relationship with students, educators may share personal details about their home lives, which may or may not include a significant other, pets, or children (Furman, 2004). However, for the gay or lesbian music educator, potential conversation about private life may cause anxiety (Bergonzi, 2009; Furman, 2004; McBride, 2017; Palkki, 2015; Taylor, 2011).

Gay and lesbian music educators, as well as researchers, suggest that one way to support gay and lesbian music teachers is through inclusive curriculum in pre-service education. Music teacher education faculty may exclude LGBTQ issues from course work (Sweet & Paparo, 2010) or only mention them briefly. Gay and lesbian pre-service teachers may feel unprepared to negotiate the tensions of sexual identity and professional identity as they enter the workforce. Mentors for these educators may be difficult to locate (Taylor, 2016). Inclusion of LGBTQ issues in music teacher educator curricula has been a growing topic of conversation (Bergonzi, 2009); however, some music teacher educators continue to question the need to include LGBTQ issues in the pre-service teacher curriculum (Salvador & McHale, 2017). How educators choose to represent their students, as well as storied individuals, both in higher education and K-12 education, can bring about either controversy or fruitful conversations (Bergonzi, 2009, 2015).

LGBTQ Issues in Education

Politicians, conservative religious groups, and educational institutions have a long-standing history with promoting homophobia. Homophobia, which Sherwin and Jennings

(2006) defined as “the irrational fear of homosexuality and gays and lesbians,” is a result of fear-based systemic institutionalization that continues to permeate all levels of education (p. 209). Robinson and Ferfolja (2001) described the ways in which schools, as institutions, “constitute and perpetuate discrimination towards gays and lesbians, through the policing of hegemonic discourses of heterosexuality and gender.” Holescher (2014) noted that many teachers may overlook the possibility that they may have a student whose identity is something other than straight or heterosexual. Whether intentionally or not, educators may thus perpetuate the heterosexist norms of education, subconsciously reinforcing homophobia and transphobia in schools.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), only 19 states offer “full non-discrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations.”² Additionally, only 22 states have passed anti-bullying laws to protect LGBTQ students and staff (GLSEN, 2015). “No Promo Homo” laws exist in several states, including Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Utah. These bills “expressly forbid teachers from discussing gay and transgender issues (including sexual health and HIV/AIDS awareness) in a positive light—if at all” (GLSEN). Finally, despite the 2015 Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in all fifty states, some states do not protect LGBTQ individuals in other areas of their lives. Currently, 17 states do not offer public employee non-discrimination policies that cover sexual orientation or gender identity. Laws like this

² For the most comprehensive and up to date list of protections listed by state, go to Freedom for All Americans. <https://www.freedomforallamericans.org/states/> retrieved 08/04/2018.

are troubling for LGBTQ educators in these states, as they could be used as grounds for terminating their employment.

Historically, LGBTQ individuals have struggled to gain acceptance in the professional workplace. Society expects teachers to be standout citizens, where sexuality is never an issue (Connell, 2015). Gay and lesbian teachers have historically been considered the antithesis of moral (heterosexual) beings (Graves, 1992, 2013; Harbeck, 1992), contributing to uneasiness about disclosing their sexual identity. LGBTQ individuals have struggled to balance their professional identity and sexual identity, evaluating the potential negative outcomes for disclosing their sexual identity within the workplace (Biegel, 2010; Blount, 2005; Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1997; Kissen, 1996). Finally, gay and lesbian educators have had to consider whether or if they might pass as heterosexuals (Connell, 2015; Griffin 1992), feeling a need to hide or lie about their personal lives to maintain their jobs and relationships with students, co-workers, administrators, and parents (Elliot, 1996; Lumpkin, 2008).

For LGBTQ educators, identity negotiation and the process of coming out are interwoven experiences that last for a lifetime, as these individuals face day to day, hour by hour, split-second decisions about what to reveal about themselves (Connell, 2015; Griffin, 1991; Palkki, 2015). This process can be mentally exhausting and can take an emotional toll on the educator. Because of this, gay and lesbian educators may feel that their relationships are often strained, and they may feel isolated in their work (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Some educators choose to draw a strict line between their private and public lives (Connell, 2015). These educators feel that the classroom is not the place to discuss their private lives, which they believe are unrelated to student learning. Other educators may feel that incorporating their sexual identity into the context of learning opens possibilities for normalizing LGBTQ

individuals and validating LGBTQ youth in a predominantly heteronormative world (Connell, 2015). They may desire to be a role model for their students, to show that gay and lesbian adults can lead happy, healthy, and productive lives while maintaining a productive career (Kissen, 1996).

Generational LGBTQ Issues

Knauer (2009) wrote that “there are an estimated three million LGBTQ individuals who are age sixty-five and older” (p. 308). These “LGBTQ Elders” experienced McCarthyism, the Lavender Scare, pre-Stonewall politics, post-Stonewall, the AIDS epidemic, and the passing of the same-sex marriage amendment (Knauer, 2009). Knauer suggested that pre-Stonewall LGBT experiences are vastly different than post-Stonewall LGBT experiences. Similarly, Grierson and Smith (2005) suggested that the experiences of gay men before the AIDS epidemic, during the AIDS epidemic, and post AIDS epidemic are drastically different. Despite these important social and political movements, and some positive gains, little research has examined the lives of LGBT elders.

Because of the historical stigma associated with gay and lesbians, many elder LGBTQ individuals have never fully come out publicly. Homosexuality has had a long and arduous battle with being “unnatural” and “un-moral” (Blount, 2005; Connell, 2015; Foucault, 1978; Goffman, 1963; Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1997). It is possible, therefore, that research surrounding the older generation of LGBT individuals was difficult to conduct, in part because many of these people were living in secret, afraid of what might happen if they were to disclose their sexuality.

Social attitudes in 2018 are quite different than they were even 10 years ago and most certainly 50 years ago. Current intergenerational and generational LGBTQ studies have explored differences and similarities in how LGBTQ individuals come out and seek

community (Grierson & Smith, 2005), needs of elder LGBTQ individuals (Knauer, 2009; Shankle, Maxwell, Katzman, & Landers, 2003), and perceptions of similarities and differences among Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomer LGBTQ individuals (Vaccaro, 2009).

Knauer (2009) and Shankle, Maxwell, Katzman, and Landers (2003) explored the histories and needs of LGBTQ elders (ages 65 and older), who often experience age-ism in addition to homophobia. This generation often remains fearful for their safety, despite the social and cultural advances in policies and laws protecting their rights. Shankle, Maxwell, Katzman, and Landers (2003) discussed the many concerns of elder LGBTQ individuals, including ethnic, racial and religious considerations; isolation; state legislation limiting their rights; finding and living in retirement and nursing home communities; financial concerns; elder abuse; mental health issues; substance abuse; and HIV/AIDS. Since the 2015 legislation legalizing same-sex marriage, some of these concerns have been resolved, but many elders remain fearful for their ability to be out, especially in nursing homes. Elder LGBTQ individuals have faced many barriers when trying to gain access to basic needs. Many elder gays and lesbians have had to deal with the persecution of gays and lesbians in the military, which led them to lead heteronormative lives. These prior experiences with discrimination often make it hard for them to feel comfortable living their lives in what they deem an authentic manner. Participants in these studies also expressed concerns about housing, social security, and Medicare.

Grierson and Smith (2008) explored the ways in which gay men in Australia came out and sought out a gay community. Using the AIDS epidemic as a landmark moment in history to categorize generations, the researchers described three generations as pre-AIDS, peri-AIDS, and post-AIDS. Those individuals in the pre-AIDS generation were born

between 1953-1962; their experiences focused mostly on telling their parents they were gay and on “finding the gay world” (p. 58), rather than on telling friends or “establishing a gay identity” (p.58). The post-AIDS generation (born after 1969) tended to come out much earlier than their pre-AIDS counterparts. They would often come out to friends first, and then family members. Coming out to friends for the post-AIDS generation was a part of establishing a gay identity. The peri-AIDS generation (born between 1963-1969) often followed a mixture of how the pre- and post-AIDS participants came out and found community. According to Grierson and Smith, “When these men talked about coming out, it was often in terms of how they saw themselves in relation to other people” (p. 61). Compared with the pre-AIDS group, who lived when being gay was seen as a socially deviant behavior, the peri-AIDS and post-AIDS generations came out during a time when “one’s gayness is not so much something that needs to be explained, but rather a social identity with which one claims an allegiance” (Grierson & Smith, 2008, p. 61).

Vaccaro (2009) explored Baby Boomer and Generation-X LGBTQ adults’ perceptions of Millennial LGBTQ youth. They suggested that limited interactions among generations of LGBTQ individuals may perpetuate stereotypes. Baby Boomer and Generation-X LGBTQ individuals believed that Millennial LGBTQ youth had an easier time coming out to their families and felt more at ease with their identity. However, Vaccaro found that the Millennial youth both described experiences coming out to their family members and reported a general unease about their sexual identity formation, similar to the older adults.

Intergenerational LGBTQ studies are limited in teacher education and, apart from Taylor’s (2011) study, are absent from music education. Taylor invited 10 gay and lesbian band directors to engage in one-on-one interviews and a group interview. Analysis of the

transcripts resulted in two broad themes: negotiating disclosure and negotiating success. Older members of the group discussed the frustrations of having to negotiate their sexuality in order to keep their jobs, while younger members of the study were less cautious. However, all members of the study realized that their sexuality was always a cause for concern.

Absent from intergenerational LGBTQ studies is the impact of the 2015 United States Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage. One could argue that, since this ruling, a new generation of LGBTQ individuals is forming, and we could learn even more about similarities and differences between and among different generations. There are now more same-sex households with children; therefore, exploring the perceptions of post-same-sex marriage generation as compared to the pre-same-sex marriage generation could be another interesting perspective to explore.

Most studies about gay and lesbian music educators' experiences focus only on the experiences of gay or lesbian band educators or choir educators (Cavicchia, 2010; Furman, 2012; Natale-Abramo, 2011; McBride, 2017; Palkki, 2014; Taylor, 2011). Little research has explored the experiences of gay and lesbian elementary music teachers or retired music educators. This study adds to existing research by exploring the lives of K-12 gay and lesbian teachers, from early-career teachers to retired teachers, from elementary general music teachers to high school orchestra teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the lives as lived of six K-12 music educators and who represent multiple generations and who identity as lesbian or gay. A deeper understanding of their individual journeys may inform the music education profession about how to better support our colleagues and future educators. The original

questions guiding this research included: In what settings do gay and lesbian music educators find themselves having to negotiate between their professional and sexual identity? What do gay and lesbian music educators choose to do when negotiating the tension between professional and sexual identities? How do other individuals (students, colleagues, administrators, parents) influence these negotiations? As the study unfolded and the data emerged, I realized that these questions were not sufficient and were, at best, superficial. To this end, I reconsidered what it was that I was trying to understand and so I developed a new set of questions that included:

- How do lesbian and gay music educators describe their sexual identity and professional identity?
- How do gay and lesbian music educators negotiate the tensions between these identities?
- What internal and external factors influence these negotiations?
- What are the similarities and differences among the participants of different generations?

To address these questions, I conducted an intergenerational collaborative study. Addressing these questions across diverse experiences provided rich insight to past and present experiences of gay and lesbian music educators.

Theoretical Frameworks: Reading and Thinking through Multiple Lenses

Theories offer ways of understanding experience through various lenses. Theories are not truths, nor should they be interpreted as such, especially when thinking through theory to understand lived experiences of individuals. Here, I share the theoretical lenses through which I read as I deepened my understanding of the experiences of the participants with whom I worked: Establishing sexual identity through feminist theory; social

construction feminism; feminist studies of men, postmodern feminism and queer theory; and performing gender.

Establishing sexual identity through feminist theory. Lamb, Dolloff, and Howe (2002) and Lorber (2012) provide historical background for feminist and gender research in music education, citing three major waves of feminist research; both outline similar chronologies, citing slightly different dates and researchers. Early feminists (early 1900's [Lorber]; 1840's [Lamb, Dolloff, & Howe], often considered first-wave feminists, sought to gain the same rights and privileges as men. Second-wave feminism began with Simone de Beauvoir's *A Second Sex* (late 1940's-1990's), which stated women's subordination to men was socially constructed (Lorber, 2012). Also within second wave research, Lamb, Dolloff, and Howe cite Kate Millet's and Gerda Lerner's publications in the 1970's as "significant precursors for the development of feminist scholarship in music" (p. 649). Julia Koza explored the representation of females in music education and music education curriculum, as well as the historical nature of gender and music (1991; 1993), while Patricia O'Toole (2005) was a leader in exploring gender concerns in music classes, particularly choirs. Lucy Green, as cited in Sullivan (2017), acknowledged a difference between sex and gender in her own writings.

Third-wave feminism(s) (1990's-present day) are not restricted to examining just female experiences, arguing that men can also be feminists, and are encouraged to fight alongside women. This work has expanded to include sexual and family rights; recognition of the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and other characteristics of human experience; and expansion of gender and sexuality binaries. Early musicology researchers in the third wave include McClary (1991) and ethnomusicologist Koskoff (1989). Feminist theory has also evolved from a singular theory to multiple theories (Lorber, 2012; Saldaña, 2015).

Present-day feminist theories encompass all genders, types of oppression, and an understanding of intersectionality (Lorber, 2012; Saldaña, 2015). Gould (2011) described “feminism(s) as methodological tools” (p. 138) as a way to interpret oppression and intersectionality through the theoretical and philosophical feminist lenses. Lorber (2012) highlighted a newer form of feminism, which she described as “Gender Rebellion Feminisms” (p. 203). As part of the contemporary third wave, these feminisms focus on gender, not women specifically, and call into question gender binaries and how gender and sexuality are socially constructed. Within the category of gender rebellion feminisms, Lorber highlighted lenses within feminist thought and theory that are considered in this study: social construction feminism, feminist studies of men, and postmodern feminism and queer theory.

Social construction feminism. Lorber (2012) described social construction feminism as centering around theories that suggest that gender is both a process and a structure.

[As a process] people construct gender for themselves and those they interact with by doing or performing gender. Gender as structure, regime, or institution: [g]ender divisions and the gendered organization of social worlds are iron cages that allow for little resistance or rebellion. The two themes are both complementary and in conflict. Process and structure are complementary in that processes create and maintain structures. They are in conflict because structure delimits process. (p. 210)

Lorber suggested that gender, as a social institution, “determines the distribution of power privileges and economic resources” (p. 108). She cited various sources of gender inequality, including “gendered structures of societies that treat women and men differently”; “gendering practices in face-to-face interaction that maintain the gendered structures of

societies”; “cultural values built into gendering that valorize men and denigrate women”; “gendered work organizations that favor men’s work and men workers;” and “gendered division of labor in the family that exploits women emotionally and physically” (p. 207). Ridgeway suggested that gender can be understood as “common knowledge,” and that it is only through a clear understanding of each other’s gender that individuals proceed with their interactions (cited in Lorber, 2012, p. 211). As a social construction, gender is often displayed in binary forms (male/female, boy/girl) in schools (Butler, 2004; Connell, 2015; Ferfolja, 2007; Goffman, 1959; Lorber, 2012). Within these established roles, society expects that individuals should act, or perform, based on their observable gender.

Feminist studies of men. Lorber (2012) problematized how society constructs, socializes, and legitimizes masculinity to encourage aggressiveness, violence and sexual exploitation of women. While confronting these issues, Lorber (2012) suggested that feminist men need their own movement to “challenge hegemony and make men aware of their patriarchal privileges” (p. 253). Feminist studies of men do not diminish feminist studies of women; rather, they use previously established feminist theories to interrogate societal norms of masculine behavior. Lorber suggested that, at times, others may not consider gay men to be men, because they do not perform the so-called normal “sexual relationships with women” (p. 273). However, despite their sometimes perceived social deviance, gay men, particularly white gay men, still hold privileges over women because of their status as male gender.

Postmodern feminism and queer theory. Historically and socially, gender and biological sex have been thought of as one and the same; however postmodern feminist theorists and queer theorists suggest that gender is not a simple binary of male or female. Rather, they suggest that gender is fluid and moves along a continuum; it is not a static state

of being (Butler, 2004; Connell, 2015). Butler (1999) as well as other postmodern and queer theorists problematized the concept of gender, suggesting that gender exists on a much wider spectrum that not only goes beyond male/female binaries, but also separates sex and gender. Butler's (1999) *Gender Trouble* suggested that, for example, transgender and intersex individuals, do not conform to their birth-assigned sex.

Performing gender. Postmodern feminism and queer theory are extensions of social construction feminism, with an emphasis on gender as “performativity,” as described by feminist Judith Butler in her essay, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988); Butler later expanded these ideas in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*. Butler (1990) contended that performativity is an unconscious act, and one that is done over and over to reproduce social norms. Butler (2006) suggested that gender is constructed through the repeated acts of individuals, along with the accepted previously established societal notions of gender and sexuality.

Ferfolja (2007) used Butler's 2006 model of performativity to describe the various identities that a gay or lesbian teacher may decide to adopt throughout the school day. Ferfolja suggested that, in addition to performing gender expectations of masculinity and femininity, gay and lesbian teachers may have also considered performing heterosexuality. By acting straight (or heterosexual), one is perceived by others to be straight until the silence is broken (Ferfolja, 2007). Butler (2004) suggested that by “normalizing” homosexuality through marriage rights, one is only “normalized” by being gay *and* being married, and then any other form of homosexuality is still considered illegitimate (i.e., being single and gay is considered not normal); therefore any positioning of oneself within marriage discourse is

performing heterosexuality.³ Ferfolja (2007) described the ways in which gendered schools often “silence and marginalize those who do not conform to the dominant gender and (hetero)sexual discourses that operate in broader society” (pp. 569-570), suggesting that individuals who do not fit into expected binaries of sex and gender may be subjected to exclusion from the larger school community.

Connell (2015) wrote specifically about the complexities of performing gender or “gender expression” in the classroom setting (p. 117). She also suggested that “to do gender correctly is to perform not only masculinity or femininity, but also heterosexuality” (p. 12). In the context of performing gender as a music educator, Connell identified an assumption that male teachers are strict, masculine, and authoritative, while female educators are often seen as nurturing, motherly, and soft-spoken, and that deviations from these expectations may elicit scrutiny from administrators, students, parents, and teachers.

These frameworks guided my reading, writing, and analysis throughout this study. As a practicing feminist, I attempted to honor the participants with whom I worked as I considered how I was reading through the transcripts, how I was (re)presenting them in their stories, and how I analyzed their lives as lived.

The purpose of this study is to understand the lives as lived of six K-12 music educators who identify as lesbian or gay. Reading the data through these theoretical lenses illuminated experiences that provided possibilities for analysis and discussion.

Clarification of Terms

For the purpose of this research, I used the following terms and definitions:

³ Butler (2004) did not dismiss the importance of same-sex marriage, but her larger point was that it implied that to be married and gay was the only way that lesbians and gays could achieve any sort of acceptance in a heterosexist society. She believed that same-sex marriage was playing into society’s hegemonic heterosexual norms, and questioned whether other ways exist that might allow gays and lesbians to be recognized as equal citizens, without having to conform to heteronormative standards.

Sex and gender. Gender and sex are not the same. Gender is socially constructed and is how an individual identifies along a gender continuum. Sex is biological and is assigned at birth based on reproductive organs (Butler, 1990, 2004; Lorber, 2012).

Cis-gender. Cis-gender individuals identify their gender with their biological sex (Cronn-Mills, 2015).

Lesbian. Lesbian describes women who are romantically and physically attracted to other women.

Gay. Gay describes men who are romantically and physically attracted to other men.⁴

Queer. Queer has had a long history as a verb, noun, and adjective. The word queer, a term for strange or unusual, is still defined as such in the dictionary, but queer has been used over time both as a pejorative and a source of pride. The word queer has been used as hate speech towards same-sex couples or men who performed their gender in an effeminate manner. Most recently, queer has been re-claimed by non-gender-binary individuals as an umbrella term to include individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other sexual identities. Some individuals, however, prefer lesbian or gay to queer, because of ways the word has been used in the past (Barker & Scheele, 2016). For the purpose of this study, I use queer when it reflects the wording used by the participants who either self-identify as queer or describe others as queer.

Self-Identity. Brekhus (2003) described self-identity as “an individual’s behavior, values, and worldview, and how that individual perceives and performs who they are, and what components of their self are important to them” (p. 23). Self-identity includes all aspects of how individuals view themselves and perform those views in the world, including

⁴ Some of the women in this study felt more comfortable identifying as gay versus lesbian. To honor their words and self-labeling, I use gay in place of lesbian throughout the document for those who chose to label themselves as gay.

aspects of professional, gender, and sexual identities. Self-identity, as a general term, is not a fixed state and can shift and evolve throughout one's lifetime and within various spaces (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Rodgers and Scott (2008) suggested that self-identity formation is based on the following assumptions:

1. that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation;
2. that identity is formed in *relationship* with others and involves *emotions*;
3. that identity is *shifting, unstable, and multiple*, and,
4. that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over time. (p. 733)

Self-identity is constructed through the ways in which individuals “interact and find meaning in society, through institutions, groups and practices” (Natale-Abramo, 2011, p. 4). This study explores two aspects of a music educator's self-identity: professional identity and sexual identity.

Professional identity. Professional identity, one aspect of the self-identity construct, is how individuals see and present themselves within the context of their professional lives, through their interactions, established meanings in society, and groups and practices (Natale-Abramo, 2011). In this study, professional identity refers to teacher identity. Dolloff (2007) described teacher identity is what a teacher *is*: “[identity is] how an individual integrates his or her ever-growing/everchanging skills, beliefs, emotional response to the teaching/learning act and to students, and subject-specific knowledge” (p. 3).

Gender identity. A second aspect of the self-identity construct is how individuals see themselves as gendered. Cronn-Mills (2015) defined gender identity as “a person's inner sense of being masculine, feminine, both or neither” (p. 78).

Sexual identity. Sexual identity and gender identity are not the same yet are closely related. Sexual identity, a third aspect of the self-identity construct will be defined specifically as how individuals act on their romantic desires. How someone identifies, lesbian or gay, is another extension of their self-identity and is intertwined with all interactions (Lorber, 2010).

Delimitations

This study explored the lives of six gay and lesbian K-12 public school music teachers. While the individual cases may have similarities and could resonate with the experiences of others outside of this study, this study does not claim to generalize the findings to the entire lesbian and gay K-12 music educator population. The intent of this study was to provide rich narratives that may connect the readers with the participants and enable them to better understand their lives. Although conducting this study has helped me better understand the experiences of these six participants, I do not claim complete knowledge of their personal experiences or those of any others.

Lesbians and gays are a sub-set within the LGBTQ population. I did not include bisexual, transgender or queer individuals in the study, not because their experiences are not unique or necessary for the profession to understand, but because I chose to limit my focus to make this study manageable. However, I believe that the stories of bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals in music education should be shared and explored.

Additionally, all the participants in this study identify as white. I fully acknowledge that this limits this study and that including individuals from more diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds would further enrich this study; however, only white lesbian and gay music educators responded to the recruitment survey, a matter for consideration. I strongly encourage the inclusion of people of color in LGBTQ research, because this research, like

the music education profession, has often been essentialized to represent middle-class and white individuals (Knauer, 2009).

Finally, this dissertation represents six individuals at different times in their professional lives and personal lives, as well as social and cultural movements in the United States. These individuals are not representatives for their generations, but rather single examples of lived experiences. Each person's story and life is unique to them, as are the social and cultural experiences that contributed to their lives.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of related literature that guided the development of the research questions. The literature review explores the following topics: 1) historical political purges of gays and lesbians in the federal workplace and in education; 2) laws and policies allowing gays and lesbians to be out in the workplace; 3) negotiating identity(s); 4) models of sexual identity negotiation; and 5) sexuality in teacher education. In Chapter 3, I offer my personal narrative of my journey through the methodology that I engaged with throughout the process of the study. Chapter 4 presents the backstories of all six participants to provide contextual information for the reader. In Chapter 5, I share the unique story of each participant's experience through creative non-fiction pieces which I constructed using the data generated with each participant. In Chapter 6, I discuss commonalities and differences among the six participants, as themes that emerged from the data generated with them. These commonalities and differences fell into two larger themes: 1) finding sexual identity and 2) finding professional identity. Finally, Chapter 7 offers a reflection on the study, including summary of findings, and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The post-World War II purges of gays and lesbians from the federal and teaching workforces remain a relatively untouched area of research in education. David Johnson's 2004 publication, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians*, documented events that led up to the purging of hundreds of gay and lesbian federal workers in Washington D.C. during the Truman (1945-1953) and Eisenhower (1953-1961) presidencies. Johnson's book chronicled the McCarthy era that employed scare tactics among federal workers to inform the government of suspected Communists, gays, and lesbians. Several other books, including Karen Graves' historical account of the Florida teacher purges, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (2009), and Jackie Blount's expansive historical narrative, *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* (2005), extended Johnson's work and expanded the research to include federal policies in Washington D.C. that subsequently informed policies in education. Additionally, these policies led to fear, superfluous stereotyping, and general mistrust of lesbians and gays that lasted for many years after the federal and teacher purges ceased.

To better understand how current gay and lesbian educators navigate the workplace, I first provide historical context by discussing these purges, and some of the laws and policies that followed the teacher purges. Then I describe the ways in which gay and lesbian educators negotiate their identity(s) within a school setting. Next, I examine the literature that describes various models of sexual identity negotiation. Finally, I describe the literature on sexuality in teacher education, including music teacher education programs.

Post-World War II, the Cold War and “Communists and Queers”

This next section explores events of the Red Scare (1947-1957) and the Lavender Scare (mid 1950's-1964), and the effects these events had on federal employees and educators. In this section I discuss how gay and lesbian workers had to feign heterosexuality in both their public and private lives in order to maintain their jobs.

The Red Scare and Lavender Scare

In 1947, members of Congress began to express concern over the number of perceived gays and lesbians in the State Department (Blount, 2005; Connell, 2015; Graves, 2009; Johnson, 2004). The relationship with the Soviet Union post-World War II was overwrought with fear as rumors of Communist spies filtered through the American public (Johnson, 2004). Communists were viewed as threat to the United States, and consequently, the United States government began to investigate individuals who were suspected of being security threats (Blount, 2005; Johnson, 2004). Communists were often referred to as “Reds” because of the Red Soviet flag, and this led to the term “The Red Scare.” (Johnson, 2004). Johnson (2004) reported that State officials often referred to gay men as “lavender lads” (p. 18) which led to the phrase “The Lavender Scare” to describe the era in which gay and lesbian federal workers were fired from their jobs. Senator Joe McCarthy was a leading force in the investigations of alleged communists in the federal⁵ workplace, arguing that homosexuality [*sic*] was a personal choice, therefore, gays and lesbians were vulnerable to blackmail. McCarthy began to link gays and lesbians to communism and that they were a major security threat to the United States government (Johnson, 2004). In February 1950, McCarthy asserted that “105 card-carrying Communists were working for the State

⁵ It should be noted that many of the individuals who were deemed deviants during the McCarthy era were not associated with Communism and were often unjustly accused of crimes they did not commit. Many of the accusations during the McCarthy era were based purely on hearsay.

Department” (Johnson, 2004. p.1); however, he lacked enough substantial evidence to support this claim. Deputy Undersecretary John Peurifoy, who worked in the State department while Senator McCarthy made the claims against Communists, denied this claim but suggested that other persons who were considered security risks had been forced out of their jobs. In an investigation to determine the nature of the security threat and the actual numbers of individuals who had been forced out of their jobs, Peurifoy asserted that 91 of the individuals who had lost their jobs were not Communists, but were gays and lesbians (Johnson, 2004). Known as “Peurifoy's Revelation” (Johnson, 2004), the general public was angered to learn that known “sexual perverts” had at one time been working for the government. Journalists coined this outcry as the “Panic on the Potomac,” and politicians defended the “purge of the perverts,” as nearly six hundred federal employees lost their jobs (Johnson, 2004, p. 2). Security officials in the State Department claimed that they were firing, on average, one alleged gay or lesbian person a day, which was more than double the number of individuals who were fired for suspicion of political disloyalty.

How you look and act matters

State department officials used physical characteristics and behaviors to identify potential gay and lesbians. Women identified as too “mannish” or a “tom-boy” were often brought in for questioning. Men described as potential alcoholics or “loquacious” (Johnson, 2004, p. 8) were deemed security threats. The State Department feared that alcoholics and gossips could easily slip after several drinks, leaking important, high security information to the public and the country’s enemies. Because of these beliefs, the United States military began to keep watchful eyes on popular gay bars in Washington D.C. and popular gay cruising areas, such as Lafayette Park. Any sort of suspect behavior was grounds for firing, whether the individual admitted to being gay or lesbian or not.

Johnson (2004) interviewed Department of Commerce employee Madeleine Tress's about her experience in the 1958 interrogation which ultimately forced her to resign from her job. Tress worked as a civil servant on conditional employment pending a security investigation, a policy that the Eisenhower administration enacted when it took office. Tress was brought into an interview room without representation, a common practice for these types of interrogations. The investigator asked Tress, "The Commission has information that you are an admitted homosexual. What comment do you wish to make regarding this matter?" (Johnson, 2004, p. 148). The investigator continued by asking if Tress knew another woman named Kate, a lesbian friend of Tress's. Despite her assertions that she knew Kate and considered her only as a friend and not as a lover, the investigators continued with demeaning and embarrassing questions and remarks. "How do you like having sex with women?" and "You've never had it good until you've had it from a man" were just some of the disparaging comments made by the male investigators (Johnson, 2004, p. 148). Eventually, Tress admitted to having participated in same-sex activities when she was in her youth, but said she had discontinued those behaviors upon moving to Washington D.C. Not willing to sign a statement prepared by the investigators, Tress had only one option: to resign from her job.

Madeline Tress was not only a victim of demeaning interrogations but was a victim of the practice that the State Department encouraged: co-workers contacting investigators of suspicious behavior. For Tress, the suspicious behavior was her "mode of dress, associations and character" (Johnson, 2004, p. 148). Acquaintances, co-workers, and neighbors who been part of a routine FBI investigation that raised questions about Madeline Tress outed her as a possible lesbian. This was common practice at the time, and the gay and lesbian population lived in fear as friends and colleagues with whom they worked silently disappeared.

Fearing loss of jobs as well humiliation, gays and lesbians banded together to support each other during this time. Gay bars were raided weekly, if not daily, so “middle-class gays and lesbians” (Johnson, 2004, p. 150) gatherwrs for house parties, a seemingly normal and very heterosexual practice. Tress recounted in her interview with Johnson that the men would dress very “smart” and the women would dress in “sexy” feminine clothing, which could potentially offset any immediate association with lesbianism (Johnson, 2004, p. 150). At bars, gay men and lesbian women socialized together in large groups, playing the part of heterosexual couples to avoid possible social scrutiny. In an interview with Johnson, John Cassidy, who held a managerial post as a civilian with the Naval Intelligence, recounted a time when, at a dinner party, the doorbell rang. By the time the hostess came with the unannounced guest (a mother of one of the guests) all the guests had positioned themselves around the table “boy/girl, boy/girl, with the guys’ arms draped over the back of the women’s chairs and the women leaning toward them. We hadn’t said a word, we just did this automatically” (Johnson, 2004, p. 153).

After the Red Scare and Lavender Scare, the fear of communism and homosexuality spread throughout the United States. Organized efforts to purge gay and lesbian educators took shape in the way of proposed bills and legislation. To provide context, Angela Lumpkin (2008) addressed the expectations of teachers in the earliest schools: “When public schools were established in the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries, one of the state missions was to teach moral values” (p. 45). She wrote that teachers were expected to be “morally upright individuals who display good character” (p. 45). Gays and lesbians were not considered “morally upright” and their character was constantly in question. McCarthy and the senate committee penned reports such as the 1950 investigation “Employment of [Gays and Lesbians] and Other Sex Perverts in Government” (Blount, 2005, p. 88) that identified

agencies that had employed gays and lesbians in government offices and ways in which to identify potential misconduct (Blount, 2005; Johnson, 2004). During the McCarthy era, gay and lesbian teachers were often encouraged to name other gay and lesbian teachers or heterosexual supporters of gay and lesbian educators. It was possible that by sharing this information, they would be able to leave their job without indictment. “Guilty by association” became a common theme among teachers and federal workers in Washington D.C. (Johnson, 2004). Anything considered suspect could be grounds for not hiring or getting fired from a job, whether or not an individual was gay. School administrators began screening prospective employees for same-sex tendencies, which included questionable gender presentation, unmarried individuals (especially men), and those educators who did not conform to societal expectations (i.e., women in the elementary schools and men in the secondary schools) (Blount, 2005). Gay and lesbian educators and federal workers were constantly on edge throughout this time as they were anxious of being outed by a colleague or being brought in for questioning by the government. This unease led many workers to leave their jobs or adjust their way of living to become more socially acceptable (Harbeck, 1992; Johnson, 2004).

Teacher Purges

Karen Graves’s 2009 historical account of the Florida teacher purges was a thorough study dedicated to understanding the policies and politics that led to the firing of gay and lesbian teachers. Using archival evidence and interview transcripts as well as newspaper articles, Graves described an era that is often left out of educational discourse. Throughout the 1950’s the country experienced turmoil, beginning with the Red and Lavender Scares and the dawn of the Civil Rights movement. Those in the deep south were deeply troubled by attempts to desegregate schools, and they responded with appeals and policies to limit the

new desegregation bills from entering their states (Graves, 2009). In 1956, the Florida senate introduced “Bill 38,” which established the “Florida Legislative Investigation Committee,” later known as the Johns Committee, headed by Florida Senators Charley Johns, Dewey Johnson and John Rawls (Graves, 2009).

The Johns Committee

After the World War II, schools were in search of more teachers and administrators to take on rising population of students as a result of the post-War baby boom. Male veterans returning from the war were looking for jobs to support their families, and, because of their military experience, many districts hired them. Being involved with the military suggested an obvious slant towards heterosexuality, masculinity (especially among men), and athleticism. Additionally, districts wanted more married men in the schools, as the profession had a long and often times tenuous reputation of employing only single women (Blount 2005). The ideal teacher candidate was married and had a family. Unmarried male candidates, especially older unmarried males, "raised doubts among school board members" (Blount, 2005, p. 84). In 1950 Ralph Major published an article in *Coronet*, a Reader's-Digest-like general interest magazine, titled "The New Moral Menace to Our Youth" (Blount, 2005, p. 89). He claimed that “homosexuality is rapidly increasing through America today” and “unless parents acknowledged the problem and guarded against it, [gays and lesbians] would threaten their children,” (Blount, 2005, p. 89). Major capitalized on the fear that gay men recruited youth to join them and that a gay man could not “indulge his unnatural practices alone. He demands a partner. And the partner, more often than not, must come from the ranks of the young and innocent” (p. 90). The claims of homosexuality during this time resulted in the “scientific belief” that homosexuality was a “learned behavior” (Blount, 2005,

p. 90). Major therefore urged parents to encourage their children to participate in gender-specific roles at home and in gender-specific tasks and hobbies.

Between 1956-1978, the Johns Committee, comprised of Florida state Senators Charley Johns, Dewey Johnson, and John Rawls, led campaigns in Florida to rid public schools of gay and lesbian teachers. The political left maintained that this committee was formed to “interrogate, harass, and intimidate members of the NAACP and other civil rights activists pushing for desegregation” (Graves, 2009, p. 2). While the Johns Committee spent time focusing on these issues, they also began leaning in on suspected gay and lesbian educators. Beginning in 1957, the Johns Committee began to take aim at Florida educators, public schools, and universities alike. Gay men had been linked to a mild outbreak of tuberculosis at a hospital where investigators believed a number of gay men were employed (Graves, 2009). Investigators with the Florida Sheriffs Bureau set up a surveillance system and questioned individuals who eventually shared the names of other gays and lesbians who turned out to be teachers. By the conclusion of the investigation, approximately 200 hundred individuals identified were gay or lesbian educators (Graves, 2009). Subsequent raids were conducted throughout Florida, focused around Miami and Tampa. Raids often occurred at popular gay and lesbian bars. Both men and women were targeted; Graves (2009) recounted one such raid where officers arrested one woman solely on her appearance, saying, “If you are a woman, you ought to dress like one” (p. 5).

Between 1958-1959 The Johns committee began to track gay and lesbian public-school teachers as well as investigate gay and lesbian teachers at the University of Florida located in Gainesville (Graves, 2009). The committee suggested that Florida K-12 schools and universities had a “problem with homosexuality” (Graves, 2009, p. 8). This “problem” was based on a previous investigation headed by the Hillsborough County superintendent

who produced a list of 20 gay and lesbian teachers. The Johns Committee asserted that the state had not done enough to find and fire gay and lesbian educators. During this time, educators experienced various forms of interrogations, often resembling the interrogations that suspected Communists, gay, and lesbian federal workers experienced in Washington D.C. Federal officials conducted interrogations in random hotels without due process or legal representation, allowing interrogators to use questioning techniques that would not be allowed in a courtroom. (Blount, 2005; Graves, 2009; Johnson, 2004).

In 1961, the Johns Committee sought ways to solicit additional votes to maintain their investigations into gay and lesbian teachers. In doing so they produced the report, “Homosexual conduct on the part of state employees, particularly in the field of education” (Graves, 2009, p. 7). The report claimed “the [homosexual] problem to be more serious and extensive than first reported,” and “the number of practicing gays and lesbians at the instructional level in our public-school system as well as our institutions of higher learning is much more substantial than is generally believed” (Graves, 2009, p. 7). The Florida legislature awarded the committee \$75,000 to continue their investigations, not only on teachers but also on suspected gays and lesbians in all Florida state agencies. Additionally, the legislature passed two bills with the hope of decreasing the number of suspect individuals, as well as educating Florida youth on the dangers of Communism. One bill required all state employees to be fingerprinted, and the other bill mandated that a course, “Americanism versus Communism,” be a required class in the high school curriculum (Graves, 2009).

The year 1963 brought another two-year extension to the Johns Committee, along with an additional \$155,000 to continue investigations. The committee shifted their higher education investigations from the University of Florida to the University of South Florida, in

Tampa. The intent of University of South Florida investigations and interrogations was to "root out communists, gays, and lesbians, and purge the university curriculum of what the committee deemed 'un-American, anti-religious, or otherwise offensive material'" (Graves, 2009, p. 51). By April of 1963, the Johns Committee reported that "it had revoked seventy-one teachers' certificates and had sixty-three cases pending" (Graves, 2009, p. 12).

Additionally, the committee reported that an additional 100 potential suspects were being investigated on homosexual charges (Graves, 2009). Graves reported that all the Johns Committee needed was a charge of same-sex behavior, whether confirmed or not. The allegation was enough for the committee to consider dismissal of the faculty member.

Debates about firing teachers for suspected homosexuality without due process took place in public arenas.

By 1964, the Johns Committee was losing steam. The public was growing weary of accusations against gays and lesbians. The final straw was the committee's final report, "Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida," which included "crude photos, a glossary of sexual terms, and an analysis of the '[gay] problem'" (Graves, 2009, p. 10). This report offended taxpayers and politicians so much that they threatened legal action against the committee (Graves, 2009). Charley Johns resigned from the committee and eventually lost reelection to the Florida State Senate in the 1966 election. The committee lost their funding from the new legislature which forced them to disband and end their campaign.

Anita Bryant and the "Save Our Children Campaign"

In late 1976, Ruth Shack, a Miami school board administrator proposed an ordinance that would protect lesbian and gays from discrimination "in housing, employment, and public accommodation based on 'sexual preference'" (Harbeck, 1997, p. 39). Anita Bryant, a popular singer, staunch Conservative Christian, and spokesperson for the Florida

Citrus Commission, was urged by her minister, Reverend William Chapman, to use her local fame to garner support to fight the proposal (Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1997). Bryant and her supporters were concerned that even though language in the proposed amendment did not include public or private educational institutions, school administrators might be forced to hire “known gay and lesbian” teachers (Harbeck, 1997, p. 39). Despite Bryant’s work against the bill, the County Commissioners passed the ordinance with a 5-3 vote (Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1997).

Upset by the Commission’s final vote, Bryant and her followers assembled the “Save Our Children” campaign in order to repeal the vote. The campaign was aimed “at the stereotypical, limp-wristed, seductive, crossdressing, [gay man] who was sexually interested in boys” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 44). Despite the clarifications by local political officials that the ordinance did not pertain to school policy, Bryant and her followers played to Floridian’s history of mistrust of gays and lesbians, and stated the policy would encourage gays and lesbians to “flaunt their lifestyle in classrooms” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 56). Using previous fears from Red and Lavender Scares, Bryant endorsed similar persecution tactics and claimed that Communists, gays and lesbians were conspiring against America (Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1997). Harbeck (1997) cited a 1978 *Playboy* interview where Anita Bryant stated, “It seems very obvious that the Communist element is a part of all of this, because a lot of these people have no reverence for this country” (p. 43). Additionally, Bryant used the religious right ideology to claim that her campaign “held evidence of a conspiracy to harm children, families, country, God, and the American way” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 45). Bryant and her followers acknowledged that gays and lesbians would likely continue to exist; however,

[T]hese people should not have a chance to increase their numbers through seduction or recruitment. Only the invisible, silent lesbian or gay man could be an

acceptable member of the local community, and she or he would have no need for extraordinary legal privileges. . . . Visibility, acceptance, and protection provided lesbians and gay men with the opportunity to increase their numbers. Spouses would leave their families, children would turn against their parents, and the whole foundation of society would crumble as the American family was destroyed. (Bryant, quoted in Harbeck, 1997, p. 46)

In June 1977, a vote of 69-31% repealed the ordinance, with over 300,000 people voting (Harbeck, 1997). After the successful campaign, Bryant announced that the “Save Our Children” campaign would begin a national movement against special privileges for gays and lesbians, built on the fears that gays and lesbians would attempt to molest and recruit children. Successful campaigns led to repeals of similar anti-discrimination laws in St. Paul, Minnesota; Wichita, Kansas; and Eugene, Oregon (Harbeck, 1997).

The Briggs’ Initiative (Proposition 6)

California Senator John Briggs was in attendance with Anita Bryant when the Dade County anti-discrimination ordinance was repealed. Briggs was in the process of gearing up for a run for governor in California and thought that Bryant’s success would help him pass a bill and win the 1977 gubernatorial election (Blount, 2005). His proposed bill, Proposition 6, would prevent gay and lesbian educators from teaching and also prevent those who associated with or sympathized with gays and lesbians (even if they were heterosexual) from teaching (Blount, 2005; Harbeck, 1997). Briggs indicated that “his bill would not deny gays and lesbians the right to housing, jobs, or the sexual lifestyle. Instead, it simply would keep ‘children from being exposed to homosexual teachers’” (Blount, 2005, p. 136). This argument was replayed many times throughout the campaign. Briggs had to explain multiple times that “his measure would not penalize the lesbian and gay teachers who *bid* their sexual

orientation. He sought to penalize teachers who *publicly* pronounced their sexual orientation in gay pride parades, at rallies, to the media, through LGBT teacher organizations and by word of mouth. He wanted all visible and activist LGBT educators to return to the closet” (Blount, 2005, p. 136). Surrounded by a police escort, Briggs announced this bill on the steps of the San Francisco City Hall, a city that had, and still has, a high concentration of gays and lesbians.

Building on Bryant’s success in Florida, Briggs announced in August of 1977 that he would start the process of collecting 312,000 signatures to move the “California Save Our Children” bill into the hands of the public voters and out of the hands of the state legislators (Blount, 2005). The Briggs campaign saw issues early on that began to cast doubt on the potential success of the campaign. The bill was wrought with elusive language that was rendered unconstitutional by then California Governor Ronald Reagan (Harbeck, 1997). According to the bill, “Homosexual conduct [was defined as] advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging, or promoting of private or public [same-sex] activity directed at, or likely to come to the attention of schoolchildren and/or other employees” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 64). Briggs drew on Anita Bryant’s belief that gays and lesbians would recruit young boys (Graves, 2009), as well as the belief that homosexuality was an “alternative lifestyle and a direct assault on the institution of the family” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 65).

Allegedly, one of the Briggs’ campaign workers encouraged the forging of names to increase the signature numbers, and Briggs accused the worker of “being a plant by activists” (Blount, 2005, p. 144). Despite the accusation of forged signatures, Briggs gathered over 500,000 signatures by May 1, 1978, putting the bill to a public vote. At the same time, gay and lesbian activists came together to fight the bill. The Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition pressured the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to “go on record in full

support of lesbian and gay teachers” (Blount, 2005, p. 138). Multiple articles in *The Advocate Magazine* (a general interest magazine, still available online) encouraged readers to take a stand against the initiative (Blount, 2005). Additional media outlets started publishing editorials, surveys, and polls that supported defeating Proposition 6. *Psychology Today*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times* all ran articles that shared stories and experiences of gay and lesbian educators. Newspapers also ran polls that supported gay and lesbians, helping to build a case against Proposition 6 (Blount, 2005).

The bill’s ambiguous language troubled many people, and the California public was growing weary of anti-gay rhetoric. Briggs’ comment in a *Boston Globe* interview did not help his cause: “One-third of San Francisco’s teachers are gays and lesbians. I assume most of them are seducing young boys in toilets” (Blount, 2005, p. 152). After over a year of campaigning, not only was the bill defeated by a margin of 58-42%, Senator Briggs lost the 1978 governor's race.

The Right to Be Out: Laws and Policies

Disclosure of sexual identity is fraught with potential liabilities. Despite same-sex marriage becoming legalized in 2015, there are still states that do not offer anti-discrimination protections against LGBTQ educators. In this next section I explore some of the research on cases surrounding rights to privacy and the laws and policies that encourage or prevent lesbian and gay educators from being out.

Biegel (2010) surveyed historical events in education that relate to LGBT educators and their exclusion from the profession. He highlighted two similar cases with two different outcomes that took place in different areas of the country: California and Wisconsin. Both cases dealt with gay educators who came out to their students via curricular class discussions. Both cases dealt with the ways in which the teachers were then harassed and bullied by

students, teachers, and parents. Administrators in both cases sought to relieve each teacher of their duties because the men were gay.

The California educator's defense was that he did not come out to his social studies class in order to promote same-sex behavior, rather, he incorporated his coming out into a larger curriculum-based discussion surrounding bigotry, suffrage, and harassment law. His 2004 coming out was prompted by a student asking if he was married to a man, to which he replied truthfully. A disgruntled parent went to the school board meeting and stated, "I'm very upset and disappointed that this person was bringing his homosexual platform to the classroom" (Biegel, 2010, p. 64). News sources picked up the story, and the district sent in an investigator to have a conversation with the teacher. The California Teachers Association provided the teacher with an attorney. Despite the initial negative remarks and actions that took place, parent and student support overwhelmed the teacher and the district. Several weeks after the initial investigation began, the school board rescinded the investigation.

In 1996, a Wisconsin educator who was out to his school community lost his job, despite the sound evidence he provided of student, parent, and administrative bullying and harassment. The teacher was plagued by students chanting "faggot" in the halls, his tires being sliced, as well as anonymous phone calls to his house. Parents called the school to voice their concerns about a gay teacher being in close proximity to their students, which then led the principal to tell the teacher that "they might need to implement 'proximity supervision'" (Biegel, 2010, p. 70). This meant the teacher would not be able to be alone with male students. However, the district did nothing to stop the accusations or behaviors by families or its employees. The district claimed that they had done everything in their power to help this teacher, even though their actions proved otherwise. By not acknowledging the harassment that was taking place on and off school grounds, the district appeared to be in

clear violation of Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court, however, favored the district, but the frustrated dissenting judge stated,

Never, in the course of these events, did the administration ever attempt to dissuade either students, parents, or anyone else in the broader community of the school district, to refrain from discrimination or harassment based upon sexual orientation. Indeed, . . . school officials never told the students that the words being used to describe [this educator] transgressed the general code of civility the majority is recommending to schools. [This educator] was just told to tough it out. . . . The only thing [this educator] wants is the *same* treatment that everyone else is receiving.

(Biegel, 2010, p. 71)

Despite this argument, the court agreed that the district was not liable for events that occurred off school grounds, so therefore, the district was relieved of any obligations to protect their employee from harassment, which included emails, phone calls and property destruction when he was not at school.

Rita Kissen (1996) described various state anti-gay referendums that occurred in the 1990s. Kissen highlighted four states where referendums garnered enough signatures to reach public ballot: Colorado, Oregon, Idaho, and Maine. Citing conservative political organizations and right-wing fundamentalist groups, Kissen stated that these groups often portray gays and lesbians as leading some sort of “gay agenda” (p. 110). These referendums perpetrated not only anti-gay commentary, but also hate language that caused emotional havoc for gay and lesbian teachers. Gay and lesbian teachers not only felt the pressure from those creating and promoting the bills, but also from colleagues, students, and teachers. While these referendums were all voted down, the emotional and mental damage, not to

mention the persistence of stereotypes, continued to harm gays and lesbians in the education system.

Morrison v. State Board of Education (1969)

As previously stated, teachers are often held to the highest “professional and honorable” code (Connell, 2015; Biegel, 2010; Blount, 2005; Graves 2009; Kissen, 1996). However, the terms “professional and honorable” are often undefined and open to interpretation. In 1969, the California Supreme Court examined a case that led them to define the meaning of “immoral or unprofessional conduct” (Biegel, 2010, p. 55), as applied to the teaching profession. Marc Morrison, an educator in Southern California, took his district and the State Board of Education to the California Supreme Court, because he had engaged in a brief extra-marital affair with another male employee in the district and he was forced to resign. At the time of the affair, same-sex activity was considered illegal. Both Morrison and the other educator involved claimed that their activity, despite being between two men, was “non-criminal” (Biegel, 2010, p. 56).

The Morrison case presented two very different interpretations of what “immoral or professional” conduct might be. From one’s perspective, it seemed as though the State Board of Education was concerned that Morrison had engaged in same-sex activity, which was considered criminal activity, and therefore he was unfit to teach. From Morrison’s viewpoint, his private life neither hindered his ability to teach nor warranted his resignation. The Supreme Court of California was tasked to define whether or not Morrison’s encounter was “immoral” and “unprofessional” and whether the district Board of Education had been right to revoke his license. Defining “immoral” as “that which is hostile to the welfare of the general public and contrary to good morals” (Harbeck, 1997, p. 214), the Supreme Court agreed that “the Legislature surely did not mean to endow the employing agency with the

power to dismiss any employee whose personal, private conduct incurred its disapproval” (Biegel, 2010, p. 56). Justice Mathew Tobriner, who wrote on the behalf of the Supreme Court majority articulated that the same would be applied for a heterosexual affair: “Surely incidents of extramarital heterosexual conduct against a background of years of satisfactory teaching would not constitute ‘immoral conduct’ sufficient to justify revocation of a life diploma without showing of an adverse effect on fitness to teach” (Biegel, 2010, p. 57). With the acknowledgement that any sort of affair (extramarital or otherwise) was seen as a non-threat to the fitness of one’s ability to teach, California made headway not only for the privacy of all teachers, but for LGBTQ individuals at large. However, this ruling was only for the state of California. Other states were slow to follow suit.

Lawrence v. Texas (2003)

It was not until 2003 that same-sex activity was finally legalized throughout the United States in a U.S. Supreme Court landmark decision that ultimately allowed privacy protection for same-sex couples (Lawrence v. Texas, 2003). Until 2003, 13 states still prohibited same-sex couples from engaging in consensual sex within the privacy of their homes (Biegel, 2010). Nine of these states criminalized both oral and anal sex for both same-sex and heterosexual couples. Four of these states prohibited these sexual acts for gay and lesbian couples, but allowed them for heterosexual couples (Biegel, 2010). The case was raised by two petitioners, John Lawrence and Tyron Garner, who engaged in consensual sexual acts in the privacy of their Texas home. Police officials entered the house on claims of illegal firearms while the acts were taking place. The arguments raised during the hearing surrounded the ideology of morality, if homosexuality was considered a sin, and the stigma associated with gays and lesbians. Throughout the hearing, Justice Scalia asserted that “‘moral disapproval of homosexuality’ is an American tradition, dating back at least two

hundred years” (Biegel, p. 13-14). However, six of the nine justices, including four Republicans, disagreed with Scalia’s argument, and argued that the Fourteenth Amendment fundamentally protects all American citizens’ right to privacy. Arguing for the defendants, attorney Smith stated, that “[w]hen [same-sex] conduct is made criminal by the law of the State, that declaration in and of itself is an invitation to subject [gay and lesbian] persons to discrimination both in the public and in the private spheres” (Biegel, 2010, p. 14).

The 6-3 decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the anti-sodomy laws and allowed one more freedom to gay and lesbians, their right to privacy. However, the stigma remains strong across many states that homosexuality and engaging in same-sex behavior is considered morally wrong. Lesbian and gay educators must navigate these murky waters as they consider the consequences of disclosing their sexual identity to colleagues, administrators, students, and parents.

Current Anti-Discrimination Policies and “No-Promo Homo” Laws

With the Supreme Court of the United States legalizing same-sex marriages nationwide (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, June, 2015), one might think that LGBTQ educators can be out and proud, in and out of the classrooms and in their communities. However, this ruling is only one small step towards equality for LGBTQ individuals and their families. According to the most recent statistics reported by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), only 22 states have anti-discriminatory employment laws for sexual orientation and gender identity and, of those states, Wisconsin only offers protection against sexual orientation, not gender identity. Additionally, only 22 states have passed anti-bullying laws to protect students and staff (GLSEN, 2015) and, of those states, only 19 offer full protection against harassment and bullying (HRC, 2016). Therefore, while same-sex couples

can be recognized in every state as married, it is still possible in many states to be fired from the job for being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Another area of concern is “No-Promo Homo” laws that prohibit the inclusion of LGBT topics in school curriculum. GLSEN’s 2018 research brief noted that, as of January, 2018, seven states have “no-promo homo laws:” Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. According to the Human Rights Campaign website, eight additional states have “laws that restrict the inclusion of LGBT topics in schools.” GLSEN’s website details these laws and policies in more depth, describing “No-Promo Homo laws” as “local or state education laws that expressly forbid teachers from discussing gay and transgender issues (including sexual health and HIV/AIDS awareness) in a positive light—if at all” (GLSEN, 2016). GLSEN’s website suggests that, while most of these laws apply to sex education, school districts may interpret these laws differently and impose them onto entire school policies and curriculum. These laws and policies have negative impacts, not only on students, but also teachers.

Summary

Discrimination against LGBTQ individuals has been a long-standing issue within the United States. Policies informed by unwarranted fears cost hundreds, if not thousands, of educators to leave or lose their jobs based on their sexuality, perceived or proved. These policies have slowly begun to change as a culture of acceptance has shifted towards inclusion in and out of the workplace. Shifts in educational policies are now beginning to protect LGBTQ youth and educators. However, a perpetuating stigma associated with gay and lesbian educators remains and may dissuade educators from sharing their non-school lives with students.

Negotiating Identity(s)

Experience and identity inform one another. How we present ourselves to others is often mediated by the situation, the environment, our previously established, or future, relationships with individuals and previous life-experiences. Lesbian and gay educators' negotiations of their various identities are further intensified by their sexuality and the way in which sexuality is played out in classrooms through various forms of institutionalized and compulsory heterosexuality. The next section explores the ways in which lesbian and gay music educators navigate different experiences through their self-identity, sexual identity, gender identity, and professional (teacher) identity, in and out of the classroom and through different generational experiences.

Self-Identity

The multiple self-stories that help individuals construct self-identity and make meaning of their lives include: “first-person identities (stories a person tells himself to about himself), second person identities (stories told about oneself to oneself by a second person), and third person identities (stories about oneself by a second person to a third person)” (Sfard & Prusak, cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 737). These stories are contextual and relationship-based, evolve over time, and help us make meaning of our self-identities. Rodgers and Scott (2008) suggested that self-identity formation is based on the following assumptions:

1. that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation;
2. that identity is formed in *relationship* with others and involves *emotions*;
3. that identity is *shifting, unstable, and multiple*, and,

4. that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over time. (p. 733)

Context is important to how we shape our self-identities—it is through context that we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. In addition, it is through relationships that we develop our identities, because “to have an identity one must be recognized as a particular ‘kind of person’ by others” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 735). Because identities shift and evolve, individuals are constantly negotiating their own identities within the context of a particular setting, influenced by social, cultural, political, and historical forces (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

Similarly, Brekhus (2003) affirmed that self-identity is socially constructed through interactions and relationships that develop over time and space. He wrote that, while some researchers use identity as a “noun” (p. 20), “identity is not simply something one *has*, it is something that one *works* on” (p. 21). Citing Goffman (1959), Brekhus described how individuals consider the ways in which they present themselves within their interactions.

Brekhus (2003) used the term identity in the following ways in his study:

1. to refer to widely recognized collective group identities such as gay identity, female identity, Korean-American identity and Muslim identity,
2. to refer to commonly recognized dimensions along which group identities are formed such as sexual identity, gender identity, ethnic identity, and religious identity, and,
3. to refer to one’s own *self-identity*—an individual’s behavior, values, and worldview, and how that individual perceives and performs who they are, and what components of their self are important to them. (p. 23)

Both Brekhus (2008) and Rodgers and Scott (2003) emphasized the importance of social relationships and contexts when describing identity and identity formation. Individuals encompass a myriad of identities that may present themselves throughout a week, or a day—sometimes within moments of each other.

Sexual Identity

Sexual identity is the way in which someone acts on their romantic desires (Lorber, 2012). Gay men identify as gay because they are sexually attracted to men; lesbians identify as lesbian because they are sexually attracted to women. Sexual identity for gays and lesbians is contextual, relational, and unstable. Brekhus (2003) illustrated the complexity of the gay identity in his study that explored the sexual identities of gay suburbanite men living outside of New York City. He identified three types of their sexual identities: identity lifestyler, identity commuter, and identity integrator.

Brekhus (2003) described gay men who embrace their gay identity as *lifestylers* or *peacocks*. These men are “100 percent gay, 100 percent of the time” (p. 28). Lifestylers seek out living spaces, social spaces, and workplaces that allow them to be gay without hesitation. “Gayness is more than a modifier of one’s self or an expression of whom one is attracted to; it is the essential defining feature of who one is and how one lives” (Brekhus, 2003, p. 33). Lifestylers are gay first and everything else second. According to Brekhus, lifestylers are the segment of the gay community to which the rest of the gay population compares their own gayness. Brekhus uses the term peacock in conjunction with lifestyler to illuminate the “out and proud” mentality of these men. Lifestylers often distance themselves from straight individuals, many times cutting off those relationships in order to completely immerse themselves in gay culture.

Brekhus (2008) described *commuters* as gay men who seek out places to be their “bad gay self” (p. 28). They often work within a heterosexual space, interact in heterosexual spaces, and thus desire gay interactions that most often occur in their off-hours and typically not near where they live and work. Many times, they maintain a complete separation between their everyday heterosexual work life and their gay life. They are always gay, but do not perform their sexuality until they are where they feel most comfortable, with other gay men. These men are in constant negotiation with their identity as they interact with individuals who may or may not know of their sexuality, and with individuals who may or may not themselves be gay. According to Brekhus, a *commuter* or *chameleon*, “prides himself on being able to fit in anywhere and on being able to get along with anyone” (p. 56). Participants whom Brekhus identified as commuters enjoyed living a “heterosexual” lifestyle in the suburbs but also being able to go into the city and spend the night out at the gay bars.

Brekhus (2008) described *integrators* whose gay identity is “turned on all the time, but it is at a low volume” (p. 29). *Integrators*, or *centaurs*, integrate their gay identity into a heterosexualized world. They are not “in the closet,” but they also do not announce their gay identity either through performance or conversation. In contrast to lifestylers or peacocks, who are “100 percent gay, 100 percent of the time,” integrators or centaurs are “15 percent gay, 100 percent of the time” (p. 29). Integrators see themselves as gay, but also embrace other identities which often rise above their sexual identity. Integrators often brush off their gay identity, suggesting that their gayness should not have any impact on what others think of their job performance or social skills. The appeal of being an “ordinary or just a regular guy” (Brekhus, 2008, p. 78) suggests that integrators prefer to blend in with the heteronormative society in which they exist.

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) proposed a model specific to the lesbian identity, because, as they asserted, “there are elements of female socialization that uniquely and profoundly affect the experience of lesbian identity formation: the repression of sexual desire, the interrelationship of intimacy and autonomy, and the recent availability of reinforcement for nontraditional behavior” (p. 518). McCarn and Fassinger suggested that lesbians engage with two paths as they are coming to understand their identity: individual sexual identity and group membership identity. McCarn and Fassinger suggested that individual sexual identity is supported by the group membership identity, by a realization that the two co-exist.

These paths run parallel to each other. Within each path, lesbians encounter certain “phases” as they begin to become aware of their sexual identity and group membership identity: awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment, and internalization/synthesis (p. 521). Prior to these paths is a non-awareness; a place in time when lesbians are completely unaware of their sexual identity. Below is McCarn and Fassinger’s (1996) proposed model.

| <i>Individual Sexual Identity</i> | <i>Group Membership Identity</i> |
|---|---|
| | (Nonawareness) |
| | 1. Awareness |
| -of feeling or being different | -of existence of different sexual orientations in people |
| Self-Statement Examples: | |
| “I feel pulled toward women in ways I don’t understand.” (I) | |
| “I had no idea there were lesbian/gay people out there.” (G) | |
| | 2. Exploration |
| -of strong/erotic feelings for women or a particular woman | -of one’s position regarding lesbians/gays as a group (both attitudes and membership) |
| Self-Statement Examples: | |
| “The way I feel makes me think I’d like to be sexual with a woman.” (I) | |
| “Getting to know lesbian/gay people is scary but exciting.” (G) | |
| | 3. Deepening/Commitment |
| -to self-knowledge, self-fulfillment, and crystallization of choices about sexuality | -to personal involvement with reference group, with awareness of oppression and consequences of choices |
| Self-Statement Examples: | |
| “I clearly feel more intimate sexually and emotionally with women than with men.” (I) | |
| “Sometimes I have been mistreated because of my lesbianism.” (G) | |
| | 4. Internalization/Synthesis |
| -of love for women, sexual choices, into overall identity | -of identity as a member of a minority group, across contexts |
| Self-Statement Examples: | |
| “I am deeply fulfilled in my relationships with women.” (I) | |
| “I feel comfortable with my lesbianism no matter where I am or who I am with.” (G) | |

Figure 1. McCarn and Fassinger’s proposed model of lesbian identity development (1996, p. 521)

McCarn and Fassinger noted that despite the linear model, lesbians often go through versions of this with each new relationship they encounter. The researchers also left out disclosure or “coming out of the closet” as part of the model because they believed that to be its own complicated experience.

Gender Identity

Keeping in mind that identity is socially constructed through time and space, so too is gender identity. Established behaviors and physical attributes can determine what is viewed as masculine or feminine (Palkki, 2016). Gender can be seen as what one does, not

what one is (Barker & Sheele, 2016). Using Butler as a reference, Lorber (2012) described gender identity and performance as,

the unconscious process of reenactment that makes gendered selves that reiterate social norms of femininity and masculinity and inscribes femaleness and maleness on the body and heterosexuality on the psyche. Performance and identity are one and the same; one does not precede or exist without the other. (p. 285)

Understanding gender means understanding how relationships and social interactions influence how we “do” gender. Gender is not a fixed state—it is fluid and can be influenced by the people around us. Individuals can disrupt gender norms and gender expectations based on their work, profession, careers, or how they identify. Female high school band directors, male nurses, male elementary teachers, and those who identify as gender non-conforming⁶, are examples of individuals who disrupt gender stereotypes and gender roles.

Professional (Teacher) Identity

Like other identities, individuals construct their professional identity through context and relationships. Professional identity is another aspect of self-identity. Educators often adopt a teacher identity in their classrooms that is unlike identities they may embrace outside the school day. Teachers may interact with a variety of individuals throughout the school day: students (from very young to young adults), administrators, parents, other teachers, and support staff. Researchers have explored teacher identity development and how teachers negotiate their personal and professional identities within the context of a school setting (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Woodford, 2002). Teacher identity is not a fixed

⁶ Gender non-conforming individuals perform gender in a way that is not typical of their perceived gender. For example, a male may wear a dress one day and a suit the next. He may identify as gender non-conforming (Lorber, 2012).

state; it evolves with the experiences of the teacher, the interactions that the teacher has through their career, and the settings in which they teach.

Rodgers and Scott (2008), citing Kegan (1994), considered the ways in which teachers develop their professional teacher identity. They posed the questions, “*How* does the teacher make sense of social, cultural, political, and historical forces? *How* does she make sense of her relationships with others? *How* does she construct and reconstruct meaning through stories?” (p. 739). These questions reflect the ways in which identity construction is grounded in social interaction. Teacher identity development can span years, and even decades, as teachers move through their pre-service teaching identity, to veteran teaching identity, and finally, retired teacher identity. While moving through these different stages of teaching identity, other forces contribute and influence identity development which include one’s teaching philosophy, teaching strategies, teaching content area, additional education, political position, and socio-economic status (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

Teachers as Role Models. Lumpkin (2008) described the various ways in which teachers can and should serve students: as role models who teach character and moral values. Lumpkin highlighted several traits of morally grounded teachers: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Lumpkin suggested that without these foundational traits of integrity, teachers could struggle to achieve a role model status with their students, colleagues, administrators, as well as parents. Many gay and lesbian educators feel that they are not being honest or trustworthy because they are not able to fully disclose their sexual identity (Connell, 2015; Kissen, 1996; Palkki, 2015).

Rita Kissen (1996) devoted an entire chapter of her book to the role that gay and lesbian educators can play in students’ lives. Kissen (1996) suggested that gay and lesbian educators “long to show their students that gay adults can lead happy, productive lives” (p.

57). They know that, “unlike students in racial or religious minorities, gay youth may have no community of people like themselves to return to at the end of the day” (p. 57). Kissen’s study identified the ways in which the participants connected with gay and lesbian students, or students who were struggling with their identities, through overt and covert means. Participants commented on the struggle to come out completely to their students for fear of potential retaliation or losing their jobs. Members of the study suggested that schools could help gay and lesbian teachers by offering better and more inclusive non-discrimination policies. Kissen (1996) recommended that offering protections to gay and lesbian teachers, students could see these educators as viable role models and experience an acceptance of LGBTQ individuals.

Partner Privilege

Palkki (2015) described “partner privilege,” in which “gay and lesbian teachers in monogamous relationships may benefit simply by taking part in this socially accepted (and heteronormative) tradition” of being partnered (p. 22). Connell (2015) also described this vehicle as means for coming out. Participants in her study often employed partner privilege to seem more “normal” and accepted into the heteronormative society. Indeed, Butler (2004) discussed the ways in which gays and lesbians legitimize heteronormativity by being partnered or desiring marriage. Connell (2015) described how even the basic tradition of wearing a wedding ring allowed for participants to ease their sexuality into their conversations more easily. Being single and gay can raise all kinds of questions, and in Connell’s (2015) and Palkki’s (2015) research, having a partner was the easiest way for gay and lesbians to come out.

Many of these sentiments are mentioned in the collective memoirs of LGBTQ educators, *Queer Voices from the Classroom* (Endo & Miller, 2014). One author reflected in

depth on the ways in which her whole life had been spent becoming and being “normal” and how there was no reason to announce that she had a girlfriend.

Unless it comes up, I don’t see the need to mention that I have a girlfriend. If I were dating a man, I wouldn’t feel the need to interrupt the conversation and blurt out, “I am a heterosexual!” So why do the same because it is opposite? After all, it’s about normalizing my life, not announcing it. (p. 117)

Partner privilege is not just a means for coming out, even though having a partner provides a vehicle for the conversation, but partner privilege, as Palkki (2015) described, is a way for gays and lesbians to adapt to a heteronormative culture. This can include having pictures of families and partners on desks, discussing weekend plans, or even bringing a partner to a school function *if* the individual believes that their colleagues will support them. However, these symbols of normalcy can often be wrought with additional feelings of fear, in case the topic of sexuality is brought up and the teacher is not partnered at the moment. In this moment, gay and lesbian teachers need to make decisions about whether or not they use gender neutral language or avoid discussing partners, or lack thereof, altogether.

Summary

A person’s self-identity evolves with each interaction that occurs. Interactions, varying contexts, and experiences shape identities. An individual’s various identities interact with each other and depending on the context, one identity may be stronger or more apparent than another identity. Our identity is influenced by not only our self-identity but our connection to a group of individuals who may have a similar identity, such as a professional or sexual identity.

Models of Sexual Identity Negotiation and Disclosure

Often considered two separate events, identity negotiation and the process of coming out to others are heavily interwoven and, for many, a lifelong experience. Connell (2015), Griffin (1991), and Palkki (2015) described the process of “coming out” not as a singular event in one’s life but as an occurrence that happens daily, implicitly or explicitly, intentionally or unintentionally. Lesbian and gay educators often have to determine whether various situations are an appropriate place to share their sexual identities (Klein, Holtby, Cook, & Travers, 2014; Palkki, 2015). Ferfolja (2007) echoed previous research that indicates that individuals are not either in the closet or out of the closet and that ‘the closet’ is both an active and resistant place for LGBTQ teachers. The next section describes different models that researchers have created to better understand how gay and lesbian teachers negotiate their sexuality and disclosure in and out of the classroom.

Jackson’s (2007) model of gay teacher identity development

Jackson (2007) explored how the lesbian and gay teachers in her study used their sexuality as a way to inform their teaching. Through her research, she constructed a gay teacher identity model that theorizes how gay and lesbian teachers develop both their teacher identity and gay identity as part of their coming into gayness. Jackson identified three identity development stages: pre-teaching, closeted, and post-coming out. External and internal factors influenced how and when these stages occurred. To better visualize the process, she created a flow chart, which I have re-created below.

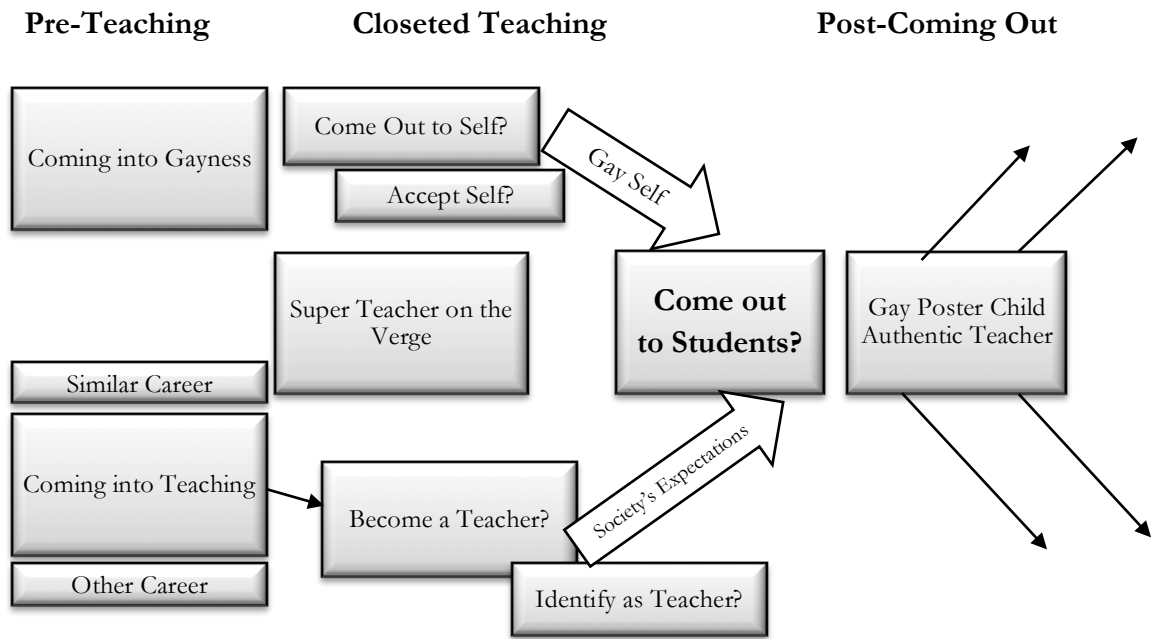


Figure 2. Gay teacher identity development (Jackson, 2007, p. 45).

Participants in Jackson’s study shared the ways in which they approached their gayness and the decisions they made to pursue a career in teaching, either through another career or a similar career, in what Jackson labeled as the *pre-teaching* stage. After participants realized their sexuality, they had to decide to come out to themselves and whether or not to accept their gayness. Concurrent to that process was their decision to become a teacher and identify as a teacher. Between these two processes, a third development occurred, the super teacher stage, where participants, as new teachers, set out to prove themselves as teachers by conforming to society’s expectations of how teachers should act. Overlapping this phase was the *closeted teaching* phase, where participants began to accept their gayness, while developing their new teaching identity. In this phase the question to come out to students was influenced by their teacher identity (influenced by societal expectations). The final phase of this model was post-coming out, where participants who decided to come used their gayness as a model of what gayness could look like in the school. Jackson (2007) used the phrase

“gay poster child” as how some of the participants in her study viewed themselves. Other participants saw themselves as being an authentic teacher because of their outness.

Additionally, some participants began to include LGBTQ issues in their curriculum.

Not everyone in the study went through this process, as some of the participants never fully merged their teacher and gay identities. Likewise, some participants left teaching so that they could live their lives in what they believed to be a more authentic representation of who they were. Finally, Jackson noted that coming out as a gay teacher, like all coming out moments, was not a one-time process. Every time when the participants encountered new students, they would have to go through part of this process again.

McBride (2017): Onstage and Offstage

McBride (2017) used the performance stage as a way to understand how gay vocal music educators navigated their personal and professional lives. McBride used the metaphor of a stage to describe how gay choral educators navigated their sexualities in the classroom. *Onstage* described how the participants in the study often adopted the role of a choir teacher and presented that role in front of their students. *Offstage* represented the participant’s private lives and how they saw themselves onstage. *In-between* was the grey area that so many gay and lesbian educators, music and otherwise, often find themselves attempting to navigate. In McBride’s concluding chapter, he problematizes the use of the stage as a metaphor as a way to understand how gay music educators navigate their identities. He suggested that the stage was not a safe place for teachers to be out, that they were still mostly backstage or in-between, attempting to find a place where they could be their authentic selves. “Schools do not allow teachers to present their gayness to an audience of students” (McBride, 2017, p. 210). Because of this, McBride suggested that perhaps the conventional closet, so often used to describe the navigation process, was a better metaphor than the stage.

Identity management strategies

Woods and Harbeck (1992) studied the experiences of twelve lesbian physical education teachers and the identity management strategies they employed to remain in their job. The first identity management strategy that the researchers identified was: *passing as heterosexual*, which included adopting strategies that would lead colleagues and students to think that the lesbian teachers were in fact heterosexual. This might mean changing pronouns of significant others from female to male or using a prior relationship with a male as a way to establish heterosexuality. *Self-distancing from others* was a technique that involved the teachers being business-like in their interactions with their colleagues, students, and parents. By keeping interactions limited, there were fewer opportunities to over-reveal personal information. However, participants described that this technique also had consequences that left them feeling “misunderstood, isolated, and dishonest” (p. 152). The final technique that Woods and Harbeck (1992) describe is *self-distancing from issues of homosexuality*. This technique could also be interpreted as acting on one’s own internalized homophobia. Teachers in the study utilized this technique whenever there was a reference to same-sex issues such as AIDS education, homophobic comments, or general conversations about sexuality. These teachers feared that if they engaged in these conversations, they would automatically reveal themselves as lesbians, which would ultimately mean losing their jobs. All the educators expressed frustration with maintaining this façade on a daily basis and described the mental exhaustion of maintaining a split between their personal and private lives. Additionally, the educators expressed a desire and hope that someday gay and lesbian educators would be able to teach, be open about their sexuality in the same manner that heterosexual teachers could be and not have to worry about losing their jobs.

Griffin (1991) described the various “techniques” that gay and lesbian educators employ to navigate their identities throughout the school day. Griffin described four behaviors lesbian and gay educators employ to either conceal or reveal their sexuality: *Passing*—not actively challenging other people's presumptions about one's assumed heterosexuality; *Covering*—censoring/hiding one's lesbian/gay subjectivity without trying to make others believe that one was a heterosexual; *Implicitly-out*—assuming that others know of one's gay/lesbian activity but not necessarily overtly stating their sexual orientation; *Explicitly out*—directly disclosing sexuality status (p. 194). While often presented as a linear progression in literature, Griffin articulated that the process is situational, with lesbian and gay educators often going through multiple negotiations throughout a day.

Kissen (1996) based her work on Griffin's (1992) identity management strategies. She also found that lesbian and gay educators feel invisible when they are not showing their true self to their students. Kissen suggested that being implicitly or explicitly out, versus passing or covering, does not exempt lesbian and gay teachers from the pressure of being model teachers. Rather, teachers may put more pressure to prove themselves as an exceptionally competent educator to counter others' preconceived stereotypes associated with their sexuality. Lesbian and gay teachers often adjust their appearances and mannerism to fit the role of the teacher. For men, Kissen found that considerations were more about speech patterns and body movements. For women, the focus was more on appearing and “dressing straight” (p. 42). These conscious acts reminded the participants in Kissen's (1996) study that they are not free to be who they truly are—that they must conform to a pre-established gender role. Dressing straight also meant dressing the part of a teacher. One participant described this as a sort of “camouflage: I dress like a teacher. I wear jumpers, blouses, and skirts” (p. 42).

Kissen (1996) used the phrase “Monday-morning pronoun” (p. 44) to describe the ways in which gays and lesbians adjust weekend details to appear and sound more heterosexual, changing names of partners and places as to not give way to the fact that they are not lesbian or gay. Many of the partnered lesbians and gays in Kissen’s (1996) study changed the pronoun or name of their significant other to protect themselves in the work place. Changing names and pronouns is like denying their partner’s existence and can cause stress if they teacher forgets. This conflicts with Palkki’s (2015) writings on partner privilege that for many, was a significant means for lesbian and gays to share their sexuality.⁷

Participants in Connell’s (2015) study navigated identity negation within a school setting through a process she described as “Splitting” and “Knitting” and “Quitting” (p. 58). According to Connell, a “splitter” is someone who draws a strict line between the personal and private life, with no crossover between the two. Connell’s research suggested that individuals who adopt a “splitting” identity will never come out to their students and will most likely not come out to their colleagues because they feel that discussing sexuality and private lives in the workplace, for any educator, is inappropriate.

“Knitters” are gay and lesbian educators who believe they have a responsibility to be gay and lesbian role models to their colleagues and possibly to their students if they choose to come out to them. “Knitters,” according to Connell, are passionate about “bringing the two identities [public and private] together, regardless of the penalties or drawbacks” (p. 83). This “knitting” phenomenon coincides with LGBTQ rights activists’ wish to be “out and proud” (Connell, 2015; Klein, Holtby, Cook, & Travers, 2014), but can also be problematic

⁷ Nine years passed between Kissen’s (1996) study and Palkki’s (2015) study. Palkki’s study was completed right before the U.S. Supreme Court passed the bill that legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states. During Kissen’s (1996) study, gay and lesbian partners could participate in civil unions, and some states performed same-sex marriages, but not all unions and marriages were legally recognized. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/same-sex-marriage-laws.aspx> accessed 07/13/2018.

for educators if students, colleagues, parents and administrators are not willing to accept the educator.

“Quitters” leave classroom altogether, either to pursue an administrative role, where their sexuality is less of a concern because of less student direct contact, or they quit the profession altogether. The “quitters” in Connell’s study felt conflicted in the same way that the “splitters” felt conflicted. They wanted to be available to the students, but they struggled to lead a secret life. These professional and personal conflicts were enough for them to find a different job.

Elliot (1996) described the internal conflicts that gay and lesbian teachers may experience when deciding if and when they might come out to their students. A participant in her study shared the emotional toll that coming out can take on teachers:

For many, if not most of us, it seems that although we are amply supplied with assumptions about what the coming out experience should be like, we do not have a vocabulary for the emotional and corporeal experience itself. We risk humiliation if we come out awkwardly or fearfully and risk feelings of personal failure if we cannot quite push ourselves over the abyss. We berate ourselves further with the conviction that if we truly had our political and personal houses in order, this trauma would not be happening to us. (p. 696)

Much like other researchers, Elliot (1996) described the responsibility that many gay and lesbian teachers believe they have to be role models or personal contacts for gay and lesbian students, as well as heterosexual students, as a means of “unlearning prejudice” (p. 698). Elliot suggested that keeping secrets about one’s identity may become one’s “dirty” secret and may encourage speculation among students, staff, and parents. Elliot also provided reasons why teachers may not come out to their students, including de-neutralizing

a classroom, a potential silencing of heterosexual teachers, and noting that “the positional authority of an ‘out’ teacher may inhibit or silence student candor, driving hostility underground” (p. 698). Coming out challenges passing and secrecy as “destructive to self-acceptance and political change” (p. 698).

LGBTQ youth identity management strategies

Klein, Holtby, Cook, and Travers (2014) described the internal conflicts that many young people experience as they begin to identify as non-heterosexual. The authors described a model of identity formation among LGBTQ youth that included the following themes: *feeling of differentness*—not feeling aligned with heterosexual cultural and societal norms; *identity formation as a developmental process*—officially “coming out” which, the authors proposed, is imperative to living a happy “queer” life; *the need for a stage of pride/ cultural immersion*; and *a need for identity integration and synthesis*. The authors acknowledged that this is often a linear process from the feeling of being an “other” to the desire to integrate the identity as part of a daily life. The authors also suggested that if one is “out” as a gay or lesbian, then there is an obligation to be politically active for gay rights. Finally, Klein, Holtby, Cook, and Travers (2014) problematized the binary of “being in” or “coming out” of the proverbial closet and how “being in” may suggest that those who remain in the closet are ashamed of their identity; whereas those who come out are seen as brave and potential role models for their students.

Friend (1993) described various ways in which LGBTQ youth negotiate their identity within the walls of a school: *Passing; Accommodation; Heterosexual Overcompensation*; and *Overachievement*. Much like Griffin’s (1991) model, Friend (1993) described passing as acting heterosexual so as not to seem otherwise. However, Friend suggested that lesbian and gay youth may be out to their families, but not out to their friends at school, despite the

potential internal conflict that students may experience if they hear or see homophobic behavior from their peers and/or teachers. According to Friend, *accommodation* refers to the ways in which lesbian and gay youth participate and contribute to homophobic language by “telling ‘fag’ jokes or participating in the harassment of students who are identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual” (p. 228). Friend suggests that this behavior “deflects attention away from the individuals and may reinforce their status among their heterosexist peer group” (p. 228). *Heterosexual overcompensation* is the belief that living a heterosexual life will potentially “cure their [same-sex] interests” (p. 228). This often looks like a gay or lesbian youth engaging in a highly sexualized relationship with someone of the opposite sex. Finally, *overachievement* is a way for LGBTQ students to deflect their identity onto scholastic or extracurricular achievements. In response to potentially low self-esteem, LGBTQ students may participate in activities that promote a sense of accomplishment. These identity negotiations that Friend suggests can also be seen in the ways in which gay and lesbian educators negotiate their identities.

Summary

Identity is the way which we perceive ourselves in relationship to others and the context where interactions occur. As individuals, we adopt a variety of identities throughout a given day, a year, and our lifetimes. Identity is not fixed nor is it stable. As we meet new people, and find ourselves in a variety of different situations, our identities shift to accommodate these interactions (Brekhus, 2003; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Sexual identity, gender identity, and professional identity are just a few of the identities that music educators experience through a given day. A gay or lesbian educator finds themselves in a unique position of having to make decision about whether or not they should share their sexual identity. Kissen (1996) and Connell (2015) both wrote specifically of gay and lesbian

educators navigating potentially complicated conversations with students when discussing anti-homophobic language and rhetoric. Additionally, Connell and Kissen wrote about teachers who believe they must prove themselves to be excellent teachers because they are gay and lesbian they fear that their sexuality may detract from that perception.

LGBTQ youth also have to contend with the matters of identity negotiation, often without support from family and friends. The ways in which LGBTQ youth negotiate their identity mirrors the ways in which gay and educators negotiate their various identities. Support from families, friends, and the community seem to be paramount in when and if LGBTQ individuals decide to come out.

Sexuality in Teacher Education: The “Education Exclusion”

The topic of diversity in pre-service teacher education has traditionally included conversations about ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language barriers, disability studies, and some gender studies (Athanasas & Larrabee, 2002; Brant, 2014; Lipkin, 2003; Sherwin & Jennings, 2007; Sweet & Paparo, 2011). Music teacher education programs may exclude LGBTQ issues due to perceived lack of time constraints or curricular relevance (Salvador & McHale, 2017). Quinn and Meiners (2011) call this “education exclusion” (p. 140), and suggest institutions reproduce heteronormative classrooms, which future educators will carry with them as they go out into their future classrooms. By not addressing these issues in teacher education programs, LGBTQ pre-service teachers and faculty may feel silenced by the institution and the profession. Furthermore, pre-service educators may not be prepared to deal with issues that may arise in their future classrooms.

Perhaps Bergonzi’s (2009) article best demonstrates the relevance of including LGBTQ issues in pre-service music educator training. The article has become well-known

for the polarizing feedback the *Music Educators Journal* received post-publication. Using his own experiences as a gay music educator, Bergonzi posited the following:

Our society expects those in the music education program to contribute to societal development by affirming and educating future generations. . . .[O]ur profession is rooted in and grows from (1) our individual interest in meeting the needs of our students and (2) our collective charge to educate our students, many of who will be important participants in society in the future. (p. 21)

Bergonzi discussed the implications of a heteronormative curriculum and the potential impact this kind of curriculum could have on LGBTQ K-12 students. Bergonzi's article outlined the way in which heterosexual privilege is played out daily in classrooms; educators are not only excluding historical narratives of LGBTQ musicians, but also silencing students and educators who may identify as LGBTQ. Bergonzi described this as "heterosexual norm" and "homosexual dilemma" (p. 24) and described the dilemmas that K-12 music educators encounter when deciding what to include and exclude in curriculum. Bergonzi noted that this would not be an issue if few gays or lesbians had contributed to the music that we teach in schools, but this is hardly the case. Bergonzi asked music educators to consider what it might mean for students who may be struggling to understand their identity and place in the world to be able to identify with a composer or teacher who may have gone through similar struggles.

Four broad themes permeate the literature when addressing the various barriers to including LGBTQ issues in K-12 education and pre-service teacher education: 1) The "Education Exclusion" in K-12 curriculum; 2) The "Education Exclusion" in teacher education curriculum; 3) The "Education Exclusion" in music teacher education curriculum student resistance of LGBTQ issues in teacher education programs; and 4) personal

narratives in teacher education program (Athanases& Larabee, 2002; Brant, 2014; Garrett, 2012; Lipkin, 2002; Quinn & Meiners 2011; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001; Salvador & McHale, 2017; Sherwin & Jennings, 2006; and Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002).

Research surrounding pre-service teacher education and the inclusion of LGBTQ issues suggests that until these barriers are acknowledged and confronted, the profession will continue to struggle to become fully inclusive for both LGBTQ students *and* LGBTQ educators. In this next section I explore the ways in which higher education programs (including teacher educators) and K-12 teachers choose to include or exclude LGBTQ issues in their curriculum.

The “Education Exclusion” in K-12 curriculum

Pre-service teacher education students may already come into teacher education at a deficit because of the K-12 exclusion of LGBTQ issues in the curriculum. Their K-12 experience restricts their understanding of what is possible in curriculum. Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002) suggested that classrooms are plagued by the invisibility of the hegemonic norm. They described the hegemonic norm as a “dominant worldview that everyone is heterosexual” (p. 32). This assumes gender expectations, such as all women wanting to get married to a man and have children. According to the authors, through this “compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 32), educators make curricular decisions as well as decisions about the ways in which they interact with students. These decisions, conscious or not, could have damaging effects on *all* students: heterosexual, LGBTQ, and especially those who intend to pursue a career in education. Quinn and Meiners (2011) described the role of the teacher as political, and stated that if teacher educators expect current K-12 teachers to embody the values of social change and justice, schools of education, accrediting agencies, and professional organizations must also model and implement the same values.

Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002) offered suggestions for the ways in which educators might bring in LGBTQ content into the classroom natural and authentic way. Changing names and genders with story problems is one suggestion made. Instead of Sally and Suzy are making cookies (a heterosexual norm) the authors suggested two boys making cookies, or perhaps using same-sex or non-traditional family structures to discuss parental involvement in a child's education. Straut and Sapon-Shevin suggested that educators structure the integration of LGBT issues in the same way that museum curators choose to include sexuality in the description of artwork: "If the sexuality of the art or artists is directly related to the work then it is relevant when discussing the context in which the work was created and/or the sexual content in the work" (p. 38). Finally, the authors suggested that LGBT issues should not be "add-ons" to curriculum, rather, they need to be fully integrated into curriculum in the same manner that race, ethnicity and gender have become more integrated.

The "Education Exclusion" in teacher education curriculum

With so few contact hours to prepare future educators for what they will need to know for their future classrooms, teacher educators must make decisions about what to include and what to not include in the curriculum. Social justice issues often take a back seat to content specific curriculum (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). Researchers suggest that, while teacher educators may be aware of LGBTQ issues, they may be reluctant to bring these issues into the classroom for a variety of reasons, including homophobia, religious background, fear of the unknown, fear of parent or administration backlash, and personal bias (Athanasos & Larabee, 2002; Brant, 2014; Salvador & McHale, 2017).

Lipkin (2002) described an important moment in his teaching career as a professor. In 2000, the Massachusetts State Board of Education, under the direction of Sandra Stotsky,

the new deputy commissioner and author of *Losing Our Language: How Multicultural Classroom Instruction Is Undermining Our Children's Ability to Read, Write, and Reason*, eliminated specific diversity language including sexual orientation. Instead, the Department of Education suggested a “generic call for tolerance without reference to representation: ‘All public-school systems shall, through their curricula, encourage respect for human and civil rights of all individuals regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation’” (Lipkin, 2002, p. 16). Because of this change, the progress that Lipkin and his colleagues made towards inclusion of LGBTQ issues halted. Until this point, Lipkin had taught classes in gay and lesbian issues in teacher education classes and had worked with college and university education departments to develop material that was inclusive of gay and lesbian youth needs. However, the new description of diversity issues that the Department of Education released suggested that teacher educators could pick and choose which diversity topics were covered in their classes and employ a “respect everyone” (Lipkin, 2002, p. 16) approach to diversity classes without a specific focus on LGBTQ issues.

Lipkin (2002) shared strategies that he employed while working with pre-service teachers that encouraged them to confront their personal biases towards LGBT individuals and to question the various policies that surround anti-discriminatory laws in schools. Through readings and bringing in various guests, Lipkin’s students had opportunities to start to understand the positive impact that bringing LGBT topics and issues into the classroom could potentially have for their future students. Despite the positive impact these experiences had on most students, Lipkin noted some students were frustrated by this approach. At times, Lipkin struggled to find balance between discussing LGBT topics and other issues such as racism and heterosexism in classroom conversations. He also suggested that if we do not confront all experiences and prejudices that students have faced, and will

face, we as educators are not only doing a disservice to our pre-service teachers, but also a disservice to the future students of those pre-service teachers.

Sherwin and Jennings's (2006) report suggested that, of the 77 teacher education programs directors they surveyed, only 60% explicitly addressed sexual orientation in their programs. The survey participants reported that, while they found these issues important, sexuality diversity and gender were often not deemed an immediate priority for attention. Additionally, survey respondents suggested that time was a major factor preventing them from including sexuality diversity in the curriculum. The participants went on to report that if gender and sexuality diversity were included, it was often a part of an isolated diversity class that occurred at beginning of a student's degree program. Sherwin and Jennings (2006) suggested that perhaps the timing of diversity and inclusion classes could be closer to when teacher education students begin the process of working with students in the public schools. This could allow pre-service teachers to see a greater connection between the issues discussed in their university classrooms and how scenarios play out in K-12 classrooms.

Sherwin and Jennings' conclusion is supported by a survey conducted by Lambert, Ventura, Hall, and Culse-Tolar (2006). The researchers examined the attitudes of Midwest college students (N=364) towards gays and lesbians to see if upper-level college students' attitudes were different than lower level college students' attitudes. The results suggested that upper level students tend to have a more positive attitude towards LGBTQ individuals. The authors proposed that the difference in attitudes may have less to do with the education within the confines of the classroom, and more to do with the socialization that occurs between classes and on weekends. The authors of the study suggested that with more education, individuals tend to have a more liberalized attitude towards those individuals who are considered a social minority, in this case, gays and lesbians. This supports previous

studies that suggested that attitudes may become more positive towards LGBTQ individuals if there is a personal connection (D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; Fish & Rye, 1991; Green et al., 1993; Grieger & Ponterotto, 1988; Schope & Eliason, 2000; as cited in Lambert, et al., 2006). This research supports teacher education curriculum changes to accommodate more LGBTQ issues in classes, so that pre-service teachers begin to feel more comfortable approaching these topics.

Holescher (2014) studied science educators at both K-12 and teacher education levels. He identified strategies for broadening curriculum to be more inclusive of LGBTQ issues, including “how to prepare teachers to work with same-sex families; how to prepare teachers to effectively teach LGBTQ-identifying students; how to prepare LGBTQ-identifying teachers for the profession; and how to help heterosexual teachers, students and families accept and include LGBTQ-people in all aspects of schooling” (p. 15).

Despite efforts made by teacher educators to prepare pre-service teachers for LGBTQ issues, there may be resistance from the students to embrace topics surrounding LGBTQ issues in their classes. Blant (2014) pointed out that sometimes teacher educators are faced with vocal opposition or silence from students during large group discussions surrounding LGBTQ issues. Blant found that students who find LGBTQ issues offensive or not relevant to the class may choose to refuse to participate or complete required assignments. Blant (2014) cited Copehnaver-Johnson (2010) to describe this problem: “the ‘problem’ of the resistant student does not always reside with the student. It is important to reflect on the ways in which we instructors inadvertently create environments that reinforce resistance” (p. 51). Blant (2014) suggested this kind of resistance will further dissuade potential relationships that students may encounter with LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ colleagues, and LGBTQ families.

The “Education Exclusion” in music teacher education curriculum

Salvador and McHale (2017) conducted a survey about music teacher educators’ perspectives on social justice issues, including LGBT issues, in the music education curriculum. The survey included responses from 361 full-time tenure-track music teacher educators at National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) accredited institutions. The study examined how and why music teacher educators may or may not include these topics into their curricula. Salvador and McHale reported that 40% of respondents reported satisfaction with the current coverage of social justice topics in pre-service music teacher classes. Respondents answered questions about what might be preventing them from including social justice topics in their classrooms with opened ended responses that included lack of time, lack of knowledge, lack of interest/not my job, tenure concerns, and nothing. Additionally, Salvador and McHale reported a clear sentiment expressed by some of the respondents that including topics, such as LGBT issues, was not part of the experience that music teacher educators should provide:

I do not believe that we as music educators need to teach lengthy units on social justice. For example, LGBTQ is none of our business and has NOTHING to do with one’s education. This being the case, to teach a course or even a lengthy unit on such a topic is essentially a waste of time for undergraduates, and rather should be reserved for masters or doctoral coursework. Teaching social justice is as easy as saying “We are all equal and should be treated as such. We should celebrate our differences as much as we celebrate our similarities. In the end, we are all human beings.” End of story. I just saved myself a week of time to talk about more important topics such as music selection, instructional behaviors, and curricular issues. (p. 15)

Salvador and McHale (2017) offered additional considerations that included examples for music teacher educators to begin to address these issues more in-depth. Reading and discussing case studies, current events, and ethnographic studies were suggested as initial experiences that may benefit students. The researchers also suggested that music teacher educators model activism (anti-homophobia activism) and suggested inviting guest speakers as culture bearers to share their experiences with pre-service teachers. Salvador and McHale also recommended that these issues not be tied to a specific unit or day, but rather, be embedded throughout the coursework.

Garrett's (2012) study addressed strategies for the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in music education. Garrett suggested that while that music education is important in all students' lives, if taught in an inclusive and welcoming environment, it may play an even greater role in the lives of LGBTQ students. Garrett suggested that music educators have the power to create welcoming environments in their classrooms. By using inclusive language, addressing the importance of pronoun preference, and eliminating heteronormative language in describing music, attitudes may change towards LGBTQ individuals. As an example, Garrett suggested that music educators could use more neutral terms when describing a piece of music that is romantic in nature. "Instead of encouraging students to think about the love they might feel for their boyfriend or girlfriend when performing a piece of music with romantic love as context, one might say 'think of the love you have for that special someone in your life,' or 'think of the love you have experienced with a significant other'" (p. 60). By disrupting heteronormative language in music education, LGBTQ students may not only feel safe, but may also start to see themselves in the curriculum.

Garrett (2012) wrote that personal bias, personal discomfort, lack of knowledge, lack of institutional support, and age-appropriateness of LGBTQ issues were reasons why music teacher educators did not address LGBTQ issues in their curriculum. Though not necessarily homophobic themselves, these educators were playing into the pervasive heterosexism that dominates much of the education system. Sherwin and Jennings (2006) defined heterosexism as “discrimination based upon the presumed superiority of heterosexuality” (p. 209). Though music teacher educators may not be overtly displaying heterosexism towards their students, music teacher educators may be perpetuating heterosexism through a heteronormative hidden curriculum (Bergonzi, 2009; Sherwin & Jennings, 2006), and an unawareness of the societal norms to which they've been inculcated. This unawareness can begin a trickledown effect, where pre-service teachers then replicate these behaviors in their own classrooms.

To address dealing with heterosexual bias in the classroom, Garrett (2012) cited Bedford's 2002 study regarding the learned behaviors surrounding prejudice and sexism. “Prejudice against LGBTQ individuals and heterosexual privilege are learned behaviors and can be unlearned with proper education and understanding” (Bedford, 2002, p. 57). Heterosexual privilege can best be understood as being the “norm” of sexuality and the privileges that come with that norm. An example of heterosexual privilege is the ability for a heterosexual white male to put pictures of family and significant others on his desk. While a white gay male may also be able to put pictures of his family on his desk, a different thought process may come with the decision. Garrett (2012) and Cavicchia (2010) discussed heterosexual privilege from a gay or lesbian student standpoint and the implications of a heteronormative classroom might have on a student who identifies as gay or lesbian.

Personal narrative in teacher education programs

Addressing homophobia and heterosexism in the classroom is one way to start the conversation about LGBTQ issues. However, teachers may feel ill-equipped to bring such topics into the classroom, whether they are lesbian, gay, or heterosexual (Garrett, 2012; Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). Because homophobia and heterosexism are so deeply institutionalized, teachers may struggle to even address the history of homophobia and the implications of homophobia on education (Connell, 2015). Brant, (2014), Garrett (2012) and Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002) discussed the importance of personal narratives, either in written or spoken form, from members of the LGBTQ community to help break down the homophobic attitudes that may permeate classrooms at all levels. Athanses and Larrabee (2003) discovered that when using personal narratives, their students not only found the stories to be helpful in their own growth and understanding of LGBTQ issues, but also exposed them to their first meeting with a gay man. Many students in the study articulated that prior to this class, they were not aware of any teachers who were gay (even though their teacher for this class was gay). However, hearing Larrabee's personal story connected them to their own experiences with social injustices.

As a person of color, I know how it feels to be marginalized by the dominant society. I know what it is to live in fear and to be a target because of one's skin color, physical appearance, language and mannerism that one cannot change. I can only empathize with people who identified as LGBT and shared our experiences as "oppressed people." (pp. 250-251)

These moments of connection between the students and the content encouraged the authors that lesbian and gay issues should be taught in teacher education.

Books such as *Queer Voices from the Classroom* and *One Teacher in Ten in the New Millennium* offer compelling experiences of LGBTQ educators and students. Additionally, *Getting Ready for Benjamin: Preparing Teachers for Sexual Diversity in the Classroom* offers various examples of inclusion/exclusion, policy surrounding diversity issues in school curriculum, the power behind narratives. These books provide context for pre-service educators and examples of how they may interact with future LGBTQ students, ways to normalize the presence of LGBTQ issues and people, in and out of the classroom (Connell, 2015; Garrett, 2012; Strout & Sapon-Shevin, 2002).

The inclusion of “Starr’s” 2002 narrative, “How my teacher education program failed,” in *Getting Ready for Benjamin*, provided evidence of the importance of including LGBTQ issues in all pre-service teacher education. Starr shared her narrative through the lens of a lesbian who felt marginalized and often silenced by her professors who chose not to include LGBTQ issues in her classes. Throughout her time as a pre-service teacher, she took part in many discussions surrounding the social justice issues of “racism, classism, gender discrimination, and able-ism; yet sexuality, homophobia, and heterosexism were consistently ignored” (p. 164). Indeed, in order to bring voice to LGBTQ issues, Starr had to out herself as a lesbian. When Starr did bring up the importance of these issues to her professors, she was often told “that class time should be used to focus on diversity issues that affected all of us, not just a small minority” (p. 165). This dismissive response resonates with Straut and Sapon-Shevin’s story in the same book, “But no one in the class is gay.”

Starr’s mention of her own inabilities to deal with her own lesbian identity parallels her peers’ inabilities to deal with similar issues from a straight person’s perspective. Neither Starr nor her heterosexual colleagues were provided tools to understand LGBTQ issues in their future classrooms and schools. Despite Starr’s constant imploring for advice and help

from her professors, Starr found herself back in the proverbial lesbian closet as she entered student teaching. She equated her experience of a closeted lesbian in a heterosexual world like to

having to pretend your mother died when you were very young and always being afraid that you will make a reference to her, or that you will slip and talk about her to other people. . . .It is very hard for me to pretend that I do not date women as it would be for someone who is very close to his or her mother to pretend he or she grew up without a mother. (p. 165)

Starr's perception ties in with all the literature that describes educators as being model citizens, morally upholding, and asexual beings. Starr articulated that heterosexual educators are often very open about their lives, and that by not being able to share her life beyond the school walls, she felt as though she was lying about herself. "How can I expect honesty and respect from my students if I feel I am not being truthful with them? I *want* to be honest with my students, but I also want to keep my job as a teacher. How do I accomplish both? Where do I go for the answers to these questions?" (p. 165-166). The deep feelings that Starr experienced are not unlike other gays and lesbian educators who were participants in studies for the research reported in this literature review.

Summary

Researchers suggest that while the acceptance of the LGBTQ population has steadily increased (Endo & Miller, 2014), more work could be done at the higher education level to prepare future teachers to be more inclusive in their curricular choices. An increasing cultural acceptance of LGBTQ issues and the LGBTQ population is not often reflected in universities/colleges and K-12 education. Researchers suggest that barriers, personal and institutional, continually restrict the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in pre-service teacher

education (Athaneses & Larrabee, 2003; Garrett, 2012; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001; Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002). By examining these barriers and challenging the hegemonic norm of heterosexuality, teacher educators may start to fully engage all future educators in considering how they might be inclusive of all their students to foster a safer learning environment.

Chapter Summary

The intent of this chapter was to provide an overview of important themes in LGBTQ literature. Because this study includes participants from different generations, I felt it important to provide a historical overview of policies, laws, and actions against LGBTQ individuals—specifically gay and lesbian federal and state workers, and lesbian and gay educators. Within this historical context I also explored the ways in which identity(s) are formed, in and out of the classroom, and how the development of a gay teacher identity may or may not be a part of a teacher identity. I also explored the ways in which general education and music education have been places of curricular exclusion, and how curriculum could become inclusive of LGBTQ individuals. While not exhaustive, the literature review aimed to provide a better understanding of LGBTQ studies in relationship to history, general education, and music education.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the lives as lived of six K-12 music educators who identify as lesbian or gay. It is my hope that a deeper understanding of these experiences may inform the music education profession in ways that we can better support our gay and lesbian colleagues. Questions guiding the research included:

- How do lesbian and gay music educators describe their sexual identity and professional identity?
- How do gay and lesbian music educators negotiate the tensions between these identities?
- What internal and external factors influence these negotiations?
- What are the similarities and differences among the participants of different generations?

To address these questions, I conducted an intergenerational collaborative study. This chapter provides the details of my methodology as well as how I analyzed the data. I explain what led me to this study and how my journey shaped my approach to the research and my interactions with the participants. I then address the design of the study, the processes of data generation and data analysis, how I established trustworthiness, and the co-construction of the participants' stories.

The beginning of a long journey . . . with many twists and turns

During my year of doctoral residency, I presented my master's thesis at several state music teacher conferences. My master's thesis, *Perceptions of Women Teaching Secondary Instrumental Ensembles* (2011) explored the ways in which women perceived themselves in a

male-dominated profession. During a conversation with a professor from another university and some undergraduate music education students, I mused how my master's thesis could be replicated with gay and lesbian educators. The professor supported that idea, and suggested those voices and experiences are important to the music education profession. I considered my own personal relationships with music educators who identify as gay or lesbian, some who are very close to me, but we never really talked in depth about their experiences identifying as gay or lesbian, being a teacher, and negotiating both of those identities. I knew them as individuals with whom I went through my master's program, individuals who helped me celebrate my wedding; they are my friends. I had not considered how their sexual identities might shape their classroom experiences and how their experiences could be completely different from my own. This interest fueled my pilot study, "Happy, healthy, and gay: Experiences of two gay choral music educators," which I completed in the spring of 2015.

What kind of researcher do you want to be?

As a cis-gender, heterosexual, white, married female, I have wondered about my role in this research besides generating data with participants. My biggest question for myself has constantly been, "Who am I to be asking these questions, interpreting these discussions and journal entries, and what right do I have to this information?" Indeed, several colleagues and professors have questioned my intentions, encouraging me to consider my "agenda" for my research, especially as a straight woman. I have questioned my intentions and how my past experiences might ultimately shape my research (Maxwell, 2013).

As I was struggling with these questions, I presented my 2015 study at the 2016 LGBTQ Studies and Music Education Symposium. There I faced a room of predominately gay music educators and professors. I was incredibly nervous about speaking on behalf of

the two gay individuals who participated in my study. I acknowledged that I felt conflicted to be presenting on this topic and explained that I hoped to use my privilege to share voices that had otherwise been silenced. My presentation was well-received, and members of the audience told me that they appreciated my research and work as an ally. It was at that moment that I realized that my interest in this topic was because of my relationships with my gay and lesbian friends, that my past interactions with lesbian and gay individuals had informed me as a person, as an ally to the LGBTQ community, and as a researcher (Saldaña, 2015). While some may perceive “allies” as inappropriately inserting themselves within the LGTBQ community, I only intend to offer my support, not as having experienced the oppression of that community, but having taken the time to listen to and share their stories (Saldaña, 2015). I hope that my work may contribute to a much-needed dialogue within the music education community.

In the “research closet”

During the spring of 2015, as I was looking for a new teaching job in my home state, I found myself in a peculiar situation. I realized that I was in the “closet”⁸—or “research closet”—with those participants who contributed to my pilot study and future research. As I interviewed for jobs, when interview committees asked what my research was about, I replied, “Marginalized populations in music education.” I even changed my personal website to describe my research in the same manner. How was it that I could not openly talk about my research topic, for fear of potentially not being offered a job? This was a very odd and uncomfortable place for me to find myself. While I cannot claim to understand how gay and

⁸ I realize that this term could be off-putting and may seem as though I am appropriating the term “closet” which is often used to describe the level of sexuality disclosure. However, I believe that this term is appropriate as I was hiding part of my identity as a researcher in order to get a job, and I was well aware that some of the schools where I applied for jobs were not particularly supportive of LGBTQ issues.

lesbian individuals experience such fears on daily basis, with potentially much more devastating outcomes, my own experience of being in the “research closet” has increased my empathy with lesbian and gay educators. Fortunately, I found a job in a school community that is incredibly supportive of my research—and of our LGBTQ students, parents and teachers—and where I can now discuss my research openly and freely.

Ally and advocate

When I started my new job, I approached the LGBTQ support group advisor and inquired about the presence of a Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA). She responded that the GSA had been absorbed by the support group, but that the students desired to have the two separated. The LGBTQ group met during the curricular day to support students who specifically identified as LGBTQ. The GSA was for LGBTQ students and their allies to promote equality and equity at our school. I became the GSA advisor and quickly learned that my heterosexuality was suspect to those students who identified as LGBTQ. I had to prove to the students that I was there to help them promote awareness through *their* experiences, not my experiences. After a rough start, we developed a group that has provided professional development workshops for our school staff. The students are passionate about sharing their experiences to inform the teachers about what we can do better to support LGBTQ students. Through our work as a GSA and the district’s LGBTQ resource office, the district adopted a policy allowing students to officially change their names and pronouns in the online grading and attendance system. This was a huge moment for the students and the district. I am proud of the work that the students have done and am happy that I was able to provide a space for them to work, brainstorm, collaborate, and problem solve.

Journey Through Methodology

The design of this study evolved throughout the entire research process. Qualitative research can be an untidy endeavor. Because this study aims to explore the experiences of individuals, I initially approached this study through narrative inquiry, a form of qualitative research. In this next section I will describe the development of this study's methodology and how I came to embrace a narrative ethic.

What kind of study is this?

As I began my work, I was confronted with the dilemma of what *kind* of study this dissertation represents. I first considered case study, which seemed logical because this study would focus on individuals' experiences.⁹ Stake (2005) described a case study as "a choice of what is to be studied" which "concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts" (pp. 443-444).

Stake (2005) described the ways in which researchers seek out both commonalities and peculiarities within a case. He suggested that the end product draws from an understanding of:

- The nature of the case, particularly its activity and functioning;
- Its historical background;
- Its physical setting;
- Other contexts, such as economic, political, legal and aesthetic;
- Other cases through which this case is recognized; and
- Those informants through whom the case can be known. (p. 447)

⁹ From my dissertation proposal: "It is likely that the description of this study will evolve as I consider the ways in which the case(s) develop across and within each participant." I still hold that this study does not fit neatly into any sort of "label" for what a case study could be. I will allow readers to make that decision for themselves or to allow the lines to blur as I have.

In Chapter 2 I provided historical context to the ways in which gays and lesbians were treated throughout the 20th century. Additionally, I examined policies that resulted from the teacher purges and further oppressed gay and lesbian educators. Finally, I examined the ways in which teacher education programs prepare, or under-prepare, future educators to deal with LGBTQ issues in the classroom, and the lack of support for those future educators who identify as lesbian and gay. The literature review pulled together many of the commonalities that have arisen through previous research. The literature review also revealed that very little research is intergenerational. Bringing together individuals from different time periods speaks to the ways in which historical and political movements have impacted the LGBTQ teaching community. My study uncovered some unique peculiarities among participants that will be shared in subsequent chapters.

When determining the nature of this study, I considered what I was most interested in exploring *with* the participants. The phenomenon for this study is to better understand how gay and lesbian music educators negotiate their sexual identity and professional identity. It is possible that this is some sort of case study but labeling it as such left me uncomfortable. In the last moments of writing this draft, I decided to label this document as a “collaborative study” to better represent the intentional process that went into this journey.

Narrative Inquiry

Stauffer (2014) described Clandinin and Connelly’s approach to narrative inquiry as having to do “with understanding how knowledge is narratively composed, embodied and lived” (p. 124). Stauffer expanded this definition: “In other words, [Clandinin and Connelly’s approach aims] to understand how people use a story as a means of interpreting experience, how they construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences, and how people live and relive, and tell and retell, their stories” (p. 170). Fraser (2004) suggested that through

narrative inquiry, the researcher and participant aim to make meaning of individual experiences within a culture and society, to “represent their identities and societies” (p. 180). Because of the relationships between cultures, societies, and individuals, stories—or personal narratives—may be used to “reinforce but also contest social practices” (Fraser, 2004, p. 180).

Stauffer (2014) asked the reader to consider,

What is under investigation in narrative inquiry? The story itself? The person who told the story? The act of telling? The incident to which the story refers? The purpose of the teller and the telling? The teller’s psychological state? The culture in which the story is situated? The social practice or oral conventions of narrating that both enable and constrain the story, the telling and the teller? What makes a particular narrative of interest to a researcher? Are the researcher’s interests the only interests that matter? (p. 165)

As a researcher, and an educator, I have a specific interest in the lives of the gay and lesbian colleagues, as well as the students who identify as lesbian or gay (and bisexual and transgender) with whom I work. I see narrative inquiry as a way to learn more about these individuals, their struggles, their fears, and their moments of optimism. These experiences are best understood through telling and re-telling of stories by the individuals who experience them. By reading these stories, readers may pause and consider how they negotiate their own identities, and more important, readers may develop empathy for those whose lives are, more or less, different from their own.

Fraser (2004) framed narrative inquiry that aims to understand the “plurality of truths to become known; [narrative practices] also provide ways to understand the interactions that occur among individuals, groups and societies” (p. 181). Fraser suggested

that instead of the potential objective stances or a one-size-fits-all approach to research, narrative inquiry presents ideas that are more “circular, tentative and multiple.” Citing Young (1997, p. 72), Fraser explained that narrative inquiry can “explain to outsiders what practices, places, or symbols mean to the people who hold them” (pp. 183-184).

Journey Through the Researcher’s Role

When considering the ways in which I (re)tell stories and (re)present individuals I (re)considered Randall Allsup’s 2017 keynote paper at the 2017 *New Directions* conference. “Whether we are looking for a dissertation topic or thinking deeply about a phenomenon and its implications, we have choices as to how we conceive of ourselves as researchers. One fact remains consistent, however. All writers are condemned to represent” (Allsup, 2017, p. 4). This statement moved me to a point where I felt compelled to consider the ways in which the participants, whom you will get to know in chapters four and five, shared their stories with me. In addition to considering approaches in feminist research related to positionality, I draw from Nichols (2016) article that explores shared vulnerabilities and “scholarly anguish” (p. 441). I describe the ways in which I consider cultural competence, unintentional or unavoidable subjectivities, and how I honor expertise in life and story throughout the research process (Nichols, 2016).

Researching as a feminist

Saldaña (2015) wrote “thinking multiculturally” as “attuning yourself to how racial or ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and other cultural and community memberships may influence and affect your participants’ identity, worldview, and daily interactions” (p. 112). Connecting this to “thinking feministically,” Saldaña suggested that how we view gender and power is based in how we view interactions (p. 114). Looking through a feminist lens

scrutinizes the way in which gender is performed, based on societal expectations, race, and class (Saldaña, 2015).

In feminist research, participants are considered co-researchers rather than subjects (Nichols, 2013; Saldaña, 2015). Researchers are not studying a person as if they are in another room surrounded by a one-way mirror. Rather, we researchers are exploring with the participants. The data that emerge during the study allows us to share perceptions based on conversations in which we engaged with participants.

Cultural competence

I have not ever had to consider my label as “straight music teacher” and ultimately, the participants with whom I worked would rather not have to think about the label “gay music teacher.” The gay or lesbian label is just one part of them as a person, and it is not what defines them. As a straight person I had not really considered what it must feel like to have your sexuality come before anything else that you are. I have plenty of friends who are gay, students who are members of the LGBTQ population, but I am still an outsider; and while I can empathize, I will never be able to understand or know.

Unintentional or unavoidable subjectivities

As an outsider I wondered about the ways in which the participants with whom I worked viewed and perceived me. I wanted to make sure they felt comfortable talking to me, so I was careful to construct questions that I had hoped did not make them feel as though I was putting them in some sort of side-show spotlight. Nichols (2016) reflected on an encounter with a quote from Riki Wilchens (1997):

Academics, shrinks, and feminist theorists have traveled through our lives and problems like tourists on a junket. Picnicking on our identities like flies at a free lunch, they have selected the tastiest tidbits with which to illustrate a problem or

push a book. The fact that we are a community under fire, a people at risk, is irrelevant to them. They pursue Science and Theory, and what they produce by mining our lives is neither addressed to us nor recycled within our community. (as cited in Nichols, 2016, p.19)

When I read this quote, I, like Nichols stopped short and experienced similar personal questions about my “intentions” relative to this research. What am I bringing to the research and how am I using this to support my own advancement? Indeed, students at the high school I teach at confronted me about these intentions. After sharing my research with a women’s study class offered at my high school, their teacher encouraged the students to reflect on what I shared. Through written reflections by the students, I was met with some encouraging words, but others were frustrated with my work. They questioned my intentions and in what ways I would be “profiting” from my work. While I joked that I was going into debt and definitely not making a profit, they had a point. Here I am, writing this dissertation, sharing with you this work. I was heartbroken that this young person did not see the bigger picture of what I was doing. I quickly called a colleague I trusted, and in tears, shared with him this story, to which he replied “Allies have been with us the entire way. Had it not been for allies, we would not have made the progress that we have made. You are doing good work and we need your work.”

Honoring expertise in life and story

The conversations that took place between each of the participants and me were emotional. There was laughter. There were tears and heartache. There was anger and frustration. These raw emotional moments were shared between us, and after each conversation I journaled about the conversation that took place. The participants allowed me into their lives in ways I could not imagine. They were incredibly vulnerable to a point

where I struggled to distinguish between my role as researcher and friend. One example from my researcher's journal in October 2017 illustrates:

Wow—this was a super intense week. Especially for Kathy and Callie. Part of me is wondering do I intervene at all? Should I offer additional lines of help? For Callie, it is work related, and since I teach in her district I feel as though I should reach out to help her—does that impede the study? Kathy is clearly struggling, and I suspect that her emotional struggles may increase as we approach the holidays. What responsibility do I have as a researcher to reach out and offer emotional support?
(10/20/2017)

How did my emotions potentially impact the way that I (re)tell the individual stories of those I spent eight months getting to know? How might I honor them in a way that the reader of this document can “hear the beating of their hearts.”¹⁰

Journeying into Data Generation

This study focused on individuals who identify as gay or lesbian and are K-12 music educators. In this section, I explain the recruitment process, participant selection, and the data generation journey, including participant conversations, journals, and a group dialogue.

Assembling the team

To address the research questions, I conducted an intergenerational study with six participants ranging from a first-year teacher to a retired teacher. Addressing these questions across diverse experiences provided rich insight to past and present experiences of gay and lesbian music educators. Through social media networks, such as LGBTQ Safe Space for Music Educators, American Choral Directors Association, and American Orff Schulwerk

¹⁰ This quote comes from Sandra Stauffer, who, during my dissertation proposal defense in Spring 2017 stated, as Tom Barone wrote, “You have a commitment to writing so well with them ‘so you can hear the beating of their hearts.’” That charge of excellence has stayed with me throughout the entire writing process.

Association, I posted an invitation to take a recruitment survey (Appendix A and Appendix B).

In attempts to diversify the sample, I created three broad categories and multiple sub-categories. The categories included personal identity, professional identity, and teaching experience (Appendix C). Based on demographic data from the survey, I invited ten individuals to participate in a screening talk (Appendix D). The purpose of the screening talk was to establish whether I could build a relationship that would allow data generation in subsequent conversations. From the screening talk, I then narrowed the participant list down to six individuals to join me on this journey:

- Anna-mid 20's first-year band director.
- Callie-mid 30's mid-career band director.
- Kevin-mid 40's mid-career band director
- Kathy-late 50's mid-career orchestra director.
- Jerry-mid 60's late-career elementary music teacher.
- Nancy-mid 60's retired orchestra director.

A more in-depth description of the participants is in Chapter 4, including the participants' backstories.

Dialoguing: “Will you go on this journey with me?”

Writing of the complexities of narrative inquiry, Fraser (2004) described the ways in which the guide for a narrative study might consider his or her various roles and proceedings when engaging in a narrative study:

- Prepare for the interview by studying the socio-historical contexts of participants' lives;
- Respond to different communication styles;

- Avoid mining interviewees for information or cross-examining them;
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the time frames of participants as well as our own;
- Facilitate a climate of trust;
- Allow participants to ask questions of their own, as well as consider how we might respond to any questions they raise;
- Reveal our own investments in the research;
- Share some of the interpretations we make; and
- Appreciate the politics involved with making knowledge. (p. 184)

Although the list above is about the interviewer roles and preparation for interviews, I chose to frame my role as a narrator instead of an interviewer. I also referred to the dialogue between myself and the participants as conversations rather than interviews. Nichols (2013) described narrative methodology as a “restructuring of the research relationship” (p. 264). Nichols departed from the established roles of “questioner and respondent” and adopted “postures of narrator and listener” with the participant in her study (pp. 264-265). In her writing, Nichols described conversations in a “we” fashion rather than a “they/I” fashion, which speaks to the nature of narrative inquiry and how the voices of participants are more important than that of the researcher. Fraser (2004), citing Berger, Gluck, and Patai (1991), explained that interviewing and listening during interviews is less about creating the “right” questions to get the “right” answers, and more about the “narrator’s self-evaluative comments, meta-statements, and the overall logic of the narrative” (p. 9).

Data generation took place over approximately eight months. I conducted three, one-hour conversations with each individual, and these conversations were audio recorded and video recorded. Conversations with four of the six participants took place via Skype or

Facetime to accommodate geographic locations that extended beyond a 100-mile radius surrounding my current location (Taylor, 2011). Two of the participants live close to me, so I invited them to meet with me face-to-face. A professional transcriptionist transcribed the conversations, and I sent all transcriptions to the participants to make sure that they represented the individuals' words and thoughts as they wished. The initial conversation (Appendix E) began with asking the same questions of each participant. Subsequent dialogues reflected the nature of themes that began to emerge, and therefore were different for each participant. I used Connell's (2015) interview guide as a resource for question development in addition to the information discussed with each participant.

Throughout the eight months of conversations, I was in constant contact with the participants. I asked them for clarification of our conversation transcripts. During my writing, I sent them multiple versions of their stories. They each had a hand in their final stories and this final document.

Chronicling during the journey: The participant's viewpoint

Additionally, I asked the members of the study to write in a weekly journal for six weeks (Appendix F). The journaling process allowed the participants to be even more reflective in the research process and offered additional anecdotal evidence and experiences that they may not have mentioned in our conversations. I provided a list of prompts to the participants that they could choose for inspiration, but also encouraged the participants to write freely as they wanted. Each participant kept their weekly journals on their password protected electronic device and emailed them to me on a weekly basis via a private (non-school) email account.

After the first round of journals, I was struck by how many of the participants included in their email, "Let me know if this is what you are looking for" or "I'm not sure if

this is what you wanted” as part of their message to me. Additionally, many of the journals were so carefully constructed they read more like formal essays as opposed to personal musings. I sent a blind carbon copy email to the group reassuring them that anything they wrote was worth my time, and that they should not be concerned with the grammar or spelling of their entries. One participant responded with an email, “I’m in general a pretty formal writer. I promise it’s what’s natural to me. I’m an avid formal essay writer (not kidding, love to do it).” In this moment I had to remind myself that not everyone writes in the way that they speak, and despite my attempts to create a casual “assignment” the participants were going to respond in whatever way they felt most comfortable.

Visual story-telling

Because four of the six participants were not within a distance where I could physically meet with them, my only physical understanding of them was through a computer screen. As I heard stories about their past and their partners, I was struggling to paint pictures of these people in their earlier years. I decided that one of journals would include a visual story (Appendix G) titled, “My life in eight pictures.” Bach (2012) described visual narrative inquiry as “an intentional, reflective, active human process in which the researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively” (p. 281). This additional layer of data generation about the participants’ lives provided additional insight that other conversations would not necessarily elicit. Drawing from Meyer’s (2017) use of photo elicitation, I asked participants to send me eight pictures from different moments in their lives. Four of the pictures needed to be from specific times:

#1: A picture of you and your family when you were in middle school/high school.

#2: A picture of you in college.

#3: A picture of you with a partner, past or current.

#4: A current picture of you dressed as you would normally dress for a day of teaching.

The other four pictures I described to be “literal, such as pictures of people or places that have been important to you, or they can be figurative, for instance a picture of an inanimate object that represents or symbolizes something about you as a music educator and/or as a gay/lesbian individual. Pictures may represent both positive and negative aspects of your life” (Meyers, 2017, p. 414). I requested that the participant describe each picture so that I could have a better contextual understanding of the situation. I made additional notes to myself about the picture and assembled a collage of the pictures in my home office so that I could look at the pictures while I was writing the participants’ stories. During the third interview the participants and I talked about the pictures and why they chose these pictures to share with me. This deepened our level of mutual trust as well as my understanding of their lives.

Group dialoguing

The purpose of the group dialogue was to create a space for gay and lesbian music educators to share experiences that they have had as well as potentially learn from each other. Because the ages spanned 40 years, it was my hope that the participants might share how times have changed, and in what ways have certain issues remained the same. I also thought that additional conversations might be raised that did not occur in our one-on-one conversations. I used “Cisco WebEx,” an online conferencing tool that participants join through a link that I shared with them via email. I invited all six participants to meet with me online at a designated time in February 2018. Seven people including myself, across four time zones, were actually able to decide on a time that would work for all of us. That in itself was a minor feat. All six of them were eager to meet each other and hear each other’s stories.

I was incredibly nervous for a variety of reasons—mainly for the technology to cooperate. I was also nervous to watch this whole episode unfold. How much talking would I have to do? Would one person dominate the conversation? Would they engage with each other? How will the technology inhibit or encourage meaningful conversation? These were all questions I had leading up until about 15 minutes into the conversation. It is possible that I lost a few hours of sleep the night before this took place, due to these questions and anxiety that were racing through my mind.

When I logged in, I wondered if all the participants would be able to login with the link that I sent them a day earlier. My anxiety turned into excitement as the first faces popped up on my screen: first Callie, then Nancy, and then Kathy. Nancy struggled with the sound, and we were not able to hear her, but we could see her, so she called me, and I put her on speaker phone. We could hear Kevin, but not see him as he was at his school and his wi-fi was not cooperating, so I quickly found a picture of him and screen-shared with the group so they could see what he looked like. Anna and Jerry joined us with no problem. We finally got ourselves settled into place after about 12 minutes. I was able to calm down and settle into my comfort zone of working with these people, with whom I had developed trusting relationships.

Later, as I read through the group dialogue transcript I made notes in the margins. I connected comments made by the participants to the literature and made note of the similarities and differences between participants. The focus group was a powerful experience for everyone involved, and while the time together did not necessarily bring forth any new information to the study, it confirmed what the participants had shared with me in our one-on-one conversations and their journals.

Will you trust me?

In order to be considered trustworthy by both the participants and the readers of this document, Creswell (1998) recommended that researchers employ at least two of eight listed procedures: “prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarification of researcher bias (reflexivity), member-checking, rich, thick description, and external audits” (pp. 213-214). For this study I used reflexivity, member-checking, and triangulation.

Creswell (1998) and Yin (2011) described reflexivity as bringing awareness to the reader, as well as participants and the researchers, about the researcher’s past experiences that may or may not shape how they interpret the data. As a practiced of reflexivity I kept a researcher’s journal, which I began with my pilot study (Minette, 2015). In my researcher’s journal, I made notes of interactions I have had with individuals that caused me to think about my role in the research. I reflected in this notebook almost daily in order to understand my own thinking, and also to pose additional questions for the participants, myself, and future research.

Creswell (1998) and Maxwell (2013) described member checking as a way of soliciting participant feedback on transcriptions, data, and potential conclusions. According to Maxwell (2013), “This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have of what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your biases and misunderstandings of what you observed” (pp. 126-127). I invited participants in this study to be consistently involved in the writings of their stories. I shared the transcripts of conversations with each participant, asking for clarification when needed, and made sure that I interpreted their facial and bodily actions correctly. As Allsup (2017) contended, qualitative

researchers should not cause participants to feel they are being analyzed, questioned, or put on a pedestal for an examination. Therefore, I engaged the participants as much as possible, aiming to allow their voices to be heard more than my own voice.

According to Creswell (1998), triangulation is a way to develop a study that is rich in information. Creswell (1998) and Maxwell (2013) suggested that generating data from a variety of sources is key to triangulation. Transcribed conversations, participant journals, the visual narrative, email exchanges, and the group dialogue were the main sources of triangulation for this study. Using a combination of these sources strengthened the data generated, and more importantly, strengthened my relationships with the participants so that we could create meaningful stories together.

Journey into the Forest of Data Analysis and Interpretation with Several Guides

Throughout this journey, I struggled to approach analysis-of-lives-as-lived through a meaningful lens that would not diminish the participants' experiences. I posed questions in my researcher's journal, similar to those posed by Allsup (2017): "How does it feel to be discovered? How does it feel to be spoken for? How does it feel to be analyzed?" (p. 5). As researchers, we do our best to consider how our work may be authentic and objective and use a variety of techniques to make sure that we disclose researcher bias. Allsup referred to these techniques as "technologies" (p. 5); he critiqued techniques such as coding and assigning phrases, as well as using computers to extract words and phrases, as being sterile and inauthentic to qualitative research. He suggested that researchers might consider confronting our biases in our observations and owning them fully. The struggles of interpretation and perception versus knowledge and fact are very real in qualitative research and, as he suggested, may be a researcher's way to unknowingly quantify qualitative research. During my analysis journey I often consulted Fraser's (2001) and Saldaña's (2015) texts to

assist me with the analysis. In this next section, I provide a description of their analysis techniques and how I used them. I conclude this section with a description of the ways in which I used analysis and interpretation to construct the individual narratives.

Surveying the Path: Guide #1: Fraser (2001)

Phase one: Hearing the stories, experiencing each story

Fraser (2004) suggested that researchers should approach interactions with participants in an emotional sense and side-line any potential theorizing about what might be occurring. To assist researchers with this first step, she offered a guiding question for researchers to consider as they reflect on an interview in their journal: “What ‘sense’ do you get from each interview?” (p. 187).

Phase two: Transcribing the material

Fraser noted that researchers may attempt to “clean up the speech” (p. 187) in order to allow for better reading of the transcriptions. However, this may mean that something is lost in the overall meaning of a story. Video recordings also should be transcribed for changes in facial features or bodily gestures, as they might lend additional insight to meanings behind words or stories. Fraser posed another guiding question for this phase, “Have you omitted or misheard any of the material?” (p. 188). By watching and listening to the conversations, I was able to pick up on additional pauses or facial expressions that were not present in just the words. These moments allowed me to bring a bit more of each participant’s personality into their stories. They also alerted me to moments of uneasiness, sadness, frustration, or joy.

Phase three: Interpreting individual transcripts

Multiple readings of each participant’s transcripts and journal entries allowed me to read with a different lens for each participant. These readings lead to different

interpretations which I then journaled about. Saldaña (2015) offered guiding questions for the researcher to consider as they read through transcripts:

- What worries or concerns are the participants expressing?
- What unresolved issues are the participants raising?
- What do the participants find intriguing, surprising, or disturbing? (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012, p. 115)
- What types of tensions, problems, or conflicts are the participants experiencing?
- What kinds of troubles are the participants in? (p. 35)

Sometimes multiple readings clarified information for me and other times, they did not, so I then contacted the participant, either by email or in our next conversation, to clarify what I was trying to understand. Fraser asked the researcher to consider, “What are the common themes in each transcript” (p. 190). I made note of the commonalities and differences among the participants, which I then explored in phase six.

Phase four: Scanning across different domains of experience

Fraser (2004) suggested that narrative researchers examine their data from multiple perspectives, namely *intrapersonal* (self-talk, what the narrator says to oneself), *interpersonal* (dialogue between people), *cultural*, and *structural*, which “[makes claims] about the influence of public policies and/or social systems” (p. 192). The participants in this study reflected on their personal interactions within the school community and their lives beyond the school community. I considered Fraser’s guiding question for this phase as I analyzed the experience across the participants’ narratives; “Are social structures (institutionalized or otherwise) present? If so, how do they appear and what is being said about them?” (p. 192). Because this was an intergenerational study, this question proved to be interesting because of

the various political movements that occurred throughout the different times that these teachers have been in the profession.

The group dialogue session proved to be a valuable resource to consider and analyze the different experiences among the participants. As I read through the transcript made notes of my own feelings and reactions to their statements. I included a transcript of the focus group, with my notes in Appendix H. My thoughts and reactions are italicized and reflect both my initial reactions during the focus group and the analysis that took place as I read and re-read this document. Finding my own narrative within participants' narratives was key for me as I began to understand their experiences. Dr. Stauffer often reminded me that "writing is part of the analysis process," so this transcript serves not only as window into my analysis process, but also how I participated as a researcher, facilitator, and problematizer.

Clandinin (2013) wrote, "narrative inquiry reminds us who we are, and are becoming . . . no one leaves a narrative inquiry unchanged" (p. 20). Indeed, this experience, and the task of having to write this document was life changing. I also believe, through speaking with the participants, that they too left this experience changed. Perhaps those of you reading who have taken on such a project will understand my internal process and thinking as you read my thoughts. Perhaps some of you who are reading this and are considering this type of project will learn what worked and what did not.

Phase five: Link 'The personal with the political.'

One of the challenging aspects of qualitative research is to own our biases and not let them interfere with our interpretation of the data. Fraser suggested that the researcher consider the following question when working with participants to construct a narrative that is true to them and to the research: "What responses might/do the participants make about your analyses? If there is a disagreement, will it be signaled? If so, how?" (p. 193). This

approach is reminiscent of feminist theory where the participant and researcher together generate data and co-construct the narrative, rather than the researcher collecting data from “subjects” (Gould, 2011; Nichols, 2013; 2016, Saldaña, 2015)

Throughout the analysis process I was in constant contact with the participants, often emailing for clarification. When I wrote the initial backstories (Chapter 4) I sent them to each participant for their approval. Most of the participants wrote back with suggestions or clarifications as to how their backstory could be improved to better reflect their lives. After realizing that the backstories were not how I really wanted to represent the participants, I then took on the task of writing their stories through creative nonfiction, which I explain later in this chapter. I sent these stories to each participant as well, but I was much more nervous to hear their reactions, as I was constructing a story about their lives. The stories themselves are true, but I approached each story writing process through a creative lens. Gutkind (2012) captured this fear of creative vulnerability in this statement about sharing a writer’s work with the participants:

I understand why you [the researcher] might not want to share your narrative with your [participant]; it could be dangerous. It could ruin your friendship, your marriage, or your future. . . .Characters appreciate hearing and considering what I have written, and have corrected mistakes. But more important, when I come face to face with characters, I’m able to communicate on a more intimate level. . . . When I show or reveal to my [participants] what I think and feel—when they hear what I’ve written about them—some of them get angry, which is also interesting to observe and write about. But most of the time they’re gratified to be brought into the process before the work is published. (p. 40)

While Gutkin (2012) reads his work to participants, rather than sharing hard copies with them, I did share the editable copies with each participant via email, because I wanted the participants to make changes in the document if they felt compelled to do so. After I sent the stories to each individual, I braced myself, as I was not sure what the responses were going to be. The first response I received was from Kathy. Her response was very positive:

Left a message of utter gratitude and appreciation on your cell phone just now. The gist: it was a brilliant move to employ this creative non-fiction approach, in my humble opinion. The essence of the story was well represented, and the feelings felt so true. Love ya to pieces, Ms. Sarah! Thanks. I feel very seen and heard.

I was incredibly relieved to read this as Kathy's story was the most emotional for me to write and I wasn't sure how she would receive my interpretation of what she experienced. Jerry's response was lukewarm and questioned some of the situations that I depicted. I quickly wrote back and asked for clarification so that I could better tell the story. Jerry wrote back and clarified what I had missed or had misinterpreted. I adjusted his story and sent the manuscript back for his approval. After several exchanges, he wrote back stating that the story captured his life and he appreciated my work. Kevin texted me and stated that he appreciated my hard work but asked if I could fix some of the wording. Kevin and I ended up meeting together to get coffee. We sat side-by-side in a booth in a coffee shop, going through each section of his story, making adjustments that he believed would better represent his life and how he would have expressed his emotions. Nancy, Callie, and Anna all positively responded to my work. Even though I was nervous to put my work before them, I knew that it was absolutely necessary so that they could see how I was planning to represent them in the version up of this document.

As a writer, I was thankful I had the opportunity to work with the participants on both their backstories and their stories. I was very thankful for the feedback they sent me, both constructive and critical, because it reminded me of the purpose of this whole document: to share their stories.

Phase six: Looking for commonalities and differences among participants

Fraser (2004) suggested a two-fold approach to analyzing narrative inquiry. The first part is a within-case analysis that examines each participant's experience. The second part consists of cross-case analysis which looks across the participants stories for commonalities and differences. As I read and re-read through the transcripts, I considered the following question: "What are the emergent themes or patterns across the transcripts?" (p. 195). While I did utilize Fraser's strategy, I often found that the lines blurred, and that I was going between individual stories and a full-group analysis.

Other researchers offered additional perspectives that informed my analysis. Allsup (2017) encouraged music education researchers to think more thematically about our work.

Thematic thinking shares with artistic thinking a quality of openness that is distinct from category-making or coding because the former attach themselves to questions that cannot be answered in a definitive or settled way. . . .Thematic thinking is fluid, and rhizomatic. I like the idea that we can write in (allow for) "spaces" within our texts—open arenas between descriptions and events. Such a poetics of representation would allow me, the reader, to fill in something from my unique vantage point; it would allow me to attach my questions to yours, making something new out of my encounter with you. In this vision, research discoveries would be (re)presented as stereographic in form and quality, resisting the final say in matters of importance. (p. 14)

Keeping Allsup's work in mind, I attempted to construct meanings of the participants' experiences through thinking, reading, and reflecting thematically. Thematic thinking, as Allsup (2017) suggested, allows for additional questions to be asked beyond what is initially posed, in this case, the original research questions. It is clear, as you will read in Chapter 7, that I have many more questions than answers in this document. The openness that Allsup described allows for additional interpretations by the reader, in the much same way a performance is interpreted by an audience member, or a piece of art interpreted by a variety of museum goers. The openness of this approach can be uncomfortable, but also quite liberating, for the lack of boundaries allows for a potentially richer experience for all involved. Reading, thinking, and reflecting beyond the original research questions allowed for additional themes to emerge that I had not even considered when I first began this journey.

Phase seven: Writing academic narratives about personal stories

The actual writing process was the most troubling aspect of "intellectualizing" a person's experience. No longer is the story just the participant's, rather, they have entrusted me to re-tell their story in way that may be interpreted by other readers. Questions that I kept close at hand were "Are the interpretations that you have made fair? Are any too understated—or conversely—bordering on the grandiose?" (Fraser, 2004, p. 196). I was especially mindful of these questions as I was constructing the participants' stories for chapter five.

Writing narratively allows the researcher and participant to co-construct the participant's story. Considering Allsup's (2017) and Stauffer's (2014) questions and using Fraser's various phases assisted me in constructing a narrative with the participants that may encourage additional questioning by readers. Saldaña (2014) described *thinking cyclically* as

purposefully going back and reviewing data, to reveal new thoughts and questions.

Throughout the study, I referred to my notes, maintained contact with the participants, and adjusted my writings as they, and I, saw fit. Through reviewing my researcher's journal, conversation transcripts, participant journal entries, and the group dialogue transcription, I was able to better contextualize meaning and understanding, as the one who is sharing the stories of the participants' experiences.

Surveying the Path: Guide #2 Saldaña (2015)

To better understand my role as a researcher, but also as a human working with other humans, I went back to Johnny Saldaña's (2015) text, *Thinking Qualitatively: Methods of Mind*. I read and re-read the chapter "Thinking Ethically" (pp. 79-92) to better understand this role as researcher and human. I considered the ways that Saldaña encouraged researchers to *think ethically*, *think emotionally*, *think empathetically*, *think darkly*, and *think spiritually* because all of these moments occurred during conversations with the participants, as well as when I read through the transcripts, read their journals, and wrote their portraits.

Thinking ethically goes beyond completing the necessary paperwork prior to the study. Thinking ethically is the way researchers approach the participants as co-constructors of the narrative, in addition to the legally binding aspects of research. "Participants sacrifice their privacy so that the researcher can learn *from* them, not 'about' them" (p. 81). *Thinking emotionally* "means heightened attunement to and awareness of participants' feelings, and how those feelings stimulate action, affect self-concept, and emerge from memories" (p. 82). Saldaña reminded readers that historically, researchers have been told to keep their emotions in check and remain as objective as possible. However, he countered this dated ideology by stating, "I'd like to think that these emotions brought me closer to understanding the social phenomena I was observing rather than invalidated my analyses and findings" (p. 83). A

phrase that comes up too often in social situations is “I know exactly how you feel” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 84). There is no way that I could even begin to understand what the participants in this study have experienced as gay and lesbians. When I struggled to understand and make meaning of their meanings, I journaled and wrote down questions. I sat on the material for days and meditated on my questions. Sometimes I never came to a full understanding, but when that occurred I realized that this was a part of the process.

Thinking empathetically is how the researcher considers the world that the participant lives in and attempts to identify with their experiences. Saldaña reminded us that we will likely judge the participants, but we need to be mindful that this is their story, not our story. We should consider the following questions “What is that person thinking and feeling right now” and “How would I be feeling if that had just happened to me” (p. 86). Saldaña again reminded us that the study is not about the researcher, but about the participant, and that empathy allows us to better understand what it means to be human.

Thinking darkly “reflects on the personal and private selves of those we study, particularly if the study focuses on some aspect of nonnormative social life” (p. 88). Working with gay and lesbian educators meant they could potentially share very personal stories with me that they had not shared with others, and especially not a stranger. I was not sure what to expect, and there were moments that the questions I asked were respectfully ignored. However, many of these questions were eventually answered through subsequent conversations or the journals. Encouraging the participants to journal allowed them to share with me additional events, emotions, and details on their own time and on their own terms. They could hit delete if they wanted and maintain that utmost privacy to themselves. There were moments, such as when reading one of Kathy’s journal’s that I became concerned for her mental well-being. Her struggle was a result of losing her partner in 2017 and finding

herself single and alone for the first time in 44 years. Her writing conveyed the excruciating pain to a degree that I contacted my adviser and asked her if I should intervene. She suggested that I email Kathy and acknowledge that I had read her journal, and that I wanted to make sure that she was okay. Kathy had missed a couple of journals, so I used that as an opportunity to check in with her through a string of emails:

Sarah: You have really opened up your heart during these writings and I hope that all is okay, or will be okay, with you. I am sure that this is going to be a tough time of year and please know that I am thinking of you. Thanks, Kathy. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kathy: Not so good with me right now. I have dipped down deeper into grief in the past three weeks and haven't had the energy or the heart to journal. I get up and get to work, and come home and go to bed, and cry, and sleep.

I believe this is a normal part of the grieving process, and I won't stay in this place, but for right now, I just can't write. Too painful.

Sarah: No worries. I was gathering that much from your last few entries. Thinking of you. I hope you can find someone to talk with about this.

Kathy: Thanks. I have a counselor and a grief group here in town, so yes, I do have support. Thanks, Sarah.

This simple exchange shared with Kathy was very powerful. This strengthened our relationship well beyond “researcher” and “participant.” When I was writing Kathy’s story, I could feel her pain, which helped me construct her narrative.

When *thinking spiritually*, Saldaña cautions researchers about engaging in discussions about religious beliefs or faith because these can be incredibly personal matters. During our conversations, the participants shared with me their own faith backgrounds as part of their

growing up. As you will read, some of the participants had very strong relationships with God. Although not initiated by my questioning, the participants shared these stories throughout the course of our time together. Eventually, I did want to learn more about how religion played a role in their lives, as, for several of the participants, their faith was circumscribed by their sexuality. The tension between the relationship with God, and the pervasive anti-gay rhetoric that is often associated with Christianity, had me struggling to understand why these individuals would continue to consider a relationship with a church or a religious community. I emailed my advisor with my journal entry from August 16, 2017, because I wasn't sure how to pull myself out of this dissonance I was experiencing:

Religion. This is really sticking with me right now. Especially in light of everything that has occurred this summer with #45 and most recently with Charlottesville.¹¹ Religion played a HUGE part in Callie and Kevin's lives, to the point where they wanted to be a nun or priest, respectively. The moral implications of religion and holding teachers to a high moral ground. The arguments against homosexuality is that it is a "sin" and "not natural"—in the sense that two men or two women cannot create another human being. Nancy was part of a church and her father was the layperson who was tasked at getting rid of the organist (who was gay??) who was bringing his gay friends to church. Because of that experience, Nancy believed that her dad would not be supportive of her sexuality and neither would her church. Kathy converted to the Baha'i faith because of the perceived openness of the religion, but actually has a harsh stance on homosexuality.

¹¹ On August 13, 2017 white supremacists met in Charlottesville, Virginia for a "Unite the Right" rally. They were met with counter-protestors and violence erupted resulting in one casualty and over 30 injuries.

I'm just trying to understand what it must feel like to be a part of a community that condemns a population that eventually you are a part of. This is where my privilege of being white and straight gets in the way of my understanding. Did these individuals explicitly hear that homosexuality is a sin? If so, at what point did their sexuality and religious beliefs collide? Is this the root of all evil? Is the underlying moral virtues keeping them in the closet?

I honestly didn't think this would be a part of the study, but perhaps this is truly the root of why gays and lesbians struggle to come out, whether they are actively involved with a religious organization or not. Damnit, I should have found someone who is actively involved in the church AND who is gay AND who is out.

Dr. Schmidt responded with the following email.

These are important thoughts. Keep exploring them with all the participants when "religion" or "the church" comes up. It's important to find out how they're defining "religion" or "the church," because those definitions are very personal and individual. As you point out, there are churches that are "welcoming," "open," and/or "affirming," where gays are quite welcome. If you think you have time, it's possible to add another participant whom you purposefully select—think carefully about whether that's wise. The meaning of religion to them is what is important.

Journaling was likely the single most important form of reflective thinking I could utilize. Journaling also turned into a form of analysis, as you will see in Appendix H with group dialogue transcription and analysis. Allowing myself to parse out my thoughts through free writing made it possible to see connections between participants. By not constricting myself to established codes or phrases, themes emerged that eventually allowed me to better understand the lives of the participants.

A Clearing in the Forest: Creative Non-Fiction-Based Research

I realized during the writing process that a standard research format of presenting participant backgrounds, analyzing their experiences, discussion and conclusion, would not honor the participants in a way I believed to be the most meaningful and impactful. When considering *how* I would write these stories I was confronted with a certain amount of uneasiness. A chronological format did not seem adequate, nor did it seem appropriate for narrative work. Most important to me when writing these stories was that the participants' voices were heard. I turned to Patricia Leavy (2015) and her description of “fiction-based research” or “fiction as a research practice.”

Fiction as a research practice is well suited for portraying the complexity of lived experience because it allows for details, nuance, specificity, contexts, and texture; cultivating empathy and self-reflection through relatable characters; and disrupting dominant ideologies or stereotypes by showing and not telling (which can be used to build critical consciousness and raise awareness). (pp. 55-56)

Cultivating empathy and self-reflection through relatable characters was foundational to how I approached writing through the eyes and voices of the participants. Fiction as a research practice seemed to provide one option for sharing stories.

When we enter into a short story or novel we can become enthralled—totally immersed in the story world and eager to read on. . . . Fiction has the unique capabilities for creating and disseminating social research because it is engaging, evocative, and accessible to broad audiences. Through fiction we are able to express ourselves freely, revel the inner lives of characters, and create believable worlds that readers enter. (Leavy, 2015, p. 55)

Upon sharing a draft of my description utilizing a fiction-based research approach with my advisor, Dr. Marg Schmidt, she asked me a thoughtful question: “How do you think the participants would feel if you called their lives ‘fiction?’” This struck a deep chord with me, and we discussed what other terms I might be able to describe the stories you will encounter in Chapter Five. Dr. Schmidt suggested “creative non-fiction” which sounded like the perfect descriptor for how I wrote the participant’s stories. Using the conversations and the journal entries exchanged between the participants and myself, I constructed stories of their lives. This style of writing puts me in a precarious situation, as you the reader, might be wondering about the validity of the data. Allsup (2017) problematized this thinking as one of the problems with the “technologies” (p. 6) that shape and direct data. Allsup encouraged music education researchers to consider themselves as creative writers, and the ways in which we can work “within and around” (p. 2) these pre-established forms that we so often find ourselves in when writing research papers. In this case, I am working within and around a dissertation study.

When considering *what* “creative nonfiction” is, I turned to Lee Gutkin’s (2012) description of creative nonfiction: “In some ways, creative nonfiction is like jazz—it’s a rich mix of flavors, ideas, and techniques, some of which are newly invented and others as old as writing itself” (p. 6). Gutkin suggested how the words “creative” and “nonfiction” are themselves a description of the literary form.

The word “creative” refers to the use of literary craft, the techniques fiction writers, playwrights, and poets employ to present nonfiction—factually accurate prose about real people and events—in a compelling, vivid, dramatic manner. The goal is to make nonfiction stories read like fiction so that your readers are as enthralled by fact as they are by fantasy. But the stories are true.

The word “creative” in creative nonfiction has to do with how the writer conceives ideas, summarizes situations, defines personalities, describes places—and shapes and presents information. “Creative” doesn’t mean inventing what didn’t happen, reporting and describing what wasn’t there. It doesn’t mean that the writer has a license to lie. The word “nonfiction” means the material is true. (pp. 6-7)

Using the participants’ stories which they shared with me through their words, in our conversations, and in their journals, I constructed stories that readers will hopefully be able to relate to in a way that allows them to interpret their own meanings and construct their own understandings. I took the lead from Leavy (2015) and intentionally left gaps for reader interpretation, so that you (the reader) may “actively develop empathic connections to the characters (and the kinds of people they represent)” (p. 56). Through all of this I worked with each participant to construct a narrative that we both believe represents them as a human, as a gay or lesbian, and a music educator. Each story is unique and cannot be generalized to a broader population. Our hope, Kevin, Callie, Kathy Nancy, Jerry, Anna, and myself is that you, the reader, might be able to relate to them in some way and discover some commonalities, develop empathy, and consider the possibilities for the future of our profession.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology that I utilized for this study. Through narrative inquiry I generated data with the six participants to better understand their lives as gay and lesbian music educators. Data were generated through a variety of means that included one-on-one conversations, journal entries that the participants sent to me, a visual narrative that included pictures and descriptions, and a final dialogue that included all six participants. Data analysis took place through reading and re-reading of

transcripts and journal entries. I also listened and watched videos of each conversation multiple times, as voice inflections and body movements were not part of the written transcription. Throughout the data analysis I utilized my personal journal to write down thoughts, concerns, and my frustrations. Dr. Stauffer reminded me that “writing is a form of analysis,” so as I was writing, I was also analyzing—not only the data, but my own researcher bias.

Chapters 4-6 will offer the different forms of written analysis that occurred throughout this study. Chapter 4 will provide the participant backstories. Chapter 5 presents each participant through creative nonfiction story. Chapter 6 pulls together themes that came through as I read through the data.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT BACKSTORIES

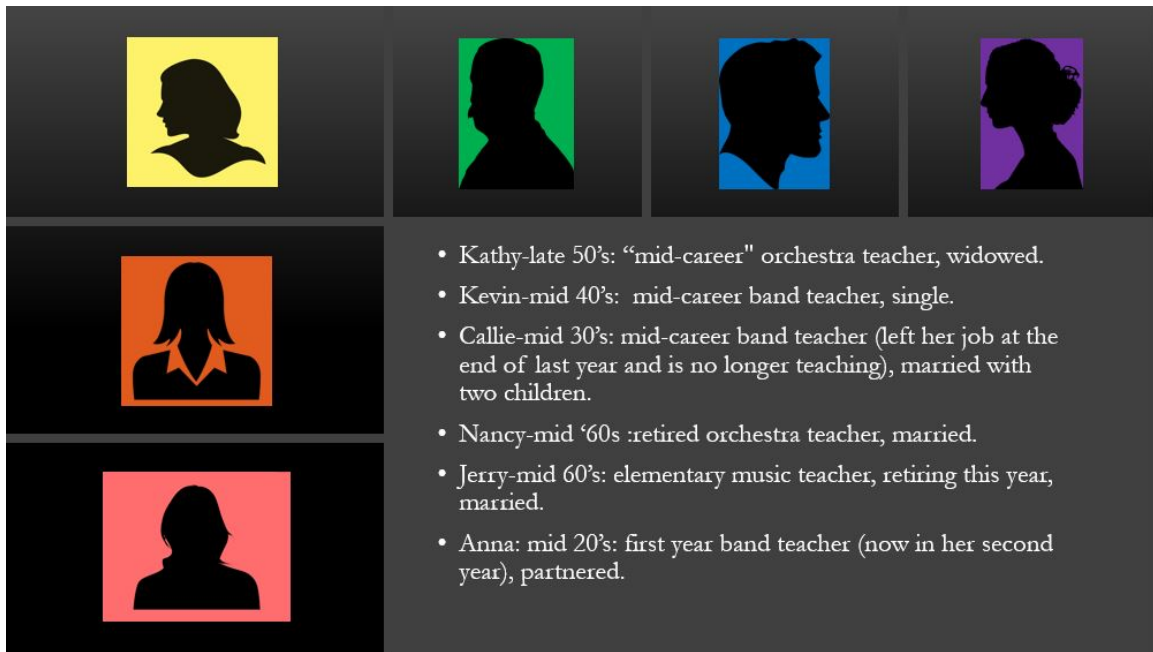


Figure 3. Participant descriptions

Introduction

Understanding backgrounds can provide contextual information that may not otherwise be gleaned from a short story. This chapter will provide a brief background of each participant that highlights their early childhood, their musical experiences, and other information that the participants believed would help the reader to better understand their back story. All names and locations have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants.

Kathy

Born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, Kathy is a dreamer and incredibly spiritual person. Raised by her parents to love books and music, Kathy, 63, is articulate with her words, both in speaking and writing. Early memories for Kathy include having “books about

quests” read to her and her brother and sisters by their mother. A huge maple tree—“Our Ship of Dreams” like those in fairy tales they read—nested the three siblings in their backyard as they read through their summer breaks. During one of our conversations, Kathy recalled a treasured family moment, “The most precious and regular family outing was going to the big Frederick and Nelson department store, riding the gleaming escalators to the 10th floor bookstore where we were allowed to purchase as many books as we could carry.”

Kathy’s music was the second most important thing to her growing up, and eventually moved into the most important form of expression for her as she got older. Kathy’s father inherited the family business, so Kathy was aware of her family’s privilege, and especially their ability and willingness to drive her to lessons and youth symphony orchestra rehearsals, which entailed traveling through a mountain pass. An early experience in a summer music camp confirmed to Kathy that she was meant to be a musician.

So here I am in the back of the cello section in the second orchestra. The less experienced orchestra, and I can barely play. The conductor stood in front of us and said, "Every single one of you is so important to this experience even if you can only play a few notes. Your attention, your focus, your good notes all contribute," and it rang a gong for me. I was so taken of the fact that I could be an important part of this experience.

Kathy was encouraged by the camp director to pursue cello lessons. Her parents supported this and continued to encourage Kathy and music making into college. Kathy’s relationships with her cello instructors were incredibly important to her. She recalled working with her first instructor and how he pushed her, but also instilled a sense of belief in herself.

Steven was the teacher of my dreams. He sat next to me; he gave me very difficult

things to play. I played the Boccherini A major cello sonata that frankly I had nowhere near the technique for, but he would sit next to me every week and play it with me, and say, "You can do this." He just inundated me with that kind of confidence.

These powerful experiences led Kathy to several colleges before she found a cello teacher that she felt a strong connection with. It was also in college where she met, and fell in love with, her husband, Roger.

Kevin

Almost like the character Harold Hill in Meredith Wilson's *The Music Man*, Kevin is a self-proclaimed "band guy." Indeed, Kevin played the role of the womanizing character in his high school's production of the Wilson musical. Born and raised in a small Midwestern town, Kevin grew up on a farm and in a family of "hard workers"—a trait that that has remained consistent throughout his adult life and a characteristic that Kevin embraces.

Kevin, 45 years old, is the youngest of five children, one sister and three brothers, raised in a devout Missouri Synod Lutheran church. Kevin's early life activities included those stereotypical of small farm-towns: sports, church, and music. However, for Kevin, sports quickly found a backseat to church, music, and academics.

Kevin started playing piano because of his admiration for his sister, who also played piano and is fourteen years older than Kevin. His piano lessons turned into organ lessons and he found himself playing organ for church services, something that he still does when he returns home to visit family. He found himself playing around on the drums in his school band room at an early age and thought he would play drums in the school band. This changed when it came time to pick out instruments, as he shared:

And then what it amounted to was that I had a conversation with my buddy, Jim, who had already picked bassoon, like a year ahead of me and we were talking about this and I said, “I think I’m going to try to do drums and piano.” . . . And he was like, “Oh you want to play something that gets melody or has whatever, you should totally do that.” So, then that got my head out of that box a little bit. There was all the other instruments and I tried them. And then when they came over and showed us the French horn and the baritone I was like oh, you know what, nobody else is going to play this. And I’m like, I kind of like that idea, I kind of liked that I wasn’t going to be like one out of seven or eight. I kind of liked that I might be the only guy, the only person. And then what I also liked, this is so stupid, but ooh, it’s big and nobody else plays it so I’m going to pick that. So, I picked the baritone horn.

From there, Kevin had many musical successes. He participated in all-state and regional ensembles, sang in church choirs, and played in piano competitions. He had a lasting relationship with his band director who, he claimed “was probably as much of a parent to me as my own parents.” His parents were very supportive of his musical endeavors throughout his high school years and seemingly never questioned why he might not be more involved with sports.

As Kevin was experiencing success in school, both academically and as class president and valedictorian, and with his musical achievements, he was also very involved with his church. Kevin shared with me that in addition to being a place of worship, the church was also the community social hour on most Sundays, and was important to his family. As Kevin began to consider plans beyond high school, he was torn between going into music education or to the seminary. According to Kevin, “the two most respected jobs in my community were teacher and pastor.”

Callie

Callie's southern drawl is subtle enough that if you are not listening close enough, you might miss it. Born and raised in the southern part of the United States, Callie, 33, doesn't present herself as a southern belle. Rather, it seems that her move to the Midwest over a decade ago has had an influence on her accent as well as the way in which she views the world. Callie's world is speckled by moments of sheer happiness and struggles with depression and anxiety. An only child, she watched as her parents struggled with their own marriage, often playing the dual role of daughter and confidant to her mother, a role that seemingly affected her relationship with her mother. Callie was devoted to music and her Catholic upbringing. She also did very well academically, earning valedictorian status. Inspired by her grandmother and mother, both musicians and music teachers, Callie began taking piano lessons when she was seven and continued to take lessons through college. In sixth grade, she started to learn clarinet to be in band, the same instrument that both her mother and grandmother played.

Callie experienced much success in music, participating in band, jazz band, and marching band, as well as small chamber ensembles. Her success in music did not outweigh her faith and commitment to the church. At one point in Callie's high school years, she seriously considered going into the convent to become a nun. She was "really into the church" and "thought that it was like a calling because I wasn't really attracted to men," even though she had dated two boys. However, her parents were not supportive of the Callie's desires to pursue a lifelong commitment to the Catholic church, and, along with her grandparents, encouraged her to pursue music. Callie believed herself to be a promising musician, under her mother's encouragement.

Sarah: So, you were interested in pursuing a music degree. What made you think that you wanted to be a music teacher or continue with music?

Callie: Well I was good at it, and, I don't know, I felt like I was shepherded into it a little bit too.

Sarah: What do you mean?

Callie: I think that was like, my outlet too. If I was upset I would go play the piano or something like that, and my mom was like, "You're really into this why don't you pursue this a little more?" But then I started teaching private lessons to younger kids in high school and helping out with sectionals. I was a section leader and stuff and I liked helping people.

Callie's decision to pursue music was not one that was made lightly and was encouraged by her band director. However, as an only child, Callie's parents were quite protective of her and did not want her to go far for college, which limited her to local colleges. She received substantial scholarship money from a local Catholic University, but her parents were not keen on her attending there. She was also interested in pursuing theology or psychology, but felt the need to appease her parents and grandparents, who were helping pay for college, so she ended up attending the local public university and pursuing music.

Nancy

Born and raised in a large suburb located outside a major metropolitan city on the west coast of the United States, Nancy has spent the last year enjoying retirement after 35 years of teaching music, most of which was orchestra. The oldest of four children, and the only girl, Nancy, 66, spent many of her days playing sports with her three brothers on the one acre of land her family owned. Nancy grew up in a privileged family that afforded her

the experiences that children during that time likely could only dream about. The family's expansive backyard had a pool and a baseball field, which Nancy and her brothers enjoyed frequently as they were growing up. Nancy's father served as the consulate to South Africa, which meant that Nancy's family hosted many foreign visitors to their house. Because of the exposure to a variety of people and cultures when growing up, Nancy's world view was likely more diverse than many people her age.

When she was a young girl, Nancy struggled to find her place in school. Often bullied for wearing glasses and her weight, as well as being a self-proclaimed tomboy, Nancy found pride in her musical ability. She was introduced to the clarinet by her mom, who had always wanted to play clarinet, but was not able to because of her family's financial situation. When Nancy turned nine, her mom went out and bought a clarinet for her to play. Nancy did not have a say in choosing the instrument, but quickly took to it. After a year of playing, Nancy's family moved to another city, where the local school band was a year behind her. Nancy's mom took the initiative and found a private lesson teacher to keep Nancy challenged and engaged in music. Nancy's brothers joined band, but not with the same kind of dedication as Nancy. Her elementary and junior high band teacher took notice of her dedication and increasing improvement, and encouraged Nancy to switch over to bassoon, which she did for the remainder of junior high. In high school, Nancy played clarinet more than bassoon, and commented that her teacher provided her with many additional opportunities to grow musically through featured solos and participation in honors ensembles.

Nancy made the decision to become a music teacher because she believed it to be her role in life.

I think I always kind of wanted to be a teacher of something, probably because I was always put in that position with my three little brothers. I had to take care of them, and teach them things, and I guess I was kind of good at it; they kept me making me do it. So, teaching was kind of fun, you know, I liked doing that part. And when it wasn't going to be math, it turned out to be music because that's what I was good at. As early as seventh grade, Nancy knew where she was going to attend college. In conversations, she shared with me a unique story about this process:

Nancy: So I went to [private Midwest college]. I don't know if you ever heard of this TV show? There was a TV show called "College Bowl," and it was teams from colleges all over that competed in answering questions quickly and correctly. I used to watch it all the time when I was in junior high, and [this college] seemed to always be on it. And they showed promos about the college in between, so I had decided that I wanted to go to [this college] when I was in seventh grade.

Sarah: Oh wow, based on that show.

Nancy: Based on that show, yeah. They always won too, it seemed, so it was kind of a directive in that way. I thought I was going to go to the college as a math major because I always wanted to teach math. That was what my original idea was, but when I hit trigonometry in high school I didn't get it. It was the same year I started winning contests on the clarinet. That was my instrument, clarinet. I won concerto competitions, I won districts, I went to state, and I won a scholarship. I was like, oh [this college] has conservatory also so I guess I can still go [there] and I'll go for music in the conservatory instead of math in the college. So that's what I did.

Nancy's parents were supportive of their daughter attending a school in the Midwest, despite the distance from home. The college that Nancy attended was traditionally liberal, and her parents were aware of this, despite her father's relatively conservative social views.

Jerry

The youngest of four children, Jerry spent most of his childhood as the only child in the house. A span of seven years between Jerry and the next older sibling meant that Jerry was "a wondrous joy, surprise, or a mistake, depending on what I had done and [my parents'] mood." Jerry's childhood upbringing may be what some describe as stereotypical of those growing in the Midwest during the 1960s: a strict household, a working father and a stay at home mother. Jerry spent the first half of his childhood in a larger city, and the second half living on a farm with his parents and his older brother. The school community in the nearby farming town was not particularly kind to Jerry. Jerry was not involved in sports, and preferred the company of fellow bandmates and young scholars.

Jerry's journey into music began at a young age when he observed a scenario that involved his sister and the family piano.

My sister, she's 10 years older than me, and she's the only remaining sibling I have. She told me that when she was taking piano lessons in her teen years, and when she was about 15 or 16, she said that she was practicing her piano lesson and getting frustrated, and she slammed down the cover on the piano and walked away in a huff as teenagers do and I was there in the living room. I went over and opened the lid and I played her piano lesson for her she said. That made her totally furious. That this little five or six-year-old brother, who hadn't had any lessons was doing her lesson for her better than she could.

Jerry's reverence for music continued with piano lessons, then violin, trumpet,

trombone, baritone, and choir. Jerry began violin in fifth grade. When his family moved to the farm, his new school did not have a string program, but did have a band program. Jerry started playing the trumpet his father had played—he “had no choice in the matter.” In middle school, his mom bought an old trombone at a garage sale and gave it to Jerry for Christmas. Jerry also joined choir in middle school, but that eventually gave way to band in high school during his freshman and sophomore years. Jerry’s high school band lacked a low baritone section, and Jerry’s teacher switched him over to baritone. Throughout his high school years, Jerry became a “fill-in” brass player as needed in band.

When it was time for Jerry to decide on his post-high school plans, he was torn. Jerry did well academically and, due to the low pay, his parents were not particularly supportive of his decision to pursue music education. Despite this, Jerry decided to begin college as music major at a small state university. Not happy with the lack of academic rigor, Jerry transferred to another larger state university where he continued his music major. During his college career, Jerry’s parents were not entirely supportive of his chosen career path in music, and he even reconsidered his parents’ suggestions to change to a major that might make him more money. He made several degree switches that included business and engineering. But he finally came to the realization that his real passion was music, so he made the final switch to music education.

Jerry fully intended to teach high school music after he graduated from college. During the two years after college, he taught K-12 music. In that time, he concluded that he was not particularly fond of high school students, but instead, thoroughly enjoyed working with elementary students. Realizing this, Jerry decided to pursue his master’s degree with an emphasis on elementary music. “[That] is where my love was. That was one of the best decisions ever.”

Anna

Anna is an only child and grew up in a relatively middle-upper-class community. Both of Anna's parents are government workers and worked full-time when Anna was growing up. Anna had the company of two German au pairs when she was growing up, who also helped raised her. Anna never desired a brother or sister, and as a child was content socializing with friends, but also sitting in her room for "four hours to just detox." She described herself as a "extroverted introvert." Anna was very involved in sports as a young girl and described herself as a tomboy. She played "boys' baseball" until she was 12 and then transferred over to softball, where she enjoyed the competition until she got injured and eventually made the decision to quit.

Anna's musical life began as early as she was born. "Well, as the story goes I guess, when I was born, my mom was like, "Does she have all her fingers and toes?" "Yeah, she looks great." "Well, she's going to play a musical instrument someday." Anna's mom enrolled her into early childhood music classes when Anna was about two years old. When Anna turned five, her mother signed her up for piano lessons. Anna was not particularly interested in piano and her mom had to "nag" her to practice. Fourth grade signaled the beginning of band, and Anna's mom wanted Anna to play an instrument. Anna's dad, whose musical life was limited, seemed rather "ambivalent" to the whole process. Anna shared with me the following conversation between her parents that led her to signing up for band.

So, when sign ups came up to play a new instrument in fourth grade my mom told my dad, "We need to sign her up for a new instrument." My dad was like, "She already plays piano, and we bought a piano, that's fine." And my mom said, "You don't get it. She really doesn't like it, she's going to quit." So, they said, "Go

ahead, go to the instrument petting zoo or whatever and pick an instrument.” She said, “You can play anything you want, you just have to carry it.”

Anna chose trumpet and experienced great success early on in her musical training. She played trumpet in fourth and fifth grade and really enjoyed, it but struggled with the range, which was further complicated when she got braces. Her middle school teacher saw Anna’s potential and suggested that she switch over to baritone. Anna made the switch and fell in love with the instrument. Her passion for music led her to participate in all-county and all-state ensembles every year. She also picked up trombone so that she could play in jazz band. Anna’s parents wanted the best for their daughter, so they made the investment in professional model instruments as early as eighth grade. They also invested in private lessons for her and took advantage of the military musicians that were nearby.

My parents found military band teachers for me. So I had really good instruction. I guess around 10th-ish grade I switched to my current/former teacher, his name is [Steve]. He was a career principal Navy band guy and he was notorious for being really tough and kicking kids out of his studio, but we got along really well and he really took my playing to the next level. My parents bought me another professional euphonium. I will say, my parents, I’ve been really fortunate that my parents have really financially supported my music too, because I was definitely good at it, but I wouldn't have been as good of a musician if they hadn't been able to pay for these lessons and take me to them and give me the best tools. Around 10th grade or so I really got bit by the marching band bug and I was super into that. I was chosen to be drum major for my junior year.

Anna was a high-achiever in her academics to the point that when she registered for college she had enough credits from her Advanced Placements classes that she was able to

enroll as a sophomore. Anna's father was an engineer, and she always enjoyed taking things apart and trying to figure out what made them work. In her mind, she thought she would go to college and study engineering and minor in music performance. However, when she attended drum major camp the summer before her junior year in high school, her mind was changed. She fell in love with being in front of an ensemble and set her mind to go into music education. Anna ended up attending a large Midwest university where she thrived in the close-knit music community.

CHAPTER 5

THE PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

You learn from the part of the story you focus on. I need to tell my story properly.

—*Hannah Gadsby*

Prelude

Each story in this chapter is unique to the individual and was crafted in a way that I believe best represents them in the times and places that I got to know them. Fraser (2004) wrote, “[S]tories are an important vehicle for creating meaning. Whether it is at home or work, stories are used to construct our lived realities” (p. 196). Writing these stories allowed me to create better meaning of the participants’ lives as lived. It is my hope that you will connect with more deeply with each individual through their stories.

KATHY’S STORY¹²

Wwakwan, Great Grandmother

You who are the Void,

the first inhale,

the Sacred Emptiness,

be with me.

Help me to simply be with what is

to feel the infinite spaciousness within me

¹² Kathy shared this prayer with me during our second interview. I was struck by the beauty of the prayer and Kathy’s way with words in both our conversations and her journals. I felt compelled to honor Kathy and her ability with words by writing in journal form. The journal entries are a combination of her words and my attempts to bring stories that she shared with me throughout our conversations together in a meaningful way.

to expand my capacity to hold in my heart
all of the world
all parts of myself
those I find acceptable
and those I want to change.
Hear the voice of this little one,
your great granddaughter,
You who are the Great Silence,
teach me to know of your living presence,
to find the strength of the dark womb
that can hold it all;
the grief and the sorrow
the joy and celebration,
that I might truly learn
to be with
myself
and the world.
Aho!

Oriah Mountain Dreamer

Dear Wwkwakwan (March, 1994)-

I don't know what to do! My life has turned upside down and I am feeling something that I never knew existed. My dear husband . . . the love of my life, my confidant, my rock, the father to my children . . . my god, my children. What will I do?

Kathy had found the new love of her life. Caroline was Kathy's cello student of four

years. Caroline was eleven years older than Kathy and they connected from the first lesson. Kathy was married to a man and had two children with him; however, she could not live in denial of her love for Caroline.

Dear Wwakwan (July, 1994)-

Today I told Roger that I don't love him anymore. I didn't actually tell him why, just that I don't love him like I used to. I was devastated but relieved. We have decided to separate, but I know that my heart belongs with Caroline. The kids know that we are separating but I have not actually told anyone about Caroline. That is too risky. I've read some things in the newspaper about women who lose their kids because they are seen as unfit to be mothers if they are . . . well, you know . . . like me. I must protect my husband. I must protect my children. This town is just too small for these kinds of things to get out. I must protect my parents—they would never understand.

Am I too old for this? I am 45. Who completely changes their sexuality when they are 40? What am I actually feeling? Is it just the attention that I receive from Caroline or is there an actual attraction there? I don't even know why I am questioning all of this. Well, of course, I do. I am not supposed to be this. I have kids for god sake. I am married to a MAN. But I love her. I want to be with her.

Dear Wwakwan (September, 1994)-

Caroline and I have been exchanging emails. She is such a beautiful writer and shares so much with me through her words. I think I fall in love with her more deeply every time I read one of her letters. She absolutely does not want to tell anyone about us. She is petrified because her parents have basically disowned her. I can't imagine letting go of my children because of something they cannot control. I love Caroline, and I wish to sing it from the mountains, but I cannot.

That being said, yesterday Mary, my dear Mary found out that her mother is a . . . lesbian. I was downstairs reading one of the emails that Caroline sent me when I heard Mary coming down the stairs. I immediately blanked the screen. I thought to myself, what are you doing Kathy. So I put the letter back up

that I was looking at and she scanned that letter while we were talking and she was next to the computer. She didn't ask anything about it but last night she said, "Mommy, are you gay?" I said, "Yes." She was shocked because she's in middle school and gay is the bad thing. So she said, "Really? Do you want to marry Caroline?" And I said, "Absolutely." She called me a pervert. I know she doesn't mean this, but she is going to struggle with this. I'M still struggling with this.

Kathy's struggle with her sexuality conflicted with her desire to teach private lessons. After she officially divorced from her husband, she and Caroline moved in together. It was at this time, Kathy decided that perhaps she should let her students and her students' parents know who the woman was in her house.

Dear Wwakwan (1995)-

Last week I told Bella and her mother the "big" news. I wanted to let them know who Caroline is, in case Bella and I were in the middle of a lesson and Caroline popped her head in or walked through the living room. When I told Bella's mom there was no reaction, absolutely no reaction. She didn't say anything or indicate that she was uncomfortable at all. What she did was she went to someone who's a mutual friend of ours who teaches in the high school in our town, still teaches there. She said, "This is awful! This is a terrible thing that Kathy has done and I won't have my daughter anywhere near her." Then she spoke to other people that were also parents of students and said, "This is a terrible thing." Now, to be honest, I don't know exactly what words she used but it was clear that she was unhappy and uncomfortable and she wasn't willing to be direct with me about it and I didn't get direct with her about it because I was so horrified that she was unhappy about something that was such an unimportant thing. Who my partner is has nothing to do with how I teach but she was from a very conservative Christian church and I think she was very uncomfortable.

I honestly did not realize that this was going to be a big deal. I thought I was doing the students a favor by letting them know my new living arrangement. Am I really that naive to think that this will not impact my studio? What does this mother think I am going to do, recruit her child? Good grief, this is just a

part of me-this does not change who I am or how I teach.

Kathy's fears were supported by longtime held public fears that by inviting young people into her house, she might recruit them to become lesbians, or even worse, potentially assault or sexually abuse the children. Kathy did not feel safe teaching in her house anymore and therefore took a job teaching in a public school, where she felt *safer* because she could protect her private identity.

Dear Wwkwkw (2009)-

I find so much joy in teaching. These young people have such a passion for making music and I get to help them with that. I am reminded daily of my own journey as a young musician and my teachers who pushed me to the highest level. Today was solo and ensemble and I cannot be more proud of the students. I am smiling as I write this, not because of their successes, but just that overall teacher glow. I took 27 kids and 5 of them are going to state so I'm very pleased about that. Pretty high after that. I am so fortunate that I get to run the string program from beginning to end. If there are any deficiencies, that is on me. In their early years, I am very involved in choosing the music and coaching them and doing run throughs with them in preparation for solos and ensembles. So they are very successful and I don't have too many surprises, and often I'm just over the moon happy about how well we do. But the high school kids have pretty much carte blanche about how to choose, what to choose and my highest group, my group that has two seniors in it chose the Cherubini quintet. The Cherubini of all things! Somehow they managed to get through it but it was almost like a slow motion train wreck that ended up not being a train wreck. Those kids . . . they surprise me at every corner.

My students don't know how lucky they are to have a professional string player for a teacher. They have no idea how much time and work I spend on them, rewriting parts, reconfiguring seating assignments for maximum equality and encouragement, purchasing music that is eclectic and engaging. Because my own junior and high school directors were band guys, I know how important it is for string players to be trained by another (in this case professional) string player. They get a big, beautiful sound in their orchestras because of

our work with bow technique. Their intonation is... a work in progress, but always improving. Their positions are so important for their long-term physical health as well as the good sound that comes from correct positions. Their emotions, their engagement, their mutual support of each other, and their commitment to the program are all crucial to their success.

Kathy's dedication to her students revealed itself in the way she spoke of teaching and watching the students grow during the six years that she worked with them. Kathy was hired to begin a string program in the school district. This allowed her the autonomy to make programmatic decisions that would impact the students through their entire school music experiences. Kathy teaches in three different schools and finds comfort in the ability to move between schools with little interaction with her colleagues. She does not have pictures on her desks because she is never in one place long enough to enjoy the pictures.

Dear Wwkwkw (2013)-

Married! Caroline and I celebrated our love for each other at church today. It was a small service with just a few friends from church. We chose this church because this is the first place that really recognized us as a couple, and the one place we felt okay to be out together as a couple. It feels odd to call Caroline my wife, because I'm her wife! I think partner just feels more natural to me. We have been together for so long it would be silly to change labels now. She is still my Caroline and I'm still her Kathy. I think being married does make it feel a bit more acceptable, but I'm still not going to go out and announce my sexuality. There really is no reason to do so, what might that do? I guess some people might say something positive, but I would rather not have to think about the what ifs.

Despite same-sex marriage not becoming legal in all fifty states until 2015, Kathy and Caroline lived in a state that recognized same-sex unions. However, this was a state that had, in the past, had amendments put to vote that would prohibit gays and lesbians from teaching. Kathy's previous experiences of coming out, and the negative implications, paired

with the historical political movements against gays and lesbians, led Kathy to remain status quo with her sexuality, rather than celebrating it, as many would when same-sex marriage was legalized.

Dear Wwkwkw (2016)-

Why are you doing this to me, creator? What have I done to deserve this torment? My love. My life . . . my Caroline. Cancer? Why? You cannot take her away from me. She is my everything.

On the first day of the new school year, Kathy received this news. Caroline was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer. Caroline was reluctant to try traditional forms of cancer treatment, so Kathy and Caroline traveled to Mexico for holistic treatments with hopes that Caroline's life expectancy would improve. This meant that Kathy had to miss three weeks of school at the beginning of the school year, which is often frowned upon. Up until this point she had not disclosed her sexuality nor her marital status to her administrators, but in order to request the time off, she needed to provide a rationale. Her very safe public school, where she was able to remain private about her personal life, started to become less private.

Dear Wwkwkw (2016)-

My therapist told me today that I need to take time off to spend with Caroline. "You might want to consider taking time off on the family medical leave act because you don't want to have regrets." I kind of laughed and said, "I'm not really the regretting kind of person but I hear you." I get so much from my symphony job, I get so much from my teaching, and it's very difficult to be with Caroline right now. She argues with me because of the cancer and the amount of medication she is taking to try and relieve the pain. She argues with me and says that I haven't given her the right medication or that something has happened or vice versa. It's very hard to be around her . . . I am losing her. She needs my kindness, my patience, and sometimes I just don't have that all the time.

I want to be with Caroline, but I hate seeing her go through this. She finally shared with our church community what is going on because the treatments that we were receiving in Mexico have not been working. For the longest time she didn't want anyone to know. I could only keep my mouth shut for so long. I have nobody to talk to about this except for the few close friends I have and my therapist. I have to keep my shit together at school because I don't need the stress of dealing with what students might think, or worse, what their parents might say, so I just go to school and stay in teacher mode. She is getting worse and it seems that our hopes for healing are dwindling day by day.

Dear Wwkwkw (February 9, 2017)-

I am alone. My Caroline has left this earth. I held her during her final breaths. Her head in my lap as I stroked her hair. Tears streaming down my face I told her to let go and go be with our creator. I told her I would be okay. I am not okay. I can't write. I can't breathe.

Dear Wwkwkw (February 11, 2017)-

Why??? Why are you punishing me for my sins, creator? To take my Caroline, and then my father? My heart broke with Caroline, but now my body is unable to move. My father, the one who instilled my love for music and life. You took him from me. You took both of them from me.

Kathy lost two family members in a two-day span, which caused insurmountable grief. When Kathy came out to her parents that she was a lesbian, they were not accepting of her. Her parents supported Roger, her ex-husband, more than their daughter. She and Caroline spent holidays alone, and when the families would come together for various events, there were tensions. However, Kathy still loved her father for how he shaped her early experiences with music. Kathy's parents were incredibly supportive of her love for music and sacrificed time and money to provide her with the best opportunities that were available to her.

Dear Wwkwkw (April, 2017)-

Rough day today. I miss Caroline so much. It's hard to stop crying when I'm at home, alone. Feels like, at 63, I'm going to be alone for the rest of my life. I've been having UTI (urinary tract infection) symptoms, and that's upsetting. I have symptoms of pain, burning, blood in the urine. My acupuncturist says I am going through a crisis, and need to decide if I want to live or not. No shit, Sherlock. So damned hard to get through the day, every day.

I'm playing for a friend's funeral on Sunday. I spent an hour with his wife last night, and we compared our partners' death stories. Sounds morbid, I know, but was strangely comforting. I'm worrying about tomorrow afternoon. I'm on the audition panel (as principal cellist) for the assistant principal cello job. I've had an absolutely wonderful stand partner, but in order for her to be paid as an assistant principal and not a section player, she (and 6 other players, including her husband) needs to audition. I hate auditions. I fear that she won't make the finals, even though she probably will and I'm just stressing over nothing. I worry that I won't be able to judge accurately. Anxiety Girl, that's my superpower. Sigh.

I'm worried about the remodeling and construction at my mountain house. It was started in September, but the contractor has had trouble getting enough workers. I don't know how he's going to finish this before the snows make it impossible to continue.

I'm leaving for my Symphony gig in the next hour. Auditions. I know the best way to honor the work that these candidates have done is to show up, do my best. What a week it's been. Usually I thrive on having a thousand balls in the air to juggle, but not this week. This week I just want to lie down and not get up. I question whether I even want to be alive. I know this will change, but ugh, right now it just feels like too much effort to be an adult. The Mask is tight on me, the mask of capable adult. The real Kathy is crying, struggling, frantic and wild, feeling displaced.

Dear Wwakwan (November, 2017)-

Is it possible that I might be bisexual? Is my body just in need of some physical intimacy, or am I still grieving? Kevin, Caroline's brother has been staying with me because he's the executor of the will. I have found myself seriously attracted to him. He has Caroline's pheromones. He has admitted a mutual attraction, but we didn't take it any farther than talk and a little cuddling. Now I have this crazy attraction thing, but definitely sense that he is not right for me to be with. He's certainly staying far away from me. So, loneliness. Sadness. And apparently no relief with a casual fling. Damn. Probably a very good thing, but . . . I'm so conscious of my identity as a lesbian being in flux right now. It was so lovely, being partnered. But maybe I'm bisexual. I do miss the automaticity of sexual libido with a male. They're so much more easily aroused, and interested in sex. But . . . oh, I miss you, Caroline! All those years of physical intimacy with you (22), and now I feel like I'm hard-wired to love you, to be with you, only you. When will I ever find the time and willingness to begin to bond with anyone else? Feels hopeless.

Caught between grief and longing, Kathy truly missed being with a partner. She spent over half of her life in an intimate relationship. Finding herself alone, she longed for companionship that likely came in the form of mutual grief, with her brother-in-law.

Dear Wwakwan (January, 2018)-

I'm coming up on the first anniversary of Caroline's death. I just decided I can't be here. I can't be teaching. I can't be in my regular life. Even though I love it I can't do it, I just can't pass through in this house where she died. I . . . In this bed where she died. I can't be here. My therapist encouraged me to think about a place I had never been and I've never been to Hawaii. Hawaii is somewhere I have always wanted to go and Caroline wouldn't fly so there was no going to Hawaii with my dear one. So I'm going by myself for five days.

It feels self-indulgent, and it's not about Caroline and it's not about my life with Caroline, but that's how it feels it needs to be. It feels it needs to be, here's the next chapter of my life. I'm starting on my

own. I'm going to be curious about what new things that I like and what new things attract me and try not to be scared about being alone. But I've read some wonderful blogs about people who have gone alone to Hawaii and had a wonderful time. So I think I'll be okay. Kind of excited about it.

I don't grieve my dad. I feel his presence strongly, I owe him a lot. He was a character but . . . It has been a really rough year for me missing Caroline. The grief groups are not going anymore. I'm done with those. There was one in the fall and one in the winter, and I'm done with those. They were helpful, but it was so hard to be around all that grief. I felt comfort in those sharing similar experiences, but that is all they are. Similar. They don't know what Caroline and I went through. They have the support of their extended communities. I just don't feel like I have that.

Dear Wwakwan (February, 2018)-

Healing has begun. Hawaii was wonderful. I still miss Caroline and it was so hard to come back to an empty house and not have her here, but I feel like this trip was cleansing. There were moments of sadness, and I had a lot of conversations with Caroline, either in my mind or out loud. She is always with me. I can feel it. That is comforting to some degree. I know this is going to be a long process, but I think I am starting to come out of the depths of despair.

I also made the decision to let my students know what has been going on. A HUGE step. I just could not keep the mask on any longer. I had to let them know. And amazingly enough, there was really no reaction. I have kids who are very compassionate about the fact that I have lost my partner and I'm experiencing a lot of grief and a lot of overwhelm. So when I got back they had given me this wonderful, huge "We love you Ms. Kathy" card and presents. There's a lot of compassion I see in their faces so that's pretty cool.

KEVIN'S STORY¹³

"The Right Kids Know"

Kevin, 42, comes home from a long and exhausting day at work. Brian is there waiting for him with a drink in hand. Brian is Kevin's roommate. An actual roommate, not the term that two gay men use to cover up their relationship status. Well, irony is funny sometimes, isn't it? Brian and Kevin used to be lovers, but that was so long ago. Now, Brian is the closest thing to a partner that Kevin has, minus the intimacy, and Kevin is perfectly happy with that status. Brian is Kevin's longest and closest friend—his chosen family¹⁴. They have known each other for nearly 21 years. He is grateful for the intimate experiences that he and Brian had, many years ago, but they are both very different people now. They make much better friends than lovers.

"Kevin, you look like you had a rough day," Brian says as he hands Kevin a cocktail.

"Oh my god, yes...." Kevin takes a long sip and sighs. "Do you remember that boy I told you about, the one that I saw on Grindr, who is my student?"

"Oh . . . yes, did you talk to him?"

"Yes, both Sally, the social worker and I talked to him. It was so bizarre. We ended up pulling him in for a meeting with the three of us. I mentioned that I was gay and also a user of the app Grindr and saw him on there. He admitted using the app and that his mom knew he was on there. Though I acknowledged that might be the case, I mentioned to him

¹³ Kevin's story is not in chronological order. It jumps around, much like the conversations that we had. To honor Kevin, I wrote in a way that I think best represents him and important moments in his lifetime. Kevin's story is presented through flashbacks and memories as they were described to me in our conversations, through Kevin's journals, and an interweaving of fictional writing.

¹⁴ Chosen family is a term often used among the LGBTQ population that describes the family that they identify with beyond their birth family. The chosen family may replace the birth family due to a more supportive role in a queer person's life.

that it might be a little dangerous for him to be on there and that not everyone there would have his best interest in mind. I also then said I'd block him.”

“Oh my god . . . what was his reaction??” Brian laughed out loud.

“I think he was embarrassed. Hell, I was embarrassed. I mean, it's not like I'm a fucking pedophile or anything, but Jesus Christ, my STUDENT?! Why did his mom think it was okay for him to be on there? It's not really a safe place for kids, or really, for anyone. It just kinda stinks that Grindr is how my student found out I was gay. If he is really gay, I would have liked to have had a better conversation with him.”

Dear God-

So, I'm really confused right now. Like, REALLY confused and I am hoping you might be able to help me figure this out. Actually, I am kind of embarrassed to tell you this, and I feel horrible, because. . . well, it is wrong. This is SO WRONG. There is this guy . . . Danny. He is REALLY nice, and he plays piano, and he plays sports—he is the basketball star, and I really want to be his friend. We even have the same class together, but you already know that, because you are God. But, I really like him. God, I follow him to his house, I even wrote his address down in my secret codebook, the one that I am using to write to you right now. I know how to do code so nobody can crack it. So, I have my own code and key, and I have this book that has two belts and a padlock to write stuff down, like Danny's address. And I brought it to school today and Amanda wanted to try to open it, even though I was begging her to stop. So she managed to simply pry open the belts and open it up but she couldn't crack my code. I would have been just so embarrassed if she would have broken the code. -Kevin, 12 years old.

Okay, I am going to do this, Kevin, 22, said to himself as he walked closer to a bookstore. He was mapping out how he was going to go into the store, casually browse the

books while working his way over to the magazines. Then, he would pick up the first gay magazine that he could find. *This is okay. It's okay, because there isn't anyone else involved. It's just me and a piece of paper, right? I can't hurt anyone by doing this. I can't bring anyone into this if it is just me and a piece of paper. It's just me.*

“Oh my God, you are BOTH gay,” Kevin’s mom said in shock as her sons, Kevin, 23, and Mitchell, 30 shared their news. Mitchell responded, “You know we don't wear dresses or anything.” Kevin’s dad gets up and does a lap around the living room. *Jesus Christ,* Kevin thought to himself. *Mitchell, what the hell. Really?*

“Well, I mean . . .” Mitchell starts a response and then changes his mind. “We still want to be a part of the family.”

Their mother stops and looks at them both, “You will always be a part of this family.” Their dad continues to walk around the living room, shaking his head.

At church in the choir loft balcony: “*Okay, God, I have a scholarship to Concordia where I can be a pastor, or I can go to UNI and become a band teacher, you control the quarter.*” Flip one, heads. *I should probably decide if heads is Concordia or UNI. Okay, I guess, I will make heads UNI.* Flip two, heads. Flip three, tails. *Alrighty, let's just see what happens out of five.* Flip four, tails. *Hmmm . . . this could be interesting.* Flip six. Heads. *Alright, God you spoke.*”-Kevin, 17 years old.

“Hey, Kevin? This is John Peterson, your old band director.”

“Hi, Mr. Peterson! How are you?”

“I’m great. Say, I wanted to let you know that the high school job is open and I was wondering if you would be interested in applying for the job?”

Kevin, 21, gets off the phone with his former band director, excited about the possibility of teaching in his old school. *This could be amazing*, he thought. *I already know the kids, and my niece is in school. It would be really great to get back home and see the family more often. Get back to the farm. This would be the perfect fit. I mean, the PERFECT fit. Band. Marching band, concert band, and pep band. What more could I want? I mean, I really am a farm boy at heart. I can go to my home church a bit more and reconnect with God. I think I need him in my life a bit. I've been straying off the path too much.*

Shit, shit, shit . . . Kevin, 26, scrambles out of bed. *First hour starts in twenty minutes.* Kevin had another long night on the phone with Brian. What started out as a bit of a fling on a gay phone line had turned into some sort of relationship. Kevin quickly dresses, washes his face, looks in the mirror. *My God, I look like hell.* Bloodshot eyes from little sleep and dark circles under his eyes show the long nights to those who might run into Kevin during the day.

Mr. Smith catches Kevin as he enters the school, fifteen minutes late.

“Kevin, can you come into my office for a minute once you get settled? You have this hour free, right?”

“Yes, I will be right in.” *Shit. Shit. Shit . . . ugh, what am I going to tell him? How am I going to explain this?*

“Kevin, I have noticed that you have been late to school quite a bit recently. I know that you stay well beyond your contract in the afternoon, but we need you here on time in the morning. You know, in case a student needs to find you, or a parent or something. We have had to run interference a few times.”

“Yes, I know, I have been late.” Kevin looks down and out the window. He notices

a sheet of paper on Mr. Smith's desk.

“Unfortunately, because of your tardiness, I need to write you up. This is just procedural, but we do need to document this.” Kevin puts his head in his hands and takes a deep breath.

“I understand the need for this, but I am wondering if I might be able to tell you a bit about what has been going on in my life?” Kevin looks up. He is shaking.

“Sure, Kevin. If there is something that we can do to help out and get you on the right track . . . I have known you a long time.” Mr. Smith was right. He became the principal Kevin's senior year.

“Okay . . . so I have been struggling with sleeping a lot recently. I am going through this thing. I think I am kinda depressed. I'm sorta seeing someone. Well, I am not sure if seeing is the right word. But I am seeing this guy . . . I'm gay.” Kevin looks down at his hands and starts wringing them in attempts to stop shaking. He is now visibly sweating.

“I see. Well . . . I've heard that happens sometimes in your profession.” Mr. Smith smiles gently at Kevin. Kevin looks up at the clock.

“I have class in about 15 and I need to get ready for them. Is it okay if I head down to the band room?” Kevin starts to get up.

“Sure, sure. But I do need you to sign this. Again, it is procedural, and it will go in your file.”

“Okay, yes. I understand.” Kevin signs the paper and turns to leave.

“Kevin,” Mr. Smith stops him.

“Yes, Mr. Smith?”

“Thanks for telling me. I appreciate it. You do good work here. We are lucky to have you.”

Kevin, 26, rolls out of bed, while Brian lays there, with a sheet draped over his body.

“I need to head out, I have school tomorrow and if I am late anymore, I am going to get pink slipped,” Kevin says as he starts to get dressed.

“Why would you get pink slipped?” asks Brian.

“Well, our late-night phone conversations have not allowed me much sleep, sweetie, and I have been late to school, A LOT. The principal is on my case, and I even had a meeting with him last week about it.” Kevin moves to the bathroom where he starts to wash his face.

“Oh! I didn’t know that. I am so sorry, Kevin.”

“No big deal, but I had to tell my principal what has been going on, that I have been trying to figure some stuff out.” Kevin comes out of the bathroom and sits on the edge of the bed.

“What stuff are you trying to figure out?” asks Brian.

“Well, I guess, I am trying to figure out if this is my thing. Like, can I do this. Can I do what we just did?” In Kevin’s mind he is thinking, *Can I do all the things I have been told are wrong? I just brought someone into this. Up until now, it was just me and a magazine or someone on the other end of the phone. Brian is a real person.*

“Can I do this and be a teacher? I mean, I don’t think I can do this and be a teacher. At least not where I teach. Do you know that I had to sign a moral turpitude clause?”

“What? They still have those?” Brian exclaims.

“Small towns, small minded folks.” Kevin responds. *Oh my God, this weekend was amazing, but can I actually do this? I’m a teacher. In my HOMETOWN. They will drive me out if they found out. Shit, I have to get going, otherwise I am going to miss my flight.*

Kevin, 28, walks up to Mr. Smith's office door and knocks on it.

"C'mon in" says Mr. Smith.

"Good morning, Don," Kevin reaches over and shakes Mr. Smith's (Don) hand.

"I wanted to thank you for having me over the other night. I didn't know that you had a daughter who, well, you know. . ."

"Yes, she was a good kid. We really miss her. My wife, Barb is usually the one that can talk about her and what happened. I still struggle quite a bit. We just didn't know."

Don was referring to their daughter's death, which was self-inflicted. Don and Barb had Kevin over for drinks earlier in the week. Kevin was grateful for the conversation that took place. He felt more comfortable hearing that his principal's daughter was a lesbian, so his principal had a better understanding of what Kevin was going through. Kevin felt badly that his boss and wife had to endure such hardship.

"So, the reason I wanted to talk to you, really, is to thank you, but to let you know that I am going to move on. I am going to resign from my position. Effective the end of this year."

"Oh! Well, Kevin, that's too bad."

"Well, it's a lot of things, but I want to go back to school. I am going to start graduate school, and I will need a job closer to that."

"So, you are on the job hunt?"

"Yeh, so. . . I will need a letter of recommendation, if that is okay?"

"Of course! I would be happy to write a letter for you." Kevin let go a big sigh of relief.

"Thanks, Don. I really appreciate it. I really appreciate everything. The opportunity

to come back, the trust you put in me with the kids. Your understanding of . . . well, you know. I really appreciate it.”

Don and Kevin shake hands, and as Kevin walks down the hall to his band room, he suddenly feels 100 pounds lighter. He is setting himself free. He will finally be able to be the person he can be without fear.

“Kevin’s a Fag.” Kevin, 17, stared at the words etched neatly between the tiles in the boys bathroom at school. *Oh, shit, what do they know. How do they know???* Kevin ran his hands under the water and tried to smudge the writing, but it didn’t work. *Who wrote that?* He wondered, as he walked down the hall. As he walked, he passed by his classmates, saying hello to them. As the class president and valedictorian, Kevin was well-known in his class.

“Hey! Kevin! Wait up!” a musical voice called from behind him.

“Hi, Carla! How are you?” Kevin grinned at the blonde girl. *She is beautiful*, he thought to himself.

“I’m so excited for our first rehearsal tonight, aren’t you?” Carla was playing the lead female role, Marian the Librarian, in *The Music Man*.

“For sure! I think it will be fun!” Kevin was making his debut performance on-stage as Professor Harold Hill, the scheming salesman who would eventually win Marian over with his charm.

“I think you are just perfect for the part! You are so musical already!” Carla was also in band, where she played flute.

“Yeah, I feel like it was meant to be. You will make a beautiful Marion,” Kevin blushes and quickly changes the subject back to his role in the musical. “I knew when I heard that the musical was going to be *The Music Man* that I wanted to audition. I LOVE this

musical!” Carla and Kevin continued walking down the hall chatting about the musical and singing through the songs together. However, what Kevin saw earlier on the bathroom wall, was still on his mind. He made sure to square his shoulders a bit more as he walked through the halls the rest of the day.

“Hey Drew, what did you think of that reading last night?” Kevin, 39, sped up his walking to catch up to his classmate as they walked towards the music building.

“Hey, Kevin. Yeh, I don’t know what I read! I read some words that formed sentences but I think I read the same paragraph about ten times before I put it to rest.” Kevin and Drew were on their way to their grad class together. Drew was dressed in khaki shorts, a plaid button down and a baseball cap. Kevin was wearing jeans and a polo shirt.

“So, what do you think of this class?” Kevin asked Drew.

“Well, you know, it’s interesting. When I look around and everyone is on their computers chatting on Facebook, that tells me that maybe the professor isn’t doing a very good job.” Both Kevin and Drew laugh.

“So, you going out tonight with the boys?” Drew asked Kevin as they proceeded up the stairs.

“Yeh! I think so! I am kinda seeing this guy and he might be out tonight, so I am hoping I might run into him.” Kevin chuckled to himself in his reference to his casual relationship. “You know, he is kind of young, so I’m not sure how long it will last, but it’s fun.”

“Hot fun in the summer!” Drew exclaimed as they open the door to the room. *Fun is right*, Kevin thought to himself as he got out his euphonium. Today was a long day. Conducting class in the morning, then the long three-hour class he and Drew had been

discussing. Kevin was feeling more and more at ease with himself and his classmates. They knew about him and his sexuality and they didn't even bat an eye. He had originally been a bit worried about Drew who seemed, at first glance, like a big burly guy that might hunt deer and bear on the weekends. However, that was a complete misconception as Drew turned out to be one of Kevin's closest friends, and not to mention a complete advocate for LGBTQ rights. Kevin's social circle was starting to expand. He had made some really great friends already during his first summer of graduate studies. He was also learning what it meant to be gay and be able to act on it without fear of retaliation. Kevin was proud of the decision he had made to come out to his new friends.

"Kevin, how about you go first." Kevin's classmates applauded him as he approached the center of the room with his baton and score. The mishmash band was made up of fellow grad students playing either their primary or secondary instruments. Kevin had prepared the wind band version of Morten Lauridsen's *O Magnum Mysterium* for his portion of the class. He led the class through the piece. *This is such a beautiful piece*, he thought to himself. *Maybe I will do this with our top band this year, maybe for the Holiday concert.* The professor cuts him off.

"Kevin, you are doing great, but it's a bit stiff. Can you tap into your feminine self a bit more?" The entire class looks down and starts to giggle and chuckle. Kevin says, "Well, I can try." He picks up his baton again, this time lifting his pinky ever so slightly and shifts his weight to one side so his hip sticks out a bit. Everyone starts to laugh, as does Kevin. *Does he even know?* Kevin thought to himself.

"No! I mean, loosen up your arms a bit more! Flow a bit more with the music. This isn't a march!" says the professor in attempts to calm the class down.

Later, at lunch, Kevin and his grad school friends are reliving the moment. Tears

running down their faces, they poke fun at the professor for his faux pas.

“I mean, how can he NOT know by now?” exclaimed Kevin.

“Well, if he didn’t know before, and he still doesn’t know, then he is really blind,” says Gina, another student in the class, and a close friend of Kevin’s.

“What are you all doing tonight? Should we celebrate the halfway point of summer classes?” Gina asked the group. They are a tight group. They study together, get breakfast together, and, when feeling up for it, party together.

“Well, hot-stuff Kevin over here is going out with the boys tonight,” shared Drew.

“You guys can come with, you know! That would be so much fun!” exclaimed Kevin. “I mean, it’s a gay bar, but it’s a bar. We can go together.” The group starts making plans. Kevin thinks to himself, *I love these people. These people love me for who I am.*

Kevin, 41, arrives home after an extremely long week of school. Pep band (for some reason the basketball team is doing really well) along with pit rehearsals have meant that he leaves by 6:30 in the morning and doesn’t get home until 10:30 most nights. Brian is waiting for him with a drink.

“Thanks, I need this.” Kevin sinks into the couch, takes his shoes off and puts his feet up on the table.”

“Did you have the talk with the kids today?” Brian asks. He knew this was weighing heavily on Kevin’s mind for the past week.

“About the suicide? Yes. Well, I talked first about bullying and the impact it can have on kids. I chose to speak to all of my bands about bullying and I very explicitly said the word . . . The fact I said the word, I got a lot of support from students. There was this one kid who was only mildly connected in band but after that was all in. He wasn't gay but he

appreciated it. One of my girls, a trombone player, came up to me and said, “Hey, thank you for the conversation, my brother is gay.”

“Oh wow! That’s amazing! What did you say?”

“Like you know I’m gay, right?” Kevin laughed at how ridiculous that sounded, but was so honest.

Brian replied, “You said that?”

“To the girl, yeah. I mean, some of the kids know. The right kids know,” Kevin said, thinking back to the interaction with the girl.

“What do you mean by the ‘right’ kids? Who are the right kids? How do you know?”

Brian was curious about his friend’s decision to only come out to some of the kids.

“The right kids are those who are gay, are questioning, who need to feel supported. And I guess in that way they can see this 44-year-old unmarried band teacher and go, well. . .And I’m not sure that would have always been a case, like if you, like, when I first got there, it was a little different because I don’t think there was an assumption that I was necessarily gay. It’s like, oh, you know he’s 30 something, just single. But by the time you get to your 40s, people do a little math.”

He takes a long sip of his drink, thinking back to where he started and how far he has come with his own acceptance of his sexuality. He is in a good place right now. He has a supportive community of friends, his family is still a priority for him, and he has a great job. He feels really lucky to be where he is.

CALLIE'S STORY¹⁵

"I could have been a nun"

"Honey, can you pick up Lily today from daycare? I have the GSA meeting after school." Callie gave her wife, Rachel, and their daughter a kiss as she picked up her things.

"Sure, what time do you think you might be home? I can make dinner tonight, or we can pick something up." *Rachel is the best*, Callie thinks to herself as she makes a quick decision.

"Let's go out. It's going to be nice out and I am sure there is a patio waiting for us to have dinner."

"Sounds good. We'll see you later. Have a good day at school."

"Bye-bye, mama!" Lily waves at her mom. Callie gives Lily one last snuggle and kiss on the forehead. *It never gets any easier to leave her behind!*

Walking into school, Callie notices the new signs by the welcome desk. "All are welcome here," in bright rainbows. She smiles to herself. *I hope our daughter can attend a school that is so welcoming and affirming.* She greets students as she walks down the hall to her classroom. Wearing her standard pants, button-down shirt, and sandals, she feels comfortable in the late May weather. It is getting warm out and the air conditioning in school is touch and go. She gets to her office where pictures of her family, Lily and Rachel, occupy her desk. She sits down and rests her hands on her stomach. *Soon there will pictures of*

¹⁵ Callie's story is constructed through the work she does with the students who are members of her school's GSA (Gender Sexuality Alliance). The stories she shares with the students are stories she shared with me. Both of us advise GSAs in our schools and we understand the importance of these stories to young people.

you with us, she thinks to the baby growing inside her belly.

The first hour bell rings and students soon start streaming through the band room. First hour is either hit or miss with these students. Right now, it is Ramadan, so many students are already a bit sleepy from having to wake up for morning prayer. She decides today needs to be a day where the focus is playing as much as possible. This group tends to get off task very easily. Combined with their general sixth-grade goofiness, Callie has learned to maintain flexibility in her expectations.

In the middle of working through a clarinet passage, one boy raises his hand. “Mrs. Wolf, are you a lesbian?” Callie stops. *What the hell? Where did that come from?* “Yes, Juan, I have a wife and a daughter.” She quickly goes back to the clarinets and then gets the whole band involved with the piece. All the while, thinking, *What was that about? How can they not know that?*

At the end of class, a few girls from the percussion section come up to Callie and ask to see pictures of Lily. A picture of Rachel pops up and another student, a Somali boy, comes up and asks, “Who is that?”

“My wife,” responds Callie.

“A woman should not have a wife. That’s sort of lesbian. That’s lesbian.” He is very sure of this, and Callie starts to say something, but is cut-off by another student.

“Yes, she’s a lesbian and that’s okay.” She beams at Callie and Callie smiles back. The bell rings, and students head off to their next class. Callie, thankful for bell, is also thankful for the support of the majority of her students.

It wasn’t so long ago that Callie did not feel this kind of support. She shares part of her story with the Gender and Sexuality Alliance that she co-advises. This group meets every

week and has anywhere between 8 to 15 sixth- through eighth-grade students per week. Most of the students identify as LGBTQ, but there are a few straight allies as well. The group is mostly a support group, but they sponsor school-wide activities for “Day of Silence”¹⁶ and “Coming Out” day.

“You know, it was a struggle growing up in the southern part of the U.S.” She scans the students, noticing who is there and who isn’t there. The students mostly identify as queer, with some students who are beginning to transition.

“I grew up in a Catholic house. Did you all know that I wanted to be a nun when I was your age?” She laughs as she shares this side of her life. The students look at her, mouths gaping open with shock.

“No way,” “You’re kidding,” “But why???” Questions are thrown in her direction.

“Ms. Callie,” GSA students call Callie by her first name. It feels more of an alliance this way rather than a teacher/adult directed group. “Ms. Callie, you mean to tell me, that you wanted to be a NUN, like wearing one of those outfits, and LIVE in a Catholic church?? But you are a lesbian. You are married and have a KID.” Asher was clearly confused by this new knowledge of her teacher.

“Yep. This is the truth. I really had a strong connection to the church. It was very important to me when I was your age. I had a strong community of people who were my friends and we had a shared faith. It is funny to think about, but I was REALLY committed.”

“Well, what happened when you found out you were gay?” the students ask.

¹⁶ The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) developed the “Day of Silence” that is practiced throughout the country. “The GLSEN Day of Silence is a student-led national event that brings attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools. Students from middle school to college take a vow of silence in an effort to encourage schools and classmates to address the problem of anti-LGBT behavior by illustrating the silencing effect of bullying and harassment on LGBT students and those perceived to be LGBT.” <https://www.glsen.org/day-of-silence/faq>, accessed July 7, 2018.

“I don’t really want this meeting to be about me, you all,” Callie responds.

“No! I like to hear other people’s stories! Makes me appreciate that maybe my story isn’t so bad,” says Levi, a student who was transitioning from female to male.

“Yeh, I don’t really know any other out adults,” whines another genderfluid student.

“Like, you are a unicorn!!” The students giggle.

“Okay, so let me think here. Well, there is just a lot that I could tell you.”

“Well, I am really curious about the whole religious thing, Ms. Callie. Because, I go to church. My parents don’t know about me yet,” a young girl speaks up. Callie looks at her and smiles.

“I see, well, I understand how you feel. I completely understand that.”

“Why do you go to church?” asks a boy, “they hate our people.”

“Not ALL churches and religions hate gays,” responds Levi. “I go to a church where the pastor is a lesbian.” Callie nods. She is familiar with that church as she has played with the praise band there several times.

“Alright, well, I guess I can talk a little bit about my journey with religion and coming out.” Callie thinks back to when everything started to take shape. So much has changed for her since she came out the first time.

“Well, okay. SO, I tried dating some guys in high school, but they were more friends than like boyfriends, you know? I actually had some gay friends when I was in high school. One of them is actually a priest now!”

“Woah, I can’t imagine you dating a guy, Ms. Callie,” exclaims a student.

“Well, I was just trying to fit in. Trying to figure it all out, which is what a lot of you are doing. But you have to remember, I grew up in a different time and in a different part of the country. You are all so lucky because you have each other, but also celebrities who are

coming out.” The students nod in agreement. They look on with encouraging eyes for her to share more of her backstory.

“SO, I think the first time I really started to realize I was not straight was when I went away for a summer to be a camp counselor. I was still living at home,” she rolls her eyes, “and my parent’s marriage was a bit of a mess, so I was really happy to be out of the home.”

“I can’t WAIT to not live at home . . .” mumbles a student who has had a less than supportive family since they shared that they are trans.

“So, I got to this camp, and I couldn’t believe all the queer kids. It was amazing, like my worlds collided. Everything I thought I knew about queer folks was gone. I had never seen so many queer kids.”

“Was it a camp for queer kids?”

“No! That’s the amazing thing. It wasn’t! It was a music camp, but a lot of queer kids were attracted to it, because for whatever reason music and queer kids go together.”

“Kinda like peanut butter and jelly?”

“Sure! Like that. I think there is just safety in being able to express yourself in music. Like putting all of your emotion into something and sharing your deepest and darkest secrets, and nobody needs to know, because you are sharing it through your music.”

“So I got there, and I just felt *right*, like I finally *belonged*.”

“Was there a GSA?” one of the students asks.

“No, there wasn’t, but there were plenty of people I felt comfortable talking to. And actually, what I first started to do, was to watch movies. It was back when Netflix was mail order and I would get all of the gay and lesbian movies that I could. I watched the “L word” and I watched “Queer as Folk.” I read a lot of books. I think that’s what I needed to do to

be like, that this is who I am kind of thing. Be okay with it to educate myself. So I read *Christianity and the Bible* and *Sexuality in the Bible* kinds of things, too, about it being okay from queer reverends. . . Other friends also started coming out at camp too which was nice, you know, safety in numbers. One other person I can think of for sure. She was in a long-term relationship with a guy and we relied on each other a little bit. There were a lot of queer women when I was at music camp that year. It was just, nobody dated anybody but we kind of like relied on each other. It was nice.”

“Like an adult-sized GSA!” one of the students exclaims.

“Yeh, I guess so. It definitely was supportive, and I . . . well, we all needed that.”

Back home, Callie and Rachel put Lily to bed and then catch up on the day’s events.

“How was your day?” Rachel asks, as they sit on the couch, both exhausted by working full time and having a child.

“It was fine. I had a good chat with the GSA today after school.”

“Oh really? What about?” asks Rachel.

“Well, I shared with them a bit about my backstory. What it was like for me to figure it all out. Where I came from, and the journey I made.”

“Did you tell them about wanting to be a nun?” giggles Rachel.

“I did! That was a huge part of me! I guess I didn’t really tell them how long I struggled with it. I didn’t really tell them how I came out to my parents either. I guess I gave them the sweetened condensed version of my coming out story.” *Well, one of the stories. It NEVER stops*, Callie thinks to herself.

“How did you come out to your parents? I’m not sure that I really know that story,” asks Rachel.

“What? Really? It wasn’t really something to remember, so I guess maybe that’s why I don’t talk about it. I think I just told mom that I wasn’t really into guys that much, and that was it. But then she took it upon herself to tell all my aunts that I’m gay.”

“As she does,” Rachel retorts.

“Indeed,” sighs Callie. She and her mom had a strained relationship, and this just brought back tough memories.

“But just think what a great role model you are for these kids. That you are happily married, with a baby,”

“And one on the way!”

“Yes! What a great thing for these kids. I’m really proud of you.”

“Thanks, honey. It’s a good feeling. I finally feel like I can be me, most of the time. It’s still a bit weird, at times, but I think that even if I was straight, it might be weird for me to talk about my partner. That’s just a part of who I am.”

NANCY'S STORY¹⁷

“Can I even do this?”

There is just no way I can do this, Nancy thought to herself after she got off the phone with Mary. Nancy had received a phone call from Mary, her cooperating teacher, explaining to her what had happened night before. Mary and her roommate, Laura, a physical education teacher at the same school, had gone out for a night on the town. When they came back there were signs all over their yard, “Anita Bryant Condemns this House.” Nancy replayed the conversation in her head.

“Hi, Nancy? It’s Mary.”

“Oh! Hi, Mary. How are you? Is everything okay?” Mary didn’t usually call Nancy, so this was rather unusual.

“It is, but I need to tell you something that happened. Our house got hit by the Anita Bryant folks.” There was a long pause. “They put signs in our yard that said our house is condemned.”

“Oh . . .” Nancy was shocked.

“Laura is really upset. We are going to take a few days to clean this up and hopefully this will pass over, but I wanted to make sure that you heard this from me first. Before school on Monday. I probably won’t be there on Monday. You know. The community talks.”

¹⁷Nancy’s story is constructed through a series of flashbacks and memories that surround her struggle to come to terms with her sexuality and her desire to teach during a time where gay and lesbian teachers were being outed by district and state policies.

“Right, of course.”

“But I wanted you to hear from me, that this happens. Even in the Midwest.”

“Sure . . .”

“I’m just letting you know . . . “

“Right, thanks, Mary. Gosh, I am so sorry this happened.”

“We are too. We are too.” Nancy and Mary hung up. Nancy sat down and thought to herself, *there is just no way I can do this.*

“Mom, I am NOT going to wear that dress,” Nancy, 16, stood defiantly as her mother put a dress in front of her.

“Nancy, it is the first day of school. You need to look nice for your teachers.”

“I can look fine with slacks and this shirt. Mom, I HATE dresses.”

“Darling, you look like such a tomboy. This would freshen you up a little bit.”

“What is wrong with what I wear? It’s comfortable, it’s what I like.”

“Fine. Have it your way.”

Grateful that episode was over, Nancy got ready for school. She really did hate wearing dresses. She really just was not a fan of anything that most of the girls did. Instead of shopping, she liked to work on cars. Instead of watching from the sidelines, she enjoyed playing baseball with her brothers.

“Billy, Tommy, you ready to go?” Nancy got her brothers in their car and they went to school. They arrived, and Nancy started to look for Anna. She found her outside the band room. That was their meeting place.

“Hi, Anna,” Nancy smiled at Anna.

“Hey, Nancy . . . how was the rest of your weekend?” Nancy and Anna had a

sleepover at Anna's house. A semi-regular occurrence. That was the one thing that Nancy did that a lot of other girls did. Sleepovers. That seemed somewhat normal.

“Yeah, it was fine. You know. Just normal weekend stuff. Homework, practicing, work.”

“Yeah, me too.” Anna smiled at her. They won't talk about what happened between them. They never will. It's just too risky.

“Student Center Hosts Gay and Lesbian Dance! Friday at 10:00pm. Be there or be STRAIGHT!” Nancy noticed the flyer on the Music Building message board by the bathroom. The flyer had little pull-offs with reminders of the date and time. She looked around to see if anybody was in the area. There wasn't. She quickly pulled one of the tabs and shoved it in her pants pocket. *It could be fun*, she thought to herself. *I don't really have anything else going on tonight.*

A few hours later, Nancy made her way to the student center. *Oh my God. What am I doing??* She was shaking as she entered the building, but there was no turning back. As she walked down the hall, she noticed lots of couples together holding hands. Boys holding hands and girls holding hands. She found herself a seat on the wall and just watched. *This exists???* *There are people here . . . like . . . me . . .*

Nancy stayed in the same spot the entire night. While nobody came up to talk to her, she was okay with that. She was shell-shocked. Never in her life had she seen so many people that were like her, and they were okay with it. And so OPEN about it. *What does this even mean?* She wondered. *Where do these people go during the daytime?* She laughed at herself. *They probably do what you do, silly. They just go to class and try to act as normal as possible.*

“Well, we finally released Jerry from the organist position,” Nancy’s dad shared at the dinner table.

“Oh, that’s too bad, he did such a nice job,” Nancy’s mom responded. “I’m sure that was a hard conversation to have.”

“Why did you have to fire him, Dad?” asked 13-year-old Nancy.

“Well, honey, the church elders were not happy with the people he was bringing to church. They were of a certain . . . type. You know.” Nancy’s dad quickly changed the subject to the upcoming ball game.

Nancy was confused. She didn’t really understand what this all meant. Why would someone lose their job over bringing people to the church? Why would a place that talked about loving all people no matter what they did or who they were, not want people to attend their church? Nancy was confused and incredibly distressed.

August, 1989

AMENDMENT UP FOR VOTE:

Homosexuality to not be promoted in the schools. Also included is pedophilia, sadism, or masochism. Homosexuals will not be protected under the terms or labels of ‘sexual orientation’ or ‘sexual preferences’ or quotas, minority status, and other related concepts. All levels of education, including the Department of Higher Education must set the standard that these “behaviors” are abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverts. Homosexual teachers, and those who support them may be subject to prosecution and

removal/denial of teacher's license.

“Julia! Come look, in the newspaper!” Nancy, was shaking.

“What? What is the issue?” Julia came into the living room where Nancy was sitting on the couch with the newspaper in front of her, white as a ghost.

“They want us out. They want us out of teaching. It is Anita Bryant all over again.” Nancy didn't know if she should laugh or cry. She started doing both. Julia came over to Nancy, sat down and put her arms around Nancy.

“I knew it. I knew I couldn't teach. I knew I couldn't teach and be this. It's not safe. It will never be safe.”

“What are you going to do? Nancy, this is just a referendum. The public is going to have to vote on it.”

“I can't do anything! I can't say anything. I can't tell people why I care about this. Julia, you KNOW this is why we left the Midwest, because of these kinds of initiatives. We came out here because of how accepting they are of us.” Nancy was sinking lower and lower into the couch, tears streaming down her face.

“Okay, Nancy. All we can do is just pray. Just pray that the people find it in their hearts that this is wrong. That your personal life doesn't impact you as a teacher. You are a great teacher, no matter what.”

“But if it passes . . . what will happen?”

“Let's not worry about that right now, there is no reason to get ahead of ourselves. Let's just focus on praying and getting through this together.”

October, 1989

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Homosexual Teachers Should Not Be in Our Schools

I attend Western High School and I don't think we should have homosexual teachers in our building. I will be voting (because I am 18) for the upcoming amendment that will ban homosexual teachers. These teachers should not be working with young people. It is not safe for us. Students, we have the right to have safe and caring teachers in our building. If you can vote, you must vote for this measure.

Homosexuality is a SIN. It is no surprise that homosexual teachers are deranged and encourage young people to join them in their quests to get more homosexuals. They see us as easy targets because we are young. Some of you may have already been targeted. We can help you. I am calling on all students who are able to vote for this amendment. We need safe schools and safe teachers.

Sincerely-

Abby (12th grade)

ABBY? Nancy thought to herself. *Abby in the viola section??* Nancy sat down in her office chair. *This is why I keep to myself. I come to school, do my job, and leave.* Nancy looked at her desk, to make sure there weren't any hints of Julia that might give her away. *This is turning into a witch hunt,* she thought. Slowly she got up and threw the school newspaper away. She put on her coat, gathered her things to take home, and locked up for the evening. Keeping her

eyes to the ground, she left school as quietly as she could, hoping not to cause a disruption. The day was over, and the kids were gone already. *Just as well. Not sure that I could talk to any students right now.* Nancy got in her car and turned it on. *This can't be happening,* she thought to herself. *This is almost the 90's. Aren't we done with this already?* She pulled out of her parking spot and headed home. Silent.

“Julia, we need to leave.” Nancy came back to the table and started to pack up their food.

“Why?”

“I just ran into a student and her parents. I can't be seen here with you.”

“Oh, that is just silly. We can be two friends catching up. Sit down.” Julia sighed as Nancy looked at her sternly.

“Look, YOUR job isn't on the line,” Nancy whispered intensely.

“No, it is not, but are you going to continue to hide your entire life?” This conversation was becoming a familiar theme in their house. Even though the amendment had failed by a large margin, Nancy still did not feel comfortable going out with Julia, unless they were in a larger group of people that had men and women.

“Nancy, sit down and finish your meal. We are fine. It's not like we haven't run into students before.” Julia was getting exasperated with all of this. The tensions were higher these days.

“Fine, but we are just friends. You are in town visiting for the weekend. Old college friends, okay?” Nancy reminded Julia of their “plan” in case any questions were asked.

Is this ever going to end? Nancy thought to herself. *Am I ever going to be able to live my life without fear?*

“Professor Johnson, I am wondering if I can chat with you for a bit.”

“Sure! C’mon in. I actually have a break right now. I really enjoyed your lesson last week. Looks like student teaching is going well for you.”

“Yes, yes, it is. I really am enjoying it. I really enjoy the students.” This was true. Nancy had dreamed of being a music teacher since eighth grade, when her band director let her conduct the band during rehearsal.

“So, what can I help you with?” Professor Johnson was Nancy’s supervisor and general methods teacher. Nancy had enjoyed her classes and felt relatively comfortable talking with her.

“Well, I just have been thinking a lot about my future, and whether or not it is even possible.” Nancy had a couple of concerns that she wanted to discuss.

“What do you mean, is it even possible? Everything that I have seen from you has been excellent work.”

“Thanks, Professor Johnson. I mean, I guess. You know, I am a woman. There aren’t a whole lot of us doing this.”

“This is true. You are paving the way! How exciting is that for you!” Professor Johnson smiled at Nancy.

“Well, I guess so. But I am not really interested in teaching elementary band. I really want to teach the older kids. But I haven’t been in marching band, and I don’t know anything about stage bands.” Nancy had realized that her musical experiences were pretty limited and that high school band was pretty demanding.

“Have you spoken to your cooperating teacher about this? She is doing great things and she is a woman.” This was true, Nancy was learning quite a bit from Mary. Nancy also

knew that she and Mary had quite a bit more in common than Professor Johnson realized, but Mary and Nancy never spoke about those difficulties.

“But there is something else that I am pretty concerned about.” *Ughh*, Nancy thought to herself. *You are really going to do this, huh?*

“What is that?” Professor Johnson leaned forward in her chair. She wasn’t entirely sure what Nancy was referring to, but she had an idea, based on how Nancy acted and dressed for classes in the past.

“Well, you know. Public dollars are being spent on me as a teacher—well, if I teach in a public school, which is what I would like to do. I just don’t know if I can do that. Somebody like me, with my lifestyle.” Nancy wasn’t really sure how to say what she was trying to say.

“I see,” Professor Johnson leaned back, crossed her arms and sat silent for a minute, thinking. “Well, Nancy,” Professor Johnson said, after what felt like the longest moment of silence ever, “you will likely just need to be very certain of your abilities. You are a good teacher, so you just will need to keep the focus on that. There is no need for personal lives in the classroom, for anybody.” Professor Johnson sternly looked at Nancy.

“I guess I understand that, Professor Johnson. I just was wondering if you had any other advice?” Nancy knew she would never be able to talk about her personal life. That was just not something someone like her would be able to do.

“Well, you might want to consider learning how to put on makeup, and perhaps giving your hair a permanent. I don’t suppose you would consider wearing dresses?” Nancy typically wore slacks and shirts to class. Professor Johnson realized she had never seen Nancy in a dress.

“No, I draw the line at dresses. I just don’t look very good in them, with my body

type.” Nancy still hated dresses. “But I guess I could learn about make-up and do my hair a bit, maybe grow it out. . . “*Ugh, this is going to be so much work*, Nancy thought to herself.

“I think that would be wise. Would deter any potential distractions from the students and possible conversations. You just don’t want to give anybody any ideas.”

“Yeh, you are right. So, focus on the teaching and keep it professional. I think I can do that.”

“You sure can. People have been doing it for years.”

JERRY'S STORY¹⁸

"Music is my best friend"

"C'mon Olson! Pick up those feet! Move faster! Let's get on the field, Olson! Everybody else, you keep doing jumping jacks until Olson is on the field." Jerry's high school gym teacher barks out orders like a drill sergeant. Sweat, dripping down his face, Jerry makes the final turn on the track. He hates running. He hates physical education class. He hates his teacher.

"Olson!" The gym teacher barks again. "Olson! Don't you lay down, you gotta finish your jumping jacks. We are a unit!" The rest of the class heads toward the locker room while Jerry, and his physical education teacher, remain on the field. Sweat is pouring down Jerry's face and starts to sting his eyes.

"Olson!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You can stop now. You need to take a shower and get cleaned up. You are a mess."

Going from the second most humiliating part of his day, to the first most humiliating part of the day, Jerry trudges towards the locker room. He HATES taking showers with the other guys.

"Jesus, Jerry, couldn't you move a bit faster?" sneers one of his classmates as Jerry walks by, towards his gym locker, clothes heavy with sweat.

"Nah, he's a faggot, he doesn't know how to move," jokes another classmate. The

¹⁸ Jerry's story highlights four different points in his life. High school in the 1970s, his support group and coming out to his family at age 32 during the 1990s, and marrying his partner in 2011 in his mid 50s.

locker room erupts in laughter. Jerry goes to his locker, and quickly undresses, trying to keep the towel wrapped around him.

“Olson, looks like you’ve had a few too many of Corky’s burgers and malts!” teases one of his classmates. Corky’s is the local drive-in that is a popular hangout for many of the high school students. Jerry rarely goes to Corky’s.

Jerry quickly showers and gets ready to go to his next class. Walking down the hall to the music room, he contemplates his options for next year. *Just a few more weeks of this torture*, he thought to himself. *Just a few more weeks of this torture with these jocks. No gym class means more music classes next year.* He arrives at the band room, just as the bell rings, and takes out his instrument: baritone. He really enjoys being a part of the low brass section. His friends are there in the low brass section as well. They are an odd crew of misfits who detest sports and prefer math to baseball and reading to dating. They are currently enjoying *The Drifters* during their off-time from school. The book and its travels, allows Jerry to escape the struggles of his life.

“Another rough day in gym, eh, Jerry?” asks Jim, one of Jerry’s fellow low brass section members.

“Ugh, yes. I hate that man. I absolutely despise him,” mutters Jerry.

“He is evil. I don’t think he has an IQ above 65, a complete dunce,” offers Billy, another baritone player that Jerry sat next to.

“Hey, you guys wanna go see a movie this weekend? I hear that *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* is playing downtown. I’m curious to see how it will compare to the book.” Jerry attempts to change the subject away from the last hour of hell that he just endured.

“Alright, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to start warming up today on concert F major.” Jerry’s direction immediately focuses towards the front of the room, where his band

teacher stands. *Finally, something I AM good at. Finally something I feel STRONG at. I can just be me here. My teacher thinks I am good at music too! Last week, he asked me if I was going to try out for the musical for next year. Apparently they are going to do "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." He said that if I wasn't, then I could lead the pit orchestra. OF COURSE I will lead the pit orchestra!*

Jerry's attention is redirected back to the front of the band room. His band director is announcing who was accepted into the summer honors camp held at the local university.

"And it is with no surprise, that Jerry Olson will be representing our school and our band!" The class erupts in applause, and his section mates slap him on the back. Jerry stands up and takes a theatrical bow.

"Congrats, Jerry!"

"You deserve it!"

Compliments are shouted out from across the band room. The director smiles at Jerry to show his approval and acknowledgement for Jerry's hard work in and out of the band room. Jerry is a leader among his band peers and is an outstanding student. His band director knows that Jerry would be incredibly successful if he were to pursue a music path, but knows that Jerry could go a variety of ways. His other teachers know this as well. Jerry is often a topic of admirable conversation among the teachers in the teacher's lounge over lunch. His band director sees a lot of himself in Jerry, perhaps too much of himself in that he suspects that Jerry is a lot like him. He will never ever say anything to Jerry, but secretly hopes that Jerry doesn't turn out like him.

Jerry's plans to go out with his friends over the weekend don't quite go as planned. Getting farm kids to drive into the city can be a bit hard at times. Jerry keeps himself occupied on Saturday doing chores and listening to music. *Music is my best friend*, he thinks to

himself. *I wish I could listen to music during gym class; that way I wouldn't have to listen to that awful gym teacher yell at me.* Jerry's taste in music is not reflective of his peers' tastes at the time. He isn't really a fan of rock 'n roll, or the folk-song movement that all the hippies, including his sister, were raving about. He really loves the classics. The emotion and passion that music creates in him are unexplainable.

Jerry decides that he wants to go into the city, even if his friends aren't with him. He asks his parents for keys to the car, and they hand them over, without any questions. Jerry is a good kid. He hangs out with good kids, and even if he doesn't have many friends, he is well-liked and well-respected by the kids he does hang out with. His parents have no reason to question why Jerry would want to go into the city. They understand that the farm life might be a bit boring for a young man who spent the first 12 years of his life in the city. Maybe there is a girl in the city. They don't ask for too much information.

Jerry gets in the car and makes a plan. There is one particular bookstore that he has mapped out in his brain, where he knows exactly where all the magazines are. He's done this before. Jerry is tall for his age and tends to act a bit more mature than most 17-year-old boys. That is likely because he has been raised as an only child for most of his life. He has older siblings, but the closest one in age is seven years older, so most of his interactions are with adults. This works well for him at the bookstore.

When Jerry arrives at the bookstore, he heads straight towards the magazines. He picks up a *Life* magazine (his mom's favorite) which is right next to the *Playgirl* and *Playboy* magazines. This is intentional. He nonchalantly slips the *Playgirl* and *Playboy* magazine under the *Life* magazine and heads up to the counter. This is the way he does this and it never fails. The cashier rings him up, Jerry pays for the magazines, and he heads back into his car. Once inside his car, he lets out a huge sigh. He has done this at least a dozen times before.

“Hi Mom. Hi Dad,” Jerry greets his parents when he gets home. He has the magazines tucked underneath the backside of his shirt.

“I pick up the latest *Life* for you, Mom.” Jerry hands her the magazine, smile on his face.

“Oh, thank you! Did you find anything for yourself? You always have a book in your face.”

“Not this time. I am still working on *The Drifters*,” Jerry starts to head upstairs to his bedroom.

Once inside his room, he shoves the magazine under his bed. He will take a look at it later tonight, after mom and dad go to bed. Tomorrow he will burn it in the oil barrel along with the rest of the trash while his parents are at their friends playing cribbage. They won't know that anything happened and it's better that way. Nobody needs to know this side of him.

Jerry, 31, walks down a long hall in the bottom of a community center. He has found a support group for men who are in the process of coming out to their family. He is the second to oldest member of the support group. The young men in the group are free and open with who they are. *They have no idea what it was like*, Jerry thinks as he walks into the room. *No idea what it was like to live in fear of what could happen*. Some of the other men look at Jerry with curiosity because of his age. Jerry hasn't shared much of his life with this group yet, as he is just a few weeks in, but today is going to change that. He wants to talk about his past. He wants these young men to know what it was like at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. AIDS is finally becoming a household topic of conversation and not relegated to

whispers surrounding what was previously known as the “gay disease.” Magic Johnson just held a press conference last week: he tested positive for HIV. This was a shock to everyone. Even Jerry, who wasn’t a sports fan. Jerry really appreciated the stance that Magic Johnson took—that he is going to be proactive, even though he is leaving the NBA. Jerry wasn’t sure he would ever be able to come out and be proactive. He doesn’t have AIDS, or HIV, but he is just not willing to tell all the world who he is.

But here he is at this support group. Here he is, about to tell his story to these young men, and figure out a way to come out to his family. He needs to tell his family because he is sick and tired of telling lies and trying to keep his story straight.

“Jerry, you can’t tell Dad,” says Jerry’s sister, Norah. Jerry, 32, is pacing back and forth in Norah’s living room. Jerry’s other two siblings, Laura and Steven, are not nearly as shocked or as negative in their responses. In fact, they handle the news quite well.

“What do you mean, I can’t tell Dad?” asks Jerry.

“Mom is gone. How is he going to deal with thi?,” asks Norah, almost in tears.

“Good grief, Norah, what do you mean, ‘deal with this?’” demands Laura. Jerry told Laura several weeks ago that he was gay. She was totally fine with it. She had suspected it for quite some time. She has several friends who are gay and who are totally “normal.”

“Well, I mean, this is a big thing. Mom just died last year. Dad is still grieving Mom. How is he going to handle this?” Norah is now consumed with emotion, likely from talking about the passing of their mom, and less about Jerry’s sexuality.

“Norah, take a step back here. It’s not like you have been the easiest child for Mom and Dad. You got pregnant at 18. You were forced to be married. You caused your own chaos in this family that didn’t make things very easy. This is who he is! You’re going to have

to learn to accept it.” Laura stands up and walks outside to take a breath. Steven follows her.

“Norah, I need to tell Dad. This is who I am. This is who I have *always* been. I have known since I was a little kid that something was different about me.” Jerry looks at Norah, who is now sobbing. Her husband stands, silently, next to her, unsure about how to respond. Jerry walks over to Norah and kneels in front of her. All of a sudden he feels like he is the older sibling in all of this.

“Listen, Norah. This doesn’t change who I am. I mean, you must have thought about it once or twice. I am 31 years old! I never bring anyone home for the holidays. Do I talk about women that I am dating? No! I just say that I am too busy to date. Didn’t that ever cross your mind?”

“Are you seeing anyone right now?” Norah whispers through sniffles and tears.

“At the moment, no. But I have gone on some dates.”

“Aren’t you scared???” Norah, looks at Jerry, fear in her eyes. Fear for her brother’s safety.

“Of course. You don’t even want to know what it was like 10 years ago. I was constantly checking over my shoulder to see if someone was following me—*especially* if I was coming out of a bar.”

“Oh my god, you actually go to *those* bars???” Norah is back to sobbing uncontrollably.

“Norah, that is the only place I can be me. It’s not like I am going home with men every single night, or ever. It’s just a place where I can be myself. I can’t have that anywhere else. I can’t be myself at my job. I can’t be myself at church. For 31 years, until this moment, I haven’t been able to be myself with you all. I have had to hide. I have had to lie.” Jerry pauses.

“I have been going to a support group which has helped me to better accept who I am. This is only one part of me, Norah. I am still Jerry. I still love music. I still love books and I still love our family. I just also happen to prefer the company of men versus women. And, I am going to tell Dad. But I wanted you all to know first, and wanted to know that you all support me.”

“Dad, I’m gay.” Jerry’s voice is shaking. Laura is sitting with Jerry, holding his hand. She squeezes his hand, letting him know that he is okay, and that she is there with him. They had just finished dinner together and were sitting in the living room together.

“Dad, I am gay and I want you to know. Part of the reason I’m doing this is because I don’t want to play the game of ‘whom did I tell what story’ and try to cover up with lies. This is who I am and I don’t want a lie to you.” Jerry squeezes his sister’s hand back. He had practiced saying this with her. They had practiced a few different lines and possible outcomes.

Simon, Jerry’s dad, looks at Jerry and lets out a sigh. He sits in silence for a moment, thinking about what his youngest son had just shared with him. Jerry starts to sweat. Norah gives Jerry another squeeze. She is experiencing this with him. She is just as anxious as he is. After what feels like an eternity, Simon speaks up.

“Well, I don’t quite understand what this is you’re telling me, but you’re my son and I love you.”

“By the powers bestowed to me by this state I now pronounce you life partners!! You may now share a kiss!” The justice of peace exclaims as Jerry and Charlie embrace and then share a kiss. Jerry’s family is there, celebrating this beautiful day. They erupt in applause,

tears, and laughter. The ceremony is small and is held in Jerry and Charlie's living room.

Jerry and Charlie walk down the "aisle" that is made up of about 30 people, mostly family and some close friends. They hug family members, who congratulate them. Laura grabs Jerry and gives him a huge hug.

"I'm so happy for you, Jerry. I am so SO happy for you." She says between tears and laughter.

Jerry is the happiest he has ever been. He just married the man of his dreams and his family is there to celebrate with them. He's grateful that he gets to share this moment with the people that are the nearest and dearest to him. He feels absolutely complete.

ANNA'S STORY¹⁹

BLOG OF A QUEER 1ST-YEAR BAND TEACHER

Musings, anecdotes, joys, and frustrations of what it means to be a 1st year teacher and queer.

Life Goals: March, 2018

I've been thinking a lot lately about where I see myself in 5, 10, etc. years. It's almost impossible to do so, I think, in teaching year one. I tell myself that I just need to focus on teaching this year, surviving, etc., but I'm a planner and I can't avoid thinking ahead. In 5 years, I see myself in a master's program for wind conducting, hopefully with my girlfriend/partner (wife???) by my side. I kind of hate to think that I'm already thinking about leaving my current high school job when I only got here a few months ago, but I'm determined to get a master's in conducting. In 10 years I see myself finishing a doctoral wind conducting program, and in 15 hopefully as a college band and marching band director.

I find it easy to plan for me, but hard to plan for my partner. I know that as a person in the hospitality industry, she can go anywhere, but I just don't know. Then there's the confounding issue of being gay and picking a grad school? Are there schools that have great conducting programs in areas that I wouldn't feel comfortable living in? Would I let that stop me from going after my career goals? I don't think so, but it is still something that I consider.

I can see myself teaching at the college level, but the same time, I don't know if I'm

¹⁹ Anna's story is constructed as a blog from her six-week journal entries and our conversations. You may read it as the way it is presented, in a blog format, with the most recent entry at the top, or you may choose to read it in chronological order, starting at the end of the chapter.

good enough. I think can be, but I guess it's normal not to be right now. I've had mentors in this realm encourage me. The one conversation I remember most though, is a white, cis-straight-male (I swear this is semi relevant) well-known wind conductor, who told me, when I told him I wanted to do what he does for a living, that he knew I was determined and good enough, but also that he knew I would be a trailblazer. He's not the only one I have heard say similar things to me. I know they are referring to my gender (it's no secret there aren't many female professional conductors), but I wonder sometimes how this reflects on my sexuality as well. It's not always easy being one of the people who must cut the path first, but it's necessary (I know my history well enough to say that). I try not to think about this too much though; it kind of gets in my head. I try to think more about how these people and musicians I greatly admire are supporting me and ushering me forward. Hopefully it all works out. But at the same time, what do I even know? I've been teaching for less than a year.

I want to get married. It's weird! Before I came out, I hated the idea of getting married. Probably because I hated the idea of getting married to a guy. LOL. Regardless, I have this gut feeling I want to marry my girlfriend. Not now, not in the next year or two, but someday. I think a lot about how music/band in college is what brought us together. I'd like cats of my own. Travel with her. My career is very important to me, but she is too. I spent so much time in college focusing on just being a good teacher, I never thought that I'd already be plotting out work-life balance as a 1st year teacher. I don't think that's a bad thing!

I Cut my Hair: February, 2018

It's been a while. I know. A LOT has happened since my last post. Concerts, holidays, more concerts. All the things. But I did something HUGE this week and it feels

AHHMAZING.

I cut my hair this week. Like really *really* cut it off. I always wanted short hair, but I was always afraid what people would think, what people would say. I've always been more masculine of center (I wear ties and men's clothing to work). At first, I said I'd wait until the end of my first year, not to make waves. Then I said winter break. Then, I was complaining on FaceTime with my girlfriend about how much I hate my hair and how I'm worried about what people would think and she said, "I think you should just do it. You've been thinking and talking about it so long. You're clearly set, and I think you'll look great and love it."

So, I booked an appointment a week later. Drove down to Yorkville. Dropped into a small Mexican restaurant where one of my friends bartends and wolfed down a few tacos and two happy-hour margaritas. I sat down. The hairdresser I had cut my hair on-and-off for ten years. Always the same long cut. I told him I wanted it all gone and showed him a few Pinterest photos (for the record I HATE Pinterest, but gosh was it good for "lesbian haircut," "butch haircut," etc.) and he said to me, "I knew that someday I would do this haircut for you." (I'm not sure what this means, but it gave me a vote of confidence.)

I felt amazing with my new haircut. I honestly didn't think a haircut could make me feel so good about how I looked. I think in a way it was symbolic? I felt like I cut off me caring how others were perceiving me and my sexuality in public and committing myself to being true.

I was admittedly a bit nervous about going into school though. But that faded quickly. The first student I saw was Shannon (a non-binary tuba player) and their girlfriend. Shannon has a shaved head now, and their faces lit up when they saw my hair before bursting into applause. I got SO MUCH positive feedback from students. Not that I particularly need or want my students' approval, but it felt nice.

It's also sort of illuminated what kind of school community I work in. Especially with the way I dress (pretty masculine, men's jackets, men's shoes, etc.), it is now VERY OBVIOUS that I am queer. But this hasn't drawn any extra attention good or bad. I'm tremendously thankful that the more I've worked this year, the more I've found out that I'm working in a really inclusive school.

Do I Really Want to do This Now?: November, 2017

I know that there are at least two other lesbian teachers at my school. One is a vice principal, who introduced me to her partner after the band's football halftime performance. The other is a guidance counselor who disclosed her sexuality to me by talking about how hot it was this fall, and how she and her fiancé had all this fall flannel they wanted to wear in their engagement photos and were going to sweat heavily during the whole photo session.

I haven't directly disclosed my sexuality to them. I'm still not exactly sure how to do that with it being natural and without my girlfriend living in the area as she finishes up her degree. The "oh what did you do this weekend?" "I did such and such with my girlfriend" seems to be the only natural method I can think to talk about it.

I've sort of passively come out to the woman in the counseling department. She and another colleague were lamenting that they wouldn't make LGBT inclusion their title goal as a department, because the county didn't collect the before and after data to make it a "true measurable goal." She then mentioned, "It needs work. We can just make them talk to our kids. Speaking of which . . . we need to get the club running again." "The club" being the Colorful Colonels, the school LGBT club. I said that if they needed help, I would gladly be willing to assist. And she said that what they really needed was a room to meet in, so I offered mine. I walked in for a copy of a 504 plan, and out as the co-sponsor of the school's

GSA.

I know that co-sponsoring the school's GSA doesn't make me out in an explicit sense, but I know that staff and students know that the people in the building who put the most effort towards helping the LGBT students, are LGBT themselves. I'm not sure what that says about the support LGBT kids are getting, but I know that the students know that there are teachers like them, who are standing firm on their behalf.

I want these teachers to know that I'm also gay, but I'm still not exactly sure how to say it, so for now, I'll just need to let my actions and care for LGBT students in the school speak for me when I cannot find the words.

Coming Out (What does that even mean?): October, 2017

Do you remember when you came out? I mean, the first time you REALLY came out, that you actually told people that you were gay? Maybe it was hard for you. You probably got one of two reactions: "Yeh, we had an idea about you," or "Are you sure you're gay?" It takes a lot of courage to let people know. I had a bit of liquid courage in me when I first came out to my friends. Yeh, I had been drinking at a marching band party (COLLEGE! Not high school). I was sitting with some friends, a lot of queer friends. There were a lot of queer kids in the low brass section that year for some reason. I don't even remember how we got on the subject, but I was crying and I was like "I'm not bisexual, I'm a lesbian" and I remember they hugged me but that was like the moment. Not one of my better moments in life and the next day, I woke up with not only a headache, but a feeling of "Oh shit, yeah, THAT happened."

When I came out to my mom, it was just my mom, and I wasn't even identifying as a full-blown lesbian at that point. (How many of you made a detour in bi-town?) We went out to dinner and my dad was out playing tennis and we were talking about something, I don't

really remember what it was. She told me that one of her best friends in college who is still one of her best friends now and is a family friend identifies as bisexual. (Looking back, I think she totally baited me). I remember freezing up for a second. I'm really bad at spitting out emotional things. I just sat there for what felt like an eternity. Finally I just said, "I'm sort of thinking I feel the same way" which is the wonderful way to dance around and say no words at all. She just said, "Yeah I sort of figured that."

What's interesting is that I never actually told my parents "I'm a lesbian." I think they get it though, since I have a girlfriend, but I have not actually said "I am a lesbian." Both of my parents really like her, and the plan is she will move here in the spring when she graduates. So my parents are like, "Yeah, she can come live here with us while you two look for a place and get settled and she finds a job." My dad really likes her because he's pretty introverted and shy, and usually in social situations he doesn't talk to people. He doesn't talk to people, you can sit him down at a table, and he'll just sit there and listen but he like talks to my girlfriend and likes her and thinks she's funny.

So yeah. Those are the first two main times that I have come out, verbally. I haven't come out to my students yet. I'm not sure how to have that conversation with them. I don't want it to be a distraction but I also don't want it to be a secret so it's trying to find that balance. My classroom has my safe space stickers and everything. I think the kids also know what car I drive. The back of my car has a bunch of different stickers that include an equality sticker and a bumper sticker from Bells Brewing Company. It's their equality one where it's five different glasses and they're all filled with a different rainbow color. So they might have an inkling, just based on that and how I dress, but I don't know. I am just not sure that I really want to do that now.

I Have Survived My First Month of Teaching High School Band: September, 2017

So I am a month into my first teaching job, and so far, it is going REALLY well. The band director before me left me in really good hands. The student leadership has been great in helping me get organized, letting me know what they have done in the past, but also have helped me make some changes. Like, everything has really gone well.

However, it is a bit hard, at times, to figure out how to talk about myself. That sounds really funny, I know, but as a queer person, I just don't have that luxury of talking about my personal life. Let's be honest here, I don't know what kind of reaction I am going to get from the students. And, is it really important to what I am doing in the classroom? Do the students really need to know what I did over the weekend? And, I am only like, 5-6 years older than some of my students, so I need to maintain some professional decorum. I very much maintain that I am there to be their teacher and I'm there to be friendly but I'm not their friend.

I remember a conversation we had in undergrad, for some methods class, about professionalism, and my ideas on professionalism haven't changed. That being said, I have so little experience I am not sure how or if it will change this year, but I stand pretty firm to what I said in class. I am cognizant that in a way I'm always performing for students, I'm always being watched, and that I always need to put on my best face no matter what I'm feeling. I need to maintain boundaries and space between what my students need to know about what I think, *especially* when it comes to any issue that is not musical, and just sort of maintaining that once again **friendly but not friends** space. There is really no place for politics in the classroom. My job is to teach music.

I just feel like so much of my teaching isn't just the material I present; it's how I am

with my students, so maintaining my teacher persona is a big part of me. There are aspects of me that I don't want to sanitize or remove because that's not true to who I am. It's just using what parts of me are relevant for what's going on in my school day, I guess. Maybe the easiest example would be that I enjoy the occasional (and sometimes rapid fire) cuss words (at home and with my friends!). But obviously I don't swear at school so it's not like I'm sanitizing that part of me, but it's like, hey, this isn't useful right now. When I leave the school and I'm in my car it can come back on but not right now in the classroom. If it doesn't benefit my students and then it doesn't benefit me.

So, I guess what I am trying to say is that I'm not sure that my sexuality really plays much of a role in the classroom at this point. As a new teacher, I am going to be distracting enough. I don't need my personal life to complicate things. And, I would hate for kids to drop band because of my sexuality. Our school is SUPER inclusive. I was really impressed with the amount of training we had on inclusivity and diversity before school started. I have a number of gender fluid, transitioning, lesbian, and gay students. But I am just not sure I need to be out at this point.

I know I am rambling here, but there is just SO much to think about! Especially as a first-year teacher. I feel like my brain is constantly going in 1000 directions. I started this blog as a potential means of connecting with other queer teachers, which I hope it does. But that being said, I AM conflicted on this idea of being *the gay band teacher*. I don't know, it's also like the internalized homophobia talking. You know I just, especially being the only person in the building who teaches band, I just wouldn't want to be the gay teacher. I know that I have students who believe and come from all sorts of different backgrounds which is amazing, but also part of me thinks that as the only band teacher, I would feel really bad if something like that drove someone away from taking—I don't know. I guess I just haven't

really worked that out yet. Let's see what happens during this school year.

CHAPTER 6

BRIDGING COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Introduction

Analysis of lives as lived is a daunting task, and not one that I approached lightly. To apply a theory to how lives are experienced seems potentially dangerous, in that I am constructing boxes into which each individual life must fit. The standardization of lives, as may happen in qualitative research and telling stories can be muffling and silencing, not only for myself as a researcher, but especially for those who selflessly shared their stories with me. As a feminist, I know that I cannot speak *for* those with whom I work, but I can use their words to inform my work and understanding of their experiences.

At times, the wealth of data generated was overwhelming, but I approached each reading and re-reading as if I were on a new adventure. As I read through the same transcript multiple times, new comments or moments stood out. Over multiple readings, themes began to emerge from the transcripts, like pieces to a puzzle that I had never put together. I attempted to read each transcript with a fresh lens. As I read through my writings and the data, I often found myself looking at the visual narratives that the participants sent me, often musing “what would Kathy think about this,” or “is this something Kevin would have said.” Keeping these pictures up during the analysis process was key to keeping the participants’ voices privileged over my own. The first round I read on my computer, making notes in the margins. For the second round, I printed up all the transcripts, making notes in the margins. From there I zoomed out and looked at the common notes that I had made and began to see the larger themes emerge. Some of these themes connected to literature from my literature review, while other themes required me to do some additional readings to further understand what it was that I was trying to understand.

As I contemplated the difficulties that I experienced through this task, I was reminded of Fraser’s (2004) statement about analyzing and writing narrative inquiry: “Rather than hoping to produce ‘the right’ knowledge, or indeed ‘the truth’, narrative researchers realize that there are multiple possibilities for representing stories” (pp. 195-196). This reminds us the way in which feminist researchers aim to create meaning through shared experiences and honoring the participants’ voices (Gould, 2011; Nichols, 2013; and Saldaña, 2015). In Chapter 5, I wrote the participant’s stories in the form of creative non-fiction. This chapter explored *some* of the themes that emerged from multiple readings of the transcripts. It is possible that different readers might glean different themes or connect the stories in different ways, if they had access to the raw data. As a reminder, below is a chart of the participants.

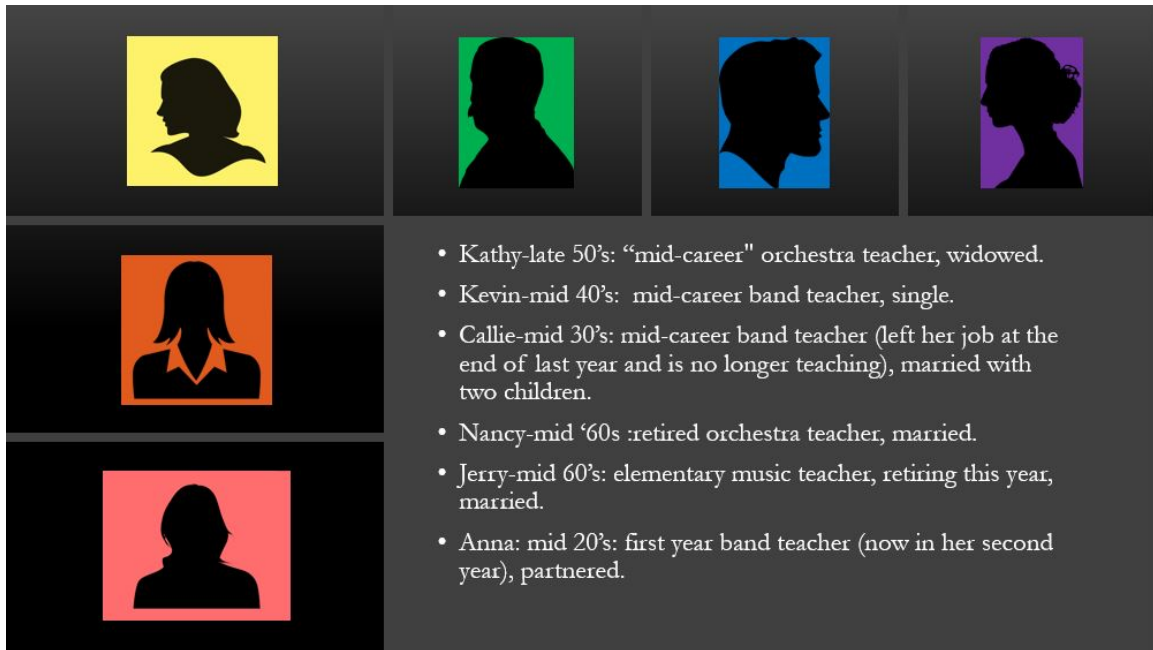


Figure 4 Participants descriptions

Part of the work that I found frustrating was deciding what to keep in the final report and what to discard, as I wanted to share as much as I could about the participants.

The two major themes I will explore in this chapter are Finding Sexuality and Finding Professional Identity. Within these themes are subthemes that illuminated the ways in which the participants came to understand their sexuality and professional identity: 1) I think I might be gay, 2) External and internal factors; 3) “True colors”; 4) “Losing my religion”; 5) “Sexual religion”; 6) “New religion”; 7) What does professional mean to you?; 8) Being labeled: But I’m a music teacher first; 9) Sexuality as a program liability; 10) Being involved; 11) Role models and mentors; 12) Modeling kindness; and 13) I’m here for you. Additional themes will be discussed in Chapter 7, as they offer additional considerations for future research.

Finding Sexual Identity

The acts of accepting one’s gay identity and “coming out” and their impact on teacher identity development have not been explored in music education research. Researchers often focus on trying to understand how gay and lesbian educators negotiate both their sexual identities and their professional identities (Connell, 2015; Griffin, 1991; Jackson, 2007; Kissen; 1992; McBride, 2017; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Palkki, 2014; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016; and Woods & Harbeck 1992). However, my study looked at the ways in which individuals came to understand and accept their sexuality throughout their lives to help clarify the ways in which they mediate these identities.

I think I might be gay

Questions that many gay and lesbian individuals are often asked include, “When did you come out?” or “How did you know you were gay?” As researchers have described, this process is not linear; one does not “come out” all at once or go through the process only once (Connell 2015; Griffin, 1991; Palkki, 2014). Additionally, the question, “How did you know you were gay?” is itself problematic, because heterosexual individuals are not asked

this question, it is unlikely that heterosexual individuals have ever had to out themselves as straight.²⁰ Because of the stigma associated with identifying as gay and lesbian, individuals may attempt to overcompensate for their gayness by performing as heterosexual. During the Lavender Scare, many gays and lesbians married people from the opposite sex to appear more heterosexual, as they knew that living their lives as gays and lesbians would likely cause problems (Johnson, 2004).

Kevin had an understanding when he was in high school that he was not like his male peers. He described earlier feelings for boys as “hero worship,” not necessarily as an attraction, but more a desire to be closer to the boys. Kevin felt an attraction towards girls in high school, because that was the social expectation of boys. “I knew I was supposed to dig girls, and I had a crush on a girl that was very pretty. She was the girl that everybody had crushes on.” However, his strong attraction to his male peers overpowered his desire to be with girls. Like most young men his age (prior to the internet), he used magazines, like the J.C. Penney’s catalogue, to explore his sexuality; however, he was looking at the male underwear models, not the women models. Kevin avoided going to parties because he was afraid that there would be alcohol there, and he might be tempted to drink. His fear was not the drinking, but about what might happen if he did drink—that he might act on his feelings towards his male peers. The “roughhousing” that Kevin experienced in the locker rooms and at youth group gatherings was often hyper-sexualized, and for Kevin, there were two sides to the experience. Deep down, he enjoyed it. Referring to a moment where he got very close with another boy during a game of tag, he said, “I really wanted to mess around with

²⁰ I should note that through this research process, I have had to “out myself” as straight to provide context for this research. It can be slightly uncomfortable, but there was never a fear of persecution.

him,” but at the same time, he called out his male peers for being un-Christian because in his mind, the acts were un-Christian.

Friend (1993) described various ways in which LGBTQ youth negotiate their identity within the walls of a school. Griffin’s (1991) model defined “passing” as acting heterosexual to avoid speculation about being gay; however, she did not include the presence of homophobic behaviors and actions in this definition. Friend (1993) added to Griffin’s model, using the term *accommodation*. According to Friend, *accommodation* also includes the ways in which lesbian and gay youth participate and contribute to homophobic language by “telling ‘fag’ jokes or participating in the harassment of students who are identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual” (p. 228). Friend suggested that this behavior “deflects attention away from the individuals and may reinforce their status among their heterosexist peer group” (p. 228). While Kevin was curious about his sexuality and the feelings he was experiencing by being closer to his male peers, he was mindful of how he presented himself and made sure to call out his peers on their behavior.

As Kevin began to understand that he was gay, he was also making decisions about where he might attend college. The scene from the church balcony, as told in Kevin’s story in Chapter 5, illuminates Friend’s (1993) description of *heterosexual overcompensation*: “the belief that living a heterosexual life will potentially ‘cure’ their [same-sex] interests” (p. 228). Callie also considered that, by going into the convent, she could have “cured” her sexual identity.

Kevin’s first acceptance of his sexuality occurred when he bought his first gay pornographic magazine. “I bought my first gay magazine my freshman year in college when I was home for Christmas. . . . I thought I could [be gay] anonymously.” Because of his strong religious background, Kevin was reluctant to bring other gay men into his life. The church’s stance on gays and lesbians was to keep the feelings concealed and to not act on the feelings.

By not bringing someone else into the physical space, Kevin believed he was still right with God. Eventually, Kevin did bring someone into his life, and while that experience left him fulfilled as a gay man, he knew that in order to live his life in that way, he would need to move to be away from his family and his church.

An outcast in his high school community, Jerry preferred the company of his academically gifted and musical friends. Tormented by the “jocks” for his weight, as well as his lack of athleticism, Jerry was called a “faggot” by his male peers. Jerry knew as early as third grade that he was “different and [was not] interested in girls.” He “didn’t have a name for it until sixth or seventh grade.” When other students started calling him faggot, he wondered if those that bullied him knew what the word actually meant, because “if you’re not into sports and you’re into music you’re obviously a faggot.” So, while he wondered at the time whether his peers had a clear understanding of the word, Jerry knew he did. Like Kevin, Jerry also used gay magazines to better understand what he was feeling.

During college, Jerry attempted to maintain a relationship with a woman for a short time period but realized that he was not attracted to her. “I thought, ‘I can’t do this to her and let it go on and get more emotional.’ Yeah, it upset her. When I broke it off with her I still couldn’t tell her the real reason.” It wasn’t until after Jerry came out to his family that he re-connected with his college girlfriend, and told her the real reason why he broke up with her.

Anna, Callie, and Nancy shared similar experiences that led them to the realization that they are gay. All three women tried dating men in high school but realized that something just didn’t feel quite right. For Anna, it was a lack of excitement towards her boyfriend that made her wonder if something else was preventing her from becoming closer to him. “We were really good friends, and I guess I didn’t realize immediately that the way I

was feeling wasn't what others of my friends that were women were feeling about their boyfriends.” Anna maintained a long-distance relationship with her high school boyfriend for three years into college. She shared with me that the breakup was painful, more for him than for her, and that they are no longer in contact. When she broke up with him, she did not share with him that she thought she might be gay. Anna considered that she might be bisexual, but upon dating women she realized where her real feelings lay. “When I started dating women, I came to terms that I wasn't interested in men at all and started identifying as a lesbian.”

Callie also dated guys in high school, but they were more her friends than a “boyfriend,” and something didn’t feel quite right about it. “I wasn’t really attracted to men. I had a boyfriend for a little while and it was like, this is weird.” Callie’s understanding of her sexuality came to fruition during a summer music camp where she encountered many queer young people. “I [had] been struggling with it I guess, and [something clicked]. ‘I think I'm gay’ and then I just kind of struggled with that for a little while.” Callie was able to connect with other queer individuals at camp who helped her process this new understanding of herself.

Nancy also attempted to date some of her male friends in high school, but didn’t feel an emotional connection to any of the boys she dated. Nancy’s senior year was a pivotal moment for her in her sexual identity development. She and another girl, who were close friends, became involved in a secret relationship that involved seemingly innocent sleepovers, a social activity that is common among young girls. They were able to hide their explorations by playing on this heteronormative and gendered activity. They were scared to share their experiences. “We never even talked about it really it just happened. It was pretty scary. Never told anyone else, we didn't even talk about it ourselves really.” Nancy had heard

of other young gay people who were kicked out of their homes or had painful family coming out experiences, including her gay cousin and who had a negative family coming out experience. Nancy's full realization that she was gay was at the college dance that she attended her sophomore year. It was here that she saw gay and lesbian couples dancing together and connecting in a way that she had never experienced before. For Nancy, this was the "moment of no return."

Kathy's story is unique in that she realized that she was gay after being married to a man for 23 years and having two children with her husband. Happily married, Kathy fell in love with an adult private cello student who eventually became her wife. "I'm 40 years old and I've fallen in love with a woman. I've scared myself to death because I was really pretty clueless about the fact that I'm a lesbian." When I asked her about what the turning point was, Kathy shared that she connected with Caroline on a completely different emotional level than she had ever experienced before, including with her husband. This emotional connection blind-sided Kathy and her world turned completely upside down.

External and internal factors

To better understand an individual's decisions to come out, it may be important to look at the external and internal factors that may influence these decisions. Inspired by McCarn and Fassinger's (1996) and Jackson's (2007) models I offer two definitions that may help us understand the ways in which the participants in this study came to understand their sexual identity and affirm their identity through external and internal factors. *Actualization* is the realization of one's identity, and *self-affirmation* is the willingness to live and accept that identity. Actualization and self-affirmation do not occur at the same time. Many external influences exist that gay and lesbian individuals contend with before, during, and after they actualize and affirm their identity. Additionally, negative consequences, much like what

Kathy experienced, may also occur. One frustration I have had with many of the models in LGBTQ research that discuss actualization and affirmation of gay identity is that the processes seem too linear and too tidy. I discussed many of these models in Chapter 2 (Friend, 1993; Griffin, 1991; Jackson, 2007; Klein, Holtby, Cook & Traverse, 2014; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). McCarn and Fassinger (1996) problematized previous models of sexual identity formation (Cass, 1979; Champan & Brannock, 1987; Coleman, 1982; Faderman, 1984; Minton McDonald, 1984), indicating that the models were too linear and did not allow for additional factors, such as social and cultural influences in the models. The participant stories in Chapter 5 similarly suggest that the processes of actualization and self-affirmation of the gay identity are neither linear nor tidy. Rather, they are separate processes that are intertwined.

When Kevin and Jerry were in high school and college, they dated women. At the time, they consciously thought “that was what I was supposed to do.” They both had underlying feelings of their gay sexuality but attempted to overcompensate for those feelings by dating women. Callie, Anna, Nancy, and Kathy all dated men. Anna and Kathy maintained longer relationships because they were in some way attracted to the men. The attraction was often felt through an admiration or friendship; there wasn’t necessarily a strong emotional connection. For the women in this study, it appears their realization of their sexuality came later than then men.

McCarn’s and Fassinger’s (1996) model may help better understand what Anna, Callie, Nancy, and Kathy experienced as they began to understand their sexual identity. Kathy, Nancy, Callie, and Anna all discussed in depth their awareness moments, where they realized that they were different from everyone else (individual sexual identity) and that there was a community of people like them (group membership identity). For Nancy, this moment

was when she attended the LGBTQ dance on her college campus. For Callie this was attending summer camp that was very open and friendly towards queer people. Kathy realized there were people like her when she did an online search and found other lesbian moms who had been previously married to men. Anna, the youngest member of the study, knew that there were lesbians, as she has grown up during a time where the visibility of lesbians has become part of the popular culture. She was aware of the community, but only gradually identified with that community.

McCarn and Fassinger (1996) highlighted in their study that external factors influenced the participants' willingness and readiness to accept their sexual identity. Their case studies revealed that religious affiliations, political climate, and social expectations mediated how and when their participants came to realize their sexuality. So too, the participants in my study were heavily impacted by these external factors. I offer a generalized visual representation that suggests that the processes of self-actualization and affirmation is murky (see Figure 4). The larger circle in the center represents the individual. The circles in the center represent the internal conflicts and influences that the individuals in this study discussed. The circles on the outside, but touching the center circle, are external factors and influences that directly affected the participants in this study and their process of self-actualization and affirmation. The blank circles in and out of the center circle represent additional internal and external factors and influences that the participants in this study did not mention, but that could have been present. The circles are outlined with dashes to represent that factors can influence each other and that there can be movement between circles—the circles are not exclusive of each other.

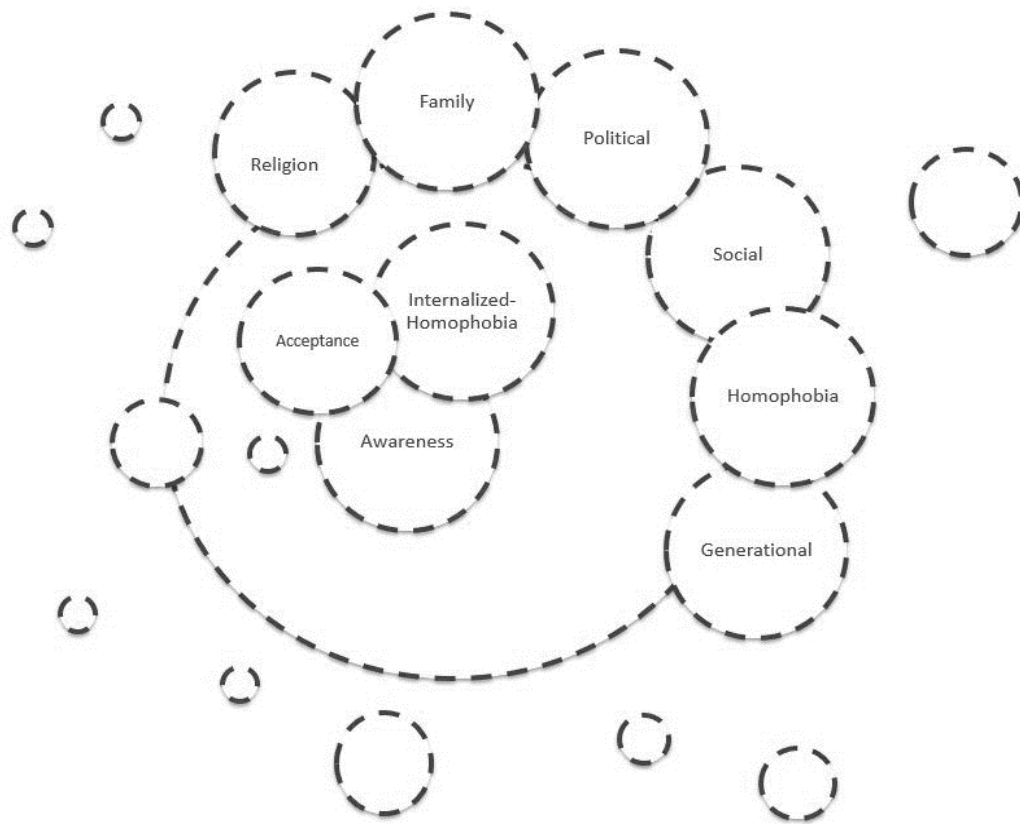


Figure 5. External and internal factors

The individuals in this study often navigated this process on their own terms first, before turning to support communities that were their friends, support groups, or family members. To offer a comparison, I created visual representations of the external and internal factors influencing Anna (Figure 5) and Nancy (Figure 6), the youngest and oldest members of the study.

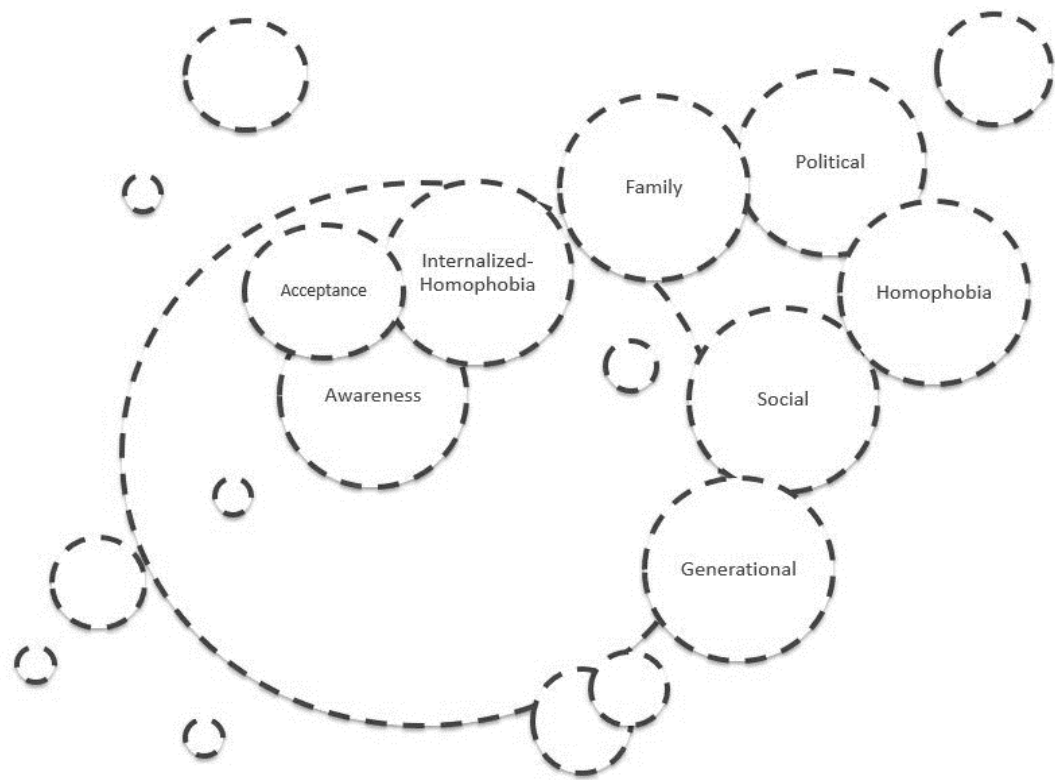


Figure 6. Anna's experiences.

Anna's generation has been exposed to more gays and lesbians in the media, so the social component may have allowed her to see herself as a lesbian more readily than the other participants. It is also likely that the homophobic language of some political movements happening at the time of her coming out created an internalized homophobia. While Anna has explicitly come out to her mother, she has not done so with her father, and the rest of her extended family is unaware of her relationship status and sexuality. Anna's awareness, acceptance, and internalized homophobia are clumped together because they all influenced each other which has led to Anna's self-actualization and affirmation of her gay identity, but also her reluctance to come out to her students and extended family members.

Anna's model does not include religion as one of the external factors because religion was not a part of her upbringing.

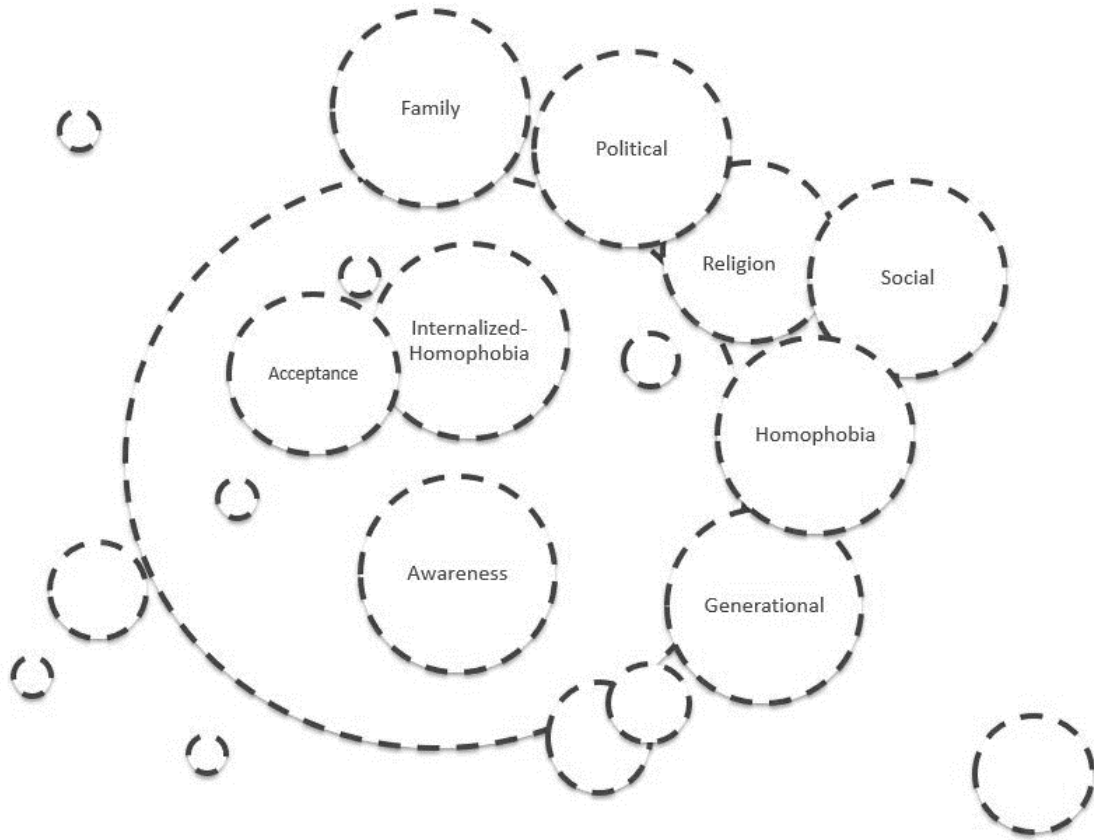


Figure 7. Nancy's experiences.

My visualization of Nancy's experiences represents the many factors and influences that discouraged Nancy from coming out. She grew up in a religious household during a political time where it was socially unacceptable to be gay. She internalized the anti-gay rhetoric for such a long time that she struggled to accept who she really was. She was aware of her sexual identity, but struggled to accept it, because of her internalized homophobia, as well as the external factors depicted in the representation. I arranged the circles to depict

what I perceived to be factors that influenced Nancy's acceptance and self-actualization, but also how these factors influence each other. For example, Nancy's grew up in a time where homophobic language was pervasive through the social and political climate. She also experienced homophobic words spoken by her family and church. The circles are closer to Nancy's self-identity because there were more factors influencing her self-actualization and affirmation, whereas Anna's model is extended a bit to represent how the political climate she grew up in influenced the rest of the factors.

This visual representation only suggests factors and influences that may encourage or discourage an individual from sexual identity actualization and affirmation. Even when acceptance occurs, external and internal factors still permeate an individual's readiness and willingness to disclose their sexuality. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) (Figure 1) provided the most comprehensive model that I could find to understand lesbian identity acceptance and self-actualization. The model that I proposed adds additional factors and influences that may contribute to the ways in which the participants in this study decided whether or not to disclose their sexuality. Additionally, my proposed model is not linear, and allows for movement. I believe other models inclusive of external factors could be created to further understand the ways in which lesbian and gays come to understand and affirm their sexual identity.

“True colors.”

Perhaps the most nerve-wracking moment is to come out to one's family. Heterosexual individuals are greatly privileged in that they never have to consider what would happen if they disclosed their sexuality to their families. The film, *Love, Simon* (2018), addresses the expectation of coming out, in a series of humorous scenes that depicts the hegemony of heterosexual culture. The scenes show young teens coming out to their parents

as straight. The teens exhibit a variety of emotions that include fear, embarrassment, and anxiety—similar to the fears that gay and lesbian teens have expressed when considering coming out to their family. The responses from parents range from “We support you” to “Are you sure?” The purpose of the movie is to establish the privilege that Simon’s straight friends have over him, as he tries to figure out a way to come out to his family as gay.

During a conversation with Nancy, I asked about differences she perceived between heterosexual teachers and gay teachers. She responded, “Coming out to your family and dealing with the holidays with your family.” Each of the participants in this study considered multiple factors about how revealing their sexual identity might affect family gatherings and relationships among immediate and extended family members. Having a partner did not necessarily ease the process. Each participant’s story was unique and reminds us that experiences cannot be generalized.

Nancy referenced her cousin who was gay and had a negative experience coming out to his family. Julia, Nancy’s partner, was not explicitly out to her own family, so Nancy often went somewhere else when Julia’s family was visiting, as to not raise suspicions.

[Julia] never straight out told them. She figured they probably assumed but she never straight out told them—She was afraid of getting disowned and losing an inheritance too. And you know, her Dad probably would have done that. I don't think her mom would have—but she was afraid of that.

Because of Julia’s fears, Nancy was also reluctant to come out to her own family. She never shared with me the full story; however, she did share that her parents eventually came to accept her and Julia. After Julia and Nancy decided to get married, Nancy’s mom expressed interest to help them pick out their new silverware—a seemingly small detail that meant a lot to Nancy. Nancy described her complicated relationship with her father and his stance on

homosexuality. “He came around, but he’s one of those where if it’s your family, if it's right in front of your face, then it’s okay. But it’s not okay for anyone else.” As an example of his mentality, Nancy referenced the story she had told me about her father having to fire the church organist when Nancy was younger.

Both Kevin and his brother, Mitchell, came out to their parents on Kevin’s birthday. While he realized the potential implications of coming out on a holiday, he believed it to be the best moment. “We did come out to mom and dad together, because it was my birthday weekend and I just said ‘Mitchell, I'm going to do this.’ I'd heard you shouldn't come out to your family on a holiday, because then your family will forever connect this ruined holiday with the day that Kevin became gay.” The response was mixed from Kevin and Mitchell’s parents. Kevin’s brother rarely talks about his sexuality; Kevin believes that to be a generational difference, even though Mitchell is only five years older than Kevin. While Kevin and Mitchell came out to their parents, neither one of them have explicitly come out to their siblings.

Kevin’s mom passed away about eight years ago and Kevin’s dad remarried. Kevin has concluded that his dad has not told his new wife, Angela, about his sons’ sexuality.

Angela made a comment to Mitchell and me at our family reunion or some family gathering, about giving us the leftovers or something, “the two bachelors.” The way she said it just made us kind of look at each other and say, “Oh shit, she doesn’t know.” It’s kind of like the whole thing of like . . . you know, would Dad have told her? Does Dad even remember or is Dad just kind of sweeping it under the rug?”

I asked Kevin if he would come out to Angela. He said that for now, he is okay with letting her think that he is just a single, straight, bachelor. When I asked about the overall family support, Kevin shared that he believed that there wasn’t a whole lot of support from

his family, but he also has not brought it up. “It’s uncharted, and I think we [Kevin and Mitchell] are afraid of the questions enough that we don’t really put it out there.”

Jerry came out to his siblings first, as described in his story in Chapter 5. There were mixed reactions from them, but they eventually grew to understand him better. His siblings did not want Jerry to tell his father, because their mother had passed away a year earlier, and they were afraid how that might affect Jerry’s father’s overall health. In the end, Jerry’s dad was incredibly supportive, and perhaps revealed a softer side to Jerry than what he had experienced as a young man growing up.

Both Callie and Anna had similar coming out experiences with their moms. Over a meal, each of their moms made a reference to someone or a close family friend coming out, and both Callie and Anna responded to their moms with a similar “I think I might be feeling that way too.” Nothing more was said in the conversations. The difference between Callie and Anna was that afterwards, Callie’s mom took it upon herself to share Callie’s story with Callie’s aunt, while Anna and her mom’s conversation stayed between the two of them. Callie is married and has children, and her family came to her wedding, so they are aware that she is a lesbian. However, Anna still has not explicitly said anything to her father, but he knows Anna’s partner and enjoys having her around the house when she visits. Anna has not come out to her extended family, because she unsure how to make it “naturally fit into a conversation.”

Kathy’s coming out process to her family was arduous. Her partner, Caroline, had a bad experience coming out during the 1980s and was scared to come out again, even with Kathy by her side. “When we were first together, she begged me not to tell anyone. She was sure that it would be taken badly, and it would result in violence or you know, just awful experiences.” When it was time to end her marriage with her husband, Kathy offered no

explanation to her husband, other than, “I’m sorry I do not love you. I’m so sorry but I cannot live with you, I don’t love you, I’m so sorry.” One of the reasons Kathy did not explicitly tell her husband that she was a lesbian because she was fearful of losing her children, which she knew commonly occurred when women came out as lesbians. Kathy eventually did tell her parents, and they did not speak to her for eight years after that. “I learned how to be okay with their disapproval and their distance and their not understanding and their blaming Caroline.”

To this day, Kathy has never explicitly stated to her ex-husband that she is a lesbian. They remain friends and continued to co-parent to support each other as they raised their now adult-children. She shared that he “obviously figured it out,” but that a conversation never took place between them. For holidays, Kathy and Caroline would often travel, leaving the children with Kathy’s ex-husband, as Kathy found it too difficult to be with her family in the holidays, even after her parents started to accept her and Caroline as a couple.

“Losing my religion”

Religion, church, spirituality, and a relationship to a higher being (most often referred to as “God”) came up during discussions with the participants. While not included in my original interview questions, conversations surrounding this topic came up with all of the participants. Religion and spirituality can be a very personal experience for individuals; therefore, I had to step away from my own notions and experiences with religion and spirituality; they have left me weathered and distrustful of what it means to be religious. As a practice in reflexivity, I wrote in my researcher’s journal as a reminder that this was my

personal experience, and not a shared experience with those whom I was working. To write it down for myself was a way to confront my biases.²¹

After sharing my journal entries with my advisor, I was gently reminded that this was *my* experience and that I could not let this cloud the ways in which I interpreted the participants' experiences. With that in mind, I sought to understand how or whether the participants saw themselves as religious beings, their relationships with the church community, and how these relationships evolved as their sexuality became a bigger part of their lives.

“**Sexual religion.**” As I struggled to understand the meaning of religion, faith, and spirituality during this study I turned to Foucault’s 1978 book, *The History of Sexuality*, to have a better understanding of how in Western Europe, sexual attitudes came to be. Foucault wrote that, prior to the organization of the church in Western Europe, “Sexual practices had little need for secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit” (p. 3). However, Foucault argued that this changed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries when the church, specifically the Catholic church, began to set and enforce social standards for most aspects of people’s lives.

Foucault’s (1978) theory of “sexual repression” (p. 5) described the ways in which individuals lost their rights to sex and sexuality to the church and state. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the church began to repress individuals’ sexuality through the practice of confession. Through confession, an individual was required to disclose all of their lives, including sexual stories, to an authoritative figure—a priest. Foucault described this set

²¹ This journal entry is on page 2 of Chapter 1.

of power relations as a way of “internalizing social norms” and sexual repression (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 71). The feeling that non-normative sexual behavior was sinful led individuals to believe that this was the “*truth* of [their] sexuality” (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 71). Foucault (1978) described three codes governing sexual practice: “canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law” (p. 31). These codes were based on the belief that marriage must be between a man and a woman, and the church held these laws in the highest regard for what should occur in a marriage. Unforgivable acts outside of marriage included “extramarital relations, adultery, rape, spiritual or carnal incest” (Foucault, 1978, p. 38). Additionally, the courts could “condemn homosexuality as well as infidelity, marriage without parental consent, or bestiality” (p. 38). Unlawful acts that were “contrary to nature” (p. 38) were considered acts against the establishment of marriage.

These laws transcended time, and became cultural norms, often encoded in civil law as well. Sex and sexuality became governed by the church and the courts, and those who deviated from the expectations were often punished. As described in Chapter 2, civil laws based on canons from the eighteenth-century church in Europe have been used in the U.S. to remove gay and lesbian teachers from the profession, as well as infringe on the private lives of individuals. While the participants in my study struggled to negotiate their sexuality with the history of sex and sexuality as established by the church, many of them were able to find themselves in places where one could co-exist with the other.

“New religion.” Callie, Kevin, Nancy, and Kathy felt a strong community connection to their various religious activities. The connection to a higher power seemed important, but more important was the communal aspect of the church. Both Callie and Kevin reflected on the power of the community coming together to support those in need

and the impact that aspect of their church had on them, both when growing up and in adulthood. Kevin shared this thought with me during our second conversation:

For instance, when my mom died, everyone showed up with casseroles and meals. They stopped by the house and made sure that everybody was doing okay, you know, and just sat with you for a while. I mean, my mom was probably the quintessential liver of the faith. She always had a dessert ready to go, at a moment's notice. Put together casseroles, same thing. If something happened there was a casserole in the fridge just because stuff happens or whatever. I mean Dad and Mom always were visiting relatives in the hospital. To me that's kind of what they do. From the second interview with Callie: "[What is] awesome about a religious community is like when Rachel's mom was sick. They had fundraisers for her. If you're not part of a community like that then you're not going to have something like that most likely."

Both Kevin and Callie grew up in very religious households as young people and saw a potential career in the church as a way to repress their sexuality. While both decided to go into music, they still hold lessons they learned from church about love and kindness close to them. "I think the lessons that I grew up with are still with me. I still on draw what I perceive to be Christianity. I guess the type of Christianity that is portrayed out there now is not at all what I think I grew up with." Callie believes herself to be spiritual but is not involved in any church. She sometimes plays with a praise band at a local church that is welcoming to the LGBTQ community, but she does not actively seek out a religious community to join. Kevin still goes to his hometown church when he is home visiting family. He is not out to his home church community and believes it to be better that way.

Kathy and Nancy both converted to Bahá'í²² as young adults, Nancy in high school and Kathy in college. Both had been raised in religious households, Congregational and Methodist respectively. However, Nancy and Kathy did not find personal satisfaction with their childhood churches, which led them to Bahá'í. Both enjoyed the community and the outreach that grounded the faith, but they struggled with the Bahá'í stance on homosexuality.²³

Kathy and her partner were married in a Unitarian church, where they first came out as a couple. They felt safe and accepted at the Unitarian church, which has a pro-LGBTQ stance, as well as a non-hierarchical belief in worship systems.²⁴ However, Kathy is reluctant to attach herself to any one religious practice. “I think my experience with being a Baha'i, and what I perceive was the need of all religions to have converts, makes me want to run and hide. I just—I'm happy to participate in a beloved religious community but I am unwilling to

²² A description of the foundational beliefs of Bahá'í: “The teachings of Baha'u'llah are vast in their scope, exploring as they do such themes as the nature and purpose of Revelation, the inherent nobility of the human being, the cultivation of spiritual qualities, and humanity's interactions with the natural world. The Bahá'í Writings are also replete with references to universal peace—“the supreme goal of all mankind”—as well as explanations of the social principles with which this peace is associated.

“Among these principles are the independent search after truth; the oneness of the entire human race, which is the pivotal principle of the Bahá'í Faith; the abolition of all forms of prejudice; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of humankind is able to soar. Bahá'ís do not view these principles as mere statements of vague aspiration—they are understood as matters of immediate and practical concern for individuals, communities, and institutions alike.” <http://www.bahai.org/beliefs/universal-peace/> accessed: 02/11/2018

²³ “Homosexuality, according to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, is spiritually condemned. This does not mean that people so afflicted must not be helped and advised and sympathized with. It does mean that we do not believe that it is a permissible way of life; which, alas, is all too often the accepted attitude nowadays.” <http://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/compilations/chaste-holy-life/> accessed: 02/11/2018

²⁴ “We are brave, curious, and compassionate thinkers and doers. We are diverse in faith, ethnicity, history and spirituality, but aligned in our desire to make a difference for the good. We have a track record of standing on the side of love, justice, and peace. We have radical roots and a history as self-motivated spiritual people: we think for ourselves and recognize that life experience influences our beliefs more than anything. We need not think alike to love alike. We are people of many beliefs and backgrounds: people with a religious background, people with none, people who believe in a God, people who don't, and people who let the mystery be. We are Unitarian Universalist and Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, atheist and agnostic, believers in God, and more. On the forefront of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer inclusion for more than 40 years, we are people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. <https://www.uua.org/> accessed 07/10/2018

convert.” Kathy and Caroline maintained a relationship with their church through Caroline’s death, but Kathy does not completely associate herself with the church’s population.

Nancy’s experience as a young child observing her father fire the gay organist led her to believe that she would not be accepted by her church community. She converted to Bahá’í thinking that the welcoming message promoted by the faith community would include her as well. However, she was disappointed with the misleading ideals.

Turns out that Bahá’í is not supportive of [gays], which is real disappointing because they are theoretically a very progressive, liberal, religion. Welcoming of all people. I mean every temple they have everywhere is welcoming people from everywhere. So, where I believe in what Bahá’í has to say, religiously, I’m not active. I don’t participate because I know that they would not accept me in that way, which is heartbreaking I guess. I’ve struggled not knowing quite what to do with this. It’s not that I want to resign if you will, that’s not the right word, but I feel like I can’t really be a part of what they do.

Despite these reservations, Nancy still identifies as Bahá’í, “And I’m not shy about telling people that I’m Bahá’í. I tell people that all the time but I just don’t get involved with stuff that they do.”

The differences between Kathy and Nancy, and how they situate themselves within the Bahá’í community, are thought-provoking. Both sought out Bahá’í because of its progressive and welcoming nature; however, both were turned off by its exclusionary stance on LGBTQ issues. While Nancy still identifies as Bahá’í, she does not partake in the formal religious practices of Bahá’í. Kathy has dissociated herself completely from any sort of organized religion because of the seemingly “recruit and convert” mentality that many

religions and churches maintain. However, she is very much in touch with her spiritual side and practices spirituality through readings and meditations.

Jerry was raised Catholic, but he commented that "none of my siblings and I ever bought into it because of the rigid beliefs of Catholicism, and it just didn't seem to fit us." His relationship with church as an adult was through his employment as a church organist and church choir director. He found himself in many different worship scenarios.

My friends were music directors of churches. Being a musician and having the opportunity to go to so many different religions. Going to Lutheran, Catholic, United Methodist, United Church of Christ—I even went to a synagogue once and sang. I got to see lots of different methods of worship, and I must say, when I was teaching up north it was funny. I was an 8:30 Catholic organist and the 10:30 Lutheran choir director in town.

As the church choir leader of a Methodist church, Jerry found acceptance, even if he wasn't explicitly out with the congregation.

Now, the Methodist church I was part of, they all knew Charlie as my roommate, and I'm sure they had pretty much figured out. None of them said anything. Again it was pretty much a "don't ask don't tell." You know, the United Methodist church—they're still going through the process. Each time it comes up for a vote, the vote turns it down on same-sex marriage, but many United Methodist churches are gay and lesbian welcoming.

Kevin's faith was extremely important to him as a young man and remains a part of him. However, as Kevin began to struggle with his sexual identity, he struggled with his relationship with religion. He articulated this in our final conversation together.

Well, because it pisses me off that the hypocrisy of the established church because— I would argue that a lot of churches aren't about theology, that it's [not] about being there for your neighbor when they need somebody. When my mom died, oh my God, those kind of times are when you when you feel embraced, you know. You know that feeling of being an outsider as well. I think that having figured out that I'm gay has given me more of a perspective of an outsider to see that. My colleague and I talk about this a lot too with our co-teachers. Like, how are our churches are supporting Trump? You know, a lot of our friends who are church-ed are supporting Trump and we're like . . . how do you not see this? Whereas I walk away from my faith [thinking] we should have healthcare for everybody. That's what I believe and know because of my faith. And then there is such an active group of people who politically have been motivated or harangued because they've been told by their church that that “No, we don't want this.” Like how can you not want health care for the sick and the poor? Is that not what Christ told us to do? And if you think it should be the job of the church, then do it. Because right now the churches aren't doing it and if they are, it's always with the strings attached like, “Oh yeah, you can have healthcare if you come to church, love Jesus, don't be gay.” So I guess when I see the colonization—when religion has become a politicized thing that bothers me. And I guess I always felt like Christianity should not be in politics, because I think it would be better for the church. Like the church, when they get active politically, lose their authenticity.

I sensed Kevin's frustration as he shared his feelings towards the hypocrisy of religiosity, that something he grew up with as being the truth was no longer a truth for him, because of his sexuality. There was a sense of sadness and reflection in his eyes as he paused, deep in

thought, considering how to answer my question about his relationship to the church and his faith.

Anna was the only participant who did not have any formal religious upbringing. Her father grew up in a Christian household and her mother grew up in a Catholic household. Anna's childhood did not include church on Sundays, Bible study, or youth groups. She shared the explanation of her parents' decision with me.

They thought about getting married in a Catholic church, but my dad said he would absolutely not sign the document that said they would raise their child Catholic or anything like that. As an adult, I did ask my parents, "Did you do this on purpose?" I mean, we celebrated Easter and Christmas, and I probably celebrated more Jewish holidays because it's a more Jewish area, and I was always at someone's house for Passover or Hanukkah. I remember as a kid asking [my parents], "Hey, the neighbors across the street go to church every Sunday, and our next-door neighbors go to the Synagogue on Saturday, why don't we do anything?" I was basically told, "We really believe you don't have to like, go to church or synagogue to be a good person. But if you'd like to go I'm sure they would be willing to take you if that's something you want to learn about." I think I said, "I don't really want to dress up to do that, so I'm good."

As an adult, Anna considers herself agnostic because, "I don't feel I need an incentive or any higher belief to just try and do my best to other people and live a good life."

Summary: Finding sexual identity

For many of the participants, their experiences with religion became a point of tension as they began to understand their sexuality. These tensions resonate with participants in Sollenberger's (2017) dissertation, which explored how gays and lesbians integrated their

religious beliefs and sexual identity. Many of the participants in Sollenberger's study acknowledged the positive sense of community that they found within established religious communities. Most of the participants in Sollenberger's study were also very involved with their religious community, despite the conflicts between religious teachings and sexuality.

The participants in my study are unlike the participants in Sollenberger's (2017) study, in that tensions between sexuality and religiosity led Nancy, Kathy, Callie, and Kevin away from their childhood religious practice to embrace a more spiritual understanding of themselves and the world. However, Jerry, Kathy, Callie, and Kevin found comfort in the community that the church provided, despite some of the official doctrine. Jerry and Kevin differentiated between the official church teachings and the openness of the particular congregations in which they participated. It was clear that the tensions between religiosity, spirituality, and sexuality were present in the lives of the participants.

The differences in how Nancy and Kathy made meaning of their religion and spirituality confused me, and I wasn't sure how to make meaning of their experiences without inserting my own experiences. I turned to outside sources to help me better understand this conflict. Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman (2008) described the difference between religion and spirituality: "Religion represents a set of organized practices established by tradition and conducted in a central place of worship, whereas spirituality is more personal, consisting of a 'lived consciousness' of relating to a higher power" (p. 412). Religion and spirituality are intertwined with each other, and can co-exist, but each can also exist without the other.

Because of my own negative experiences with religion it is hard for me to understand how some of the participants maintained some sort of relationship with organized religions that hold beliefs that being homosexual is a sin. I'm still struggling to understand how the

participants' views on organized religious beliefs and their own spirituality. The ways in which religion and spirituality affected the participants and their decisions to come out were not a part of my original research questions, but I learned that they clearly were a major part of the participants' lives. Because of my own unresolvable tensions, I encourage future researchers to consider the tension between formal religion and spirituality as an additional angle to better understand how religion may impact gays' and lesbians' abilities and desires to come out to their family, their church community, and other communities may interact with their religious experiences.

Finding Professional Identity

Educators adopt various identities throughout a school day. Teacher, colleague, wife, friend, mom, musician, adult choral director, private teacher, and musical director were some of the identities that the participants described to me throughout the study. The participants felt more or less comfortable talking about their different identities, including their sexual identity, depending on the situation and with whom they were speaking—each one's sexual identity and professional identity co-existed to different degrees in the classroom.

What does professional mean to you?

The participants and I spoke about their “professional identity”: what it meant for them to be professional, how they defined professionalism, and how they displayed professionalism through their identity.

As a first-year teacher, Anna heeded the advice of her college professors to maintain “professional” boundaries between students and herself. She understood that her students might approach her more as friend first, because she looked young, so she took extra steps to look professional, believing that this would help remind students that she is their teacher

first and foremost. Anna also considered the ways in which she presented herself to her students as a teacher, not just through her clothing choices, but also through her teaching. From our first interview she discussed a clear idea of what she believed to be her persona in the classroom.

I just feel like so much of my teaching isn't just the material I present; it's how I am. It's how I am with my students, so maintaining my teacher persona is a big part of me, but I sort of, there are aspects of me—I don't want to say “sanitize” or remove, because that's not true—but, it's just using what parts of me are relevant for what's going on in my school day, I guess. If it doesn't benefit my students then it doesn't benefit me. So that's just how I think about it. Some of the mornings I've been really stressed out and overwhelmed, and it's like, okay, that's my job to deal with. That's not something my students need to see.

Anna was unique in this study because, as a first-year teacher, she was in the process of developing not only her gay identity, but also her teacher identity. Anna “officially” came out in college as a lesbian. Prior to her teaching job, Anna held various leadership roles, such as drum major and section leader of the ensembles she participated in throughout high school and college. As a first-year teacher, she was not new to the idea of being an “authority” figure, but she was also trying to understand out how to develop her own identity in an authentic way. Our last conversation together revealed that Anna was starting to open up more to her students about her life outside of school. However, she was still unsure how to approach these conversations in a way that was relevant to what was happening in the classroom. “I've talked about my cats—I think it's not something I feel—at least I think maybe my perception has changed. My personal life is not something I feel tight-lipped about, it's just not something that has come up in a way I feel it would be

natural to talk about.” Anna’s experiences of developing her teacher identity and gay identity reflect Jackson’s (2007) gay teacher identity development model. While Anna was out to some students, she understood that societal expectations of teachers might not necessarily support being a gay teacher. Anna’s understanding of “professional” was influenced by her own participation in ensembles, as well as the ways in which her former teachers presented a professional identity. I asked Anna if she remembered any of her former teachers opening up about their lives outside of school, and she could not recall any teacher in particular who made a concerted effort. It is possible that, because Anna did not have influential teachers that opened up about their lives, she does not see a need to do so herself.

Jerry considered his professional identity more in relationship to his colleagues rather than his students. The conversations that Jerry and I had about professional identity intersected with professionalism and were intertwined with friendships, social media, and coming out. Jerry shared with me that there were very few colleagues he didn’t get along with, but he was careful about who he interacted with on Facebook. When meeting new colleagues, Jerry stated that he would “read their level of comfort when I talk about my life. While I’m fairly open in most situations, I also don’t want to make someone else feel uncomfortable in a professional setting. If they want to ask who Charlie is or some other question, I always answer truthfully and note their reaction.” Jerry maintained a different professional identity between his classroom identity and his collegial identity. Students in his classroom were not privy to personal information about their teacher, but he felt comfortable sharing private information with colleagues.

Nancy’s description of professional identity also intersected with professionalism and included the teacher’s content knowledge and the ability to “manage a classroom.” According to Nancy, if you were a professional, you had the “whole package.”

You know, that unfortunately I've seen a lot of teachers that don't have a clue about stuff like that. But professional means—You know, if it's about teaching, you know your stuff about teaching. Be able to spot something you need to address for the future type of thing. Like, know where the pitfalls are going to be, where the problems are going to be. If you're a professional, you have that whole entire knowledge.

Nancy's thoughts on professionalism focused on how to facilitate a safe learning environment with high expectations for the both teacher and the students. Nancy had a no-nonsense approach to her classroom, but her students also knew how much she cared for them.

Kevin approached his professional identity in relation to students with a stereotypical “traditional, high school band director” mindset, with a bit of compassion to even things out.

As a teacher I'm fairly straight-laced. I'm not particularly hard core like some of my teacher colleagues, but rather fairly even-keeled, compassionate. Rather than get angry that kids aren't submitting their scale assignments in Google document folders, I'd rather think of ways to have them do their scales with me. What I've found is that kids often have some hang up that prevents them from knowing how to actually do the scale, but they don't know how to ask, are afraid to ask, or sometimes don't know that they aren't getting it.

For Kevin, professionalism reflected his beliefs about relationships with his students and colleagues. His compassion for interpersonal relationships with students was reflected in one of his journal entries, where I asked the participants to describe themselves. “I like finding commonalities with people. I think this greatly informs my teaching. I feel I'm at my

best in the classroom when I take time to ask students about themselves and to share something more than their thoughts on whatever classroom topic we're discussing." Kevin's relationships with his colleagues, both at his school and beyond the school, have evolved since he first started teaching. Kevin shared that, when he first moved to his current state, he kept relationships with his colleagues at an "arm's distance," because he was reluctant to share anything that could have revealed his sexuality or impacted his professional status.

Callie's definition of professionalism included both the ways in which teachers seek to better themselves and professional dress. "[Teachers are] somebody who is striving to be an expert in their field and continuing knowledge. I try to dress on the nicer side—because it helps me feel confident." Callie and I discussed the notion of "power dress" that many women follow to portray confidence and competence in the workplace. The "power suit" or "power dress" resembles what men might wear to school: dress pants, a button-down shirt, and sometimes a suitcoat. For women, this allows them to demonstrate a more stereotypical masculine side to their teaching. This creates an interesting play on (un)performing gender (Butler, 1990), to the degree that women are more accepted in the workplace if they dress more masculine. Wearing masculine clothes plays to the stereotype of lesbians as "butch," downplaying their femininity. The "power suit" is a opposite reflection of what Nancy's advisor suggested to Nancy as she prepared to go out into the world as a music educator, to dress as ultra-feminine to avoid being suspected of being lesbian. In the middle of the school year, Anna cut her hair short and stated, "I am now visibly queer." Anna, a millennial, has grown up seeing women may present themselves in a more masculine way. Indeed, she dresses in a way that that she described as masculine. The differences in acceptance between Nancy's generation and Anna's generation are fascinating and could warrant additional

considerations for the ways in which gays, and specifically lesbian women, present their gender in the classroom based on their clothing choices.

Being labeled: But I'm a music teacher first

Griffin (1991) explored the ways in which lesbian and gay educators managed their identity through a lens of contemporary labeling theory. Derived from Goffman's (1963) writings on stigma and deviance, contemporary labeling theory "is concerned with the way that dominant groups in society impose standards of acceptable behavior and identity onto subordinate groups in society" (Griffin, 1991, p. 189). In music education, the dominant group can be described as white, cisgender, heterosexual, female and male music educators. Society also holds certain behavior and gender expectations for men and women educators. For men, these characteristics often include masculine, strong, no-nonsense, and authoritative. Women educators are often expected to be nurturing, empathetic, and feminine (Grant, 2002; Minette, 2011; Sears, 2010). Deviations from the dominant group's established norms for educators are considered questionable, and often subject to some sort of speculation and possible interrogation.

For the participants, the label "gay music educator" was uncomfortable, and most often, unnecessary. While they did not deny their sexuality, the participants felt that their sexuality was only one small part of their self-identity. Jerry shared this sentiment during a conversation about how he approaches his sexuality within the school. "I don't really talk about being gay—it's just another aspect of my life." Of the 16 privileges of heterosexual teachers identified by Bergonzi (2009), the desire to be just the "music teacher" was a constant point of discussion for Jerry. "I just didn't want to be known as the *gay* teacher, I just want to be I'm the music teacher, not the *gay* music teacher."

While Jerry does not deny that he is gay, he understands the potential ramifications of being labeled the “gay teacher.” Potentially more dangerous for Jerry is the stigma surrounding pedophilia, concerns that male elementary teachers may sexually abuse young boys (Taylor, 2018).

Kevin was aware of the consequences that might come with being labeled the “gay band director.” This frustrated him, as he commented that his sexuality had the potential for being an asset to connect with students who needed a queer role model in their lives. However, because he felt limited in revealing his sexual identity to students, he did not feel satisfied with what could have been a more meaningful interaction with the student he found on Grindr.

I feel like [there have been] situations where it should have been an asset. But it kind of became a little bit of a liability and I don't know why. Would having been more open made that situation better or worse? Like, if everybody knows that I'm the gay teacher? You know, [if I could say to the student], “Hey, you're on Grindr. And I'm on Grindr too, get off Grindr.” Versus people blowing my door open, “Oh no, there's this gay band director who's been interested in our kids for 20 years.”

Kevin's frustrations about “people blowing my door open” reflect potential circumstances where a person's sexuality is disclosed by an outside source, and they are labeled before they can claim their sexual identity. Contemporary labeling theory suggests that being labeled as a social “deviant” can negatively impact a person's mental and emotional well-being. Kevin's worries are similar to those of teachers in the early purges, where teachers lost their jobs based on hearsay (Connell, 2015; Biegel, 2010; Blount, 2005; Graves 2009; Kissen, 1996).

All participants shared that their sexuality did not impede their ability to be excellent educators. They firmly believed that their responsibility was to the students first. They all

enjoy creating musical moments with their students and shared many moments of teacher satisfaction with me. However, for some of them, and especially Nancy, there were moments early in their careers where they were unsure if they would be able to separate their sexual identity from their professional identity. Nancy shared her thoughts with me during our final moments in our last conversation.

At the beginning I was wondering if I was going to be able to do it. And I guess in the end I did. I managed to navigate through it all. But you know, I've also known some others that haven't made it. I had a friend, he was at one of the high schools. He was the band director. And he was pretty open you know, not brash like some of the newer teachers, and he was there for eight years and he just quit. And he is a flight attendant now. Especially after doing this with you, Sarah, I want to at some point have a good sit down with him and say "why?" You know, I mean, it is hard when all the teachers around you, and everybody else is talking about their family, and their kids, and their this and that, and vacations. Either you pipe up and risk what they're going to think or you just keep your mouth shut. I mean I suppose that that's one of the hardest things.

Sarah: And that's what you did for most of your career.

Nancy: I kept my mouth shut until I found people that I could trust.

Nancy's fears speak directly to the ways in which people respond to being labeled, as described by contemporary labeling theory. At one point in an early conversation, Nancy even remarked, "Well, you know, I have always been a little different." This struck a chord that left me unsettled. I was reminded of a conversation with an administrator with whom I didn't particularly see eye to eye. He made the comment that I was a "little different." That moment has stuck with me because, in that moment, I felt less-than and definitely not an

equal with my administrator. He was concerned that I was not nurturing enough with the students and that when he hired me, he thought I would take on a more motherly role—opposite to the male band director who had the job before me. He was asserting his power as a white, heterosexual, cisgender male, over me, a strong and determined female band director, one who didn't particularly nurture the students in a motherly fashion. In that moment, I was not meeting his expectations. While not claiming that my experience is equivalent with the experiences of gay and lesbian educators, I realized in that brief moment how not meeting a pre-established expectation could affect one's professional identity.

Sexuality as a program liability

In our one-on-one conversations, as well as in the group discussion, sexuality as a possible program liability often came up as a reason for the participants to not come out to their students. The teachers' fears of what could potentially happen to them professionally and personally if they revealed their sexual identity remained an underlying consideration of the participants. Kevin, Anna, Nancy, and Kathy shared their concerns about what could happen to their programs if they did come out. Both Anna and Kevin acknowledged that typically, students choose to be in high school music courses, so if their sexuality was a possible reason why students might not join band, they preferred to not explicitly come out.

Kevin's job is located in an area that tends to be politically conservative, despite its proximity to a large metropolitan area. His history with church, along with the presence of conservative churches located in his school district, likely heighten his awareness that his sexuality could be a program liability.

I played through this a lot of my head. Band is an elective. I mean yes, I could come out, and yes, [here in this state] they couldn't fire me for being gay. But, if everybody stopped enrolling in band? That seems really legitimate. I mean these are the things

that I kind of thought about. And maybe people don't think about it as much [as I do]. But, I would never put my program in that situation. If I sensed that the program was going to tank, I would just resign. Find something different to do. I wouldn't put a program in that situation.

Kevin's comment, "maybe people don't think about it as much [as I do]," made me pause and consider who he meant by "people?" I wondered whether he meant heterosexual teachers, who, as Bergonzi (2009) articulated, do not have to consider possible ramifications for the music program due to their heterosexuality. It is also possible that because of his personal history and external factors, he was referring to other gay and lesbian teachers who feel more comfortable being out in their school community. Additionally, Kevin's comment about quitting reminded me of Connell's (2015) description of "quitters;" he claimed that if sexuality became too big of an issue for his band program, he would just quit altogether and do something else.

As a first-year teacher, Anna was dealing with many concerns that were bigger priorities than whether or not she should come out to her students. Maintaining a thriving program was likely one of the priorities. For fear of students not wanting to join band, or even worse, drop band, she saw her sexuality as a liability and wasn't ready to "go there" with her students.

I don't know, it's also like the internalized homophobia talking. You know, I just—especially being the only person in the building who teaches band, I just wouldn't want to be the gay teacher, the gay band teacher. I know that I have students who believe and come from all sorts of different backgrounds, which is amazing, but also part of me thinks that as the only band teacher—well, I would feel really bad if

something like that drove someone away from taking—I don't know. I guess I just haven't really worked that out yet.

This comment came earlier in our conversations together, before she got a haircut which made her “visibly queer.” Even then, however, Anna remained unsettled about explicitly coming out to her students.

Kevin’s and Anna’s fears about program liability resonate with McBride’s (2017) findings from a study about gay choral music educators. Cameron, a participant in McBride’s study, was reluctant to come out to his students and school community for fear of the implications this information might have on the choral program. “I’m not out to students, one, because I want the choral program to be intact and safe. . . . Kids talk, and kids get concerned, kids get uncomfortable” (McBride, 2017, p. 103). It seems these teachers would rather see a program become successful and flourish than bring their sexuality into the school setting.

Nancy's fear of coming out in the public schools likely stemmed, at least in part from the political movements that occurred during the same time she was in college and her first years of teaching. She knew she was a lesbian, and she knew that her income was coming from public taxes. She struggled to negotiate this thin line of public life and private life. "Well, you're paid by public money and out there in the public. People get to know you, so you can't really hide." This fear increased when Nancy’s cooperating teacher’s house was plastered with Anita Bryant signs during the “Save the Children” campaign. Nancy realized then that her sexuality could negatively impact her job and her livelihood. She and her partner moved to the Pacific Northwest to get away from the homophobic rhetoric of the Midwest and to live in a more accepting community. However, after several years of

teaching in her new location, Nancy found herself facing a state legislative amendment that could potentially impact her as well as her program.

Sarah: Were you ever concerned what might happen to your program if people found out about your sexuality?

Nancy: Especially during that time I told you about with ballot initiatives that were going around [here]. There were two different times where they were trying to pass this thing that said—It would have been a witch-hunt for gay teachers—to push them out. And I got the paper and they have letters to the editor. And during that time, I would read the letters and some of them were just—wow, you know, in favor of this initiative.

Sarah: That must have been hard to read.

Nancy: They were written by parents of some of my kids. So, it's like you know, if they knew, if they knew about me, they'd probably take their kid out of my program.

Sarah: What year was that? Was that the early 80s?

Nancy: No, it would have been mid to late 80s because I started here in 86. I don't think it was the first year, so it might have been 88? 87? 89? Somewhere in that era but, yeah, pretty close to the beginning of my career here. Yeah. It's just like, “yay, hold off again.”

Nancy's comment about “holding off again” hinted at the constant decisions about “coming out” that gays and lesbians must make throughout their lifetime (Connell 2015; Griffin 1991; Palkki, 2015). She came out during college but refrained from sharing her sexuality while she was student teaching, except conversation she had with her advisor. Even during that conversation, she never said “I'm gay.” She never came out when she was teaching during

her first job, but had hoped for a more open life, a merging of public and private lives, when she and her partner moved.

As her college professor had suggested, Nancy made a conscious effort to “pass” as straight. She dressed more feminine, put perms in her hair, and wore makeup. By putting on the heterosexual mask of straight woman (Goffman, 1959), Nancy was conforming to the heteronormative expectations placed on educators (Connell, 2015; Kissen, 1996), in hopes of not damaging her program. Butler (2006) described this performance of balancing the social construction of gender and sexuality as “compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 24). Society expects teachers to act—and be—heterosexual (Blount, 2005; Connell, 2015). The idea of appearing “heterosexual until proven otherwise” (Connell, 2015, p. 12) permeated my conversations with the participants regarding sexuality in the classroom.

Kathy’s situation was unique to the group in that she began her teaching career as a private teacher, teaching out of her house. She thought she was doing her students and their families a service when she came out to them, explaining who Caroline was. In Kathy’s mind, she believed that she absolutely needed to come out to the families as they were coming into her house. This action backfired on her and families removed their children from her private studio. When she entered the world of public school teaching, she felt safer because there was less chance of students discovering her living situation. However, she still feared that if students found out about her sexuality, they could potentially quit, or choose not to join, orchestra.

Few researchers have identified sexuality as a program liability in current LGBTQ music education research. Discussions surrounding sexuality as a liability most often surround the personal and professional tolls on music educators who decide to come out to their students (Furman, 2012; McBride, 2017). High school performance ensembles, such as

band, choir, and orchestra are often electives, and as Anna and Kevin articulate, students are choosing to be there. Parents are choosing to spend money on instruments, uniforms, extra rehearsals on the weekends, as well as concerts, and trips. The looming question, “What if they find out?” could potentially have positive or negative consequences on a program, depending on the location of the school and administrative, parent, and school support. Music educators may not be willing to take that risk.

Being involved

Callie is happy to be out at work and to be able to share stories about her wife and daughter. She is also expecting another child in early Fall 2018. She became involved in her middle school's Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) during the 2017-2018 school year to work more closely with queer students and their allies. “Even though I talk about my family and stuff in my classroom, I wanted to just be more supportive out there and help with any work they want to have done too.”

Anna also became involved with her school's GSA during her first year of teaching. While she has not chosen to be explicitly out at work, she believes that her role as a co-advisor may lead students and families to come to their own conclusions about her sexuality. This is more comfortable for her than openly stating “I'm gay.” This also resonates with Griffin's (1991) model of the way in which teachers navigate their sexuality throughout a school day. Anna's implicit outness suggests that she is willing to let students and families come to their own conclusions about her sexuality while being a positive role model as a high school band director. Anna doesn't work hard to “pass” as a straight woman—her fashion style and her short hair resonate with a more masculine approach.

I know that co-sponsoring the school's GSA doesn't make me out in an explicit sense, but I know that staff and students know that that the people in the building

who put the most effort towards helping the LGBT students are LGBT themselves. I'm not sure what that says about the support LGBT kids are getting, but I know that the students know that there are teachers like them, who are standing firm on their behalf. I want these teachers to know that I'm also gay, but I'm still not exactly sure how to say it, so for now, I'll just need to let my actions and care for LGBT students in the school speak for me when I cannot find the words.

Anna's story resembles Karen's, a participant in Connell's (2015) study, who was also an advisor for her school's GSA. Karen was also not explicitly out to her students, and she used the term partner to refer to her wife. She wasn't sure what this veiled outness meant. "Does this mean I'm still closeted? What does that mean?" (p. 84). Connell described this as the struggle that many "knitters" experience when attempting to close the gap between their personal and professional lives.

Role models and mentors

Throughout our conversations, I noticed that Kevin often avoided answering my questions about being a role model or a mentor to his students. Kevin is in a comfortable place in his job—he has administration support, supportive colleagues and a thriving program. He is "mid-career," both as a music educator and also as a gay man, two roles that he does not see as completely compatible with each other.

I mean this is where things get uncomfortable for me because—part of my ability to work and achieve has been partially because of that plausible deniability. I think sometimes I feel like because I can fit in, I don't have to worry about gay things. And I think this is sometimes on the flipside why I feel like I don't always fit in with the gay culture either.

Brekhus (2008) described this ability to fit in as being a “commuter” or a “chameleon” (p. 28). Kevin’s ability to fit within a heterosexual identity at school, despite a potential assumption by students and parents of his gayness, kept him safe. But this also meant that he was not able to be there for the students in a way that he felt could be beneficial all the time.

Kevin then alluded to his belief that “the right kids know,” and the ways in which there is a coded understanding between him and those students.

I guess that for me it's like, I would love to be the person that's more out and be a little more open. And so sometimes I think the idea that the right kids know is a little bit of a wink and a little bit of—still kind of that speak, the coded speak. [In the] gay culture you use a “friend of Dorothy” or “He's family.”

In our last conversation together, he shared with me how he was still struggling with adopting the idea of being a role model into his professional identity.

I deliberately avoided the question of being a role model for students, I think. And I mean, you (Sarah) clearly pick up on it, because you kind of brought up the “who are the ‘right students?’” To me, [thinking about this has] helped shine light where I feel like light has needed to be shined I guess; in that way that's reflective. I guess, for instance, one thing, I kind of went down the road with the student at my former school who committed suicide. I couldn't help but wonder had I stayed there, would that have been different. I voiced that to somebody else, and they came back with, “Hmm, maybe, but probably more likely is it would have killed you too.”

Kevin was reluctant to participate in his school’s GSA for fear of being the “lightning rod.” “I’m kind of grateful that I’ve had straight allies at our school that are taking that on because for me, I wasn't ready to go to that place yet.” This sentiment reflects Connell’s (2015) splitting identity, as well as Brekhus’ (2003) description of commuter or

chameleon. Kevin sees himself first as a band director, and he believes that the majority of the conversations that take place in his classroom should be related to music making. He will take moments to address kindness and bullying, like many teachers do in their own classrooms, but the focus is generally on music making.

Throughout our conversations, Nancy did not specifically answer my question about being a role model. She shared that she was supportive of student groups participating in the "Day of Silence" as well as the GSA, but she never acknowledged herself as a potential role model or mentor to students as a lesbian woman.

Callie was the only participant that explicitly positioned herself as a role model to students. In our last conversation together, she shared with me how being an openly gay music educator had helped her negotiate her sexuality within her classroom.

I think it's helped me be consistent, like with that kid that raised his hand in the middle of class [to ask if I was a lesbian] or even just with the kids whenever I showed them the Santa pictures. "Is that your sister?" "No, that's my wife." It's helped me with knowing that I should be, I don't know if "should be" is the right phrasing, but just to hold myself accountable for the queer community. I know for sure we have tons of queer kids. In one band I have at least three females [transitioning] to male students. They are, at least toying with that idea. I don't know if they are 100% there yet but they have asked to be called "he" and "him."

Sarah: So, do you see yourself as more of a role model now, than back in your old job?

Callie: I do. Yeah.

Sarah: How do you feel about that responsibility?

Callie: I think it's—I feel fine about it. I feel good about it. I feel like it's necessary for kids to see queer people out there being successful. I mean it's a little bit of pressure to always correct someone about it or things like that but—Yeah, I think it's okay. I'm feeling a little more comfortable with it too.

She also taught in a district that supports LGBTQ teachers and has a strong anti-discrimination policy for both LGBTQ youth and educators. The support that she felt from her district likely aided her decision to be more transparent with her life with students. Callie represented Connell's (2015) “knitters,” as she was able to weave her sexuality in and out of her classroom, either through one-on-one conversations with her students, or showing pictures of her family to the whole class at the beginning of the school year. Callie's partner and family privilege allowed her to be more open about her sexuality in the classroom (Palkki, 2015).

Grant (2002) suggested that role models often influence from a distance, as “someone who one can look to as an example, someone who embodies what we aspire to do” (p. 121). It is possible that the participants in my study did not have LGBTQ role models in their own lives who helped them navigate these complexities, which may be one reason they were hesitant to assign themselves this responsibility.

Grant (2000) described the role of a mentor as “a process that is intentional; a nurturing process; an insightful and encouraging process; supportive and protective; affirming; and is best accomplished if the mentor is an accessible role model” (p. 47). This view of a mentor's role describes a different type of involvement in the student's lives that allows teachers to work with students in a meaningful way, but without revealing too much of oneself. It also seems that, with exception of Callie, the participants were reluctant to serve as mentors or role models.

Taylor (2018) examined the mentorship between gay and lesbian cooperating teachers and gay and lesbian student teachers. While he worked with student teachers rather than K-12 students, the implications are not far removed from a potential impactful relationship between gay and lesbian teachers and younger students. Participants in Taylor's study were able to negotiate struggles that they experienced in and out of the classroom with their mentors. This one-on-one relationship could be very powerful for teachers and students; however, some of Taylor's male participants feared "false accusations of pedophilia" if they shared their sexuality once they got out into the classrooms (Taylor, 2018, p. 75). This fear of crossing the line could be one of the reasons why participants felt reluctant act as a mentor for students.

Modeling kindness

When I asked Jerry how he perceived his role as a potential role model, his response was less about his sexuality and more about character.

One of the big things I try to model for them is kindness and appropriate manners. Simple as holding a door open for someone. When you return that kindness that will come back to you. That's something I've believed in for so long, that karma—eventually good things will come back to you. I tell the kids, I've had so many good things happen to me because people have been kind to me, and not just because they gave me something like a food object or a pen or something like that. I tell them even just the idea of somebody slowing down in traffic to let me pull in, or if they hold a door open for me. Those things of kindness, I turn and say thank you. I tell my students how one time I was out to a restaurant with a friend of mine, and the server would come and put my food down and I'd turn and say thank you. My friend said, "Why are you thanking them? That's their job." I said, "Well, I'm thanking

them because they're doing it nicely. They are not interrupting us at all. They are bringing things. Wouldn't you want to be thanked for doing a job well done?"

Callie and Kathy also commented on the role of love and kindness in the classroom, especially during a time in the country where political leaders, and even members of the general public, have shown hatred towards others. Callie shared with me a conversation she had with students regarding hate speech in her classroom. "The biggest thing I've noticed with kids who are not being super nice to one another, and I say, 'Let's choose kindness,' and then they say, 'Well, our president doesn't.' So, I respond, 'Well, we have to be better people than that.'"

Talbot and Hendricks (2016) described character modeling in their study about how teachers dealt with name calling and bullying. They described how the participants in their study, two gay music educators, dealt with the pejorative slang, "That's so gay," in a meaningful and teachable way that likely had a lasting impact on their students. Kathy and others also address this kind of slang and hateful speech at the beginning of the year with a no-nonsense approach.

I've dealt with it by saying, "I heard you say, 'That's so gay' and we're not going to use that language, ever, in my classroom. That's not appropriate. You can say, 'I don't like that,' but don't use the word gay." They would get this look in their eyes, that feeling of, "Oh, she really means it, okay." I stopped many kids from saying things like that in my classroom.

Callie shared a moment with a student where she was quite dramatic but was attempting to drive the point home.

I took a kid out in the hall and I said, "I'm gay." He was like *gasp*. I said, "So whenever you say something like that—" This was way bold[er] than I would

have been five years ago. “But whenever you're using that word or that term, that means stupid or things like that. There are a lot of better words you can use. People who are gay can be insulted and they can also take that really personally. People kill themselves about that.” I’ve been really dramatic about it.

Callie is now comfortable where she can use her own sexuality to confront pejorative slang. When she taught in a more conservative district, she called out students on their words, but used a general “gay people” approach to combat the situation and avoid outing herself.

The participants are well aware of the ramifications of this kind of language, because they have been victims of hurtful and hateful speech directed at them or to the LGBTQ population. By standing up to the speech, they are not only promoting a safe space for themselves and their students, but they are also modeling love and kindness. However, this can be tricky in a school community. “Out and proud” often celebrates the stereotyped gay, lesbian, or queer aesthetic: a suggestively flamboyant lifestyle that includes “leather daddies to drag queens to bears to gym bunnies to dandies . . . and lipstick lesbians, bull dykes, and sapphic sisters in tuxedos, top hats and monocles” (Davis, 2013). “Knitters” are aware of these stereotypes and stigmas, and want young LGBTQ youth, as well as their straight peers, to know and understand that gays and lesbians are not always what they see in parades, films, or clubs, but rather, individuals who are happy and healthy, just like any heterosexual individual (Connell, 2015; Kissen, 1996).

Both Kissen (1996) and Palkki (2015) suggested that while some gay and lesbian educators may embrace their status as a role model, both for students struggling with their own sexual identity, and students who identify as heterosexual, there are gay and lesbian educators who would prefer to be known as “educator” as opposed to “the gay teacher.”

This may be more related to the perception of a sexual “lifestyle” rather than their concerns about their sexual identity.

I’m here for you

During the group dialogue, Kevin offered consideration of sexuality as a program asset, rather than a liability. He suggested that gay and lesbian teachers bring in additional life experiences that may help students see the world in a different way. “Part of me is like, ‘When do we get to the point where our sexuality or being gay is an asset vs. a liability? When do people see the diversity we bring and the diverse lifestyle and life experiences we have?’” The participants all wanted to let students know that they are there for them, no matter what, but they were sometimes unsure how to broach the topic. The participants in Taylor’s (2010) study also recognized the potential that “their experiences as members of a marginalized group in society may have strengthened their ability to relate to students with compassion and openness” (p.9). Understanding the struggles that all students have as young people, coupled with their own unique backgrounds as gays and lesbians may encourage an additional level of empathy towards students.

All teachers felt a responsibility to let their students know that they are there for them, even if from a distance. For Kevin, this meant acknowledging that the “right kids know,” and that he was willing to come out to some students in private conversations when he believed it to be relevant to the topic.

The discussion with students that I remember having about sexuality was a few years ago. This was following the suicide of a student in my hometown. He was bullied by comments in school and thought that all his friends joined a group against him on Facebook. I talked with each of my bands that day about bullying in general and specifically talked about what happened in my hometown. I didn’t say that I was

gay, but I did talk about the student who committed suicide and why he was being bullied. . . . I then had a student who sent me an email discussing how much more respect he had for me after having had this conversation. He himself was not gay, but he respected that I had the conversation. He was a trombone player, and a few days later one of his trombone section mates, a girl, asked if I had a second after class. She shared with me how much it meant to her that I talked about it in class. She then shared that her brother was gay. Her brother had not been in band but had graduated from our school just the year before. At that time, I shared with her that I was gay—if she hadn't known. She mentioned that she knew and that generally kids also knew but that no one seemed to make much of a deal about any of it. . . . Since then, I've had a number of other students open up about their sexuality.

This seemingly conflicts with Kevin's reluctance to be a role model or mentor for his students, and he fully acknowledges this internal conflict.

I guess it's more of a final goal of mine, because I know that that's where the rub is. I still have fears of all—Am I at the place where I can accept a family that will not only just quit band because they don't like their band director, but they'll make a stink and come after me. You know there's still that kind of, "He doesn't belong in the school" [referring to past political movements]. I know I've got the support of my administration. For fuck's sake, we have a lesbian superintendent. Which you know there's this little interesting thing because I don't think she's out to everyone. I don't know that that's common knowledge. Why should it be? Except that it could be really great.

Kevin's sentiment of "that could be really great" speaks to the unease that most of the participants expressed throughout our conversations about their potential roles as mentors or role models to students who are dealing with similar experiences that the participants experienced when they were their students' ages.

Jerry, Kathy, and Nancy were the "older generation" of gays and lesbians in this study. GSA's did not exist when they were in school as teens, or for most of their teaching careers. Acknowledgement and positive conversations about these topics did not happen when they were growing up. For them, taking on a role of mentor or role model as a gay man or lesbian woman was not part of their aspirations when they became teachers. However, Jerry, Nancy, and Kathy were very supportive of students who they thought might find themselves in situations similar to their own student experiences. They believed themselves to be more of a supportive role, rather than someone that students to look towards as a model of how to be a "successful" gay or lesbian person.

In one of his journal entries, Jerry described his school and a scenario where he found himself in a supporting role to help a student's gender identity journey.

We do have students who I believe have gender identity issues. I have one third grader and one fifth grader who look and act like boys. The third grader told her teacher to call her "Duke." The teacher did come to talk to me to ask my opinion about the child and I did agree with her, though I'm only working off of 30 plus years of experience in working with children in general, not as a trained gender identity/psychologist. . . . Fortunately, we have some great teachers who are caring and supporting of students who may be "different." While I know that this is not the same as being gay, I do understand being labeled as different. The world is different

now than it was when I was a child. I could never have come out when I was in high school.

Jerry noted the Duke's classmates' lack of interest in their classmate as Duke navigated their identity formation. Jerry's connection to being labeled different as a young person speaks to the generational shift that has occurred since Jerry was in high school. As more students begin to grow into their gender identity and sexuality at an earlier age, it seemingly has become more normalized.²⁵

While Kevin capitalized on students coming out to him as an appropriate time to disclose his own sexuality, Kathy and Nancy did not disclose their sexuality to students until after the students graduated. Nancy shared a moment when a student came out to her while she was teaching, and in that moment, it was very uncomfortable for her because, while she wanted to share her own experiences to help support this student, she refrained from doing so to protect herself. Both Kathy and Nancy commented that students who have come out to them post-graduation have become close friends with them. This is possibly due to Kathy's and Nancy's own life experiences as gays and lesbians.

Summary: Finding professional identity

Participants in the study were hopeful that their sexuality might be seen as an asset to the program. Because of their own experiences with injustice and discrimination, the participants were mindful of how they modeled kindness and acceptance in their classrooms. Each participant made themselves available to students, but in different ways. Some participants, like Jerry, worked with teachers and parents to help students through their own

²⁵ "Normalized" might be a contentious word to use and perhaps "socially acceptable" might be favorable to others. The argument for "normalized" can stem from considering gay and lesbians as normal as any other person in today's society. The "normalization" has occurred through TV shows, such as "Will and Grace," "Ellen," "Modern Family," that include gay and lesbian characters and their stories.

identity negotiations. Both Nancy and Kathy commented that it was refreshing to see the younger generation of teachers feel comfortable with their sexuality, so they might be able to be a mentor or role model for students. While Anna is still in a place of understanding how her sexuality and her professional identity may work with each other, she is making efforts to be available to LGBTQ students.

Participants in this study saw their professional and sexual identities weaving in and out with each other throughout the school day. Some participants maintained a clear and defining line between the two. Jerry, for instance, often used the phrase, “it’s a non-issue,” when describing how his sexuality played out in the classroom, implying that his sexuality did not impact his teaching. In talking with colleagues, he made more internal negotiations about how to present his sexual identity as part of his professional identity. Both Kevin and Anna saw the potential for their sexuality to be a positive asset in their classrooms, but they were aware of potentially being labeled “the gay music teacher,” and worried that the label itself could be a potential liability for the program. Callie saw herself as a role model and weaved her sexuality and her professional identity together, much like the “knitters” in Connell’s (2015) study. Nancy, the retired teacher of the group, remarked how she was “able to make it work” over the course of her career. All teachers believed that their sexuality complicated their decisions about enacting their professional identity, but did not impede their ability to connect with students—in their minds, they had no question that their role was to be a music teacher first.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored themes that emerged from the analysis of the data generated with the participants. Many external and internal factors play into how the participants understand their sexual identity and professional identity. Family support and spirituality

were two major external factors that influenced how the participants negotiated their sexual identity. When attempting to navigate their sexual identity within their professional identity, participants found themselves wanting to be strong role models and mentors for their students; however, they emphasized the importance of being a good music teacher first. All the participants experienced moments of internal tension when trying to navigate the complexities of their private lives in a very public arena.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND MORE QUESTIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of this study through a review of the research questions and themes that emerged from the data. I offer recommendations for practice based on the current political climate, and how the profession might create communities of support and safe and open spaces for lesbian and gay music educators. I provide recommendations for research based the external and internal factors that the participants in this study experienced, as well as additional thoughts on future research surrounding how gay and lesbian music educators navigate their professional and sexual identities. I also recommend the inclusion of black and brown lesbian and gay music educators in future research. Finally, I offer additional questions for the profession to consider as additional areas of research, and questions to consider as we continue to push forward in the name of equality and equity.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the lives as lived of six K-12 music educators who identify as lesbian or gay. Questions guiding this research included:

- How do lesbian and gay music educators describe their sexual identity and professional identity?
- How do gay and lesbian music educators negotiate the tensions between these identities?
- What internal and external factors influence these negotiations?
- What are the similarities and differences among the participants of different generations?

To address these questions, I conducted an intergenerational narrative study. Over the course of a year, I worked with six music educators who volunteered not only their time, but their life stories to me. Each individual and I engaged in three, one-hour conversations. Additionally, each participant journaled for six weeks between the second and third interview and shared their journals which included their visual narratives with me via email. Finally, all six participants and myself sat down for a group discussion that took place online. The data generated from these interactions was rich, detailed, engaging, and—for me—life changing.

In Chapter 4, I provided contextual background information for each participant. In Chapter 5, I wrote creative non-fiction stories about each participant, based on the conversations and journal entries that the participants shared with me. I intended these stories to represent the participants through their words. The stories explored dark and haunting times that the participants experienced, but also joyful times. Each participant also shared how music played an important role in their lives.

Chapter 6 explored two overarching themes that emerged from the conversations with the participants: finding sexual identity and finding professional identity. The following sub-themes supported the larger themes: 1) I think I might be gay, 2) External and internal factors; 3) “True colors”; 4) “Losing my religion”; 5) “Sexual religion”; 6) “New religion”; 7) What does professional mean to you?; 8) Being labeled: But I’m a music teacher first; 9) Sexuality as a program liability; 10) Being involved; 11) Role models and mentors; 12) Modeling kindness; and 13) I’m here for you. The sub-themes helped to understand the ways in which the participants not only found their sexual and professional identities, but also made up the external and internal factors that influenced their levels of disclosure in and out of the classroom. When the participants began to realize they were gay, a myriad of factors

played into when and whether or not they came out: their family support, their religious practice, the political landscape and cultural norms of the time, and support from friends. As the participants developed their professional identity, they focused on being strong and compassionate music teachers by being involved, being role models and mentors, and being available for students. However, all the participants made it clear that they want to be known first for their ability to teach students, not their sexuality.

I will be truthful in that I don't understand everything about their experiences. That is partly due to the limits of my own sexuality as a cis-gender, straight woman. This is also due to my upbringing in a small, university town, and my own "coming of age" in the early 1990s. Although at that time, gays and lesbians were not as present in household discourse and popular culture as in many places today, I still had an awareness that these people existed in my social sphere. Despite my lack of understanding due to my own external factors and background, I have become much more aware and am learning to put my assumptions aside, because each individual, no matter how they identify, is unique. This study has made this even more apparent to me. Each person's life is unique to them; any sort of generalization to others' lives minimizes the experiences that an individual has encountered. Others may have similar experiences, but as Dr. Stauffer reminded us time and time again at Arizona State University, "Reality is socially constructed, individually experienced, and thus not totally knowable."²⁶

²⁶ "Reality as socially constructed" was a constant topic of conversation in my qualitative methods course. Dr. Stauffer engaged us in various practices to help us understand this concept, that our unique experiences are influenced by many external factors and by our backgrounds. This quote remains with me in my work with high school students and with other professional music educators.

Recommendations for Practice

In this next section, I offer considerations for how we as a profession might better equip ourselves to support our lesbian and gay music educator colleagues. I begin first by re-examining the ways in which history is being repeated in explicit and non-explicit ways, followed by suggestions for combating those practices and policies through anti-homophobic education. I then share experiences which the participants in this study offered that help them feel accepted in their own communities, and how we might offer acceptance in our professional communities.

History repeating itself

When I began this study, I had a general understanding of some of the historical movements that prevented gay and lesbian teachers from being in the classroom. As I dug deeper, I became immersed in a much darker history of how the United States government and activist groups have negatively shaped public perceptions and attacked the LGBTQ population. Because of the intergenerational component of this study, I knew the historical section of the literature review in Chapter 2 would provide important context. I realized how little I knew, and how important this history is to better understand the plight of the LGBTQ population, and more specifically, lesbian and gay music educators. I also knew that I had to include this historical element because most other studies only scratched the surface of these events and their effect on past and present LGBTQ educators.

I would be remiss if I did not say that I am not particularly optimistic about what is currently happening in our nation with policies affecting LGBTQ individuals. When the Supreme Court passed the same-sex marriage bill in 2015, many lives were changed that day. Advocates continue to fight for the rights for individuals to use bathrooms that align with their gender rather than their assigned birth sex. Fears regarding pedophilia in education

surround lesbian and gay issues, even in 2018. Most recently, same-sex couples and other individuals have taken private businesses to court because, based on the owner's personal religious beliefs, when they were denied service.²⁷

Currently, “28 states do not offer explicit public employee” (“28 states, 2018) non-discrimination policies covering sexual orientation or gender identity. While it is not often that we hear about a teacher being fired for being gay, lack of guaranteed legal protection could be a reason why teachers fear coming out in their classrooms. The current White House administration has rolled back protections for LGBTQ youth in schools. Betsy DeVos, the current Secretary of Education, indicated that schools that do not receive federal funding do not need to abide by the federal laws on discrimination against LGBTQ individuals.²⁸ In spite of all the work done by pro-LGBTQ activist groups to advance rights for LGBTQ people, the climate seems to be becoming more dangerous for LGBTQ students and teachers.

Anti-homophobia education

In order to progress to a point where LGBTQ teachers can live their lives in the ways *they* want to live, our profession must take steps to confront the barriers that prevent this from happening. So, what to do? This is complicated, especially for those who work and occupy spaces and institutions that, despite anti-discrimination laws and policies, continue to perpetuate homophobia. Those in power create laws that lead to fears surrounding job security, professional reputation, and potential backlash (Talbot, 2018). The goal of anti-homophobia education is to create a place where these powers are disrupted so that new

²⁷ The most current ruling occurred on June 4, 2018, when the United States Supreme Court voted in favor (7-2) of a Colorado baker who refused to bake a cake a same-sex couple.
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/04/politics/masterpiece-colorado-gay-marriage-cake-supreme-court/index.html>

²⁸ (2017, June 6). Betsy DeVos is grilled on discrimination against LGBTQ students. [video file].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=e9SOuuABjrY

ways of being and living can exist. “Anti-homophobia education considers how heteronormativity, as a historically produced set of power relations, endangers, and impoverishes *all of us*” (Mattson, 2010).

Much of the research surrounding LGBTQ issues in music education describes how we can create safe spaces for students to learn and be themselves. Creating safe and open spaces for students is incredibly important, especially as our schools become more reflective of the world in which we live. Teachers can begin to help create this environment by reflecting on ways in which we communicate our values to the students through curriculum and repertoire choices and even the look and feel of the classroom. One example to create a more inclusive and open classroom is to consider who is represented on the walls as composers and musicians. Instead of having pictures of just classical composers, perhaps there can be a mix of classical composers and current musicians, including gays and lesbians. When students see themselves in the music that is being played or represented, this can help shift an entire mindset.

Anna, Kevin, and Nancy all mentioned “internalized homophobia” as one reason or for feeling as though they should hide their sexuality to some degree, or not come out to their students. Internalized homophobia is not self-constructed, rather, it is absorbed from words and actions of others, particularly those in power. Keeping this in mind, educators should start to question the ways in which we perpetuate homophobia, and should confront homophobic language and policies that exist in our schools.

During the group dialogue, Kathy mentioned that teachers, both gay and lesbian, as well as straight teachers, could be more authentic: “I think modeling authenticity is crucial and it doesn't necessarily mean telling all of your story to anybody, but I think finding pockets of safe places to be authentic.” Callie agreed with this and suggested that in teacher

education programs, having conversations about how to talk to students about our private lives might be helpful so that we can better connect with students at all levels of their educational experiences.

Fighting for the right

We in music teacher education should identify heterosexual norms that persist throughout our profession and in our classrooms. We should be asking ourselves how our curricula exclude rather than include. In what ways can teacher educators bring in narratives of those who have been marginalized, either as guest speakers (which is most ideal) or through readings that can connect future teachers with their future colleagues? My intent here is not to disparage the work that has been done to support LGBTQ youth, but rather to expand this conversation to include ways in which we can support our LGBTQ pre-service teachers. In what ways are we connecting LGBTQ pre-service teachers with LGBTQ in-service teachers as mentor teachers? While placing student teachers in “successful” music programs could benefit their teaching, perhaps we might consider the impact of a strong gay or lesbian music educator mentor on a future music teacher who identifies as gay or lesbian, someone who may have more experience dealing with professional identity and sexual identity negotiations (Sweet & Paparo, 2010).

Questions surrounding *how* we may act on pairing mentor teachers with pre-service teachers as teacher educators were discussed during my defense. It is important to consider the ethical implications potentially outing either the teacher or the pre-service teacher without their permission was concerning. In what ways could our own well-meaning intentions have a negative impact on the overall experience? While these are understandable concerns, a consensus of asking the mentor teacher if they would like to be a mentor specifically because they are gay or lesbian gives them the chance to say either “yes” or “no.”

Asking the pre-service teacher if they would like to be paired with a gay or lesbian teacher is equally important.

Those in K-12 music education might consider the ways in which their local and state policies protect (or not) our colleagues. If anti-discrimination laws do not exist for our LGBTQ colleagues, it is time to put your foot down and say, “Enough,” in the fight for equal rights. You are fighting for a potential colleague who may sit across the office from you or share a concert with you. You are fighting for colleagues who pursue creating memorable musical experiences with students in the same way that you do. You are fighting for the rights of those who, despite gains, still are not the equals of their straight colleagues.

Finding communities of support

The participants all mentioned that while growing up, and especially in high school, the music classroom was where they felt the most connection to other students. All of the participants performed with honors groups outside their schools, many of them in multiple music groups. There is no denying the impact that a strong school music community can have on a student’s ability to connect with other students from various backgrounds.

During the group dialogue session, I asked the participants how they seek out support, either through one-on-one conversations or through various communities. In this instance, I considered “support” to mean safe and open spaces, not support groups. I wanted to know if there were communities where the participants could 100% be themselves. Teaching can be emotionally draining; adding on an additional layer of “what if” could prove even more exhausting. Apart from Kevin, all the participants found communities outside of the profession. However, Kevin has always had gay and lesbian music colleagues, so it is likely he felt a commonality among his colleagues that he may not have experienced if he were the only gay music teacher. Retirement has meant that Nancy

has been able to reconnect to her music communities as well. Nancy has been in the teaching field the longest of the participants. Many first-year retired teachers may have difficulty transitioning to a new lifestyle and a new set of routines (Britton, 1953; Sikes, 1985). For Nancy, having a group that she can connect with on a regular basis likely aided her in transitioning from over 30 years of teaching to a more personal schedule.

Overall, these participants each found communities where they could allow themselves to present their whole, authentic selves. They felt welcomed and safe in these communities without fear of potential backlash. To that end, I explore the need to create safe and open spaces for LGBTQ teachers in schools.

Creating safe and open spaces for teachers

Recent music education research about LGBTQ individuals has often focused on creating safe spaces for LGBTQ K-12 students and children as well as pre-service music teachers (Bergonzi, 2009; Garrett, 2012; Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2016; Salvador & McHale, 2017; Sweet & Paparo, 2011). This is important research for our field, as we consider how we are preparing future lesbian and gay music teachers, as well as current K-12 music students. However, in what ways are these same classrooms safe and open for LGBTQ music teachers? Often, even when schools embrace a “we welcome all” mentality, the “welcome” is often geared towards students and families.

Are schools welcoming of all teachers? Describing the participants’ experiences in his study, McBride (2017) noted, “At the heart of this safe space existed a very unsafe space: the school. Even when out, . . . there was a need [for the teachers] to downplay or disguise and suppress sexual identity for the perceived benefit of the students” (p. 212). McBride also advocated for open spaces for the participants in his study to be able to weave their sexual and professional identities together. This reminds us of the historical erasure of gay and

lesbians in the teaching profession, as well as the dangerous stereotypes that have perpetuated—and continue to reinforce—anti-gay propaganda and rhetoric. Nancy’s fears of being discovered, while teaching in a public institution where public tax dollars paid for her salary, were not misguided.

As I discussed in Chapter 6, many external factors may influence gays’ and lesbians’ self-affirmation and actualization of their sexual identity. Other researchers have proposed models of identity formation and management for gay and lesbian teachers (Connell 2015; Griffin; 1991; Jackson, 2007; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), but few of them include an in-depth look at the external factors that may prevent teachers from coming out in their classrooms. In what ways are the spaces occupied by gay and lesbian teachers a product of external factors over which they have no control? McBride (2017) suggested that, because teaching is often shaped by one’s own or others’ predetermined expectations for what a music classroom should sound like, feel like, and look like, the gay choral teachers in his study believed that the only control they had in the classroom was how they acted or presented themselves. In McBride’s study, the participants felt that they had to “continue the performance of good teaching, neutrality, traditional masculinity, and heteronormativity in ways that positioned their sexual identity in the background” (p. 210). If pre-established roles exist for teachers to fill, then straight teachers might question and scrutinize these expectations, and propose variations and deviations.

How are schools and communities allowing for truly safe and open spaces for gay and lesbian teachers to be able to disclose their sexuality, *if they want to*, without fear of receiving a bad review, harassment, or firing? In what ways are educational and political leaders using their power to model inclusivity and diversity within their own institutions? What kinds of conversations are taking place at local, state, and national levels to ensure that

all LGBTQ individuals are protected from harassment, bullying, and hate speech so that they can truly be a part of the school community? I ask these questions, not only for myself as I consider the next steps that I take in my work, but also to encourage the readers of this document and future researchers to consider in what ways they might make their voices heard and—more importantly—begin taking action.

Recommendations for Research

In Chapter 2, I presented models from prior research that aim to represent how lesbian and gay educators navigate their sexual and professional identities. These models don't always examine both the external and internal factors that encourage or discourage the merging of the two identities, or the ways in which gays and lesbians come into their gayness. In this section I offer considerations for future research about these factors. I then revisit the analysis and discussion surrounding the ways in which the participants negotiated their sexual and professional identities and how generational differences affected these negotiations. I also offer my thoughts about a lack of research on black and brown gay and lesbian music educators.

External and internal factors

External factors such as administrative support, community culture, school culture, and political climate can all influence a person's comfort level with disclosing their sexuality in school. As Nancy expressed multiple times throughout conversations, she often questioned if she would be able to be a teacher. Nancy was very aware of the external forces that could prevent her from teaching if she were to disclose her sexuality at school. She was a teacher, and she was gay, but she never fully embraced being a gay teacher. Likewise, Kevin and Jerry expressed a similar sentiment, that outside factors have prevented them from

merging the two identities. Jerry and Kevin make concerted efforts to avoid discussing their sexuality in the classroom.

I created a visual representation (Figures 5) to offer a better understanding of how these external factors influenced the participant's actualization and self-affirmation of their sexual identity. I offered a generalized visual representation that represented the external and internal factors that the participants in the study discussed. Then I created a visual representation for Nancy and Anna (Figures 6-7), the oldest and youngest members of the study. Because each woman's story was unique, each model was slightly different, although they shared common factors. My attempts at creating these models showed me that *one model* cannot generalize an entire population's experience; in both my own and others' proposed models, while there may be similarities between some of the experiences, no two experiences will be the same. Future researchers may want to extend this idea further to consider additional ways in which the structure of specific music classrooms and curricula can encourage or discourage gay and lesbian music teachers from disclosing their sexuality.

Sexual identity and professional identity

Nancy and Kevin often wondered about the reality and possibility losing their jobs during the early part of their careers. They both struggled with the ways in which their professional and sexual identities conflicted with each other. Being a music teacher is a very public profession. Concerts, marching band, pep band, and festivals may position the music teacher front and center. Implicit or explicit expectations for how music educators should act, look, and present themselves may limit how they perform their identities in the classroom. Kevin was trying to fit into a role that is often described as being masculine and authoritative. While Kevin is cis-gender, he would not necessarily describe himself as overly masculine, so there are times when he must consider how he presents himself. Women

educators are often described as being nurturing, caring, and supportive. While Nancy might view herself in this way, she doesn't necessarily present her gender as overly feminine. She hates dresses, but still believed she should actively try to look more feminine and less masculine in her appearance. Anna, the youngest member of this study, felt comfortable presenting herself in a non-feminine way, but was not ready to come out to her students.

During our group conversation, Nancy made a comment that she was slightly jealous of the younger generation's ability to be so free and out with their sexuality. However, Anna responded that she wasn't out and free with her sexuality at school. She was implicitly out, and she shared information with students who asked outside of class time, but she did not volunteer the information. Nancy's assumption that the younger generation is free to be who they are resonates with the "Baby Boomers" in Vaccaro's (2009) study. These Baby Boomers felt that the Millennial generation was reaping the benefits of their hard work as activists, without understanding the LGBTQ movements that have occurred in the past 30 years. However, the Millennials in the study were just as uncertain as Anna about how to come out to family and how to "be gay" in public.

Anna's sexual identity journey is relatively new, as she just came out in 2015 after a long-term relationship with a young man. As she is negotiating her sexual identity in and out of the classroom, she is also developing her teacher identity. When we concluded our final conversation, it seemed as though she was starting to merge the two; however, factors such as internalized homophobia, and her experiences growing up during a time where she heard both very positive and negative comments about gay and lesbians, likely have influenced her willingness to be open in her classroom. Anna is neither a splitter nor a knitter (Connell, 2015). I suggest that Anna is a quilter, where different patches of the quilt represent the

visible parts her sexuality—her short hair, preference of loafers to high heels—that make up her larger self-identity.

Callie was the only participant who felt completely comfortable being out at school. External factors helped her achieve this level of comfort: her school is located in a major city with a large LGBTQ population; the school district is relatively progressive and forward thinking in its anti-discrimination policies; there are other out gay, lesbian, and trans* teachers in her school and across the district; she is married, has a child, and one on the way. These external factors contribute to Callie’s confidence to be out at her school and be an active mentor and role-model for LGBTQ students. This was not always the case for Callie; she purposely changed jobs so that she could be more out and open about her life.

The participants were concerned about creating a safe and welcoming learning environment for all their students. They believe their sexuality does not hinder their ability to cultivate this environment. The participants want students to experience music, and they see their role in that as teachers, not gay-teachers. While Callie embraced the “gay music teacher” label a bit more readily than others, all of the participants agreed that the most important part to teaching was the students’ well-being.

Let’s talk about race

Missing from this study are the voices of black and brown gay and lesbian music educators. While it was my most sincere hope to bring those voices to the table, my invitation yielded no lesbian or gay music educators of color. I have thought long and hard about why this group is not represented and have worried that this could be just another telling of a white person’s story. Perhaps it is because I am white and straight. I am concerned that black and brown people have been incredibly mistreated by our society. I understand the real sense of mistrust about how white people often use their experiences for

personal gain. I will be the first to acknowledge that absence of black and brown lesbian and gay music educators presents a major limitation in this study. I recommend that future researchers intentionally seek to include these missing voices as they are not just missing from this study.

A Call to Action

One of the frustrating aspects of all research is that we are often left with more questions than answers. Indeed, one of the purposes of qualitative research is to not define a truth, nor come up with *the* answer, but rather to better understand. While I certainly have a better understanding of the lives of the six individuals in this study, I feel as though I am left with even more questions. When I began my doctoral journal in the summer of 2014, I had no idea of the ways in which I would change. My entire *life* philosophy has changed, and for the better. Researching and writing this dissertation has proven to be invaluable in ways that I never would have thought possible, and it is with my voice that I offer my final thoughts to the music education profession.

Researching and writing a dissertation has proved to be an incredible journey. I chose a topic that could be seen by some people as controversial. Indeed, I remember feeling as though I had to adjust my own words to describe my research as I attempted to navigate the murky personal, professional, and political waters of my most recent search for a job in music education. My research agenda started out as research questions, but has certainly evolved into a political agenda. Throughout the time I have worked on this dissertation, I have been offered many opportunities to talk about my work, why I think it is important, and how we can use this research, as well as other research related to LGBTQ issues, as a call to action. Audre Lorde (1977) spoke eloquently of the ramifications of remaining silent in the face of injustice: “I have come to believe over and over again that

what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood” (p. 41). She spoke as a black lesbian, sharing her musings about what could happen, especially in 1977, to a black woman for speaking up and calling out racism. She asked her listeners to consider the following questions: “What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence” (p. 41)? These questions beg listeners to consider how their silence perpetuates the injustices that face marginalized people. Finally, Lorde recognized this as a collective fight.

We must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. That we not hide behind the mockeries of separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept as our own: for instance, “I can’t possibly teach black women’s writing—their experience is so different than mine,” yet how many years have you spent teaching Plato and Shakespeare and Proust? Or another: “She’s a white woman, what could she possibly have to say to me?” Or, “She’s a lesbian, what would my husband say, or my chairman?” Or again, “This woman writes of her sons and I have no children.” And all the other endless ways in which we rob ourselves of ourselves and each other. (p. 43)

As I re-read Lorde’s words, late into my dissertation journey, I realized the importance of this work, especially in music education. For too long the music education profession has struggled to find the right words, if there truly are “right” words, to fight the injustices of our profession. We are careful not to offend because of potential ramifications to job security or our professional reputations. We are told to be careful because speaking

out might tarnish an institution's reputation. However, when we remain silent and "neutral," we contribute to the problem.

We are at a time, in 2018, where we must acknowledge that maintaining a neutral stance is equivalent to remaining silent. When I give seminars on social justice issues in music education, I turn to these two quotes: "At the heart of teaching others is the moral imperative to care. It is the imperative to perceive and act, and to not look away . . . This is a starting point for social justice, understood as a principled, even public, response to a perceived hurt or act of injustice. **Notice inequity. Name the inequity**" (Allsup & Shieh, 2012, p. 48, bold print my own). "Social justice is a complicated endeavor involving, among other things, adjudication of conflicting values and interests, political action, and **a concern for the welfare of the public, but especially of those who have been marginalized or oppressed**" (Benedict et al., 2016, p. xi, bold print my own). I encountered these quotes early on my dissertation research, and they have remained with me as a cornerstone for this study. They also guide how I enact my research in the larger world in which I live. To defend the idea that education—and music education—is not political means turning a blind eye to the colleagues and students with whom we work. To turn away from moments of oppression is to side with the oppressor²⁹, in turn, making the music classroom more unsafe and unavailable to those who need a safe and available space.

We must begin by confronting the heteronormative hegemonic structures that exist in schools, as a result of policies created by those who govern the schools: administrators,

²⁹ The term, "oppressor," could leave some readers feeling uncomfortable, especially if you have not considered how your role and place in society may contribute to the ways in which others may have to live their lives. This is a hard place to be, but I encourage us continue to spend time here, and begin to question where we could start to make changes. "Allies recognize that unlearning oppressive beliefs and actions are a lifelong process, not a single event, and they welcome opportunities to learn." Retrieved from <http://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/lgbt/ally/> 08/02/2018

families, tax-payers, local and state governments. This is hard work, and we must be willing to consider what could happen if we speak out for those whose voices have been and continue to be silenced. I must be clear that this work is not the responsibility of those who have been oppressed, it is our work, the oppressors, who must courageously confront these issues of injustice. When considering my role, as a white, straight woman, I reflect on Freire's (1970) words in his discussion about the role of the oppressed versus the oppressor.

The oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires. Moreover, their struggle for freedom threatens not only the oppressors, but also their own oppressed comrades who are fearful of still greater repression. When they discover within themselves the yearning to be free, they perceive that this yearning can be transformed into reality only when the same yearning is aroused in their comrades. . . . The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself from their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot live authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. (pp. 47-48)

Freire's words, as well as Lorde's (1977), illuminate ways in which those who are not a part of the LGBTQ community must consider what it must be like to live a life where barriers prevent living life free of worries about what could happen next.

James Baldwin's, *A Talk to Teachers*, was monumental for its time in 1963. He asserted that educators needed to be aware of the injustices that were occurring in and out of

the classroom towards black youth, specifically black boys. He cautioned teachers that, by raising awareness, they would most likely be met with resistance by those in power.

You must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won't happen. (p. 696)

Baldwin expressed this sentiment 14 years before Lorde's (1977) essay, and 55 years before my dissertation. The thoughts remain the same and are just as impactful.

Baldwin (1963) asserted that the purpose of education was to provide an experience for individuals to be able to look inward and outward, and to realize their place within society.

The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change. (pp. 678-679)

Inspired by Talbot and Hess's (2018) paper, *A Talk to Music Teachers*, and bringing Baldwin's and Lorde's (1977) words into present day 2018, I want to encourage educators to “go for broke” (Baldwin, 1963, p. 673): to stand up to the injustices that have been in place for years,

and face the resistance of those who hold those injustices over the safety of those with whom we work. As Lorde stated in 1977—I will re-iterate—“My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you” (p. 41).

I come from an absolute place of privilege. Not only do I work in a school that embraces the breadth and depth of the backgrounds its students and staff bring to the classroom, I work in a school that actively confronts sexism, racism, and homophobia. I am also white, straight, and happily married to a white man. We ooze privilege, and we are both very aware of what this allows us to say, display, and present in any context. Our ability to exist in this world is not questioned. I work with my utmost passion to create a similar culture and environment *with* our LGBTQ colleagues. I understand that this will take time, especially with the current United States government. However, I am committed to making these voices heard. I do this by writing contested blog posts and Facebook status updates. I do this by reaching out to pre-service teachers and in-service teachers for professional development opportunities. I do this by putting up a large rainbow flag in my classroom and advising the GSA. I incorporate issues of anti-homophobia in my curricula for *all* of my classes. I realize that these actions are not possible for everyone, but I urge anyone, especially those in positions of power and privilege, to consider the benefits over the costs of speaking out. It is possible that your action may be to replace posters of white composers with current musicians from *all* backgrounds: lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans*, black, brown, Latinx, and more. By doing this, how many more students could be reached? How many more students might see themselves in those pictures? Perhaps these posters might provoke conversations among and with students who now feel safer and more open in the music classroom. What can you do in your lives to bring awareness to issues of injustice for LGBTQ teachers? How can you implore your school communities to be safe and open?

What actions are taking place to create safer and more open spaces for educators? It is no longer enough for those who have experienced these barriers and injustices to speak out. In fact, they may *still* not be able to do so in their particular school or community. Our profession is well behind in supporting our LGBTQ colleagues. If we aim to support our LGBTQ students, then we must aim to support our LGBTQ colleagues. This is where I encourage us as a profession to put our words into action and begin confronting the policies in place that create unsafe, unopen, and potentially dangerous climates for teachers to work. If, as Lorde (1977) described, our silences do not protect ourselves, in what way is our silence also not protecting those who need these deafening silences to be broken? This is my call to action.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT SURVEY INVITATION

Dear Facebook friends and colleagues,

I am a graduate student studying with Dr. Margaret Schmidt in the Music Education Department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study that examines the experiences of lesbian and gay K - 12 music educators. I am doing this study because I see a need for the profession to read and hear the voices of their lesbian and gay colleagues. I am hoping to generate ways in which we can be more understanding of the potentially unique needs of our gay and lesbian colleagues as well as LGBTQ students.

My interest in LGBTQ studies in music education stems from an understanding and acknowledgement of the lack of representation of LGBTQ individuals in music curriculum, discourse and diversity training in music education teacher education programs and K-12 music programs. This study is an extension of a pilot study, *Experiences of two gay music educators*, I completed in the Spring of 2016. This study has been presented at several conferences and has provided a model for this current study. Please feel free to visit my website to read more about me as a researcher as well as an educator:

sarahminnettemusic.com

If you are interested in being considered for this study, please follow the SURVEY LINK to complete the ten-question survey. Based on the survey, I will invite 10-12 people to participate in the larger study; completing this survey does not obligate you to participate, nor does it guarantee your participation in the study. If you are invited to participate in the study you will be involved in three one-hour interviews, one 30-minute follow-up interview, and a group dialogue session with other participants, over six months. Additionally, you will

be asked to write in a weekly journal for six weeks. I assure you that information that you share will be held in strictest confidence, and if you choose to participate in this study, your identity will not be compromised.

If you meet the following criteria, I invite you to participate in the study:

1. Identify as lesbian or gay
2. Are currently teaching, or retired, or student teaching
3. Teach music in a K - 12 public school setting

If you have any questions about the study or are interested in participating in my study, please contact me via email and/or phone number to avoid posting personal contact information on a public forum. If you know of other lesbian and gay music educators who you think may be interested in participating in this study, please forward this post to them.

Thank you for your time and willingness to consider participating in my study.

Sincerely,
Sarah M. Minette
email: sarah.minette@asu.edu
cell: 952.393.5757
website: sarahminettemusic.com

APPENDIX B
RECRUITMENT SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to collect an initial response of individuals who wish to be a part of a larger qualitative study that will be examining the experiences of lesbian and gay K-12 music educators. This research is part of a PhD dissertation through Arizona State University. Your participation in this survey does not guarantee that you will be a part of the study, but you may be contacted in the next one to two months to participate, based on the demographics that you provide. By taking this survey you are also under no obligation to participate in the study. If you respond to the survey and are not selected to participate in the full study, your email and name will be destroyed, once final participants for the study have been selected.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to the research team at

sarah.minette@asu.edu 952.393.5757, or marg.schmidt@asu.edu, 480-965-8277.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

1. Do you identify as lesbian or gay?

- a. Lesbian
- b. Gay
- c. Neither (if neither, participant will be directed to submit survey and no further questions will be asked)

2. What is your age?

- a. 20-25
- b. 26-30
- c. 31-35
- d. 36-40
- e. 41-45
- f. 46-50
- g. 51-55
- h. 56-60
- i. 61-65
- j. 66-70
- k. 71+

3. What most closely aligns with your job description (check all that apply)

- a. High school band director
- b. High school choir director
- c. High school orchestra director
- d. High school general music teacher
- e. Middle school band director
- f. Middle school choir director
- g. Middle school orchestra director
- h. Middle school general music teacher
- i. Elementary band director
- j. Elementary choir director
- k. Elementary orchestra director

- l. Elementary general music teacher
 - m. Other: please describe
4. How many years (total) have you been teaching?
- a. I am currently student teaching
 - b. 1-5
 - c. 6-10
 - d. 11-20
 - e. 21-30
 - f. 31-40+
 - g. Retired
5. What best describes your immediate family status?
- a. Partnered (not married) without children
 - b. Partnered (not married) with children
 - c. Married without children
 - d. Married with children
 - e. Single
6. How do you describe your race or ethnicity?
7. How would you describe the location of the school(s) that you teach?
- a. Rural
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Metro
 - d. Inner-City
 - e. Other: Please describe
8. What best describes your level of disclosure, or openness, about your sexuality?

- a. I am open with everyone, including students, colleagues, administration, parents as well as my own friends and family.
 - b. I am open to my friends, family and administration only. I am not open with colleagues and students.
 - c. I open to my friends and family but not my school community (colleagues, administration, students, parents).
 - d. I am only open to my friends. I am not open to my family or my school community at all.
 - e. I have not disclosed my sexuality at all.
9. Describe a positive experience in your job (or if you are retired, a positive memory) that you have had in the last month.
10. This study aims to better understand the experiences of gay and lesbian k-12 music educators. Based on the survey, I will invite 10-12 people to participate in the larger study; completing this survey does not obligate you to participate, nor does it guarantee your participation in the study. If you are invited to participate in the study you will be involved in three one-hour interviews, one 30-minute follow-up interview, and a group dialogue session with other participants, over six months. Additionally, you will be asked to write in a weekly journal for six weeks. I assure you that information that you share will be held in strictest confidence, and if you choose to participate in this study, your identity will not be compromised. If you are interested in participating, please provide a private email address and your name so that I may contact you.

APPENDIX C

CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES FOR PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Ten to twelve individuals who represent most of the following descriptions will be sought for this study:

Personal Identity (pertaining to sexuality identity, partner and sexuality disclosure, and race)

-lesbian

-gay

-married w/out children

-married w/ children

-partnered w/out children

-partnered w/children

-single

-individuals of color

-individuals who are open about their sexuality to their students, colleagues, administrators, (school community in general)

-individuals who are open about their sexuality only to their admin (not colleagues, not students)

-individuals who are not open at all about the sexuality to their school community but are open to their friends and family

-individuals who are open only to friends about their sexuality, not to their family

-individuals who are not open at all about their sexuality.

Professional Identity

A sample from the following will be solicited (either lesbian or gay):

-elementary music educator

-band educator

-orchestra educator

-choral educator

-secondary (6-12) general music educator

Experience

A sample from the following will be solicited (either lesbian or gay):

-pre-service teacher (ideally, student teaching or semester before student teaching)

-neophyte teacher (1-5 years)

-early career teacher (6-10)

-mid career teacher (7-20)

-late career teacher (21-40)

-retired teacher

APPENDIX D

SCREENING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Share with me a bit of your background as a teacher.
2. Where did you grow up? Describe your high school experience growing up.
3. What made you realize you wanted to be a teacher?
4. What difficulties, if any, have you had being gay or lesbian and a music teacher?
5. Share a successful moment you had with a student.
6. Why would you like to be a part of this study?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Growing Up

- Tell me a bit about yourself: where did you grow up, your family life, hobbies?
- How did music come into your life?
- What kinds of musical activities did you participate in as a young person? What kinds of musical activities do you participate in now, besides teaching?
- What other support systems do you have to rely on during tough times with the general teaching job, but also relationship issues, life issues, etc?
- Did you grow up in a religious household?
 - What is the role of religion in your life now?

Professional Identity

- Tell me a bit about your life prior to being a music educator? Why did you decide to become a music educator?
- At what point did you decide to go into music education?
- Describe your role as a music educator? How do you see yourself in the classroom? In the hallways? With administrators and colleagues? With parents?
- How do you deal with pejorative language among students in your classroom, such as “that’s so gay?” How do you deal with that kind of language with your colleagues?
- How do you perceive your role as a gay or lesbian music educator with other students who identify as LGTBQ?
- Describe a moment when you had to negotiate between being a _____ teacher and being a lesbian/gay
- How are things going in your new job?
 - What have been some really positive experiences?
 - What have been some negative experiences?

- What were some of your biggest fears (if you can remember) during your first years of teaching
- I'm trying to construct a timeline of your teaching career and am hoping you can help me with this. Can you help me with this starting with your first public school teaching gig? Then we can go back and talk about your private lesson teaching in

 - Where was your first public school teaching experience?
 - Where are you now?
 - Were there any schools in between there?
 - Have you taught private lessons while teaching public school?
 - Have you taught only private lessons?
- How would you describe yourself as a person? As a teacher?
- How would you describe the school that you teach/taught at? Paint me a picture of the students, faculty, what the school looks like

Sexuality Identity

- At what point in your life did you begin to identify as lesbian/gay?
- Tell me about one experience of coming out to friends, family, or co-workers.
- What support system did you have when coming to terms with your own self-identification?
- Tell me about a time when you felt different for being gay/lesbian?
- Tell me about a time when you felt “othered” by a teacher or faculty, either directly or indirectly?
- How did your sexuality play a part in your first job search?

- Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experiences as an individual who identifies as lesbian or gay?
- How would you describe your sexuality in-school? Out of school?
- How open are you with your administrators at your school about your sexuality?
Why or why not have you made the decision to come out to your administrators?
What kind of support have you received from them?
- If you have come out to your students, describe the process of making that decision.
What has that process been like? If you haven't come out to your students, why haven't you?

APPENDIX F
JOURNAL PROMPTS

For the next six weeks you will be writing in a journal or diary. The purpose of this writing is for you to spend some personal time thinking about some of our conversations and anything else you might want to share. Your entries can be as detailed and as long as you want, although I don't want you to spend hours constructing an entry! You may want to pick a question or topic at the beginning of the week and contribute to it throughout the week, as the time becomes convenient to you. Or, you may wish to set aside 15-30 minutes one day per week to write. Whatever works best for you.

Below are some possible prompts. You may use these to help guide your writing process or free-write. You may answer specific questions, or cater them to your own experience. At the end of each week, I would like you to send me your journal entries. I may make notes in your entries and ask for clarification right away, or I may wait until our next conversation. To reiterate, these entries and photos will be held in confidence.

To help you keep track of the journals, here is a timeline of "due dates". You can always send me your entries before these dates as well :)

Week #1: October 21

Week #2: October 28

Week #3: November 4

Week #4: November 11-photos are due

Week #5: November 18

Week #6: November 25th

1. How would you describe yourself as a person? As a teacher?
2. How would you describe the school where you teach/taught? Paint a picture of the students, faculty, what the school looks like.
3. Describe an interaction that you had with a colleague, administrator or student this week that made you consider your sexuality?
4. Have any of your students come out to you? What was that experience like for you as a teacher? Can you describe some of the emotions you felt? Did that experience change your relationship with this student?
5. Do you know any other gay or lesbian teachers in your school? Have you disclosed your sexuality to them? Are your interactions with them any different than interactions with your heterosexual colleagues?
6. Describe your thinking about creating safe spaces for students.
7. Teachers are often held to a higher “moral” standard than other professions. It is not unusual for teachers to adopt a different identity in the school and outside the school. What identities did you adopt throughout this week. Describe each identity and the ways in which they are similar or different.
8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years, 10 years, 15 years? What are your hopes and dreams in your professional and personal lives?
9. Did anything happen this week that you would like to discuss in our next interview?

APPENDIX G

VISUAL STORY TELLING PROMPT

My life in eight pictures (required)

In order to construct a narrative that represents you to the fullest possible potential, and one that readers may be able to visualize, I am requesting that you send me 8 pictures that represent different moments in your life. You can choose four that you would like to share.

If possible, I would be interested to see pictures of each of these four moments:

#1: A picture of you and your family when you were in middle school/high school

#2: A picture of you in college

#3: A picture of you with a partner. Past or current

#4: A current picture of you dressed as you would normally dress for a day of teaching.

For each picture, please provide a caption or description that provides some details to the nature of the scene in the picture. **Please send me the pictures along with the captions by Saturday, November 11th.** This will count as one of the journal entries.

The other four pictures can be literal, such as pictures of people or places that have been important to you, or they can be figurative, for instance a picture of an inanimate object that represents or symbolizes something about you as a music educator and/or as a gay/lesbian individual. Pictures may represent both positive and negative aspects of your life. During our third interview we will talk more about these pictures.

APPENDIX H

GROUP DIALOGUE PROMPTS AND TRANSCRIPT

GROUP DIALOGUE PROMPTS

1. Describe your life outside of school? How does this fit in with your school life?
2. Describe any role models and/or mentors you had as a young teacher. Were any of them gay or lesbian?
3. Describe your hiring process. How did you negotiate your sexuality within the hiring process?
4. If/when you are partnered, how would you talk about your weekend events, if students asked.
5. Do you ever feel like your ability to connect with students is harder because you have not shared more personal experiences with them (family, partners, trips...etc)
6. If you are partnered how do they/did they support you in your profession?
7. How did your teacher training prepare you to be a lesbian/gay music educator?
8. Something about music community; religious community; LGBTQ community
9. What communities outside of school have been important outside your life?
(Support group? Music Groups?)
. Church: negative/positive/ faith versus church...etc.
10. I know that the same sex marriage amendment was a big decision.... Also state and local politics
11. How has/did the political environment influenced your choice to come out or not to your students? How has the political environment influenced your choice of jobs and relationship with your students and colleagues?
12. How do you think the era you grew up in has shaped your experiences?

GROUP DIALOGUE TRANSCRIPT

Sarah: Okay so we're all here, we can all hear each other, I think. I just need to start recording the screen and hopefully the technology gods will stay with us and let's get this thing rolling, shall we. *Good grief, I am sweating, I am SO NERVOUS for this. Here's hoping all technology works. I cannot recreate this. Everything is recording, yes? Screen recording? Audio recording?* So first of all, thank you all so, so much for agreeing to do this. I am so honored that you've all taken the time to share your lives with me. I feel very, very honored. If you can go around and just introduce yourselves and maybe where you are in your career and some basic things. Then I'll throw some questions at you, but I really want this to be a discussion between all of you. And I'll ask questions or maybe guide in a certain way, but this is really about you all and your experiences. Kathy, would you be willing to start? *Good grief, you are babbling. Stop.*

Kathy: Sure. So, I teach orchestra. I started an orchestra program in my small town on the Pacific Coast eleven and a half years ago. So, I teach 3rd grade through 12th grade. I'm 63 but I didn't start teaching [in public schools] until I was 45, so I don't consider myself at the end of my teaching career. I consider myself in the primo time. *Such a fascinating story. Kathy's story doesn't align much with Jackson's (2007) model of gay teacher identity. But her teacher identity also is unique in that she started out as a private teacher and then moved into public school teaching as she was beginning to identify as a lesbian. McCarn's and Fassinger's (1996) model might prove to be more useful in understanding Kathy's life. Perhaps a combination of Jackson's (2007) model and McCarn's and Fassinger's (1996) model could be useful.* I did lose my partner just almost exactly a year ago. My partner of 22 years, Caroline, so that . . . So, I'm going through a year of grief and that's been a very big deal and a very hard time. *It sure has been. Listening to Caroline's story really affected me*

for about two weeks. Damn empathy. And this is another reason why more research should be completed on LGBTQ elders, although I doubt Kathy would consider herself an elder.

Callie: I am so sorry to hear of your loss.

Kevin: That must have been so hard.

Kathy: It is hard, but it's getting better. Thank you for your words.

Sarah: Thanks, Kathy. You and I had some great talks. Nancy lets pass it off to you.

Nancy: Okay, hi everybody. Let's see I'm the same age as Kathy, she just said we were in college at the same time. I am retired from 36 years of teaching in public schools. The first 5 years I was in the Midwest and then 30 years in the Pacific Northwest. Most of my career was teaching string orchestras, though I did do some band and general music. I'm a clarinet player so you would think band would be the logical course, but I actually taught orchestra. So, I'm spending my time now playing clarinet a lot more than I did when I was teaching. My partner is Julia and we've been together for 35 years. *It's amazing to me how long she and Julia have been together and seemingly nobody knows, or knew, at her school. She was teaching basically as long as she has been partnered. To not ever talk about your private life?? Nancy fits into Connell's (2015) description of "Splitters" to a T. However, the external factors that forced her into the "closet" should not be ignored. The political movements of her time made her consider whether she could even do the job that she did. I am glad that she eventually found herself to be successful.*

Jerry: Okay. My name is Jerry. I'm currently an elementary school music teacher in the Midwest. I teach about 700 kids each week in two schools. *God bless those elementary music teachers.* The majority are [English] language students [who's home language is Spanish]. Both are very low-income schools. I've been with my partner for 27 years, and legally married since 2011. *Jerry did get married before the marriage amendment was voted on in 2015. Jerry and his partner live in a state that recognized civil unions in 2011. I love this. All three of the oldest participants are*

married to their partners. Again, a call for more research on LGBTQ elders Interestingly they don't refer to their partners as wives or husbands, but their "partners." Partner is ambiguous and more straight couples are using the word partner to describe their relationship status. However, there is an "assumption" that goes along with the word "partner." Butler (2004) suggested that same-sex marriage is seemingly the only way to 'normalize' gays and lesbians, and that with same-sex marriage, there is still a sense of hegemonic heteronormativity. At the end of next year in May of 2019 I will be retiring and I'm looking forward to that.

Sarah: That's new information that you specifically decided to retire.

Jerry: Oh, I never told you that?

Sarah: You said you were thinking about it but congratulations!

Jerry: I signed the papers last week.

Sarah: Well congratulations! Anna, will you share a little bit about yourself with us please.

Anna: So, I'm Anna, I teach high school band, orchestra, AP Theory, and I run the marching band on the east coast. This is my first-year teaching. I'm 23 and hanging in there. Yeah that's I think that's pretty much it for me. *I have a feeling this might be a bit overwhelming for her. She is also on the East Coast so it's a little late as well. Could she fit into a specific "model?" I'm not sure. If any model would work, it might be Jackson's (2007) mode. Anna has fully embraced her professional identity as well as her gay identity but has not necessarily merged the two. Well, she has in some ways, in the way that she performs her gender. She identifies as female but dresses in a more masculine way that might suggest to someone who does not know her to suspect that she is a lesbian.*

Sarah: Thank you, Anna. Kevin, the mystery man. *I really wish the technology was working so that everyone can see everyone. This is irritating.*

Kevin: Right. So, I'm Kevin I teach in the Midwest. This is my 20th year at my current school and my 23rd year teaching. I taught in my hometown for three years before I came

here. My current school has about 2800 kids in the 9-12 building and we have about 260 in the band. *That's amazing.* I teach all of the bands that come along with teaching band at a high school. *Pep band, marching band, concert bands, pit orchestra, jazz band. That is just A LOT of time at school. Kevin shared with me that he read somewhere that a high school band director is basically the equivalent to the head football coach. That certainly is a loaded analogy for gender and sexuality norms and expectations.* I have now a full-time coworker for the first time. The last couple of years he was part time and admin finally realized he should be full time. I know Sarah through my grad school program actually, and it's been nice to know her. *And, I realized how much I didn't know about Kevin. This whole project has been really illuminating as to what we think we know about our friends.* (random applause erupts, and everyone giggles nervously)

Sarah: What was that? Where did that come from?

Kevin: I think that came from my computer.

Sarah: Wow, you got some applause there Kevin. That's funny. Callie please share a bit about yourself.

Callie: I'm Callie, I teach in the Midwest in a large urban district. I teach 6th through 8th grade band and 8th grade guitar class and a 7th grade choir class right now. Which is exciting. I have been married for about three years to my wife Rachel. We've been together eight years total now, and we have a two-year-old as well. I started my teaching career with Kevin as my mentor teacher back in. . . .What 11 years ago? *I was hesitant to bring these two in for this project because they know each other and I was unsure if their pre-existing friendship with each other, and with me, would prevent them from sharing their stories. However, they were eager to be a part of the study and I have learned so much about their experiences that I would have not known if we didn't travel on this journey together.*

Sarah: So, some of us know each other and maybe after this we'll all know each other a little bit better. *I hope this goes the way I see it going in my head.* Most of you are partnered. Kevin you've been partnered at times. Are you currently partnered Kevin?

Kevin: Nope, I'm single.

Sarah: Okay. So, I'm wondering in what ways have you talked about your personal lives with students. For example, do you share what you did over the weekend with your students? Are there times that you don't talk about the weekend or your partner? *I am REALLY hoping they engage with each other.*

Nancy: Well, Julia has been my partner for 99% of my teaching career. When I started teaching in the Midwest there's no way in the world I was going to be letting anyone know she was my partner, or that I was a lesbian. That just wouldn't have gone over well. And as we've talked a lot Sarah, that just wasn't an option. *Nancy said that phrase a lot through our conversations "that wasn't an option." As a young girl she watched her church organist get fired for being gay. She student taught with a teacher who was a lesbian and had Anita Bryant hate speech signs put on her lawn. Nancy never told anyone she was gay because she had seen what could happen to people who did come out, and it was never a positive experience-that is why she thought it was not an option.* When we moved to the Pacific Northwest, things were a little better until some politics started going crazy in our state. And then stayed in the closet again for a while. *Yes, coming out is a process and completely non-linear. Jerry also was "in and out of the closet," especially towards the beginning of this teaching career which was during the AIDS epidemic.* As time went on in my career, parents of students seem to be the first ones to kind of figure out that Julia was always at the concerts. They started asking questions, or just putting two and two together. So, I slowly kind of made friends with a few parents that were okay with it. But I never did in my 35 years, go public with that information to kids or parents. Some knew sort of underground if you will.

So much implicit “coming out” here. It seems that a lot of teachers, based on the research that I have read, and from conversations that I have encountered, just allow their students and parents to come to their own conclusions about teacher sexuality.

Sarah: So . . . If kids asked you, “what did you do this weekend,” and maybe you went away for the weekend up north, or to the west? I don't know where people go when they are in other parts of the country besides Minnesota where all you do is go up north. How do you navigate through those types of things? Anna, you go and visit your partner quite a bit.

Dammit, I should have allowed for some space for them to think about this rather than just calling out a name. Gab.

Anna: I had an encounter this week where I have two student aids. Both are seniors in our program. One of them is very out in the school, very out non-binary queer. *How many of the other teachers would have had out students their first year of teaching? The description of her students and her ability to talk about her queer students is unique to Rachel's generation of teachers.* They finally discovered I have a picture of me and my partner in college marching band on my desk. They just said, “Hey, can we ask who is the other person in the photo?” I froze for a second and I just said, “Oh, that's my partner when we were in college band,” and they were like “Oh that's cool. Did we make enough copies for the sight-reading program?” (a round of laughing emerges from the computer as everyone realizes that the kids are more focused on copying than who Anna's partner is.) “That's fine; just don't forget to put the tenor sax parts in because that was a real bother today.” So that's the most explicitly I've mentioned it. *This is a real generational shift. Students in Anna's school feel comfortable being out and are seemingly okay with an gay teacher, but Anna is not out. This makes me wonder how we create safe spaces for teachers. Is it up to the teacher to create these safe spaces or the school? Base on history it seems that safe spaces for teachers is a different concept than safe spaces for students.* But my partner came to visit me last week and we

spent the weekend doing stuff around town. When I told students what I did this week it was pretty much I just spent some time in the city and saw the new Obama portraits and that was a good enough answer for them. *She's still not ready to tell her students. Even if she uses her partner. Even though she has cut her hair and is "visibly queer" there is that reluctance to divulge into further details. This resonates with Brekbaus' (2008) description of "integrators" who are "15 percent gay, 100 percent of the time" (p. 29). This is also an implicit form of coming out. Anna's students likely assume she is gay as she has shared information about her partner, but only as a need-to-know basis, much in the same way Kevin tells certain students—"the right kids know."*

Nancy: I'm close to jealous of your generation—to start your teaching career on that wonderful note. *Exactly. YES!! This is the kind of conversation that I am hoping continues during the next 45 minutes!*

Anna: I'm really fortunate that the community and the school that I work in is really progressive in this way. One of the vice-principals is happily married to her partner of many years. *I wonder her principal is an example result of Connell's (2015) "Quitting" framework—that it is easier to be a lesbian or gay person in power, like a vice-principal, versus a classroom teacher. There are a lot of our staff members that have sort of paved this path for me and I just sort of get to reap the rewards this year. I'm not entirely sure which path she means by "paving the path." Does she mean other gay and lesbian directors, or that her program was already well established when she started? She shared with me that her predecessor set her up for early success with the students. That's how I feel about it. I'm very thankful but I know that I'm just, I'm fortunate that the timing worked out and I ended up in a really supportive community.*

Kathy: It's wonderful to hear.

Sarah: Jerry what about you?

Jerry: Most of my students don't ask personal questions like that because they're

elementary kids. *Which is surprising to me, because from my own personal experience, elementary students have no filter.* If I do something on the weekends I don't mention my partner. *Erasing his partner from his life at school. The stigma of men teaching elementary still persists.* The staff, yeah they know about Jeff, and they've all met him and they know we're partners and everything. No one on staff has said anything negative to my face. They often ask how he's doing, so I'm fortunate with that. The kids do see the rings on my fingers and if they ask, I just say I like to wear rings. Sometimes I'll take the ring off one hand and switch it to the other hand and vice versa. *I think this is a combination of covering and self-distancing. Jerry actively avoids conversations that could potentially out him as a gay man by adjusting his rings—a heteronormative symbol of marriage.* Because with the age I deal with I don't necessarily feel it's something I want to get into in my classroom. *Internalized homophobia? This speaks to research and people who feel that these issues don't have a place in the classroom as well as what is "age appropriate."* This also reminds me of *conversations that I have had with practicing teachers that ask how to approach sexuality in the classroom. When we talk about gays and lesbians, people think about the act of doing, not necessarily the people. I remind teachers that little things, like how we approach student pairings, can make a big impact. Instead of pairing boys and girls for dances, we can pair girls together and boys together. As a profession we can start to normalize this as well.*

Sarah: Go ahead Kathy.

Kathy: I was just going to say when I first started teaching privately in 19— oh shoot I can't remember when it was. It was about 1999-2000, I experienced a lot of backlash from my community. My children were in the school system and my children, my daughter in particular let it be known that I was out as a lesbian . . . you know I couldn't really muzzle her nor did I want to. I had several students who pulled out of my private studio and who were expressing a lot of unhappiness. Oddly enough I found more anonymity in the public

school setting when I started teaching public schools than I had when I was a private cello teacher. *This confused me for the longest time when she shared this with me. I couldn't understand why she felt like this. But I finally got to the bottom of it. Because she was inviting people into her home, to teach them lessons, she felt a responsibility to come out to her students. In the public schools, she didn't have that responsibility. Very backwards to previous readings I have done, regarding the nature of "public" school.* So I kind of learned to shut up and not tell anybody. I was unhappy about it because I'd been married to my children's father for 28 years prior to that, and I was used to the privileges that come with being straight. So, when I figured out I was really a lesbian and I needed to be with Caroline, it was a shock to me to have to muzzle myself but I wanted my job. I loved my job very much and I wanted to make sure there weren't any impediments to my kids joining orchestra. *This is a common theme among Kevin, Kathy, and Anna.* So I just let it be on the down low. When I moved to my current city there were several people who knew I was partnered and who knew Caroline, but mostly I was. . . . I wouldn't say closeted, but I just didn't share my life with people very often. When Caroline got sick in 2016 I had to take a lot of time away from school. Then when she died on February 9th of 2017, I just - it broke things open for me. I wasn't interested in being closeted anymore. We had married in 2013 and I didn't invite any of my colleagues at the high school, or the middle school, or even elementary. I didn't invite any of my colleagues to my wedding, even though I liked several of them. I just didn't. I was careful. Now—I wanted everyone to know that I had lost my wife. *Complete turnaround for Kathy, from completely in to completely out.* I admire so much my young colleagues in this group dialogue and in my life who are not afraid to be who they are. To be open about who they are, and you know you don't share a lot of personal stuff in your public school teaching but it's nice to have change now.

Sarah: What about you Kevin? *Again, I should have waited for some time to let them all process this story and ask questions if they wanted to.*

Kevin: I guess for me it's, being single it's a different thing. *Kevin defies the stereotypes of high school band directors. He is single and over the age of 40, and gay. Even though we are in 2018, there is still stigma associated with single men over a certain age that suggests they might be gay if they aren't married.* I was kind of listening here and thinking, "I don't really share a lot about my weekend or that kind of stuff with students unless it's something like school relevant or I go to a conference." Or I will talk about my family if I go back to my hometown and I guess that's a common thing. I think the first time I had an interaction with bringing a boyfriend to school was after I had come back from a band trip abroad and we were having a picture day for the families. He was helping me because I was having a hard time getting the power point - this was 2003 or 2004. So he was helping me put the pictures in the PowerPoint and stuff. Then we ended up having technical issues, of course. So then he was there to help out. Well, he's [Asian] and my school is very white. So it was evident that there was a stranger among us, and that clearly I knew him, and that there was at least a friendship there. So there were a couple of parents that went out of their way to say hello and thanked him for his help and that was kind of a thing for me because it was like, "Oh my god that's pretty cool." *I wonder if they just thought he was a tech guy. I wonder how Kevin acted. I would have liked to have seen this interaction.* That was the first I'd really experienced something like that. There was another time I brought a boyfriend along to a concert. Kids were starting to arrive, and we're back stage and shared a real brief kiss. Not thinking a whole lot of it. Immediately within two seconds, a student was on stage behind me and I'm like, "ugh did he see?!" Clearly he didn't because there wasn't this overwhelming sweep of information or whatever that I would have imagined would have gone on. It was also just kind of a check for me. Even if I would have

been straight, it would have been no big deal. *Exactly, but I think a lot of straight teachers limit their public affections. This goes back to so and so stating that teachers are often perceived to be asexual. And that goes back to school teachers who were young women and who had to stop being teachers once they got married.*

Kathy: What age are your kids again Kevin?

Kevin: High School.

Kathy: High school, oaky.

Sarah: One of the things I've noticed as a teacher that helps me connect with students is sharing things that I do outside of school because then they're like, "Oh, you are a human being, you don't just live at school." And so relationship building is so important in our profession. I'm wondering if you have felt hesitant one way or another about sharing information about your families, or your partners, or perhaps even changing pronouns of someone that you hung out with over the weekend, *or not wearing your wedding ring.* Or, maybe completely erasing them from that conversation-not even mentioning them at all. *Anna just mentioned this.* Do you feel like that hinders your potential relationship with students at all?

Kevin: I don't think it affects my relationship at all. *Kevin has a strong presence at his high school as the band director. He shared with me during one conversation that the two most important figures in the high school are the football coach and the band director. I suspect this role, as the "high school band director" is akin to how Goffman (1959) described the ways in which we interact depend on setting and the other actors. In this case, the high school band director is a well-established role, one that Kevin has aspired since high school. There is an expectation of how band directors act and who they are: strong heterosexual men. The other actors are his students. To deviate from the established band director role, could potentially cause a rift in the relationships between Kevin and his students.*

Kathy: I would say not only with students did it hinder relationships but also with other faculty as well. There were a lot of times everybody else was talking about what they did for the weekend and I wasn't willing to share. *Self-distancing from others, (Woods and Harbeck, 1992). Kathy is also at multiple schools, so her ability to form relationships with colleagues is greatly hindered. This limited interaction prevents lesbian and gay educators from becoming a part of the larger school community.*

Sarah: So you just wouldn't speak or you'd just be, oh I didn't really do anything.

Kathy: Yeah sometimes. Then they either think you're a snob or something else.

Sarah: Callie what about you?

Callie: You know, I'm pretty out with students. *She is the ONLY one who is explicitly out (Griffin, 1991). She also has MAJOR privilege: a partner, a baby, a baby on the way, and an incredibly supportive and diverse school district located in a metropolitan area.* It's pretty easy for me to just talk about my daughter instead of being with my wife too, because everybody wants to hear about the 2-year-old and what she's doing now. *That is an interesting perspective. I wonder what work has been done on "family privilege" as another means of coming out in the workplace. One step beyond Palkki's "partner privilege."* But I do show family photos. I show things like that now.

When I was first teaching I did have a partner and she came to concerts and things like that. I was out with staff because that was pretty easy, but with students I was pretty quiet about things. I think there were students that did begin to wonder who was with me if we were hanging out before or after concerts. *Implicitly out.* If they asked, I would just say "she's my friend." But now I feel like I'm pretty comfortable being out, and even though I have some students who are pretty conservative who might not be super 100% with me being an out lesbian, they understand that's just part of me and who I am. *This is a generational shift, for the most part. However, there are still pockets of the population that believe that gay and lesbian teachers should not be in the classroom. Non-discrimination policies continue to perpetuate this mentality.*

Sarah: Jerry, you work with little kidlets but you shared with me at times that you have a sense that a few years down the road a few of them may come into their own sexuality that is not necessarily hetero, or cis-gender. But I'm wondering in what ways do you all feel a sense of mentorship or needing to be a role model to students? Do you feel you should even do that or actively look out for students who might be struggling with their sexuality?

Kathy: Well, I would never bring it up first. *Kathy has mentioned her fear of the potential consequences of her even bringing up her own sexuality into the classroom-that it might discourage students from the joining program.*

Callie: This year I got involved in our GSA. *This is reminiscent of Connell's (2015) thoughts on "Knitting" and the ways in which teachers weave and knit their sexuality into their teaching and/or their relationships with students. Callie isn't necessarily using music class as a way to talk about LGBTQ issues, but she is present as an openly queer person at school.* This is my second year at the school I'm at so I thought I could get a little more involved in things. I'm not the main person, but I have made myself present and let kids know that I can be a resource for them if they need it. In one of my band classes, at least five students are questioning their gender, or are gay for sure, but some are wanting to be called he/him instead of she/her. So I felt like because there are so many students in my program who identify as something other than straight that I wanted to let them know that I was, wanted to be there for them. *This makes sense. I hope Anna chimes in about her role in her school's GSA. This reminds me of Elliot's (1996) description of the seemingly inherent need that gay and lesbian teachers may have to be mentors and/or role models for their students. This also came up in my pilot study when one of the participants shared with me that he wanted students to know that you can be "happy, healthy, and gay."*

Sarah: And Kathy you said you wouldn't start that conversation?

Kathy: Yeah, it's probably my age. *Generational and potentially location as well as the age of the students, especially the younger students. Larger cities seem to have a more diverse population which tends to breed a larger acceptance.* I'm so conscious about not wanting them to be uncomfortable. I'm an orchestra person! Oh my god, you don't want to be uncomfortable! We're uncomfortable enough as it is! (Everyone is laughing at this.) But you know, it's been interesting to have kids come back, who have now graduated, and have come back and now have come out to me. I, of course, feel very supportive of anyone who is coming out, but our lives are so different from theirs in particular because of my age. *YES. The generational aspect of this is really coming through. Even though Kathy came into her sexuality late into the game, she had a previous life as a straight woman, with children, which further complicated the whole situation.* You know there's such a huge gap in my experience and my worldview and theirs. I mean I'm so in awe of their relaxed and welcoming attitudes, it's fabulous, really wonderful. *A lot has changed since she has come out, or Nancy or Jerry for that matter. I think about how media has really changed in that there are openly gay characters on T.V. and of course, the same-sex marriage amendment, and openly gay pop musicians.*

Sarah: Nancy what were you going to say?

Nancy: So, I had kids typically from 5th grade all the way through high school because I had the elementary, the junior high, and the high school. So I got to know these kids 8-9 years in a row and literally see them grow up. It's been interesting over the years; it's been mostly boys who have come out to me after they have graduated. I only had one girl before she graduated come out to me and that was a really tough talk with her. I think I described that situation to Sarah, but I wouldn't come clean with her until she was graduated. Now we are friends for life. *Nancy used this phrase multiple times throughout our conversations. "Coming clean" seems like she was really trying to hide something that she wasn't proud of. This is likely due to the intense*

amount of homophobic rhetoric she grew hearing while growing up in the '60s and '70s as well as her church experiences. Same with the boys, they've all waited until they have graduated and come back and talked to me and we have had great conversations and support them too. I wonder if this has to do with the culture of Nancy's classroom and/or the culture of the school environment. It's been interesting. Relationships do change with students after they move on. And, especially considering how long Nancy and Kathy worked with these kids. They likely thought of them as family members, their own children, to some degree.

Sarah: Jerry what about those elementary kids you observe?

Jerry: Sometimes when I see kids with certain behaviors it makes me wonder, what will they develop into? I have a couple of female students who have chosen a look that is very masculine. One student did ask to be called by the name Duke. But then again, she's a third grader. This is a child I only see once a week for 40 minutes. I did talk with the classroom teacher and she said, "Yeah I had that discussion with the parents and we're just going to let her guide us to what she's comfortable talking about." So, I figure right now if she wants me to call her Duke I'll call her Duke. *He seems a little dismissive of this, but I also suspect that this is generation. Trans students are just starting to become visible in schools, and this was definitely not something that he experienced when he was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s.* That's the only child that's said something. But sometimes when the children start getting very expressive with their clothing or hair styles or makeup it makes me wonder. I have let the social worker and classroom teachers know that if they want me to talk to parents at all, that's something I'm willing to do. *Willing to do as a gay man? I should have pressed this a bit further. This could also be the self-distancing from issues of homosexuality that Woods and Harbeck (1992) described. He would like to help and he is supportive of the students, but is reluctant to "go there" with the students. As an older generation*

gay man, it is more than likely that he is not equipped to have these kinds of conversations with students or parents.

Sarah: That's great. So, one of the reasons I'm doing an intergenerational study is because I think we can learn a lot from each other. For example, Anna is a first-year teacher during a very interesting political climate. When Jerry and Nancy started teaching in the late 70's and early 80s, you were dealing with the aftermath of Anita Bryant and the teacher purges. I'm just wondering, especially for Jerry, Nancy, and Kathy, are you experiencing any similar emotions as to what was going on in the 80s as to conversations that are happening now. Let's just throw in that whole marriage amendment in there. What has that been like in terms of politically?

Jerry: Well for me it's been wonderful because I was absolutely thrilled that finally I could marry my partner.

Kathy: Yes. *And Nancy as well. All three of them were married. What must it feel like to be married and not feel comfortable sharing that part of your life. And just be able to "be married." I wonder if I over-share with my students. I certainly have the privilege of sharing.*

Jerry: Like I have said with you Sarah, by that time, basically everybody I worked with had figured out that we were a couple, but early in my career I had kept very quiet. *Jerry had mentioned going back into to the closet. He "came out" during college, but once he started teaching, he did all that he could to pass.* That was when the AIDS crisis was beginning and there was such anger and negative politics about it. *And, not to mention that he was an elementary music teacher-so all of the stereotypes surrounding that.* I figured "I'm not coming out at all" because if they find I'm a gay teacher of elementary aged children, most of them would have had the idea that I was going to corrupt them. *"Corrupting"-this sentiment dates so far back to the Lavender Scare. I have a feeling there are still some people that think this. How far have we really come as a society?* But it's a different

age now, thank goodness. Again, I'm very happy for the younger members here [in this group dialogue] that are able to be who they are at such a young age. *Jerry's generation paved the way for this current generation.* But now, it makes me very happy that I can provide health insurance for my partner. That we can own our home together and I don't have to sign papers or he doesn't have to sign papers to make sure neither of our families could come take it away from the other. *Oh my god. That's awful.* We legally have that protection for us and that is a huge thing off our shoulders. I think partly because of these protections, it's allowed me to be more out. *And his state supports these protections. There are STILL states that do not offer anti-discrimination policies to same-sex couples.* Because, frankly at this point, if someone asks I don't lie to them. I don't generally bring it up, but as I have said, if adults bring it up I'll be truthful. *This is also a bit like Brekaus' (2003) description of chameleons. Jerry is very comfortable living in a relatively affluent neighborhood not too far from a city, and does well fitting in with his school community.*

Sarah: Nancy, you're nodding your head yes?

Nancy: Yeah, sure. I always figured if people asked me they are willing to hear the answer either way. *"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" turns into "Do Ask, Do Tell?" But she would not ever invite or initiate the conversation to occur.* I'll share a little bit of the Anita Bryant story if you want me to. So in the late 70s when I was doing my student teaching I was with a woman band director, outstanding teacher. She is single and she shared a house with a woman physical education teacher, also single. This was right during the Anita Bryant time-stereotypes all over the place. Overnight people plastered her house with signs that said "Anita Bryant Condemns this House." She had to tell me that that happened because she didn't want me to hear it from anyone else. I wasn't about her to tell her about me, but it was an example to me of "Wow, is public teaching really going to work for me?" She left teaching then. She went off

and got married, had a kid just as quick as she could, and what a waste. She was a wonderful teacher. *“And they were wonderful teachers.” (Graves, 2009).* So that kind of scared me. *This is so sad. So many educators, and just in general, lesbians and gays, have had to live their lives in ways that were not true to them.*

Sarah: Anna, Kevin and Callie, are you familiar with who Anita Bryant was? Yeah?

Anna: Yes.

Kevin: Yes.

Callie: I'm from the South. *In the heart of the bible belt.*

Sarah: Oh, Yeah. That's right yes. Yeah.

Nancy: The end side of that story is, I got married on our 33rd anniversary of being together. We've only been married 2 years now. *That's incredible. And all the while she was a teacher, having to hide. Or, at the very least, not “come clean” to use her words. Nancy and her partner waited to get married versus having a civil union ceremony, which was set into law in their state in 2007.*

Sarah: What about now? Politically now, I mean yes, we live in an age where all people can be married, but at the same time there's still states that do not offer anti-discrimination laws. You can be married. You can be “gay married” but you can't be gay. So, we're not home free yet. So, you know, does that play a part in where some of you have chosen to teach?

Anna: I know that the high school I was offered practically the ideal job I wanted. I'm in the school system I grew up in. *She teaches in the same district that she grew up in, but at a different high school.* It's incredibly suburban, very dense, lots of students. *The district is located near a large metropolitan area and her school is quite diverse in regard to socio-economic status, student demographics, and, as she has shared, gender and sexuality diversity.* It helped knowing that the county and the school system have put such an emphasis on equality, and the school board made statements

every year in support of like, “June is Pride Month.” It also helped that this state had all of these employment protections. These were things I was conscious of when signing the paperwork. I remember thinking, “Okay, that's something I don't have to worry about now as much.”

Kevin: I guess when it came to my current job — I had been teaching in my hometown.

That's so brave. I remember him sharing with me that he had hoped that by going back to his hometown, he might “keep the sin at bay” And one of my fears was, that I had family connections still there.

My niece was actually in my band, so I was concerned about that. One of the reasons I did come to my current state was because I knew they had protections for GLBT individuals and that we couldn't be fired strictly for being gay. But, I've always had the perspective -

band is an elective. If there's — there's that's fear like well if kids find out and it's not okay, I'm not going to be the guy that stays here and holds up the program. *Again, both Anna and Kathy have shared this sentiment. And all very different ages: 63,43, 23. Some things may never change.*

They would rather save the program than consider what other negative consequences would occur if they were to come out. I would have resigned if something had happened. I guess being in the suburban community with a fairly conservative community, we have some fairly active very

conservative churches, and yet the staff is super supportive. I guess for me I had to overcome the fear when I first moved here, even though I knew I had the protections. I

knew that I needed to be able to be out, or work my way to being more out. I know initially professionally I kept a lot of arm's length distance because the fewer questions I got asked,

the fewer lies I had to tell was kind of my perspective. *He mentioned this during our conversations and journaled about this during the visual narrative. Kevin did not actually come out to professional*

colleagues until he started his master's degree. From Kevin's visual narrative: “There was a deliberate moment where I made a decision to either be completely out or the usual— up until that point really — kind of out,

but...not really. I'm grateful that I made that call at that time because the vulnerability at that moment resulted in deeper, more meaningful relationships than I had really ever allowed myself." I can see the generation before me pretty closely, *interesting perspective*. I have an older gay brother. He's only 5 years older than me but to me he seems a lot older because he kind of guards his sexuality even more than I do. I'm a lot more open than I think I would have been 15 years ago.

Sarah: Kathy you were nodded your head when Kevin was talking about he wouldn't want his sexuality to be a reason for people to not be in band. You've experienced that sentiment?

Kathy: Yeah, I had people pulling away from me before I was in the public school setting and choosing to not be around me, and talking in the community. So, I was very shocked by that. It doesn't take too many experiences like that, that make you pull away and really closet yourself or be very cautious. I think it's a fascinating thing to be having this conversation. I have to say it's really sort of interesting. I'm grateful to you Sarah for this opportunity to discuss it and describe it. *I'm grateful to THEM*. I have a former student who's now the bass professor at the university here in this town who's very out with her wife and their 4 children. I just think it's amazing, I mean really it pulls me forward into courage.

When I find appropriate ways to come out it gives my students and their families opportunities to express their support. I think it's pretty fantastic. And, I think the temptation to be censoring yourself all the time is maybe not always such a great idea. You end up missing some opportunities to connect with other faculty members, other people who might be your allies and who you might not suspect to be your allies. *This self-distancing can have its downfalls*. I'm curious to know, Nancy, if you—now that you're retired if you're more out at all in your community or with some of your former students?

Nancy: I have a handful of former students that stay in touch and we talk about things. I did go to the gay pride last June without worrying about it. I have a friend who was appointed district court judge a couple of years ago. She's an out lesbian, and of course that part of her story is what made news in the paper, because she was supposedly the first "out" judge. *Indeed, the practice is to put the identifying feature (gender, sexuality, race or ethnicity, disability) in front of the person, e.g., gay music teacher.* Her comment on it was "This should be a non-issue, and I hope we're getting to the place where it's a non-issue but obviously I don't think we're there yet." *Jerry used the phrase "non-issue" to describe how he feels about his sexuality in the classroom.*

Sarah: Let's talk about that because the reason I'm doing this research is because it's sort of an issue. You are all human beings, you are all music educators, but you are also gay or lesbian, and I kind of think of it as the blooming onion of identity. So you have like multiple identities that, as you peel through the layers, you get to the core of who you are. So I wonder how do you all, I mean Kevin and I kind of spoke about this, but what does it mean to be a gay music educator. Is that a thing or should it be a thing? Why is it a thing?

Nancy: It shouldn't be a thing, but you know, people's religious background, political background, or social background is what makes it a thing. *And what the hell is a "thing," Sarah? Way to be vague. But maybe that is part of the problem.*

Sarah: Jerry you were nodding your head as I was talking. What were you thinking?

Jerry: I couldn't quite hear what you said there?

Sarah: Oh, you were nodding your head as I was talking. What were you thinking?

Jerry: Oh. Just about being like you said the authentic self. Like I've said, I've reached the point where next year being my last year, it's like, okay, just throw caution to the wind. I'm not going to care much about what I say because there's nothing they can do about it. I was joking last night; I went to see a live performance of "Cabaret" with my partner and the

psychologist at my school who is also gay but not out to our school. I jokingly said, “Well maybe next year we’ll do “Cabaret” as a performance, and I’ll be the MC,” and he said “Well, I’ll be Sally Bowles.” And we just burst out laughing about how silly that would be. I said, “Yeah but I’m retiring and you’re not.” His response was, “Well I’m too valuable they can’t get rid of me because there’s no other bilingual psychologist around.” The freedom of being who you are is wonderful.

Sarah: Yeah.

Anna: This is completely unrelated, but I will say Jerry your cat is really cute.

Jerry: I didn't even realize she was back there.

Sarah: Aww fur babies. Callie which fur baby is that?

Callie: That's Earl. (A large dog makes his way onto the screen).

Sarah: Awe.

Kathy: Sarah I have a question for you actually. So through all this, what has been the most surprising thing for you to learn or discover or realize it wasn't even something you didn't even think about or know before?

Sarah: That's a great question. I just wrote about four pages about a conflict that I had. All of you have shared so much with me and for many of you faith has played a very important part in your lives. I walked away from church in high school because I was at youth group and we were having a conversation about something bible related, and somehow we got on a conversation about gays and lesbians. I distinctly remember the youth pastor stating, “Well, if you know a gay or lesbian you need to talk to them and change them.” I looked at him and I'm like “You can change their sexuality the same way you can change mine,” and I got up and left. I don't know. I've thought long and hard about what prompted my feelings. I don't know, something deep in my heart was like that's not right. So when I was listening to you

all share your strong faith backgrounds and how some of you still struggle and yet are still very committed, I was struggling to put personal experiences away because I just... I don't ... For me it was very hard to understand why you might be a part of something to me... there's a lot of hateful language coming out of it. But upon learning that and talking to you all, what I have learned is it's not so much the religious aspect of church but it's so much bigger. It's the community and that was like, kind of like a realization for me, that it's much bigger than what a bible says or what it doesn't say. The community aspect of your faith and the what you have garnered out of that is very important to many of you. So that was a big learning curve for me because I really struggled with that for a while. For about a week I sat there and was thinking, "I don't get it," but that's not my job necessarily as the researcher if you will. *Wow, that really turned that conversation onto its head. I am glad that she asked that, but I guess I wasn't so prepared to be super vulnerable with ALL of them right there. I can understand how they felt having me pry into their lives.*

So, let's talk about this community aspect, and are there other communities beyond your faith communities that you're a part of that support you in your lives? Music communities, or support groups. As were all coming to terms with your sexuality did you seek out LGBTQ support groups, that kind of thing. I know Jerry you did.

Jerry: You talking about the coming out group years ago?

Sarah: Well that is one support group you were a member of. You can talk about that or are there other kinds of community groups that you are a part of now?

Jerry: Community groups I wouldn't call them that.

Sarah: Or just groups that there is a community. *I should have defined "community."*

Jerry: I've got a big group of friends that I met through one of my neighbors. She used to be a colleague of mine in the school district, she's at another district now. She started

introducing us to her friends who were all science fiction geeks and they're all wonderful people. *Throwback to his younger years and his friends.* Not a single one of them ever batted an eye at Jeff and I being a couple, so we've sort of pulled into their community. We don't go to their conventions as they do and get dressed up, but you know, with them there was just total acceptance right off the bat. It's a nice group of friends to have. They are not the closest friends we have, but we see them periodically throughout the year and it's just nice knowing that if I put something on Facebook that might be troubling, or something we're going through, one of them will respond with some support. That's what I appreciate about them.

Kathy: The orchestras I play in, we're —none of us are in these boxes. *That is what a label is, isn't it? A box to check off.* We're not, “gay music educators. . . But certainly the orchestras I play in, we're a long time community of like-minded souls and so I've had a lot of support just with my colleagues in the orchestras.

Nancy: Yeah, I've had support like that from the groups I play in too as well as my school community. *This is interesting because Nancy never really mentioned that her school community, as a large community, was supportive.* I have a large group of women friends and we go camping, and do dinners, and parties and such. But one of the other groups that has been really important to me is a women's golf association. We play golf and have dinner every Monday night all summer long. Even off-season we get together once a month for dinner when it's not golf weather. That group has been totally welcoming to both Julia and I. There are others in that group, obviously not everybody, but it's just been a place where it isn't an issue and that's fun. *A common theme that is occurring is that school is not considered a “community.” It is definitely a workplace.*

Sarah: Callie what about you?

Callie: I have a pretty close group of friends that I've met through the band that I played in, and then also a parent group that I'm a part of. There is another two-mom family in that group, but it was just a coincidence. It's just a group of parents; we get together once a week and let our kids run around together. The kids are all two years old, all within about six months of each other. It's nice to be able to commiserate with them about things our toddlers are doing. So that's like one of the more prominent groups in my life right now.

Sarah: Anna, were you going to say something?

Anna: Yeah, I think because I just moved from college and I'm living with my parents right now, so I've definitely gone through a big transition as far as leaving a lot of my friend group behind. So, I think my most supportive group right now is actually my gym community. So, I'm really into Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, which is a very rough and tumble sort of sport. Actually in a lot of ways there's like... some Jiu Jitsu gyms have really macho culture, but there's a really great group of women there. Actually a good handful of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people that train also. It's the only activity in my life that when I go in the evening I completely forget about everything else. It's a small social group. There are some teachers in there too, so we can complain about work or about the weather or whatever, but that's been a really central gathering point for me, that no matter how long my day is, or what's been going on that I know I am going to the gym that evening and I'm going to see people that I like and that I'll forget about everything else. *Lots of these communities have nothing to do with school or music, but just basic acceptance.*

Sarah: Kevin what about you?

Kevin: One of the biggest places I've found community as out gay man was in my grad school. You and I have talked about this. It was the first time in my life I made the decision. I was like, "Okay am I going to be the normal-closeted-gay if you ask me kind-of-gay, or am

I just going to put it all out there. And I decided to throw it all out there, and it was one of the greatest choices for me. So, we're a fairly close. We're a close group of teachers in this area. And that's a good spot, but then also among my teachers here at school. *This is unique to the participants. Not one of them mentioned their school as a community of support, even though they feel supported by the school community.* I think it's interesting. I don't know that I've ever had a straight band colleague! I've had gay coworkers. *Kevin's job is unique in that his band colleague is gay. He has also had two choir teacher colleagues who were gay who no longer work at the school.* So I've had great coworkers here. My choir colleagues are very supportive both republican. We can talk through that and not run and scream from each other. We can actually have conversations. Along with other staff, we have great staff at my school that are very supportive. People that I just like being with, so I'm very fortunate in that. That I have a place like that that I can be.

Sarah: I just have a couple more questions and this kind of actually revolves more around music education because ultimately this dissertation will have to talk a little bit about the implications of all of this in music education. I wonder in what ways can we as a profession do better to help support our gay and lesbian colleagues, our bisexual colleagues, but also the students we work with? It's a big question, so I'll give you a second. Are there things we can do better in the classroom, but also preparing young teachers, straight, or gay, or lesbian, to help them feel more authentic, to be their authentic self, be successful, feel successful?

Nancy: I think in instrumental music education particularly a lot of the times job assignments involve multiple schools. In my case, all through my career I was in five different buildings which had it pluses and minuses. I mean the plus side was I didn't have to interact with a whole lot of adults and worry about that, but that was also a minus because I didn't get any other support so I feel isolated at times. *Music teacher isolation can be tough. I have*

felt this in the past and I have had to actively seek out relationships with colleagues not in the music department. Teaching in five schools makes that even harder. I don't know if going forward teachers can have more contact. We were pretty much just on our own out there.

Sarah: So potentially better mentorship.

Nancy: Yes. To be able to develop some kind of connection.

Kathy: I think modeling authenticity is crucial and it doesn't necessarily mean telling all of your story to anybody, but I think finding pockets of safe places to be authentic. That might not just be coming out about your partnerships but it might be, telling— being honest about what you're struggling with. That's not bitching about a particular student or a particular political setting. Finding ways to be authentic sometimes means asking questions instead of telling. *I really love this.* I think as music education we are very good at creating environments of inclusivity. I hope we are. I hope we are... *I hope we are too, and this could open a whole can of worms as to what it means to be inclusive. I really admire Kathy and how she talks about modeling authenticity and what that could feel like and look like.* Certainly, in my experience that's been crucial to have an environment that supports a variety of kids and their styles. I think developing that kind of environment where everyone is accepted regardless of what's going on with them is the best thing we can do.

Sarah: Anna, what do you think?

Anna: Oh my gosh, I feel like I don't have the experience base to answer this yet. I will say that it was nice in preparation that you know when issues of— it was a frequent topic in methods classes, instrumental and otherwise about inclusion and . . . I think I was just - it's a start but I was just always thankful that it was part of the conversation. I really agree with Kathy that I think just creating an environment that is universally welcoming. I don't really know yet, this is something I have to continue to think about. *So now we are talking about*

“inclusion” and I wonder what they mean by this. Do they mean gender and sexuality and how gender and sexuality is represented in their curriculum, or are they mean the overall “feel” of inclusivity?

Sarah: Kevin what are your thoughts

Kevin: Part of me is like; when we do we get to the point where our sexuality or being gay is an asset vs. a liability. *Yes. So much yes here.* When do people see the diversity we bring and the diverse lifestyle and life experiences we have, brought us to a point of this is what I want? *Because we talk about the different cultures that are in our classrooms, and that they are assets, why can't these lived experiences also be an asset.* I want value. I was having a hard time just not going down stereotypical roads, *of being gay? or being a band director. Kevin does split these two identities.* When you've brought on the fact that or the idea of being universally accepting . . . I think that conversation has come forward more in the last 10 to 15 years than what I remember or was aware of. Because it's interesting to, here where I am located, I feel like we have a fairly active gay music educator group of folks that are around but we're not connecting with each other. *I wonder what could happen if they did. What implications could this have on programs, students, and the profession at large?*

I think some of it is because we all feel pretty comfortable and safe where we are. That we don't necessarily feel like we need that network and so it's . . . I don't know where it's going next but I like the path that we're working toward. I think we're seeing it in society as well. I mean, you can look at the Olympics and Adam Rippon being out and we're seeing and Gus. We have out athletes now and I think that trend is continuing. *And more and more musicians, popular musicians are coming out as well.* I think we're going to see that in our music education. It's kind of fascinating too because there have always been gay music students. When I came out to my principal at my first job and it was kind of, I was in a depressed state and I was like I have to tell someone. I came out to him and the first thing he said back to me was, “I

heard that happens sometimes in your profession.” I’m like it’s not like this hasn’t been around, but it’s the fact we’re actually talking about it and that we’re able to draw on each other. And others are able to help feel this out.

Sarah: Nancy what do you think?

Nancy: Well. Yeah. I think it’s definitely in a better place than it was when I started teaching. I wouldn’t wish some of my experiences on the next generation. I hope no one has to go through those things again and I am really encouraged to see the younger generation coming in and being able to just be themselves. *Progress has definitely been made.*

Sarah: Yeah. Jerry?

Jerry: I think with my age group that I deal with, I work mainly with kindness and acceptance. Occasionally I’ll get 5th and 6th graders who might throw a comment out if we’re talking about a current musician they listen to their music and they know that musician is gay. Sometimes they will say it just to see what reaction I’ll give. And my reaction is usually I’ll look at them and say, “And so? It’s a non-issue.” *A Jerry-ism. This is the phrase he has used to describe his sexuality throughout this whole experience, and I think I finally understand. It’s not an issue because it is just a part of him. It is not his defining characteristic. It doesn’t make him any better or worse of a teacher-it doesn’t affect his teaching at all. It’s just a part of him-a non-issue.* I just let them know it’s a non-issue with me and most of the kids drop it after that because we have such a diverse population racially at our schools. I just try and get them to accept people for who they are and what they are. When I see former students getting to the high school level I enjoy it when I hear them share stories of, “Oh, you remember so and so…” To them it’s a non-issue for the most part in my schools as they get older, and my colleagues who teach there will occasionally share stories with me and it’s very comforting to hear the younger

generation is more accepting. I hope that continues that way the kids won't grow up with a lot of the frustrations that I had early on before I came to terms with everything.

Sarah: and Callie?

Callie: What was the question?

Sarah: I'm sorry what?

Callie: Can you repeat your initial question?

Sarah: Let me think, it's not one I had written down.

Kathy: How can we be better colleagues? How can we encourage each other is that what you wanted?

Sarah: Basically, what can we music education professionals, do better to help create—I don't remember what I asked to be honest with you.

Callie: You know, when I was in college we never even talked about like, sharing your life with your students. We just talked about learning how to teach music. So I didn't feel like we learned about how to actually connect with students and how to do that so I think if music education programs can talk about the personal aspect to music in creating a program I think that would be helpful. And talking about how to find a way to be comfortable... like finding someone you're comfortable with in school. *For sure. I remember my first year of teaching. I didn't know anyone and struggled to build relationships with anyone outside of the music area. I still have to actively seek out those relationships.* I don't know, as someone who is — I'm an introvert so I always have to seek out the situation before I'll say anything a lot of times, and so it takes me a while to want to be able to open up to someone too.

Sarah: Putting the human part back into the humanities?

Callie: Yeah totally.

Sarah: Yeah. Well, we're just about out of time because Anna needs to eat dinner and she's starting to turn into a pumpkin. I'm wondering if—first of all, thank you from the bottom of my heart for this and your patience with getting the technology and Nancy on the phone. But I'm wondering if you have any final thoughts, nuggets of wisdom that you would be willing or wanting to share, or have thought about since we started this conversation a while ago.

Nancy: I would want to stay thank you Sarah for doing this. It's nice to hear other people's perspectives and their situations too. I would just say carry on.

Kevin: I guess I would say thanks to Sarah of course, and also to those teachers that have paved the way for those of us who are able to enjoy some of the positions that we're in right now.

Anna: This has just been really interesting. I didn't say much, but I listened and learned a lot today.

Kathy: Like I said before, thank you Sarah. This has been really therapeutic for me as I work through my own journey.

Holy crap. That all just happened. I am shaking, sweating, and almost in tears. I have envisioned this for about a year and it just came to fruition. I'm slightly irritated that the technology didn't quite cooperate, but that is not anything that could be prevented. They all really touched on some beautiful moments, and I think, from an outsider's perspective, this probably left each of them changed in some way.