Bringing Ourselves to Work:
A Narrative Inquiry of LGBTQ Professionals

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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Graduate Program in Educational Studies

The Ohio State University
2017

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Abstract

Traditional models of professional socialization have largely overlooked or sidelined the role that personal LGBTQ identity plays in the development of professional identity. Additionally, there has been limited research on the impact of LGBTQ identity based professional roles on personal LGBTQ identity.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the narratives of identity for LGBTQ people who engaged in LGBTQ professional work in higher education settings. In particular, I was interested in understanding their professional development trajectories, their personal identity developments, the entanglement of their personal and professional identities, and descriptions of work. Using narrative inquiry methodology, data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of twelve LGBTQ professionals spread across the United States who also identified as members of the LGBTQ communities. Narratives were analyzed using a categorical-content approach. Results were examined through the theoretical lenses of professional socialization and career construction theory, the development of LGBTQ identity across the lifespan, and considerations of intersectional, intersecting, and intrasecting identities.

The results of this study created a cohesive narrative of LGBTQ professional work on college campuses. This included a clearly defined role that was focused on advocacy, education, and community building for LGBTQ students. The collective story
also contained the necessary awareness of an attentiveness to climate as it related to LGBTQ students and performing work that was campus and context specific.

In addition to the descriptions related to scope of role and the climate in which these role duties were performed, LGBTQ professionals were driven to help LGBTQ students and community members on their campuses because of their personal experiences with LGBTQ identity and because of their desire to help other LGBTQ students feel supported, cared for, and welcomed. Ultimately, these professionals’ personal LGBTQ identities were influenced and reshaped by their work, resulting in more robust and complex understandings of their own identities and the LGBTQ communities they served.

This research helps to challenge traditional notions of career socialization as being removed from personal identity by demonstrating how personal identity can be a driving force in shaping one’s career choice. In the same turn, this study bolsters the application of career construction as a useful theory for understanding the career development of LGBTQ persons. Lastly, this research project contributes to the cataloguing of the modern LGBTQ civil rights movement on college campuses.
Dedication

To all those who endeavor for a better world.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation marks the end of a long journey, one which began the first day I stepped on Ohio State’s campus and began my work in Student Life. Were it not for that first graduate assistantship, I would have never embarked on the journey of pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education. There are so many people who have helped me in this Ph.D. process that I must acknowledge. Dr. Susan Jones, thank you for taking me on board as an advisee and guiding me through this process. You truly are a scholar among scholars. I will always be grateful for your relentless pursuit of excellence, your insight, and for always readying me for each stage of this process. Dr. Darcy Granello, my first Ph.D. advisor, who encouraged me to leave Counselor Education for Higher Education. I did not know it at the time, but you were right. I needed to find my intellectual home. Dr. Colette Dollarhide, you have seen it all. From day one of my master’s degree to my final defense, you have been there every step of the way. Thank you for seeing something in me. Dr. Antoinette Errante, thank you for your knowledge and expertise in this journey. Your quiet encouragement helped see me through. Dr. D’Andra Mull, I will forever be grateful for your unwavering support. Whenever I needed it, you were there as a mentor and confidant. Dr. Todd Suddeth and Dr. D’Arcy Oaks, thank you both for your invaluable feedback on all my drafts and for the critical feedback. Mom, thank you for always encouraging me to pursue my dreams. Tyler, thank
you for being my husband and putting up with me for this entire dissertation process and not once making me feel guilty for taking the time I needed to finish this program. And last but not least, Willie Young, thank you for your constant check-ins and encouragement. You never let me take my eye off the end goal.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions cannot be satisfied with the message that it will get better someday—as if there is little student affairs professionals can do to make the climates for LGBT people warm and welcoming today. (Vaccaro, 2012, p. 430)

Vaccaro’s call to student affairs professionals to enact positive changes within higher education institutions addresses the harsh reality that for a significant number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons college environments are harmful (Vaccaro, 2012). This research project was a study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) professionals on college campuses who chose to respond to Vaccaro’s call to action. The purpose of this study was to understand the career motivations, professional and personal LGBTQ identity developments, and impact that working on behalf of LGBTQ students had on these professionals and their identities. This research project also provided an opportunity to explore and describe the facets of LGBTQ professional work on college campuses.

Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) found in a national survey of 5,149 LGBTQ identified students, staff, faculty, and administrators that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) persons were almost twice as likely to experience harassment (23%) over their heterosexual peers (12%). Transmasculine, transfeminine, and gender non-conforming respondents reported experiencing harassment at rates of 39%, 38%, and 31%, respectively. This was compared with a 20% rate for cisgender men—men whose internal sense of gender identity aligns with the gender identity they were assigned at
birth—and a 19% rate for cisgender women. For persons of color in the LGBTQ community, harassment was even higher as these persons attributed feeling harassed due to both their racial/ethnic identities and their LGBTQ identities (Rankin et al., 2010). In a more recent survey on sexual assault and harassment conducted by the American Association of Universities in which there were 150,072 participants, 60.4% of gays and lesbians surveyed (5,468 respondents), 69.1% of bisexual students and 64.0% of asexual and questioning students (10,074 respondents) reported being sexually harassed (Canton, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Lee, Bruce & Thomas, 2015). This is in comparison to 45.9% of heterosexual persons reporting the experience of sexual harassment (132,149 respondents) (Canton et al., 2015). Statistics like these provide an alarming snapshot of the current climate for LGBTQ persons on college campuses, and in fact, are connected to a historical lineage of oppression stretching back generations (Renn, 2010). Understanding this history and its impact on LGBTQ people is crucial to understanding the current status of LGBTQ people within higher education settings and the issues faced by the professionals working on their behalves.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the current state of campus climates for LGBTQ persons as well as explanations for this treatment as rooted in broader cultural discourse and institutionalized forms of discrimination. From this foundation, I discuss changes in institutions of higher education, society, and student affairs that set the stage for the creation of LGBTQ practitioners who specialize in LGBTQ student support on campuses. I then turn to the purpose, theoretical frameworks, research questions, study significance, and research design that I used to support and focus the scope of this
research project. My intention is to provide a context and animus for the LGBTQ professionals heeding Vaccaro’s (2012) call to make campuses climates better for LGBTQ students.

**Climate, History, and Context for LGBTQ People on College Campuses**

The need for LGBTQ professionals to advocate on behalf of other LGBTQ persons is a result of and in response to chilly campus climates that have been found to be “unwelcoming, invalidating, or unsupportive” (Vaccaro, 2012, p. 430). The nature of these hostile climates is constructed through acts of violence, threats, exclusion, and verbal harassment (Vaccaro, 2012; Vaccaro & Mena, 2011). These acts may take the form of microaggressions, microassaults, and microinvalidations which function to subtly dismiss, exclude, derogue, or insult persons of certain identity groups (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Buccheri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). They may also manifest in explicit and outright acts of discrimination or bodily harm. Climate is defined as “common patterns of important dimensions of organizational life, or its members, perceptions of, and attitudes towards, those dimensions” (Rankin, 1998, p. 278). This climate is created by doxa or the “‘stuff everyone knows’ … [or] common knowledge … [or] the understanding we absorb from our native culture that we use to make sense of the world” (Blank, 2012, pp. 25-26). Doxa is powerful because as Blank (2012) stated:

> Knowingly and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly, we participate in doxa because it is how we know what is desirable and undesirable …, what is acceptable and unacceptable, what will get us punished and what will get us praised. (p. 26)

Hostile climates and acts of violence are just two ways in which LGBTQ people are mistreated through doxa (Bank, 2012; Vaccaro, 2012). This mistreatment can lead to an
awareness of one’s social identity as being unacceptable or punishable. The term that best captures this phenomenon is *stigmatization salience* which is defined as “negative self-focused attention to one’s membership in a culturally stigmatized group” (Brenner, Lyons, & Fassinger, 2010, p. 323). Institutions of higher education are important sites of doxa as they serve as sites for the production and maintenance of a global culture in which clashes occur between “the ideals America espouses and what Americans practice” (Dill, 2009, p. 229). This tension is captured on college campuses which have the simultaneous ability to create both unsafe and negative environments for LGBTQ people and are also called to be places where diversity is strongly pursued such that the sacredness of each individual is fully honored (Poynter & Washington, 2005). Although understanding and examining doxa is not a major focus of this study, the term is utilized here to encapsulate the force within higher education that LGBTQ professionals resist and push against.

The current treatment of LGBTQ persons in society and in particular on college campuses is connected to a specific pedigree of mistreatment (Blank, 2012; Renn, 2010). Prior to the 1970s, homosexuality was commonly believed to be a disease that was deviant, untreatable, and contagious. This viewpoint was used to expel students who practiced or were suspected of practicing same-sex activities (Renn, 2010). Over time, as homosexuality came to be reframed as a treatable disease, homosexual students were allowed to remain on campuses where they could receive psychological services. The 1973 removal of homosexuality as a psychological disorder further cleared the path for enabling LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty to remain on campus (Renn, 2010).
Some of the first documented liberation-based activism took place on the college campuses of Cornell and Columbia in New York state contemporaneously with the Stonewall riots of 1969. As a result of these struggles at Cornell and other college campuses, by 1971 Cornell students had a fully established gay-student organization and they were not alone. Across the nation, 175 other institutions also recognized gay and lesbian student groups. These historic movements helped to move rights for LGBTQ persons forward laying the foundation for further inclusion. However, institutional support in the form of centers and staff that specialize in LGBTQ student development and social issues took much longer to arrive (Beemyn 2003; Sanlo 2000).

The Development of LGBT Resource Centers

The first LGBTQ support office opened at the University of Michigan in 1971 shortly after agitation by student activists (Burris, n.d.). However, the majority of LGBTQ support offices were not founded until the 1990s (Sanlo, 2000). The creation of these offices may have taken longer for two reasons. First, diversity and inclusion in organizations was originally conceived “without reference to sexual identity, gender identity, or gender expression” (Schmidt, Githens, Rocco, & Kormanik, 2012, p. 335). In order to enter into and be recognized by the discourse of equity and inclusion, a gay identity was created that centered on a homosexual subject perceived to be White, cis-gender, and male. This gay identity became a homonormative group that purported to represent all LGBTQ persons and allowed LGBTQ persons to take part in minority-based civil rights activism even as certain identities within their group such as trans persons were further marginalized (Piontek, 2006). Second, unlike offices created to support other
minorities, LGBTQ offices were typically created from a determination of organizational needs by administration (Sanlo, 2000) and not in reaction to student protests or government legislation (Ferguson, 2012). By 2008, 150 campuses had LGBTQ support offices (Renn, 2010). In 2015, the most recent year that statistics were available, there were approximately 250 LGBTQ resource centers on college campuses in the United States (Consortium of Higher Education LGBTQ Resource Professionals, 2015).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer support offices possess specialized information and understanding of the LGBTQ needs of LGBTQ students and issues in college settings. In Sanlo’s (2000) survey of 23 LGBTQ center directors, it was found that these offices were typically staffed by one to two full-time employees and served the entire spectrum of identities within the LGBTQ community. This means that while there are important differences between sexual orientation and gender identity in regards to resource needs, LGBTQ persons are often treated from a student services perspective as belonging to a singular group (Renn, 2007). Beyond their service to students, LGBTQ professionals also worked with campus staff and faculty (Sanlo, 2000). Although Renn (2010) and Sanlo (2000) provided significant insight into the evolving climates for LGBTQ persons on college campuses and the services that were created to support them, they did not directly focus on the experiences of LGBTQ professionals. To further understand the establishment of these positions and their relation to the practice of student affairs, I pivot to a discussion of the broader cultural events that located diversity work within the manifold of the student affairs profession.
Social Justice and Diversity in Student Affairs

Student affairs as a profession is guided by five enduring principles (Reason & Broido, 2011). The first four are (a) a focus on students’ holistic needs; (b) an imperative to understand the role of context and environments and a commitment to shape these two forces to help students grow and develop; (c) an intentional practice of using empirically grounded work that enables and creates best practices for student development; and (d) an acknowledgement that student affairs professionals are accountable to the broader society (Carpenter, Miller, & Winston, 1994; Harper, 2011). Social justice, though not explicitly named in the outset of the profession, is considered a fifth overarching principle (Reason & Broido, 2011). There are two reasons for this. The first is that it connects to the profession’s commitment to diversity and the profession’s call to advocacy for all students. The second is that social justice resonates deeply with the profession’s values of justice, human dignity, freedom, and equality (ACPA/NASPA, 2015, Reason & Broido, 2011). This resonance was captured even more explicitly in the most recent American College Personnel Association (ACPA)/National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (2015) publication of competencies for student affairs professionals which emanate from the enactment of the professions’ principles and values. In this document, the authors renamed the formerly titled Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion competency to the Social Justice and Inclusion competency. This competency is defined as both “a process and a goal that includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of oppression, privilege, and power”
(ACPA/NASPA, 2015, p. 8). The reason for this shift was that “social justice” as opposed to “equity and diversity” captures the active and aspirational work student affairs practitioners must undertake in order to create a society in which all persons have full and equitable participation.

The explicit turn to social justice by the student affairs profession was due in large part to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In a study of 18 student affairs professionals who served on college campuses in the 1950s-1970s during the civil rights era, Gaston-Gayles, Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Ward, and Tuttle (2005) found that student protests and the university responses to them facilitated a shift away from the student affairs practice of in loco parentis—acting as a stand-in parent that manages and disciplines students. As the profession shifted away from parenting students, it moved towards the empowerment and development of students in which practitioners worked with students who were seen as adults who have rights and responsibilities within their institution of higher education (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). This shift in the understanding and treatment of students, along with student affairs leaders becoming part of central university governance, led to a proliferation of professional roles. These roles included being an “advocate, mentor, and friend; educator and resource; mediator; initiator and change agent” (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005, p. 265). Within these roles, student affairs professionals became the enforcers of institutional values and rules as well as conduits through which students’ voices were heard and valued by the institutions for which they worked. These professionals served as consultants to help students more effectively organize for collective action and have their concerns heard. They also worked to foster
structural changes in universities that created higher education environments that were more accessible to and equitable for students from diverse social identities and backgrounds (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005). The establishment of LGBTQ professional roles within institutions is intimately connected to these structural changes that came out of the work of student affairs professionals as driven by their commitments to the guiding principles and values of the profession. As such, understanding the stories of these LGBTQ professionals provides insight into a facet of the profession that, on the whole, has largely been overlooked by higher education and student affairs literature (Renn, 2010). More importantly, knowing these professionals’ stories creates the potential for others to learn how these professionals work to make college environments better for LGBTQ persons on campuses.

**Statement of the Problem**

McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich (2006) reminded researchers that “we are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell” (p. 3). By telling the stories of LGBTQ professionals, the modern history of the LGBTQ struggle against oppression on college campuses is preserved; and with its preservation, the foundation and necessity of future LGBTQ professional work is secured. In listening to the stories of LGBTQ professionals, student affairs professionals and scholars hear how they came to the work of helping LGBTQ individuals, the purpose and drive behind their work, and the impact this work has on them. Not to investigate these stories is to risk their erasure from cultural, institutional, and personal cognizance and may contribute to a lack of understanding of the ways in which LGBTQ visibilities and rights are being advanced at institutions of
higher education. Not to illuminate these stories is to risk, as Schulman (2012) termed it, *a gentrification of the mind*. This is a sociological process whereby the story of how oppressed people fight for their rights and lives is replaced by the narrative that circumstances naturally and without effort become better for marginalized groups. When the mindset that doxa and culture will just get better for LGBTQ persons takes hold, college and university organizations and LGBTQ communities easily forget the worth and value of LGBTQ professionals and their work. These stories need to be shared through thick descriptions that have transferability and applicability to the lives of others (Ahmed, 2012; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), particularly those who desire to continue to bend the arc of societal structures towards justice.

**Theoretical Frameworks and Influences**

The nature of LGBTQ professional work is multifaceted and complex. In order to approach narratives from LGBTQ professionals, I focused on three main theoretical frames and influences. These frameworks are (a) the processes of professional socialization in conjunction with the theory of career construction; (b) the development of LGBTQ identity across the lifespan; and (c) the consideration of intersectional and intersecting identities. In this section, I will briefly outline and introduce these theories and their relation to this research project. I will revisit and expand on these theoretical frameworks more fully in chapter two.

**Professional Socialization, Career Construction, and Commitment**

Professional socialization is the process by which a person comes to affiliate with the values, knowledge, and skills that define a body of people engaged in professional
work (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). In order to understand the experiences of LGBTQ professionals, it is necessary to establish a description of the profession’s requirements and a mechanism by which a person could come to see himself/herself/hirself as possessing a professional identity. Professional socialization as a process provides a possible explanation of how a person might identify and come to affiliate with the professional values and work of an LGBTQ practitioner in higher education.

Connected to professional socialization is the related but distinct concept of career construction. This is the process by which a person navigates entry into and transitions between career roles, work roles, and professional identities. In the process of navigation, a person is able to develop the skills and capacity to not only make intentional choices about his/her/hirs (hirs and ze are used as pronouns to refer to persons who do not ascribe to a binary gender of man or woman) career but create narratives explaining his/her/hirs career choices (Savickas, 2013). A person’s career may or may not align with a specific profession; but when they do align, career theory adds robustness to framing how a person chooses to exist, engage with, and pursue specific goals within a profession. It also allows the researcher to follow a person’s choices about work and career should he/she/ze choose to leave or modify one’s professional role (Savickas, 2013).

Tied deeply to both the choice to socialize into a profession and the choice to direct one’s career in a particular area of work is the idea of commitment and following a protean oriented path in career construction. Research by Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996) provides insight into how commitment to social justice and social change takes
form in people’s lives. Studies on the process of consciousness-raising capture a person’s progression from inaction on issues of social justices to his/her/hirs active participation in addressing injustice and his/her/hirs increasing ability to act in interculturally mature ways (King & Baxter Magloda, 2005; Landreman, Rasmussen, King & Jiang, 2007). These frameworks structure a nuanced understanding of the developmental requirements of socialization to become an LGBTQ professional; they help to illuminate the skills, knowledge of self, and emotional affects necessary for a person to persist in LGBTQ professional work in the face of setbacks; and they help to further articulate the social identity of being an LGBTQ professional. Professional socialization, career construction, and commitment to diversity are rendered in service of capturing the complexity of an LGBTQ professional identity. In the next section, I will identify models for articulating a personal LGBTQ identity.

**LGBTQ Identity Development**

Social identities influence and reshape how people conceive of themselves (Jones & Abes, 2013). Two important social identities to be considered in relation to the development of LGBTQ persons are sexual orientation and gender identity. The two models used in this study are D’Augelli’s (1994) Model of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Development and Bilodeau’s (2005) model of Transgender Identity Development which extends D’Augelli’s model to transgender persons. These models are useful to this study as they structure identity development as continually occurring as both an intrapsychic and social process that is defined from within and at the same time shaped by others.
This allows for the consideration of an LGBTQ identity that is relational and that intermingles with other identities and developmental processes.

This ability to intermingle helps to inform the ways in which career development over the lifespan may be influenced by the lifespan development of an LGBTQ identity that is marginalized within society. These models also help to frame how a person who identifies as LGBTQ may or may not choose to engage in social, political or activist activities in relation to his/her/hir LGBTQ community; and specifically the activity of becoming an LGBTQ professional who serves LGBTQ students on a college campus. The process of entering an LGBTQ community as described within the model is a shift from holding a personal identity as being an LGBTQ person to understanding the ways in which structural heterosexism and genderism impact and oppress the LGBTQ community (Bilodeau, 2005; D’Augelli, 1994). However, possession of an LGBTQ identity is not a singular, unified or monolithic experience as sexual orientation and gender identity are influenced by an individual’s personality, circumstances, and other social identities that he/she/ze possesses. To examine the varied experiences with LGBTQ identity systematically, I introduce the theoretical lens of intersectionality, the concomitant Intersectional Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (I—MMDI), and the Queered—Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Q—MMDI) (Jones & Abes, 2013).

**Intersectionality and Intersecting Identities**

In articulating the definition of intersectionality to encompass intersectional research from a higher education and student affairs perspective, Jones (2010) specified that three core characteristics emerge:
(a) A primary focus and centering on the lived experiences of individuals; (b) an exploration of identity salience as influenced by systems of power and privilege and the interacting nature of such systems; and (c) a larger purpose of contributing to a more socially just society. (p. 227)

Under this definition, this study connected to intersectional research as it focused on the career narratives of individual LGBTQ professionals. In undertaking an examination of these experiences, I was interested in understanding how personal and professional LGBTQ identities are expressed for these persons as connected to their experiences of discrimination and oppression and their work to challenge systems of power and privilege. Personal LGBTQ identity was a central and recurring concept throughout this study as it served to encompass the private and internal-meaning making space by which individuals came to understand and claim their identities as LGBTQ individuals. As I articulate further in the significance of the study section, I not only wanted to understand LGBTQ professionals’ work on college campuses in regards to social justice, I also wanted to contribute to a more socially just society by telling their professional stories.

In addition to aligning with the definition of intersectional research in higher education, I explicitly consider these LGBTQ professional’s multiple, overlapping social identities and their relation to professional socialization and career development. The MMDI as conceived by Jones and McEwen (2000) and the I-MMDI as extended by Jones and Abes (2013) and Q-MMDI as refined by Jones, Abes, and Kasch (2013) were be used as a theoretical touchstones. Specifically, these models helped to locate the relationship of participants’ core selves to the inter- and intrasecting social identities that surrounded these cores. The I—MMDI in particular provides an explication of the relationship between a person’s social identities and the influence that macro-systems of
power and oppression have on these social identities (Jones & Abes, 2013). Social identities served as moderators to external work environments and macro culture that recursively shaped participants social identities and impacted their core selves. These models helped to insure that identities were considered in relation to one another and to the social contexts in which they were exhibited as opposed to in isolation from one another and that the wholeness of a person was considered (Jones & Abes, 2013). With this overview of the theoretical frameworks, lenses, and influences established, I turn to the purpose of this study and the associated research questions.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the narratives of identity for LGBTQ people who engaged in LGBTQ professional work in higher education settings. In particular, I was interested in understanding their professional development trajectories, their personal identity developments, the entanglement of their personal and professional identities and descriptions of work. Three research questions guided this study of LGBTQ professionals:

1. How do professional identities develop for persons working as LGBTQ professionals in higher education?
2. How do the personal LGBTQ identities of LGBTQ professionals develop?
3. What are the intersections and influences between personal and professional LGBTQ identities for LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings?
Research Design

This study was situated in a paradigm of constructivism in that sought to better understand the lived experiences and identity development of LGBTQ professionals and doing justice by sharing these experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In terms of epistemology, this investigation was avowedly subjectivist as it framed knowledge and reality as being socially constructed in specific localities and in the relationship between the storyteller and listener (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In addition, a constructivist approach allowed for revisions in a person’s story of self and understandings of identity. This was in alignment with lifelong human development theories that look at a person’s identity as ever changing, never static (D’Augelli, 1994).

Methodologically, narrative inquiry works well as a tool for exploring and analyzing socially constructed knowledge as it provides “one of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zibler, 1998, p. 7). This approach focuses on analyzing the time, external forces, and place within which narratives occur (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Twelve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons engaged as LGBTQ professionals at institutions of higher education were purposefully sampled in order to elicit rich and meaningful narratives (Patton, 2002a).

Narratives were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews which are often cited by narrative researchers as most useful in studies of meaning making and identity (Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993). Narrative inquiry allows for multiple
forms of analysis; and while I considered the forms of the stories that are told, the primary analysis method I employed in examining these stories was a categorical-content approach. This approach allowed for the attendance to “sections of subtext” within and across narratives most relevant to the topic of study (Lieblich et al., 1998). This subtext was sorted into categories and analyzed through the theoretical frameworks which oriented this research project (Lieblich et al., 1998).

**Definition of Terms**

Some key terms need to be operationalized in order to understand their use in this study. The acronym LGBTQ is an expansive term meant to stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities. The terms lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) refer to a person’s sexual orientation which is understood to be “a physiological predisposition toward patterns of sexual and romantic thoughts, affiliations, affection, or desires with members of one’s sex, the other sex, [or] both sexes” (Morgan, 2012, p. 53). The term transgender (T) “refers to individuals whose gender identity conflicts with their sex assigned at birth and/or societal norms for their gender expression” (Bilodeau, 2005, p. 30). The term cisgender is used to denote a person’s “internal sense of gender corresponds with the sex the person was identified as having at birth” (Cisgender, n.d.). These terms relate to a person’s gender which is “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). However, these terms do not capture the full spectrum of sexual orientation identifiers or the scope of gender variance which people inhabit and exhibit. As such, the term queer is included as it is used “by some—
but not all—LGBT people as an identity category including sexualities and gender identities that are outside heterosexual and binary gender categories” (Renn, 2010, p. 132). This diversity of identities under the umbrella term queer also brings with it an understanding that work in this community is often intercultural in that it involves interactions between various social identities and their attendant cultures which influence, shape, and inform one another (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

The presence of heterosexism maintains the cultural practice of stating that “‘normal’ development is heterosexual and that deviations from this identity are ‘unnatural,’ ‘disordered,’ or ‘dysfunctional’” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 314). Genderism reinforces “static male or female categories [that] create a binary social system that results in the oppression of transgender persons” (Bilodeau, 2009, p. 4). To further push against genderism in this study, I use the invented, gender-neutral pronouns of ze and hir alongside the traditional gender pronouns of he/she and him/her.

LGBTQ professionals are persons in higher education who are charged with both combating oppressive practices, policies, and systems and providing support, mentorship, and programs for LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff (Sanlo, 2000). Professionals are defined as persons engaged with, invested in, and regulated by the skills, values, roles, and knowledge of a particular profession (Cornelissen & Wyk, 2007; Weidman et al., 2001). This term was chosen over activist, which is a person who socially and politically advocates for change (Stone, 2009) but may not be professionally engaged in these activities. It was also selected over the term ally—one who joins in helpful association for
accomplishing a specific purpose (Lucozzi, 1998). These two terms may be too narrow to capture the full scope of an LGBTQ professional’s job and identity requirements.

*Identity* is connected to, but distinct from a person’s self and is “understood as one’s personally held beliefs about self in relation to social group” (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 577). Identities arise from a negotiation and interaction between personal positioning—or the ways in which a person privately composes an identity—and social positioning—the ways in which external persons or social forces define an identity (Raggatt, 2006). Connected to the construct of identity are the terms *personal identity*—which is related to a person’s privately composed LGBTQ identity outside the professional sphere (D’Augelli, 1994; Yoshino, 2007)—and *professional identity*—which is an identity created as a result of professional exposure and socialization into a profession (Weidman et al., 2001). In addition to interacting with self and others, identities also intersect and impact one another. *Intersectionality* is particularly focused on the experiences of persons who have multiple marginalized identities and their relationships to larger systems of inequality (Jones, 2010).

**An Explanation of Term Selection**

The use of language has the power to shape reality as it relates to self-determination, perceived value, representation, and self-worth. As such, in sharing the stories of LGBTQ professionals, I chose the acronym LGBTQ in an attempt to be as inclusive of persons with varying minority sexual orientations and varying gender identities as possible. As I gathered narratives from participants, I used the identifiers participants choose to share with me as their identity labels of choice. Whenever possible,
I defaulted to individual, self-defined labels. However, when talking about participants as a group, I used the term LGBTQ. Any singular term used to try to describe any group of people is reductive and singular; yet, the term LGBTQ is the most expansive and succinct term available.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study was related to the power of these participants’ narratives to explicate the development of personal and professional LGBTQ identities, the intersecting nature of these identities, and the scope of modern day LGBTQ professional work in higher education that draws upon these identities. This research illuminated the issues these professionals must confront as they worked to support the needs of LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty at universities and in society. The study also shed light on how oppressive systems and policies operate and negatively impact LGBTQ professionals and the persons with whom they work. Most directly, this study allowed for the stories of LGBTQ professionals to be told in ways that give them greater accolades, support, and credit for the work in which they are engaged.

This was a significant research project because the struggle for LGBTQ rights has been just that, a struggle. It has been daunting and dangerous; and yet, because of persons like the LGBTQ professionals I studied, progress towards LGBTQ equality has continued. By capturing the stories of these professionals, a crucial component of the history of the LGBTQ civil rights movement on college campuses was documented preserved. When future LGBTQ communities face hardships, people doing the work of equality can draw upon these narratives to inform their own works and build upon the
progresses and setbacks of those who came before. As Cohler and Hammack (2006) noted, “The act of writing the gay life story, of making public one’s narrative of identity, both reveals and contributes to the cultural transformations that provide the foundation for new life stories” (p. 155).

In addition to the preservation of history, this study expanded upon prior research examining the professionalization requirements and processes for diversity professionals (Ahmed, 2012; Weidman et al., 2001). This research allowed for a detailed investigation of the institutional and social forces reshaping the nature and direction of diversity work as it is used both for the advancement of social justice and for gains in economic and social capital (Ward, 2008). Lastly, this project helps researchers to better conceptualize the negotiation between career construction and professional socialization, the interplay of professional identity and other social identities, the process of committing to a career in social justice related profession, and links the models of intercultural maturity and/or critical consciousness to LGBTQ professional work (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Landreman et al., 2007).

Conclusion

In the realm of LGBTQ professional work, “We’ve done difficult things before” (Spade, n.d., para. 16). And yet, the stories of LGBTQ professionals in higher education have not been researched and told in ways that richly describe how these persons became professionals, how they make meaning of their work and are shaped by it, and how they understand their work to impact the students, staff, faculty, and institutions they serve. As such, the knowledge of these persons and the stories of their work are at risk of being
gentrified and lost. My hope in conducting this study was to prevent that gentrification, to articulate the importance of LGBTQ professionals in higher education, and to describe the significant ways they are working to honor Vaccaro’s (2012) *make it better* call to action.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton and Renn (2010) wrote, “Theory…enables the organization and interpretation of enormous amounts of information existing in the world” (p. 23). A single theory can rarely be applied to the study of a topic in its entirety. Rather, specific concepts from a theory can be used to understand specific instances (Evans et al., 2010). The purpose of this literature review is to establish the requisite contextual knowledge and theoretical frameworks in which this narrative inquiry is situated and the lenses through which results were analyzed. This study focused on the people who were employed as LGBTQ professionals in higher education settings who also personally identified as LGBTQ.

Literature about the experiences of LGBTQ professionals is scattered amongst the fields of higher education, sociology, human resources management, and counseling/psychology. In order to pull together a framework for understanding these professionals’ experiences, I drew upon a diverse literature base focusing particularly on: (1) contextualizing diversity work within organizations; (2) establishing a description of LGBTQ professional diversity work; (3) discussing LGBTQ work as a unique profession; (4) the relationship of professional socialization and career construction; (5) the development of commitment to diversity work; and (6) the impact of personal LGBTQ
identity development on professional LGBTQ identity and the intersection of multiple identities. With each piece of this theoretical bricolage, the intent was to build a conceptual lattice capable of holding the narratives of LGBTQ professionals without constraining them.

**Understanding Diversity Work within Organizations**

Diversity work, including LGBTQ specific diversity work, takes place in particular settings and times under particular conditions. These settings shape the ways in which diversity work is enacted (Ahmed, 2012). Because of the influence that an organization can have on diversity work, it is necessary to consider the experiences of LGBTQ professionals within organizations. However, because there is scant literature directly examining how these professionals navigate their work within institutions, I examine four studies of non-LGBTQ diversity professionals charged with diversity work in organizations both in and outside of higher education. The first study addressed perceived costs and benefits of diversity work, the second and third the selection of language diversity workers use, and the fourth strategies of resistance used to advance diversity work.

In a study of 41 diversity specialists, Kirton and Greene (2009) examined the experience of full-time and part-time professionals advocating for diversity and spread across various public organizations. The researchers reported the race/ethnicity and gender of participants. Twenty three identified as White and female, four as Black or minority ethnicity (BME) and female, 10 as White and male, and four as BME and male. In terms of costs, the researchers found that some participants expressed stress in
navigating the competing demands to challenge discriminatory practices while simultaneously achieving organizational goals. Some participants felt unpopular or disliked within their organizations because of their advocacy work. A few felt a sense of isolation in their job roles along with frustration in finding themselves forced to make business cases to justify the continued support of diversity initiatives. With reference to benefits, some participants expressed that working as a diversity officer was beneficial to their personal growth, allowed them to make positive difference in the lives of others, and that they had greater job satisfaction. Kirton and Greene (2009) noted that the majority of their sample was White and that having a White social identity seemed to protect these diversity practitioners from the negative costs of diversity work.

Kirton and Green’s (2009) observation about the whiteness of diversity workers touches on the concept of embodied diversity—the presence and representation of minority persons within an organization (Swan & Fox, 2010). The emphasis on the professionalization of diversity work has the detrimental potential of causing workers with historically marginalized identities to experience being screened out from diversity roles because of their lack of access to educational credentialing as a result of discrimination (Slay & Smith, 2011; Weidman et al., 2001). I return to this topic in the section on the increasing professionalization of LGBTQ professional work. Although Kirton and Green’s (2009) study is not an exact proxy for the experiences of LGBTQ professions, it aligns with the costs and benefits discussed by LGBTQ professionals in this study.
In terms of framing how diversity professionals position their work, Hamaz (2008) found from interviews with six diversity consultants who worked with public sector organizations that, in order to engage in conversations about diversity, these professionals focused on making business cases for diversity. They tended to avoid using radical and leftist language like “racism” or “race” and shifted to terms like “difference” or “culture.” Their explanation for these shifts was that it allowed them to get at the concepts of discrimination and equal opportunity without alienating clients or having them withdraw from diversity conversations. Hamaz (2008) also found that these consultants tended to tone down their emotional or anger-based reactions to discriminatory comments and actions focusing on assuming the role of a neutral moderator.

These findings mirror those of Swan and Fox’s (2010) study of 50 equity and diversity workers in higher education. Their participants acknowledged an intentional shift to using diversity-based, as opposed to equality-based, language. They stated that this language attracted certain vocabularies while ignoring others; namely, they commented that diversity focused on celebratory issues in relation to difference as well as focusing on the ways in which organizations could move forward in working with diverse persons. These shifts in language amount to a type of code switching, or changing the type of language used in order to make it more appealing and acceptable to a particular audience (Cross, 2012). Like Hamaz’s (2008) sample, these practitioners also used the language of diversity in order to get at issues of equality and discuss past and present realities of discrimination and difference. These diversity workers also expressed
awareness of the potential of diversity language to be co-opted and used only to celebrate diversity and not as a tool to address inequality in organizational practices (Swan & Fox, 2010). These two studies address an important component of diversity work, namely that it involves recognizing and managing the institutional politics, values, and resistance to diversity (Lorbiecki, 2001).

In considering more fully the politics of diversity work, Kirton, Greene, and Dean (2007) sought to illuminate how diversity professionals framed the nature of their work and the strategies they used to press for change. In a study of 39 diversity professionals across 29 organizations, the researchers found that the majority of their participants saw diversity as a long-term process of cumulative successes and failures. The participants tended to believe that diversity and equality were intertwined and that it was important to balance both business interests and the rights of individuals in their organizations. Key strategies for resistance identified by researchers included (a) taking personal threats to their minority statuses and becoming a diversity professional to directly address these threats; (b) organizing collective action to resist strategies seen as discriminatory; (c) amplifying the impact of positive policy changes through education, outreach, and training of staff; and (d) leveraging small wins against discrimination by framing these wins as steps toward a greater organizational practice of equality (Kirton et al., 2007).

This study explicates diversity practitioners strategies of resistance and the role that experiences with personal discrimination can play as a motivator for becoming a diversity professional. More broadly than these results, this study helps to understand the

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positionality of LGBTQ professionals within organizations as those of *tempered radicals* (Meyerson & Scully, 1995).

**Tempered radicals.** Drawn from the self-reflective work of Meyerson and Scully (1995), tempered radicals are persons who “identify with and are committed to their organizations and also to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization” (p. 585). These persons’ radicalness comes from their focus on pressing against inequitable and discriminatory practices or policies within organizations; and their temperedness comes from their desire to both survive and advance in these organizations. They are outsiders existing within an organization which affords them the insight of being an insider and the critique of being an outsider. This duality of identity situates them in an emotional place of ambivalence in which they can feel lonely, alienated from those they perceive as true insiders and those on the outside who share their outsider or marginalized identity (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). In a study of 19 LGBTQ persons who were identified by the related term of insider-activists working within public sector institutions, Browne and Bakshi (2013) found themes similar to those described by Meyerson and Scully. Brown and Bakshi’s (2013) participants described feeling as though they were criticized by the larger LGBTQ community of Brighton for not doing enough press for LGBTQ equality and rights issues. Simultaneously, they expressed fear of retaliation or being targeted by colleagues and supervisors if they pressed too hard or too publicly for an LGBTQ agenda within their organizations.
Ahmed (2012) addressed this latter point of fear of retaliation in her study of 30 diversity professionals within institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia. In this study, she found participants to be frustrated when their institutions made non-performative commitments to equity and inclusion. These are commitments in which there is a written or stated policy about diversity but no practical mechanisms to implement the stated policy. She also found impatience and annoyance at the slow pace of change in implementing diversity initiatives at many of their institutions. In both of these instances, diversity professionals who became too frustrated or pushed too hard risked being let go from their employing institution. To moderate this risk, her participants expressed that they had to carefully select strategies of change and resistance to moderate the discrepancy between their personal desires for change and the organization’s willingness to tolerate change.

Diversity work within organizations, Ahmed (2012) argued, is inherently incrementalist in nature. Instead of focusing on radical change that might upend the organizational social order, diversity workers focused on implementing and reshaping policies and practices that make affirming and supporting diversity the default and automatic response of the organizations in which they work. This, I argue, is the same focus of LGBTQ professionals. These persons are invested in making colleges and universities better for and more affirming of LGBTQ individuals (Sanlo, 2000; Sanlo et al., 2012). The organizational dynamic of diversity work was an important consideration in this study. Not only does it constitute part of the workload of LGBTQ professionals, but it also has the power to shape, limit, and define what work can be done on behalf of
LGBTQ communities at universities. In the next section, I detail the specifics of LGBTQ work.

**Describing the Work of LGBTQ Professionals**

Empirical research on the experiences of LGBTQ professionals is limited. Within the literature only one researcher directly sought to understand the purpose and roles of LGBTQ professionals—persons employed by institutions of higher education to serve members of the LGBTQ community (Sanlo, 2000). In this study of 23 LGBTQ center directors employed in full-time positions, Sanlo (2000) found that their work typically focused on understanding the experiences and needs of LGBTQ students on college campuses. These directors held either masters or doctoral degrees and had specialized knowledge about LGBTQ student development that they used to make students’ lives “better than their own” (para. 26) experiences had been when they were in college. Due to the lack of research on the experiences of LGBTQ professionals and their development, I draw from the Council for the Advancement of Academic Standard’s (CAS) (2006) document on best practices for supporting LGBTQ students as well as texts written by practicing LGBTQ professionals who may or may not possess personal LGBTQ identities.

**Job Requirements for LGBTQ Professionals**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer professionals have two main job requirements. Firstly, they must engage in ally behaviors. The organizational structure of LGBTQ resource offices in which services for both persons of minority gender variance and persons of minority sexual orientations requires that LGBTQ professionals be allies
who can work across the many identities within the LGBTQ community. Secondly, they must use their knowledge as student development experts to serve LGBTQ students directly, advocate for them administratively, and educate others about the issues and dilemmas that impact them (CAS, 2006; Sanlo, 2000). Their ultimate purpose is to help shape and create environments within higher education that help these students to persist in college and thrive.

**The LGBTQ professional as an ally.** While there have been a proliferation of arguments for distinct and specialized services for transgender students, most universities group support services for LGB and trans students. This manifests as marginal support for trans students (Dugan et al., 2012). As a result, LGBTQ professionals must work across the LGBTQ populations to be effective in serving the entire LGBTQ community (Beemyn, 2003). Lucozzi (1998) defined an ally as “one in helpful association with another; to unite or join for a specific purpose” (p. 48). People develop ally identities through four processes:

(a) *approximating experiences* that allow individuals to draw on their own experiences to relate to marginal group oppression; (b) *borrowed approximations* or knowing a member of the marginalized group and being witness to their suffering; (c) *overlapping approximations* or the analogy to some oppression they have suffered; and (d) *global approximations* or a connection to their democratic or political orientations. (Stone, 2009, p. 338, italics in original)

The implicit requirement of becoming an ally is that LGBTQ professionals be aware of their own identities and their relationships with others of differing identities
within the LGBTQ community. Further, being an ally suggests a degree of intercultural maturity that allows the professional to understand and appreciate difference, engage in meaningful and interdependent relationships with persons different from oneself, and act in ways that are appropriate and respectful of others’ beliefs, situations, and identities (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Failure to develop as an ally or advocate across the numerous LGBTQ identities might mean focusing on some identities within the LGBTQ population to the exclusion of others. This exclusion is most notable with regards to genderqueer and transgender identities as well as persons of non-White races or ethnicities (Ward, 2008).

As Beemyn (2003) stated in a reflective piece on working with LGBTQ students, “Most LGB … center directors still have little understanding of the experiences of trans people and continue to engage in trans-exclusive practices” (p. 34). At its worst, these exclusions take the form of resentment, exclusion, and discrimination. In a study of 32 Midwestern gay and lesbian activists, Stone (2009) recorded responses in which activists expressed anger that the transgender identity had been brought under the fold of LGB rights.

While some progress has been made since Beemyn’s (2003) manuscript, Bilodeau (2009) found in a study of 10 undergraduate students that there was still significant privileging of the experiences of lesbian and gay identities within the LGBTQ community in comparison to the transgender identities. For the LGBTQ professional, the tension between and within the LGB and T communities means navigating a dynamic relationship. In a study involving 536 persons who self-identified as transgender or
gender variant, Galupo, Bauerband, Gonzalez, Hagen, Hether, and Krum (2014) found that in LGB spaces transgender persons felt invalidated in expressing their gender identities. A major take away from these studies is that ally hood must be intentionally cultivated on the part of the LGBTQ professional in order to serve the entire queer community. This cultivation involves particular forms of expertise as they relate to serving LGBTQ communities on college campuses.

**The LGBTQ professional as student development expert and educator.**

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons face developmental barriers through the invisibility of their difference and “social and legal penalties attached to overt expression” (D’Augelli, 1994, p. 314, italics in original). Transgender persons may have even greater obstacles in the development and enactment of their identities as persons can be actively engaged in homosexual acts while largely staying closeted in straight communities. However, expressing transgender behavior often makes one seen (Bilodeau, 2005). Being open and expressive about sexual identity and gender orientation can have serious negative consequences ranging from increased stress due to a recognized minority status, active discrimination such as being fired, a perceived or actual loss of credibility, familial rejection, increased mental health concerns, and the experience of harassment or hate crimes (Baum 2012; Bilodeau, 2005; Bilodeau, 2009; CAS, 2006; Chrobot-Mason, Button & DiClementi, 2002; Vaccaro & Mena, 2011).

As a result of these threats to safety, health, and wellness as well as the developmental obstacles facing LGBTQ students, LGBTQ professionals in higher education focus on retention of students. They serve as role models for positive and
healthy development for LGBTQ students and share their life stories. These professionals help students navigate personal and professional choices in relation to their LGBTQ identities, respond to crises, and advocate for LGBTQ students who have experienced bias or discrimination (CAS, 2006). They also encourage student leadership initiatives, support broader diversity initiatives, and respond to crises (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002).

Connected to this role as a student development expert, LGBTQ professionals must also serve as administrators within the institution to work with other offices like admissions to recruit LGBTQ students, manage media relationships, help LGBTQ students navigate the process of applying for financial aid when needed, and work to acquire funding for LGBTQ programming. These professionals help to create admissions forms and policies that are inclusive to LGBTQ students, keep statistics on discrimination, stay current on policies and laws that impact LGBTQ persons, and incorporate LGBTQ issues into institutional discourses (Baum, 2012; Sanlo, et al., 2002).

Lastly, in the role of educator and facilitator in relation to LGBTQ student circumstances, LGBTQ professionals educate students, staff, and faculty on how to support LGBTQ students (Sanlo, et al. 2002). They serve as facilitators of difficult discussions about LGBTQ issues where they create spaces that are physically and psychologically safe for students from both privileged and oppressed identities to come together for dialogue (Bell & Griffin, 2007; Quaye, 2012). While creating these common spaces to promote intergroup communication and learning, LGBTQ professionals are also required to create monocultural and homogenous groups with which LGBTQ
students can affiliate and feel safe (Poynter & Washington, 2005). With the practical
descriptions of LGBTQ work in place, I move to examining this labor through the lenses
of profession and professional socialization.

**Exploring LGBTQ Diversity Work as a Profession**

Embedded in the description and best practices of LGBTQ work in higher
education settings are the requirements that these persons be student development experts
who can navigate higher education policy and serve as educators (CAS, 2006; Sanlo et
al., 2002). These requirements bring LGBTQ work in direct alignment with the
professional values and ethics of student affairs (Reason & Broido, 2011).

Simultaneously, the requirements that they be allies and advocates for other LGBTQ
persons shows that LGBTQ professionals might also be categorized as diversity
professionals. Ahmed (2012) described diversity professionals as commitment carriers—
persons who strive to champion diversity and hold true to institutional promises to
minority students. Under this description, LGBTQ professionals in higher education exist
within the confluence of diversity work and student affairs work. This may be why in
Sanlo’s (2000) study she called LGBTQ practitioners a new profession within student
affairs.

Given Sanlo’s (2000) claim that LGBTQ professionals constitute a distinct and
new profession within student affairs, this section and the next will focus on building out
the definition an LGBTQ profession. This will be done by discussing the concept of
*profession* and the turn towards professionalization within diversity work. Once the
discussion of LGBTQ as professional work is in place, I will examine the process of
professional socialization, a conceptual model of socialization, and the ways in which a stigmatized or marginalized identity may give rise to new definitions of professional identity within a profession. Each of these sections is put forward in service of answering the question, “How do LGBTQ people come to do identity-based LGBTQ professional work?” Part of answering this question is defining the conceptual systems that exist to inculcate people into a particular line of work.

**Defining a Profession**

Within a profession, people possess a professional identity which can be thought of as something held collectively by those in a field of practice who share an “awareness of a consistent continuous inner organization [of the profession], which is recognized and perceived by others” (Kirk, 1994, p. 204). This consistent and continuous inner organization is formed by features such as common theoretical frameworks from which persons in the profession operate, consistent and rigorous training and educational standards, and a definition of the roles of that professions (Arminio, 2011). It is also formed by the creation and maintenance of a professional philosophy (Reason & Broido, 2011). Because of the limited research addressing these concepts of professions in relation to LGBTQ work, part of the purpose of this study was to further illuminate the inner organization and philosophy that is connected to but distinct from those of diversity professionals or other student affairs professionals.

The second means of understanding and recognizing a professional from an external perspective was articulated by Moore and Rosenbloom (1970). They stated that professions have six dimensions: (a) a professional engages in a full time occupation
from which they earn the majority of their living; (b) a professional relates to other professionals by drawing from his or her own expertise; (c) a professional has signs and symbols, often formalized, which set the professional apart from non-professionals; (d) a professional has useful but esoteric knowledge gained through sustained or exceptionally difficult training; (e) a professional is committed to his/her/hir occupation as a calling that has enduring expectations of behaviors; and (f) a professional has a great deal of autonomy within professional practice that is bounded by responsibility to one’s profession. These six dimensions of a profession frame the instrumental behaviors, commitments, and knowledge required for persons to consider themselves as professionals. The description of LGBTQ professional job requirements aligns LGBTQ work with the first two dimensions of a profession as these workers are employed in full-time roles and have knowledge bases they use to operate and relate to others (Sanlo et al., 2002; Sanlo, 2000). As to the second two requirements of formalized signs and symbols and an esoteric knowledge base from which a professional operates from, these will be discussed in more depth in the next section. The fifth requirement of commitment will be discussed later on in a section on the development commitment to diversity work. The last requirement of autonomy is the least explored in literature and was examined in the course of this study. This thread of professionalism throughout discussions of LGBTQ practitioners was important as it served to tether and illuminate aspects of professional identity which was a key concept explored in this study.
The Increasing Professionalization of LGBTQ Diversity Work

Diversity work focuses on addressing a lack of diverse representation within organizations. It addresses policy and cultural issues that create negative or exclusionary environments for persons from historically marginalized identities. It is an individual and organizational process that prepares diverse persons to participate in the dominant organizational culture while simultaneously reshaping the organization to accommodate these diverse persons (Gordon, 1995).

The topic of the professionalization of diversity work arises from two shifts in the field. The first shift was the aim of diversity work and the second was the means by which diversity professionals derive their legitimacy. Over the past 30 years, there has been a movement away from an affirmative action framework concerned with correcting historical inequities. This has been replaced by a goal of celebrating cultural difference and strategically managing diversity for the benefit of increasing organizational efficiencies, competitiveness and reach into diverse markets (Lorbieki, 2001). This shift in focus has also attracted different persons with different skill sets to the work of diversity. In the ‘90s, persons doing diversity work were typically recruited from activist backgrounds and often possessed minority identities themselves. They derived their credibility from personal experiences and political backgrounds that gave them the authority and expertise to lead equity initiatives (Kirton & Greene, 2009). The present iteration of diversity professionals has specialized skills and codified knowledge that relates to managing diversity. This generation of diversity professionals has advanced degrees, business management or human resource backgrounds, and a business-case
mindset for leading changes in diversity (Kirton, et al., 2007). This shift in requirements is known as *technicalization* (Swan & Fox, 2010, p. 569). Through this process, diversity work becomes linked to professional and managerial statuses.

While this process brings diversity specialists in greater alignment with the professional values and practices of student affairs (ACPA/NASPA, 2015), it also serves to exclude some of the very people it purports to represent as persons from historically marginalized backgrounds may have been excluded from attaining the necessary credentialing needed to become diversity professionals (Swan & Fox, 2010). It may also be problematic as “professionalization is seen to domesticate radical thinking and action by marginalizing practices, knowledge, and ideologies which are not acceptable to the mainstream” (Swan & Fox, 2010, p. 573).

Connected to the trend of professionalization, Ward (2008) found a similar trend in her study of three LGBTQ social change organizations. As these organizations focused on the professional interests of queer leaders, grassroots activists’ voices were phased out. Knowledge of diversity skills and discourse served as a form of cultural capital that enabled persons who possessed these capitals to secure jobs within these organizations. Being able to understand and manage intersecting and multiple identities is seen as a marketable skill that signifies both good judgment and professionalism. This resulted in the recruitment of leaders from the private sector with qualifications and experiences in personnel management, abilities to lead financial growth, and track records of technological innovation (Ward, 2008).
These shifts signified a movement toward what Ward (2008) termed *diversity culture*. In this mode of operation, “diversity culture … expanded the range of people who feel a sense of ownership over social justice discourses, including members of dominant groups…who may speak authoritatively…about forms of oppression they have not experienced” (p. 29). Although ownership of social justice discourse allows for multiple identities to be represented and celebrated, it also allows for these identities to be “managed, commodified, and reduced to easy-to-understand stereotypes” (Ward, 2008, p. 29). The turn to professionalized diversity in LGBTQ organizations also legitimated the use of diversity to enhance public image and locate financial security and prosperity as an end goal that justified and even exceeded the value of representational diversity itself. An example of financial security exceeding representational diversity was exhibited when organizations excluded or sidelined members of low socioeconomic status in the pursuit of political access, visibility, and legitimacy in existing systems of power (Ward, 2008). At the same time as diversity became professionalized, social transformation to radically challenge injustice was traded for incremental change that was less threatening to existing systems of power. Ward (2008) critiqued this shift away from longer term strategies of organizational and cultural change. She argued that the professionalization of diversity reifies discrimination along lines of socio-economic and educational privilege even as it advances equity among racial or ethnic differences. The advancement of some identities at the cost of others is, according to Ward (2008), antithetical to diversity work which is concerned with equality for all persons.
These studies and writings on the professionalization of diversity work point to three key considerations. The first is that diversity work has specific aims that demarcate it from affirmative action or advocacy work including its ability to be repurposed for other institutional aims such as publicity or financial gain. The second is that its primary goal is not radical transformations of organizations to better serve marginalized individuals; rather, its goal is to make incremental changes and manage extreme dissent that might disrupt business functions. The third is that diversity is understood to be a specific profession requiring advanced training in specialized knowledge and discourse. Without these, diversity professionals are not seen as having legitimacy (Ward, 2008). As a result of this perception, I explore in the next section the process of socialization as it relates to profession.

Socializing into a Profession

Professional socialization is a process through which people acquire the knowledge, dispositions, skills, values and commitments. These five characteristics allow a person to participate in the practices of an identifiable cohort of professional colleagues (Weidman et al., 2001). In graduate and professional programs, socialization into a profession progresses through four stages: anticipatory, formal, informal and personal (Weidman et al., 2001).

During the anticipatory stage, media, society, and preliminary knowledge of a profession inform persons about the potential profession in which they are interested. This knowledge may be drawn from informal conversations with professionals in the field or from popular culture representations of a profession. The formal stage occurs
when students enroll in and receive instruction from faculty and professionals and become apprentices who tend to idealize the profession.

The informal stage allows a person to learn from peers and classmates about the norms and behaviors and to develop as an emerging professional. This stage happens dynamically with the formal stage and allows a person to question formally learned knowledge. Finally, the personal stage of socialization is the time during which a person forms a professional identity and begins to modify and adjust his/her/hir self-concept as a result of that identity formation (Weidman et al., 2001). Progression through these stages involves the core elements of knowledge acquisition within a profession, investment of resources to becoming a professional to the exclusion of other opportunities, and involvement with the profession through practicing skills and working with other professionals. Receiving feedback through these core processes about performance helps to develop a person’s self-confidence in his/her/hir understanding of a profession (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufman, 2006; Weidman et al., 2001).

Running parallel to these core elements of socialization are the commitments that one makes to reshape oneself in order to work in a profession: (a) cognitive commitments—identification with the knowledge and tasks of a professional role; (b) cohesion commitments—relational and affective ties with a professional community; and (c) control commitments—a responsibility to carry out the roles of a profession and to regulate one’s behavior in the context of professional expectations (Weidman et al., 2001). These commitments allow a person to create and refine professional possible selves which are cognitive frameworks and schemas that contain future oriented goals,
motivations, and concerns about whom one is going to become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Within the field of career counseling, the idea of a possible self has been further refined to the term future work self which refers to a person’s “representation of himself or herself in the future that reflects his or her hopes and aspirations in relation to work. The clearer and more accessible this representation, the more salient the future work self” (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012, p. 580). Role models whom a person perceives to be similar to oneself are crucial to the formation of and commitment to a future self. Role models serve as possible conceptions of self “because they assume such models’ experiences would extend to their lives as well” (Nauta, Saucier, & Woodard, 2001, p. 535). As a person progresses through the stages of professionalization, the future work self becomes increasingly concrete and integrated into the person’s current self-concept such that the future work self becomes the present work self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Weidman et al., 2001). The construction of a possible self within the acquisition of a professional self-concept connects the process of socialization with the lifelong theory of career construction, role implementation, and professional identity discussed later in this chapter (Savickas, 2013). With the process of professional socialization discussed, I explicate a conceptual model of socialization and professional development.

**A Conceptual Model for Professional Socialization**

Professional socialization is a learning-based process focused on the intentional acquisition of skills, patterns of thinking, and credentials that contribute to a person’s specialized knowledge base within a field of work. These components allow a person to act competently within the bounds of his/her/his profession and reflectively evaluate the
professional actions one chooses to take (Nicholls, 2001). The process of professional socialization is meant to foster professional development. The traditional understanding of this process is a linear model. First, a person is admitted based on standard criteria. Second, he/she/ze is developed into a professional through interactions with a socialization process. Third, he/she/ze emerges from a program as a professional. In this model, he/she/ze adapts his/her/hir personal identities to fit within a profession by looking to role models, experimenting with possible selves, and evaluating his/her/hir progress towards these selves using internal and external standards (Slay & Smith, 2011). The ultimate goal of this model is the creation of a professional identity (Weidman et al., 2001).

However, this traditional model largely ignores the personal history and individual characteristics of the person entering the professional socialization process (Weidman et al., 2001). More recent models look at the aspects in which the core elements of socialization interact dynamically throughout the course of a graduate or professional preparation program. In one such conceptual model, The Weidman, Twale, and Stein Graduate Socialization Framework, students’ individual backgrounds and predispositions, personal communities, individual cohorts, and professional communities are foregrounded as key forces that create unique socialization experiences for each individual. Additionally, this model figures professional identity development and commitments not as items to be finitely achieved but as constructs that continually evolve (Weidman et al., 2001).
Connected to the continual evolution of professional identity, Slay and Smith (2011) theorized that persons with stigmatized identities might defy the adaptive and assimilationist process of traditional models of socialization. In their study of 20 Black journalists, they found that these professionals redefined their professional identities. In doing this, they refused to adopt White expectations of their professional identity by ceasing to respond reactively to White journalists’ negative perceptions and stereotypes about their race and experiences. They instead developed a unique set of values, goals, and professional rhetorics that positively incorporated their personal Black identity. This redefinition allowed them to examine journalistic stories through lenses that helped to deconstruct and detangle a White mindset and White bias in reporting that framed White perspectives as universal, unquestioned, and professional (Slay & Smith, 2011).

Redefinition is an important construct within this study because it shows how persons with marginalized identities can reshape a profession. The process of redefinition serves as a possible explanation for the emergence of LGBTQ professionals as a new class and distinct class of professionals within student affairs. By challenging the negative biases and stereotypes of student affairs professionals as documented in Renn’s (2010) literature review, LGBTQ professionals have been able to redefine and create a new professional identity. These professionals question the entanglement of heterosexual and cis-gender biases and mindsets in relation to the field of affairs and diversity work. With this questioning, they have found ways to construct a profession that does not require them to be a professional or an LGBTQ person. In an LGBTQ professional role, they can be both. Later, I will discuss the tensions that remain between professionalism
and queerness; but first, I will discuss career construction and the LGBTQ professional as the next piece in the bricolage for capturing LGBTQ professionals’ experiences.

**Career Construction Theory**

In coming to affiliate with a profession, “the individual negotiates the ‘Who am I?’ questions amidst social messages of ‘This is who we are’” (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006, p. 1032). Beyond a specific profession or job role, the story of who one is in his her/her/ her work life is one of career—the narrative of meaning making as connected to a person’s working life that explains the job roles, work selves, and transitions a person has considered and made over the course of time (Savickas, 2013). Career Construction Theory (CCT) is one framework for conceptualizing the career narrative. Career Construction Theory is a branch of vocational psychology that considers the ways in which persons come to envision and create possible work selves (typically through some socialization process) that evolve in complexity over time. The evolution of a person’s work self is framed by CCT as a person starting as an *actor* in his/her/hirs career role in which that person tries on and plays out prescribed parts. Over time, a person becomes an *agent* who is able to take self-directed actions within a career role. Eventually, a person becomes an *author* who is able to explain the choices and actions of his/her/hir career through narratives (McAdams & Olson, 2010; Savickas, 2013). The use of this theory in the study of LGBTQ professional practitioners allowed for the consideration of life circumstances and personal factors that influenced each person’s career choice prior to engaging in a formal graduate career socialization process, their actions during his/her/hir socialization process, and their career post socialization.
Career Construction Theory is rooted in the work of Super’s Life Span, Life Space Theory which was created from his analysis of career literature and his 50 years of career and vocational counseling work. Life Span, Life Space Theory was also grounded in Super’s 20-year longitudinal study of 100 ninth graders from Middletown, New York in which he examined the career patterns of a group of boys in adolescence, emerging adulthood and adulthood at age 36 (Hartung, 2013; Super, 1985). From surveys and interviews in Super’s (1985) longitudinal study, he identified a “maxicycle” (p. 407) within career development that delineated stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline (Hartung, 2013). Throughout these stages, he found that individuals implement self-concepts or ideas about who they are in certain work roles and make determinations as to how well particular self-concepts suit or satisfy them. Individuals also work to find environment in which they fit. The greater the satisfaction with a particular work self-concept and the better fit with a particular work environment the more likely a person is to persist in a career, develop a sense of work self-efficacy, and actively engage in designing one’s life in relation to work. The ultimate outcome of progression through this model is career maturity—an individual’s readiness to cope with a particular vocational developmental task (Hartung, 2013). Super described readiness in the dimensions of attitudinal and cognitive. Attitudinal readiness denotes active planning and exploration of one’s occupational future. Cognitive readiness denotes the possession of knowledge about one’s occupation and the ability to make good career decisions (Hartung, 2013).
While Super’s theory was supremely influential at the time in which it was written, two primary criticisms arose when applied to contemporary work conditions. One was a lack of diversity in Super’s original sample; and a second was the decline of traditional and stable career paths (Hartung & Subich, 2011). Instead of a predictable pattern of career progression with sequential stages, Savickas (2013) stated that “rather than make plans, individuals must prepare themselves for possibilities” (p. 149). With this shift in focus, Savickas reexamined the career maturity, person-environment fit, and self-concept components of Super’s theory. The major thrust of CCT is that, as opposed to actors working in pre-defined career roles and pathways, individuals must be agentic. Due to the common occurrence of external events prompting movement or transitions within a person’s career, individuals must be able to adapt to both anticipated and unanticipated transitions if they are to sustain a career. As such, Savickas (1997) advanced the concept of career adaptability in place of the concept of career maturity to explain the developmental readiness needed to successfully navigate changes in career and work roles.

With the move to adaptability, CCT also shifted the focus of a person’s fit within an environment. With environments conceived as being more transitional in nature, the fit between the two centered less on finding the right environment or role for a person and more on creating a self-concept that was self-contained enough to maintain its coherence through successive career transitions (Savickas, 2011). Savickas (2011) changed the focus of CCT from the term self-concept to identity as the latter is less reliant on a particular situation to preserve its conceptual integrity. The narrative of one’s career

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identity captures the autobiographical meaning making or *authorship* of a person’s career over time and thus allows for a person to understand how he/she/ze has constructed one’s career as opposed to following a pre-determined process (Savickas, 2011).

For LGBTQ professionals, the theory of Career Construction helps to explain how many of the persons in Sanlo’s (2000) study could take part in positions and a profession that did not exist when many of them were in school. Instead of progressing through a traditional series of predefined stages in an established career path, these professionals constructed careers for themselves. The choice to become LGBTQ professionals when no prior LGBTQ professionals existed highlights another important facet of utility of CCT.

Savickas (2013) termed careers like those followed by LGBTQ professionals as protean. Protean careers are described as a series of job-related choices and transitions defined by one’s adherence and commitment to his/her/hirs values. Boundaryless careers are marked by an orientation towards change and growth in which a person transcends specific job roles or organizations. Kaplan (2014) suggested that LGB workers would likely ascribe to protean and boundaryless careers because of their experiences with hostility in the work place and the inability to trust in the stability of traditional career paths. He further advanced the idea that within a protean or boundaryless career path, LGB people would likely develop different career anchors depending on their status of being out or closeted at work. Kaplan (2014) described career anchors as the values, talents, and needs one holds about one’s work self-concept that shape motivations and actions in regards to career behavior. For an openly LGB person, he believed that a person’s career would likely be defined by a life-style career anchor in which a person
makes choices that align with supporting an LGB life. He also suggested that an openly LGB person would value a stability and security anchor in which jobs are chosen that will most likely protect a person from harassment or discrimination. While not based on a specific research study, Kaplan’s (2014) ideas on career anchors provide organizing frames for describing the career trajectories of LGBTQ professionals. With these frames in mind, I turn toward the concept of commitment to further explicate motivation and persistence in diversity work.

**Developing a Commitment to Diversity Work**

Part of the aim of this study was to understand how LGBTQ persons come to engage in LGBTQ work. Embedded in this aim is a question related to values development and commitment to diversity work. The concept of commitment was an important consideration in this study as it is woven in one of the six characteristics that define a profession (Moore & Rosenbloom, 1970), serves as a keystone in the construct of the protean career anchor (Kaplan, 2014), and touches on one of the aspects of LGBTQ identity development, that of entering an LGBTQ community (D’Augelli, 1994) which I will discuss later. The guiding research question of how a person comes to do diversity work is also tied to the idea that it is through the conduct of one’s work that a person shows allegiance to a profession. To better understand the process of developing commitment, this section draws from studies of persons pursuing diversity work broadly and undergraduate studies on intercultural maturity as the literature on the experiences of LGBTQ professionals specifically is sparse and models of LGBTQ professional development, non-existent (Renn, 2010).
The idea of commitment is deeply connected to the notion of vocation which Rehm (1990) defined as “a sense of directed purpose in a larger context, a function of doing good to others, an opportunity to develop the self through the use of gifts and works to do, and a sense of meaning in life over time” (p. 122). In a study by Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996) of 100 persons living lives of commitment, the authors defined this term as: (a) an active commitment working on behalf of marginalized persons for the purpose of the common good; (b) an ability to persevere in the work; (c) a congruence of values across multiple social contexts and domains; and (d) an active engagement with the complexity of diversity work in challenging systemic injustice. In focusing on persons who met these criteria, the researchers found that “the people we interviewed have learned that they and all others are an integral part of the fundamental interdependence of life. Knowing this, when faced with a violation of what they know to be true, they cannot not act” (Daloz et al., 1996 p. 198, italics in original). The language of commitment helps to explain the motivation required for an LGBTQ profession to persist in spite of setbacks.

In their work, Daloz et al. (1996) produced a richly descriptive study articulating factors that led persons to pursue lives of commitments. One key factor that the researchers found was that participants tended to have early life interactions with others in which they felt they mattered, were made aware of ethical and moral issues, and were empowered to make a difference in the world.

Another study by Landreman, Rasmussen, King, and Jiang (2007) examined the development of critical consciousness in 20 university multicultural educators of varying
racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation identities. *Critical consciousness* was defined as “the process of developing knowledge and ‘personal concern’ for social justice leading to action” (p. 276). In this study, Landreman et al. (2007) found that critical consciousness developed in two phases. In Phase I, participants described a general process of awareness-raising by which they experienced (1) exposure to diverse persons and ideas; (2) critical incidents of primarily cognitive dissonance that made participants aware of difference such as hearing about racial profiling or harassment through intergroup dialogue—discussions with persons who were different from one’s self; and (3) self-reflection and reexamination of one’s place in the social world in relation to these critical incidents. The confluence of these three factors led to "Aha moment[s]" (p. 281) in which their understanding of the world shifted to one in which they could understand how critical incidents related to broader systems of privilege and oppression (Landreman et al., 2007).

Following the *Aha moment*, participants in the Landreman et al. (2007) study entered into Phase II, “Moving to Critical Consciousness,” (p. 281) which describes an engagement to internally defined action and motivations. This second phase involved continued engagement with diverse persons, experience of critical incidents, and self-reflection of Phase I. However, Phase II also involved deepened intergroup relationships with persons from varied backgrounds and commitment to social justice action that aimed at interrupting oppression (Landreman et al., 2007). The model the researchers formulated describes the types of experiences these participants went through that helped
them engage and commit to multicultural work. In relation to this study, this model provided insight into the origins of LGBTQ practitioners’ motivations for their work.

King and Baxter Magolda (2005) proposed a related, theoretically-driven model for understanding the degree to which a person has developed what they term intercultural maturity. Intercultural maturity is defined as a multi-dimensional construct “consisting of a range of attributes, including understanding (the cognitive dimension), sensitivity to others (the interpersonal dimension), and a sense of oneself that enables one to listen to and learn from others (the intrapersonal dimension)” (p. 574). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity (DMIM) frames a person’s progress towards intercultural maturity as tracked on a three-by-three, multidimensional framework. This framework describes the initial, intermediate, and advanced ways in which a person becomes increasingly able to act in nuanced and appropriate ways across social identities in the domains of cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal development (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

Prior to achieving intercultural maturity, a person goes through experiences that cause him/her/hir to question the ways in which one’s perceptions and interactions with others have been externally defined (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). King and Baxter Magolda (2005) theorized that a person exhibiting intercultural maturity demonstrates a self-authored and self-determined knowledge of self and identity that allows them to skillfully and authentically engage with others based on the context of their surroundings. With this self-authored understanding of self, a person is able to appreciate human difference and engage in meaningful relationships with diverse others. There may also be
the willingness “to work for the rights of others” (p. 576) by taking social action to address oppression or injustice. This willingness touches on an LGBTQ professional’s skills and abilities to be an ally for other members of the LGBTQ community.

In a follow up study of the DMIM, Perez, Shim, King, and Baxter Magolda (2015) looked at 110 intercultural experiences from 82 undergraduate students across six higher education institutions. In this study, the researchers found confirmatory evidence to support the DMIM. They found that as persons transitioned from an intermediate to an advanced level of intercultural maturity in the intrapersonal domain they were more able to see themselves in a social context. Within that social context, they were also able to see differences in the privileges and oppressions that were attached to their social identities. Cognitively, they were able to articulate more nuanced understandings of cultural differences; and interpersonally, they were able to describe ways in which they explored and negotiated their social identities (Perez et al., 2015). For the purposes of this study, the DMIM provided a model to consider the degree of sophistication LGBTQ professionals possessed in their work with persons with identities diverse from their own.

With each of these models, the question of commitment is tackled from a slightly divergent angle. In the Daloz et al. (1996) study it is tackled and defined directly. In the Landreman et al. (2007) study, it is examined through the lens of a developmental model looking at the conditions that give rise to sustained multicultural work. Lastly, in the King and Baxter Magolda (2005) DMIM it is understood through the looking glass of an overall developmental capacity to engage in the behaviors and skills needed to effectively engage in diversity work. Used in conjunction these three strands of research help further
relate the broader theories of professional socialization and career construction to the
topic of LGBTQ professional development. With the concept of professional LGBTQ
identity situated, I explore the literature of personal LGBTQ identity and development.

**Factors Influencing LGBTQ Persons’ Career Decisions and Development**

In connecting Career Construction Theory (CCT) to LGBTQ identity
development which will be discussed more fully in the next section, at least one study
using CCT has been documented in clinical work with an LGBTQ career counseling
client. This study by Maree (2014) was conducted with a gay, pre-transition, female-to-
males client, Joan, to determine the utility of using CCT as a therapeutic intervention to
help Joan author her career story. The intervention was to administer the five question
Career Construction Interview aimed at illuminating the person’s own expertise on her
experiences, life and career goals, and to determine types of environments that the client
believed would best for her life. From this interview, the therapist worked to construct a
life portrait, or a cohesive story of the client’s life. This format encourages and allows the
client to author her career story and then make purposeful decisions about future career
decisions and choices based on a sense of career authorship. After conducting this
intervention, Maree (2014) found that in using CCT as intervention, Joan was able to
author her career story to the extent that she was “no longer willing to give in to pressure
and to make a choice that is inconsistent with her innermost inclinations” (p. 444). By
seeing herself as the author of her career, Joan was able to place the importance of her
career in relation to other aspects of her life. She stated that through therapy she came to
understand “I am who I am. I am still somewhat unsure about exactly what career I will
build but it is more important now to become the person I need to be” (Maree, 2014, p. 447). For Joan this meant honoring that she was transgender and taking active steps to bring her physical person in alignment with how she felt internally. This was something that prior to the CCT intervention, she had put off doing. She further indicated that only after this was done could she move forward in constructing a career that would be personally meaningful and in alignment with her identities and values (Maree, 2014).

This case study provides important insights into the relationship and impact of a personally held LGBTQ identity on career construction and choices. Because of the discrimination faced by LGBTQ persons in the workplace and in society, LGBTQ person’s careers can be significantly shaped, altered, or derailed depending on the environments in which they work (Prince, 2013). In order to unpack the complex interplay of an LGBTQ personal identity in relation to career construction and work, I look at a life span model for understanding LGBTQ identity development. After introducing this model, I come back to specific research that examines the experiences of LGBTQ people in the work place.

The Development of LGBTQ Social Identities

The premise of D’Augelli’s (1994) conceptual Model of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identity Development is that LGB identity develops within a community context of like others. Earlier models of sexual identity development framed identity as emerging in relative isolation to external conditions (Evans et al., 2010). Social models of identity development make particular sense for LGBTQ identities as they are horizontal identities or identities that children are not likely to share with their parents as contrasted
to vertical identities which are traits and characteristics that children share with their parents (Solomon, 2012). Horizontal identities develop in the context of like others, what is named in the literature as families of choice (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, & Rostosky, 2008).

McCarn and Fassinger (1997) articulated a model of lesbian identity development that provided insight into the development of a lesbian horizontal identities. In this four stage model, persons coming to identify as lesbian progress through awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment, and internalization/synthesis. Within each of these stages, McCarn and Fassinger (1997) attended to both individual sexual identity and group membership identity. In the individual sexual identity domain, the progression towards identity formation focuses on moving from a feeling of difference of heterosexuals to making intentional sexual and emotional choices to love women. For the group membership identity domain, the evolution of identity is one that begins with an awareness that there are other lesbians in the world to ascribing as a member of a sexual minority group across multiple contexts (McCarn & Fassinger, 1997). Although this model was not built in reference to all identities within the queer community, the group membership identity concept is useful in attending to the role that others in one’s identity group play in spurring identity development. Related to the D’Augelli (1994) model, McCarn and Fassinger’s (1997) concept of group membership identity helps to further articulate the process of developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity, defined in the next paragraph.
D’Augelli (1994) framed LGB identity development as ever-evolving and subject to change over time as opposed to progressing towards a definitive end state. At its core, D’Augelli’s (1994) model posits (a) that people continue to develop, grow, and change over their entire lifespan; (b) that humans are highly adaptable to environmental circumstances; (c) that individuals develop differently and that they engage in unique behaviors; and (d) that they have significant capacities to impact and shape their own developments (D’Augelli, 1994). D’Augelli (1994) stated that identity development for LGB persons involves the following processes:

1. *Existing heterosexual identity* which requires recognition of one’s attraction as being non-heterosexual. “‘Coming out’ begins with the very first person to whom an individual discloses and continues throughout life.” (p. 325)

2. *Developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status* which requires figuring out what it means to be LGB for oneself. This figuring out is done in relationship with others who can help confirm identity characteristics and can help negotiate myths or stereotypes about gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons.

3. *Developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity* involves developing a support network of people who accept a person’s sexual orientation. This may include others in a social network coming out as allies and friends of that LGB Person.

4. *Becoming a lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring* means disclosing to parents one’s minority sexual orientation and redefining one’s relationship with parents who now know that they have an LGB child.
5. *Developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status* involves figuring out how one behaves in a non-heterosexual relationship given that how one acts is up for negotiation and that there are limited models for LGB couples.

6. *Entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community* means entering the LGB community and publicly committing to social or political engagement and action for and with that community. It also involves knowing about the current legal and sociocultural state of LGB people and understanding historical and current oppressions so that one can commit to resisting them.

This model explicitly eschews a pre-determined sequence by which these six processes occur or a requirement that a person engage in every process. By framing each of these processes as related but independent, a person may experience one or all of them and they may occur temporally either serially or simultaneously (D’Augelli, 1994). Bilodeau’s (2005) model focusing on transgender identity development is an extension of D’Augelli’s theory. In a case study of two transgender college student students, Bilodeau (2005) found confirmatory evidence of this theory’s applicability to transgender persons. Specifically, he found indications that they engaged in the processes of: (a) exiting a traditionally gendered identity; (b) developing a personal transgender identity; (c) developing a transgender social identity; (d) becoming a transgender offspring; (e) developing a transgender intimacy status; and (f) entering a transgender community.

These three models taken together highlight the continuous and ongoing nature of LGBTQ identity development as well as the important role socialization with other
LGBTQ persons plays in allowing LGBTQ persons to come to understand their LGBTQ social identities.

**Personal identity as an organizing term.** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer are considered social identities because they arise as a result of participating in social groups with others who have a similar experiences to one’s self. Members of this group have ascribed to a particular label that describes the shared experiences of that group (Jones & Abes, 2013). In this study, I use the term personal identity as an organizing term to capture the experiences of a person in their social identity group outside professional or work settings which is akin to what Yoshino (2007) term private sphere.

Personal identity or private sphere identity is an important concept in this study as it speaks to the experience of having to cover or hide a private sphere social identity in the work place (Yoshino, 2007). The act of covering has four dimensions as described by Yoshino (2007): appearance, affiliation, activism, and association. Appearance relates to the choices one makes in physical presentation as to lead others to assume that he/she/ze is or is not LGBTQ. Affiliation relates to the choices about how a person exhibits cultural identifications. Activism touches on a person’s choice to politicize his/her/hir identity. Association involves the decisions one makes about with whom they are seen.

As Rofes (2000) deliberated, every day he had to make a decision about the extent to which he would reveal or showcase private aspects of his personal LGBTQ. Because of the separation required at times of LGBTQ persons in the workplace to hide or cover their personal LGBTQ social identities, a focus on the personal LGBTQ identities and the
ways in which LGBTQ professionals had to selectively showcase or downplay their personal experiences with LGBTQ identities is a central focus of this study.

Beyond the affective and at times unpleasant experience of hiding one’s personal LGBTQ identity in professional settings, the act of covering, may delay or inhibit one’s personal/private social identity as he/she/ze may feel the need to disengage from that personal identity in order to feel that he/she/ze is adequately obfuscating a personal LGBTQ identity in the work place. Joan’s choice to forestall her female-to-male transition process was made out of a decision to conform to societal standards compelling her to continue to live as a woman. These included messages conveyed to her in current and prior workplace settings (Maree, 2014). As a result, Joan was not able to, or was severely restricted in, her ability to participate in processes related to her transgender identity development.

Related to the Maree’s (2014) findings, Tomlinson and Fassinger’s (2003) study of 192 lesbian and questioning women found a significant, positive correlation between negative perceptions of campus climate towards gay and lesbian women and delays in career development for these women. In light of the significant impact that local environments can have on LGBTQ persons’ career developments and choices, I look now to literature that focuses on the topic of LGBTQ persons at work. This section serves as an important reminder that LGBTQ professionals charged with supporting LGBTQ others must first make choices about how their personal LGBTQ identity shows up in the work place.
Being Queer and Professionally Queer at Work

The act of passing and the impact that work environments can have on LGBTQ person’s expression of his/her/hirs LGBTQ identity represents a significant portion of the literature related to LGBTQ experiences in the work place. The majority of studies on LGBTQ individuals’ experiences in the work place have made the assumption that these spaces are repressive and homophobic (Williams, Giuffre & Dellinger, 2009). However, as Gordon (1995) noted in her analysis of the advancement of diversity within organizations, “Historically the corporation [including organizations like universities] has promoted a liberal corporate order which imagines itself as a model of progressive social relations” (p. 4). In other words, while organizational culture draws upon culture in general, it is also concerned with reshaping and influencing that broader culture.

As a researcher, I make the assumption that institutions of higher education that expend resources in creating LGBTQ professional positions and resource centers are invested in modeling progressive social relations. I also make the assumption that persons employed as LGBTQ professionals who possess a personal LGBTQ identity are likely to be out. However, I do not make the assumption that the organizations in which these professionals work have non-discrimination policies for LGBTQ persons. I also do not make the assumption that these policies are comparable between institutions. With these two assumptions stated, I consider literature on the impact of LGBTQ identity presentation and disclosure in LGBTQ-friendly workplaces.

In a study surveying 65 gay men’s work experiences in which roughly half (55%) worked in organizations that had no formal sexual orientation-based anti-discrimination
policies, Tejeda (2006) found that gay men reported experiencing greater hostility in workplaces that had anti-discrimination policies. He also found that, in workplaces with sexual orientation anti-discrimination policies, 39% of respondents reported being out to a supervisor compared to 6% at workplaces where no policy was in place. Tejeda (2006) did not have data to explain the differences in experiences with hostility. However, based on Yoshino’s (2007) idea of covering, it is reasonable to assume that in not covering their sexual orientation, these men faced greater hostility because their co-workers were aware of their marginalized sexual orientation.

Similarly, Ferfolia (2009) found general consensus in a literature review on the experiences of lesbian teachers that non-discrimination policies did not impact feelings of personal or professional safety on a daily basis. Ferfolia (2009) also referenced research showing that lesbian teachers tended to perceive a need to perform extraordinarily in their job roles in order to overcome perceived stigma. She further noted that for some teachers, coming out put their professional reputations at risk or it was seen as a political act. Researchers found that these teachers believed that in coming out they were perceived to be promoting a progressive political agenda or an alternative lifestyle to their students.

Even in workplace settings that not only have anti-discrimination policies but are also considered “gay-friendly” (Giuffre, Dellinger, & Williams, 2008, p. 259), issues with being open about one’s LGBTQ identity persist. In a study by Giuffre et al. (2008) of 16 gay men and women in gay-friendly work they found that respondents were often asked personal questions about their sexual practices. They also reported be subject to stereotypes and feeling the need in some instances to modify their behavior so as to
minimize stigma associated with their sexual orientation. This included being “very serious” (p. 263) in one’s professional demeanor and downplaying one’s sexuality in the work place (Giuffre et al., 2008). These choices also reflect aspects of Yoshino’s (2007) concept of covering parts of one’s identity.

In another related study looking at the experiences of 12 individuals who work at LGBTQ establishments like a gay and lesbian video store or a gay-owned professional office, Williams et al. (2009) found that to do their jobs within these establishments respondents felt the need to make their sexualities visible by conforming to stereotypes. One of the respondents, Lynn, who worked at a lesbian book store talked about her want and need to inhabit a lesbian esthetic in order to be identified and serve the lesbian community. This is what Adkins (2000) identified as putting the aesthetics of a visible lesbian to work. She made the claim that performing visibly as lesbian may give persons access to certain resources and cultural capital. However, she also acknowledges that the extent to which a person performs her sexuality has limits and may come with costs.

Within the setting of higher education, Rofes (2000) detailed his struggles with managing students’ perceptions of his gay male identity. Rofes (2000) stated that “each day when I wake up, at least two people move in me: the teacher and the lover” (p. 440). In saying this, he indicates that these two identities do not comfortably coexist in a professional educational setting where he is figured as the teacher and authority in the classroom. To illustrate this tension, he goes on to articulate the ways in which he selectively exhibits and covers his gay identity within the classroom. In one passage Rofes (2000) asked:
When I am teaching *Education 188: Gay and Lesbian Issues in Schools*, I am hyper-aware of how I represent myself as a gay man to students... Should I look and act like a stereotypical fag or should I provide an alternative vision of gay manhood?... Is it okay to use camp... or should I eschew the affectations of fagdom?... Is it okay to cross my legs?... Can I call my gay students ‘honey’? Is it okay for me to refer to male colleagues as ‘girlfriends’? What image should I project when I walk across the room? (p. 450)

In this passage, Rofes (2000) named the types of questions one might ask oneself when attempting to manage a personal identity in a professional setting. He goes on to discuss the fears he has that being campy may reinforce negative stereotypes about gay men and distance him from his heterosexual students. He also deliberates the ways in which covering his sexual orientation may alienate him from his gay students and entrench perceptions that in order to be a successful teacher one must hide the details of one’s sexuality. Rofes’ (2000) experiences along with others discussed in this chapter shed light on the potential conflict between workplace expectations and the expression of gay or lesbian sexual orientation. They also show evidence of the negotiation that takes place within the interpersonal domain of the DMIM (Perez et al., 2015).

As an aside, Both Adkins (2000) concept of putting lesbian aesthetics to work and Rofes’ (2000) deliberation on the ways in which he could exhibit his personal gay identity at work bring forward the notion of performatives. Wilchins (2004) described performatives as “special kinds of speech that also qualify as social acts” (p. 132). Performativity is the act of using speech and identity to enact change in one’s environment. In considering identity from the lens of performativity, identity is not something that is simply stated or know, it is performed. This performance takes shapes through the ways in which a person chooses to act and speak. (Wilchins, 2004). Rofes
(2000) demonstrated the performative nature of his gay identity when he deliberates whether or not he should behave as others might conceive a “fag” (p. 450) to behave which included acts such as crossing his legs, using the term “honey” (p. 450) with students or calling other males “girlfriend” (p. 450). Each of these acts of speech serve to both create and reinforce a representation of the term gay man. In connecting back to the concept of doxa, these performatives of gay identity violate typical expectations of manhood and masculinity and may at least with straight peers result in negative reactions.

In relation to the experiences of transgender or bisexual persons in workplace environments with non-discrimination policies, I could not find scholarly literature directly addressing their experiences. However, one study by Schilt (2006) of 29 female-to-male (FTM) transmen who openly identified as trans or were not open about their trans identities and able to pass as cisgender examined the ways in which their presentation of gender changed their experiences with fellow workers. Advantages respondents noted were that they gained legitimacy and authority, had greater recognition for their work, and had increased economic opportunities and status. One respondent stated that he could drop the emotional labor or niceness about his work that he had felt he needed to perform as a woman. Others reported that as women, they were ignored, passed over, or sexually harassed in ways that no longer occurred post-transition. For stealth FTMs, these perceived changes and advantages were greater than open FTMs as the latter group often had to endure “invasive questions about their genitals and sexual practices” (p. 480). Schilt (2006) highlighted the ways in which covering one’s trans identity may prevent
social stigmatization at work. Certainly, more research needs to be conducted with transgender individuals to better assess the nature of the hostilities they face.

Worthen (2013) addressed both the dearth of studies examining hostility towards bisexual and transgender persons as well as the conflation of experiences with oppression as described in studies about the LGBTQ community. She pointed out that discrimination towards trans persons is qualitatively different than discrimination of gays and lesbians. Worthen (2013) also commented on the long documented history of discrimination within the LGBTQ community towards bisexual and trans persons. Stone (2009) found in a study of 32 gay and lesbian activists that they too held exclusionary beliefs towards trans persons and some believed that trans persons should be left to advocate for themselves.

Each of the studies and writings presented in this section helped situate the experience of holding an LGBTQ personal identity within the work place and provided insight into the conflicts LGBTQ professionals face in bringing their personal LGBTQ identities to work. With the confluence of personal LGBTQ identities intersecting with professional identity considered, I now take into consideration multiple intersecting and intersectional identities as a theoretical intervention to be considered throughout this study.

Identity and Intersectionality

To this point, I have focused exclusively on understanding either a person’s LGBTQ identity or a person’s professional identity and the ways in which these two may intersect. However, as Gedro (2009) reminded us, same-sex attraction does not operate in
isolation of gender. In considering the ways in which lesbians’ careers might be influenced, she noted that in addition to negative stereotypes in relation to their sexual orientation, they also endured negative stereotypes in relation to their gender. Ferfolia (2009) too implores readers to be wary of conflating the gay male and lesbian female experiences with sexual orientation discrimination as, in many circumstances, males are still afforded greater privilege and power than females regardless of sexual orientation. In considering the ways in which gender and sexual orientation may impact one another, these authors touch on the concepts of intersectionality and the interplay of multiple intersecting identities.

Intersectionality is not a theory in and of itself but an “analytical lens through which theories may be viewed and which results in a shifting frame of reference” (Torres et al., 2009, p. 588). Intersectionality resists the notion that identities are additive and that they can be pulled apart and experienced independently (Bowleg, 2008). Instead intersectionality brings these identities together and asks researchers to examine “the whole of self as well as the individual context” (Torres et al., 2009, p. 585). Intersectionality pays particular attention to the interplay of multiply marginalized identities though it may be used to attend to the interaction of both privileged and oppressed identities (Nash, 2008).

Bowleg (2013) illustrated this in a study of six Black, gay couples. In the study, several participants noted tension between their racial identity as Black persons and their sexual orientation. One participant noted that he felt an expectation within White LGB communities to assimilate and sublimate his Black identity. Another participant stated his
African-American identity came first because it, to him, was always visible and highly salient whereas his sexual orientation could be hidden and he could cover or pass as heterosexual. Ten of the 12 participants stated that they prioritized their identity as Black and/or as Black men as primary. However, as Bowleg (2013) observed, one respondent, Nigel, revealed that his identity as a Black man came with stereotypical assumptions by others that he was promiscuous and unable to maintain a relationship. He further stated that these same assumptions overlapped with the negative assumptions people applied to him as a gay man. He went on to say, “Well it’s hard for me to separate [my identities]. When I’m thinking of me, I’m thinking of all of them as me” (p. 758). Another participant, Charles, mentioned that it would be difficult for him to separate his sexual identity, gender and race “because I really don’t experience it that way” (p. 758). Yet another participant, Jay, felt that being Black and bisexual was like having a double “strike against you in our society” (Bowleg, 2013, p. 759).

The narratives shared by these men foreground the idea that the interaction of two or more social identities can create social pressures and demands on a person that neither identity in isolation could create. This interactive effect was found in another study of 577 LGB men and women in which Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, West, and McCabe (2014) set out to examine the impact of discrimination on mental health. In their sample, the researchers found that two-thirds of respondents had experienced some form of discrimination in relation to either their gender, sexual orientation, or race. Interestingly, the researchers found that discrimination against one’s sexual orientation or one’s racial identity alone did not equate with a greater likelihood of experiencing a mental health
disorder. However, for persons who experienced both racial and sexual orientation
discrimination, rates of mental health disorders significantly increased (Bostwick et al.,
2014). When gender discrimination was factored in, the likelihood of experiencing
significant mental health disorders increased even further. While the authors did not
name intersectionality as an analytic lens through which they were examining the
experiences of these LGB individuals, their results indicate an intersectional experience
with discrimination between sexual orientation, race, and gender (Bostwick et al., 2014).

In attending to intersectionality in this study of LGBTQ professionals, my intent
was to resist the prevailing view of social identities as being singular and independent
(Bowleg, 2008). When interviewing LGBTQ practitioners, this meant looking at
narratives about varying social identities such as race, age, ability status, and gender in
addition to discussing their personal sexual orientations, transgender identities, and
professional identities. Examining these intersectional experiences is no easy task as
methodologically intersectional research is difficult to conduct (Jones & Abes, 2013).
Part of the reason for its difficulty is that intersectional studies demand that researchers
“broaden their analytical scope beyond the collected data to become intimately
acquainted, if they are not already, with the sociohistorical realities of historically
oppressed groups” (Bowleg, 2008, p. 318).

To honor this call by Bowleg (2008), I discussed in Chapter One the changing
climate for LGBTQ persons, the organizational changes that gave rise to the development
of LGBTQ centers, and the shift in the profession of student affairs towards social justice.
For Chapter Two, I discussed LGBTQ professionals’ job requirements, the issues and
challenges these diversity professionals experience in advocating for change, and the influence that queer identity may have on career and professional development. Each of these discussions serve as conceptual building blocks for understanding the historical and current social realities of LGBTQ professionals in higher education. With these pieces in place, I turn to the discussion of models that helps to frame intersectional and intersecting identities, the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity and its theoretical extensions (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Jones & Abes, 2013).

The Models of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

The Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) provides a helpful framework for understanding the ways in which multiple identities may intersect and come to bear on a person’s experiences in social situations. Based on a study of the intersecting identities of 10 undergraduate women, the MMDI demonstrates the relationship between a core self, the social identities one possess or identifies with, and the contextual influences that surround a person at the micro level. The core is the site where one’s “relational, inclusive values and guiding personal beliefs” (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 82, italics in original) exist and where personal attributes, personal characteristics, and personal identities reside. The core self exists in relation to an environment filled with contextual influences which “include factors such as family background, peer culture, social norms and stereotypes” (Abes & Jones, 2004, p. 619). Mediating this relationship between the core and micro-level environmental contexts are social identities (Evans et al., 2010). These identities are socially constructed, meaning they are created in the process of interacting with others in social groups. These identities
also intersect influencing one another and the core self’s experience of these identities (Jones & Abes, 2013).

In the Reconceptualized—Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (R-MMDI) Abes and Jones (2004) introduced the concept of a meaning-making filter that moderates the extent to which external definitions of identity dictate a person’s internal definition and experience of that identity. The less developed this meaning-making filter is, the more a person allows his/her/hirs social identities to be externally defined. As the filter becomes more sophisticated, a person is better able to interpret, redefine, and ultimately self-author his/her/hirs social identities (Jones & Abes, 2013).

Professional identity is one of the possible identities a person can hold in relation to self. The use of the MMDI in framing a person as having a core that is connected to but distinct from his/her/hirs social identities helps to situate a person’s experiences with social identities. In career construction terms, a professional identity is not a concept that the self simply matches with or fits into; rather, professional identity is something that a person creates that reflexively influences, reshapes, and helps to develop one’s core self. This process occurs through the exchange of beliefs, values, and relationships that happen through engaging with a professional identity in a professional role (Hartung, 2013; Savickas, 2013).

The MMDI also invokes the concept of identity salience when considering the degree to which an identity influences one’s sense of self. Salience is predicted by three features:
(1) those who are highly identified with their group, independent of context…(2) those for whom there is a contrast between self-perceived social identity and context…, and (3) those for whom there is a contrast between past background and current context. (Evans et al, 2010, p. 41)

Professional identity salience is an important consideration in this study as it hints at the degree to which a person is actively involved with thinking about and working with his/her/hirs work identity. Identity salience also helps break apart different aspects of the relationship between core self and an identity for analysis as it allows for questions related to how well a person fits in with his/her/hirs professional peer group, how a person’s professional identity shows up in non-professional settings, and how a person’s expectations do or do not align with the requirements of his/her/hirs professional role.

**The Intersectional—Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (I—MMDI).**

The I—MMDI is helpful in this study as it allowed for the explicit consideration multiple intersecting identities through an intersectional lens. In this model, the original MMDI is preserved. However, the core self, intersecting social identities, and micro-level environments are imbedded in macro context or power, privilege, and oppression that operate as forces impacting an individual’s social identities. The meaning making filter from the R-MMDI becomes a layer between the macro and micro levels moderating the extent to which macro contexts impact a persons’ interpretation and experiences of their micro level social identities. Specific identities become salient when a person experiences marginalization or discrimination because of the larger, social values placed on these identities (Jones & Abes, 2013). This model calls attention to the ever present doxa that
operate across multiple contexts privileging some identities while punishing others (Blank, 2012).

**Queer—Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Q—MMDI).** The Q—MMDI as another, distinct theoretical extension of the MMDI draws particular and explicit attention to the experiences of non-heterosexual persons (Abes & Jones, 2013). In the Q-MMDI, the external context, or macro level, in which social identities are imbedded becomes heteronormativity—the expectation that the world is composed of heterosexual romantic relationships, that these relationships have greater value and hold more legitimacy than homosexual relationships within society, and that expressions of non-heterosexual behaviors should be punished. Resistance becomes the primary mechanism by which a person engages with the heteronormativity context (Jones & Abes, 2013). Jones and Abes (2013) refashioned the meaning-making filter within the Q-MMDI to represent desire and defined this term to mean a drive to pursue social transformation that enacts resistance to challenge heteronormativity. As persons become more self-authored, the desire filter increases in complexity and persons are better able to resist heteronormative contexts, self-define and express their identities, and bend the external world towards greater acceptance and inclusion of those identities. Social identities in the Q-MMDI are intrasecting as opposed to intersecting which results in their being experienced as singular and inseparable. This is a significant departure from the MMDI which framed identities as intersecting but distinct. The Q-MMDI also brings to the foreground the duality of identity being both a personal descriptor and a performative. As performatives, identities become social acts continually interacting and reshaping the
core self of a person, allowing the core to enter a state of continual transformation (Jones & Abes, 2013). The concept of continual transformation is related to queer theory’s focus on identity as becoming. Identity is never a static state to be achieved but a construct after which a person is constantly in pursuit.

While the I—MMDI and Q—MMDI arise from different theoretical traditions, both serve to extend the conceptualization of social identities, the interplay of these identities, and the ways in which they are experienced and perceived by non-majority persons (Jones & Abes, 2013). Each is rendered in service of more fully capturing and articulating the complexity of social identity.

**Conclusions**

The purpose of this chapter was to locate the narrative study of LGBTQ professionals alongside theories that most directly provide interpretive insight into the questions that bound this study. Professional socialization, career construction, development of commitment to diversity work, LGBTQ identity development, intersectionality, and the Models of Multiple Dimensions of Identity are presented as lenses that helped interpret the stories and experiences LGBTQ professionals chose to share in their interviews. Although the interpretive choices I made were partial and imperfect (Lieblich et al., 1998), these theories combined with the individual instances and experiences that participants choose to share provided greater insight into universal social experiences connected to LGBTQ professional work and identity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the design of this research project. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011b), there are five questions a researcher should seek to answer when undertaking a study. Who or what will be studied? What strategies of inquiry will be used? How will the design connect to the paradigm being used? What method and tools will be used to gather data and analyze it? How will research materials allow the researcher to speak to praxis or change? I address these five questions in this chapter.

Interwoven through these five questions are the values and ethics I hold as a researcher because these two qualities form part of “the basic foundational philosophical dimensions of [a] paradigm” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 116). In addition, a specific exploration of values and ethics is located at the end of this chapter and includes a discussion of my subjectivity in the study as well as my work to assure the trustworthiness of the study findings and interpretations.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to better understand the LGBTQ people who engage in LGBTQ professional work in higher education settings. Specifically, I sought to illuminate the features of their work to understand the shared characteristics of their
professional identities. I also investigated their stories of personal and professional LGBTQ identity development. Three research questions situated this study:

1. How do professional identities develop for persons working as LGBTQ professionals in higher education?
2. How do the personal LGBTQ identities of LGBTQ professionals develop?
3. What are the intersections and influences between personal and professional LGBTQ identities for LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings?

Paradigmatic Considerations

The paradigm framing a study attends to three key elements that relate to research design: ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Lincoln et al., 2011). In order to understand the methods and context in which data is gathered and which tools are selected for analysis, these three terms must be defined.

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Within and closely related to ontology is epistemology which concerns itself with how knowledge is found or created. Further still, within an epistemological perspective are particular methodologies by which a person goes about deriving knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

I approached this research study from a constructivist perspective. This means that as a researcher, I consider knowledge to be “local and specific [and derived from] co-constructed realities” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 195). Epistemologically, I see myself as
a subjectivist researcher. I believe that findings are constructed by people through their interactions with researchers. This is in opposition to believing that knowledge exists independently of socially constructed understandings and that truth is objective and discoverable (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Lincoln et al., 2011). Part of my belief in the subjective nature of knowledge is based on the premise that storytellers and listeners are invested in the positions they take on subjects (Esin, Fathi, & Squire, 2008). These investments are laden with subjective attachments that shape the construction of meaning.

Constructivism is focused on looking at “how participants construct meanings and actions from as close to inside the experience as possible” (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012, p. 349). In order to get as close to the inside of an experience as possible, researchers and their participants construct meaning through their relational interactions (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). In order to gain knowledge, one must establish and nurture relationships in which knowledge can be found. With the nature of knowledge being localized (Lincoln et al., 2011), “The constructivist position views research as an emergent product of particular times, social conditions, and interactional situations” (Charmaz, 2008, p.160).

I was interested in understanding the experiences of LGBTQ higher education professionals as they created their stories of engagement with LGBTQ advocacy work in the geographic contest of the United States. My choice to study LGBTQ professionals in depth was in alignment with the constructivist goal of accumulating knowledge through “more informed and sophisticated reconstructions” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 101). At the time of this investigation, no narrative study of these professionals had been undertaken that examined the confluence of LGBTQ identity and engagement in LGBTQ
professionalism in higher education. Ultimately, my aim with this research was to construct “emancipatory knowledge and knowledge that encourages ‘human flourishing’” (Lincoln et al., 2011 p. 120). In short, I sought to shed light on the modern-day condition of being an LGBTQ-identified LGBTQ professional in higher education; and I hope that this knowledge empowers the study’s participants and others to understand the impact and value of LGBTQ professional work more fully.

Methodology

In order to access the experiences of LGBTQ persons working as LGBTQ professionals, I utilized narrative inquiry as the methodological approach to this study. Narrative inquiry is particularly well suited for understanding career development and progression (Savickas, 2013). This methodology situates the participant as the author of his/her/hirs career story. It allows the participant to define important events, motivations, actions, and consequences in the career story and draw relationships between the elements that make up one’s narrative (Savickas, 2013). Stated succinctly, a person is able to explain how he/she/ze “came to be and where he or she [or ze] is going in life” (McAdams & Olson, 2010, p. 527). Chase (2011) defined narrative as:

…a distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or others actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing consequences of actions and events over time. (p. 421)

Narrative inquiry, which utilizes spoken or written accounts to gain knowledge, provides “one of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7). This is likely because as Ben-Ari (1998) stated, “Thinking, perception, imagination, and moral decision making, are based on narrative structure” (p. 155).
In order to undertake a narrative inquiry, three *commonplaces*—specific details that demarcate the space in which a narrative occurs, needed to be explored in relation to the purpose of the study: *temporality*—people and events are always in transition and come with pasts, presents, and futures; *sociality*—external forces, conditions, and environments make up an individual’s context; and *place*—events happen in a specific location (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The nature of this study required that I attend to these commonplaces as I examined LGBTQ higher education professionals in specific places, at specific times, and in the context of societal and cultural forces.

Researchers utilizing narrative inquiry access both individual identity and the way in which a person makes meaning of that identity. They are also able to access the social and cultural world in which that person lives (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Lieblich et al., 1998). As Raggatt (2006) stated, “Narratives of self are *positioned* in a matrix of social and moral relationships” (p. 19, italics in original). He went on to state that the way in which a person is socially positioned “is governed by contemporary societal expectations and prescriptions that, as it were, bear down on the person in all directions from the outside” (p. 19). Personal position, which is closely related to what Jones and McEwen (2000) term a person’s “core” in the MMDI model, is not directly conferred from these expectations and proscriptions. Instead, personal position is generated from “internal dialogues, in which the person grapples with the problem of ‘the good’ and their ‘orientation in moral space’” (Raggatt, 2006, p. 19).

This grappling with “the good” is what McLean and Thorne (2006) called “stories of trouble” (p. 111). These types of stories are often a centerpiece to narrative studies of
identity because stories “are constructed to make sense of experiences that disrupt individuals’ assumptions about their place in the world and their relations with others” (p. 111). In addition to stories of trouble, narrative inquiry can examine the ways in which people “display stability, growth or both” (Chase, 2011, p. 422) and also the ways in which identity develops and synthesizes over time (Halbertal & Koren, 2006).

Furthermore, narrative research has been used to explore identities that do not move towards synthesis or formation (Halbertal & Koren, 2006). Researchers have also used narrative inquiry to examine stories in which identity is found to be “too complex and inconsistent to afford the kind of neat identity consolidation that Erikson once envisioned” (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 5). In these personal accounts, identity is told as a multiform narrative in which different selves are pitted against one another. In other portrayals, the self is conceived as multiple versions of self that exist both in relation and in opposition to one another. The narrative serves to tie them together into something of which meaning can be made (McAdams et al., 2006).

Narratives are written or spoken and may originate from fieldwork, from natural or everyday conversation, or from interviews. These narratives vary in length and foci. They can be short and topical, focusing on a particular event; mid-length, encompassing entire periods in one’s life such as participation in an organization; or quite long, covering a person’s entire life (Chase, 2005).

Lastly, narrative methodology honors that “stories are co-constructed or dialogically constituted, this constructionist approach stresses the continually changing elements of narratives … overtime” (Esin et al., 2008, p. 205). Put another way, this
method of inquiry acknowledges that the stories told by participants in the context of the research study will be unique to that research context. Narrative methodology does not claim that these recountings are absolute truth nor that over time or in different contexts they and the meaning making attached to them will not change.

**Research Methods**

Within a methodological framework, specific methods or tools exist that allow a researcher to access knowledge that aligns with specific paradigms. In this section, I explicate sampling criteria, sampling strategies, data collection methods, and data analysis frameworks consistent with a constructivist narrative study.

**Sampling Criteria**

The sampling criteria for a study establishes the characteristics required for a person to be considered eligible to participate in the study. Establishing criteria is important because the more excellent a participant is, the better the quality of data a participant is able to provide and fully describe the topic under investigation (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). In this research project, the phenomenon under investigation was the narratives of experience, development, and meaning making of LGBTQ persons engaged in LGBTQ professional work.

In order to explore this phenomenon, four criteria were adhered to when selecting participants: (a) the participant openly identify as LGBTQ; (b) the participant was employed as an LGBTQ professional with the title of liason, program coordinator, center director or other applicable job title for LGBTQ students, faculty and/or staff; (c) the participant worked at a college, university, or higher education setting; and (d) the
participant worked in the United States. In relation to the first criterion, I use the term LGBTQ as a short hand to encompass the ever expanding ways in which persons who identify as sexual or gender minorities choose to label themselves. When explaining this study to participants, I used the term LGBTQ in initial communications; but I used the terms with which participants preferred to identify in the context of my conversations with them. Participants’ preferred identity terms were also used in the write up and analysis of their separate narratives. I was interested in persons who identified openly as LGBTQ in one or more of these communities/identity categories because I wanted to understand how persons who inhabit these identities understand the intersection of their personal and professional LGBTQ identities.

Many researchers choose to study either LGB issues or transgender issues because they focus on two distinctly different identity constructs. I chose to engage in a study that pulls from all four identity categories. I did this because many institutions had only one person to support both gender and sexual minority populations (Sanlo et al., 2002; Sanlo, 2000). This created the possibility that sexual minority persons, even those who name themselves as activists or allies, might have lacked knowledge about transgender issues or have transphobic attitudes (Galupo et al., 2014; Stone, 2009). Further, transgender or gender-variant persons may resist the conflation of sexual orientation and gender orientation issues which can happen when LGBTQ services have been grouped together with no thought to the consequences of such grouping (Ledin, 2014). As such, separating out these categories of identity did not seem ethical when this distinct separation of work was not made in the lived experiences of LGBTQ higher
education professionals who are called to serve all LGBTQ students (Sanlo, 2000).

I was interested in studying people who were employed as LGBTQ professionals in a higher education setting because the knowledge and abilities required to act on behalf and with others who are LGBTQ is a distinct skill set. It is a skill set separate and apart from existing as an LGBTQ person in the world (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996; D’Augelli, 1994). Through researching these persons, I sought to better understand the experiences of persons who were named as the LGBTQ professional at their institutions and were charged with working on behalf of and supporting LGBTQ others. Being employed as an LGBTQ professional suggested that a person was employed in a full-time, 40-hour-a-week, role in which all or a majority of his/her/hir job description was formally dedicated to serving other LGBTQ people at his/her/hir institution.

Finally, I situated this study within the geographic space of the United States (U.S.) where federal legislation increasingly supersedes state based legislation on LGBTQ rights making the legal issues faced by LGBTQ persons across the U.S. more standardized. This is evidenced by the 2015 Supreme Court ruling making marriage equality for same-sex couples the law of the land (Obergefell et al. v. Hodges, 2015). Situating this study across the U.S. also provided access to a greater pool of participants, an issue discussed later in the section on sample size.

Due to the distances from my participants, I conducted all interviews via video conference and adhered to strategies outlined by Seitz (2015) to ensure high quality experiences during interviews. When video was not available, I used a telephone based
method, as this has been shown to be an acceptable alternative in interviewing when face-to-face interactions are not possible (Holt, 2010).

In considering the intersection of a person’s LGBTQ identity with other social identities, I sought to include persons with diverse sexual, gender, ethnic, racial and ability backgrounds. These variations in identity were viewed through the lens of the I—MMDI (Jones & Abes, 2013) as some of these identities for some participants impacted the ways in which professional and personal LGBTQ identity was experienced (Jones & Abes, 2013; Slay & Smith, 2011). The I—MMDI served as a heuristic technique for entering the study of identity in a way that captures one’s sense of self as influenced through multiple intersecting social identities imbedded in varying external contexts (Jones & Abes, 2013). It also helped in working to position identities that conflicted or were discordant with one another. With these considerations of sample criteria in place, I turn to the sampling strategies used to recruit participants who served as information rich narrators.

**Sampling Strategies and Procedure**

Sampling strategies are the ways in which a researcher goes about finding potential persons to participate in a study (Jones et al., 2014). Purposeful sampling is one of the most basic elements of qualitative research that distinguishes it from quantitative research (Patton, 2002b). Quantitative research focuses on random sampling meant to derive a representative group of a broader population to which results can be generalized. Qualitative sampling in contrast is purposeful in that persons are sought who are information-rich and have in-depth understandings and insights “about issues of central
importance” (Patton, 2002b, p. 273) to the study. Identifying issues of central importance to a particular group of people for analyses is necessary because from “specific instances…we learn about the kinds of narratives that are possible for certain groups of people, and we learn about the cultural world that makes their particular narratives possible—and problematic—in certain ways” (Chase, 1995, p. 20). Within narrative inquiry, Lieblich et al. (1998) established seven criteria for assessing if a person was an information rich case. These criteria include one or more of the following: (a) supply insight in ways that allow him/her/hir to be understood and comprehended; (b) provide a feel for the person; (c) help to understand how someone thinks; (d) deepen sympathy or empathy for a person; (e) furnish an effective portrayal of the social or historical world of a person; (f) illuminate causes and meaning of relevant experiences; and/or (g) present a compelling or vivid to read account (Lieblich et al., 1998). In addition to meeting the criteria for sampling, through the course of interviews, I also used these criteria to assess the quality of data shared by LGBTQ professionals.

In addition to purposeful sampling, I also implemented maximum variation (Patton, 2002a), a technique used to “explore the common and unique manifestations of a target phenomenon across a broad range of phenomenally and/or demographically varied cases” (Sandelowski, 2000, pp. 337-338). I utilized maximum variation within the LGBTQ identities of participants to ensure that at least one person from each of the LGBTQ identity categories was represented. This helped to both represent the plurality of perspectives within the LGBTQ identity umbrella in this study and helped to further resist homonormative representations of the LGBTQ community and its issues (Piontek,
I recruited participants through the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals list-serv. This list-serv reached over 300 members of the LGBTQ higher education community and is used to disseminate information on current LGBTQ issues, job postings, and research studies (Consortium of Higher Education LGBTQ Resource Professionals, n.d.).

My first contact with potential participants about this study was through the Consortium email list-serv in the form of an invitation to participate posting (see Appendix A). This initial posting linked to an interest, demographic, and screening survey. This survey constituted “Phase One” of the study (see Appendix B). By completing this survey, participants gave informed consent for Phase One of the study only (see Appendix C). After completing the initial survey, eligible participants were contacted with an acceptance to participate email (see Appendix E) that allowed them to take part in “Phase Two” of the study (the two semi-structured interviews). Those who were not eligible were sent a declination email (see Appendix D).

Sample Size and Demographics

In terms of the size of a sample, “qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n = 1), selected purposefully” (Patton, 2002b, pp. 272-273). Studies utilizing narrative inquiry methodology are no exception because even if only one person is sampled, “the quantity of data gathered in life stories is large … Even when researchers limit the breadth of their questions, or the time of the
“(Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 9). The focus on a small, but information rich sample size was reiterated by Jones et al. (2014) in their discussion of sample size.

Given that this study is a narrative investigation of personal and professional LGBTQ identity development and meaning making, the final eligible sample yielded from recruitment was 12 participants. This was a similar sample size to the sample recruited in Abes and Jones (2004) study of the multiple dimensions of identity for lesbian college students. More importantly, this sample size of 12 provided enough data to reach coverage and thoroughly explicate the phenomenon of identity development of LGBTQ professionals (Jones et al., 2014).

From the initial recruitment post (see Appendix A) on the Consortium for LGBTQ Professionals in Higher Education, 45 people completed the initial interest survey. Of those who completed, 18 were eligible to participate based on the established sampling criteria. Of those who were eligible, 12 responded to the acceptance email, followed through on the arrangements to conduct either video-conference or phone interviews, and completed two, one-hour semi structured interviews. The final sample consisted of 12 LGBTQ professionals in higher education. These participants ranged in age from 24-39. Eleven stated their sexual orientation as queer and one person stated her sexual orientation as bisexual. Of the 11 people who identified as queer, five also identified as gay, bisexual or lesbian. Six participants identified as cisgender women or femme. Four participants identified as cisgender male or men. One respondent identified as genderqueer and another identified as a trans-man. Nine participants identified as racially or ethnically white and three as persons of color. Five held the title of director,
two of assistant director, four held the title of program coordinator or equivalent title, and one held the title of program manager. Undergraduate degrees varied with the majority holding bachelors in a social science or humanities related field. Eleven held masters degrees with seven in Higher Education/Student Affairs, three in Social Work, and one in English. One person held a Ph.D. in higher education and student affairs and one person was in the process of completing his degree in higher education.

**Data Collection Method**

Lieblich et al. (1998) stated that, “The narrative approach advocates pluralism, relativism and subjectivity” (p. 2). This honors that each narrative is partial and that “no individual or case is ever just an individual or a case. He or she must be studied as a single instance of more universal social experiences and social processes … to study the particular is to study the general” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b, p. 245). One useful tool for getting at diverse perspectives or instances of an experience is through interviewing as it allows access to individuals’ meaningful experiences (Seidman, 2013).

Narrative inquiry as a methodology helps to shape the way in which interview questions are asked. Participants are asked to tell stories about their experiences in the contexts of their lives, how they have interpreted their experiences and the meaning they have derived from these experiences (Lieblich et al., 1998). This is the opposite of asking them to remember events exactly as they happened. Focusing on eliciting stories also serves the important function of asking the narrators to take on the responsibility of determining what is important in their narratives. This importance is indicated by what they choose to share and what they choose to emphasize (Chase, 1995, pp. 2-3). Further,
this approach to interviewing honors that life experiences are reconstructed in context-specific ways and are not verbatim accounts of experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Lieblich et al., 1998).

As to structure, Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) stated that there are a broad range of ways that narrative interviews can be structured both in the numbers of interviews held with a participant and the way in which questions are asked during interviews. Regardless of the variability in these two features, they suggested eight ways of going about narrative research in order to elicit detailed and thick descriptions of experiences:

- Develop trust. Listen nonjudgmentally.
- Initially, scaffold or structure conversations and set norms, if necessary.
- Encourage talk about topics that are controversial and difficult.
- Allow emergent purposes for the conversation to develop.
- Value different discourse styles.
- Specifically articulate the learning that occurs in conversation.
- Examine assumptions.
- Pay attention to issues of power-in-relationship. (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, p. 166)

My interviews followed these guidelines.

I conducted two semi-structured interviews per person. The first interview focused on collecting narratives connected to career trajectory and professional identity development and to build rapport with participants. In the second interview, I leveraged the trust I built with each participant to ask questions related to personal identity development and the intersection of personal and professional identity. Semi-structured interviews seemed to be the most appropriate method of data collection for this study as they allowed for in-depth examination of social and personal matters. At the same time,
they also allowed for the reality of time constraints in interviews and pre-determined interview times where little observational data was available (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

In the first interview, I reviewed and obtained a written informed consent (see Appendix F). I then asked a series of pre-written, open-ended questions (see Appendix G) that related to the research questions. These prewritten questions were designed to illicit open narratives focused on a particular topic of interest (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) and were constructed to avoid the use of “why” questions (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997). My initial questions were followed by periods of uninterrupted listening in which few or no questions were asked. When follow-up questions were asked, they closely echoed the participant’s own language, were asked in a curious but non-evaluative manner, and asked participants to elaborate further on events described in their stories (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997). The first interview was finished when all initial prompt questions were asked and a final chance for elaboration or expansion on any of the participant’s initial answers was given (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

In the second interview, I asked prompt questions customized to each interviewee based on content that was shared in that particular participant’s first interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997), again following the Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) interview format. The question structure is listed in Appendix H. At the end of the second interview, I thanked participants for their time and confirmed their email address to receive their incentive.
With permission of the participants, I audiotaped all interviews. These were transcribed with analysis occurring as I conducted and finished interviews. I also journaled my thoughts and initial interpretations about the interviews after they were conducted. These steps were part of the narrative record that helps document the research process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Each interview was approximately one hour in length. For participating in this study, I offered each interviewee a $25 dollar gift card to either Amazon.com or Starbucks.

**Data Analysis Method**

Lieblich et al. (1998) explicated three “voices” to which a researcher must attend while analyzing data generated from interviews. First, attention must be given to the voice of the narrator in the interview and transcription. Second, an examination of materials must be conducted using a theoretical framework which provides tools for interpreting and making sense of the data. Third, the researcher must be reflexive and self-aware in reading and interpreting the narrative to draw conclusions.

Within this framework, two branches of narrative analysis/interpretation exist. In the first, narrative data is collected and then the researcher organizes and unifies “the data to create a cohesive narrative with a plot” (Clandinin, 2007, p. xv). In the second, narrative data is collected and the researcher’s task is to analyze it for themes or concepts (Clandinin, 2007). Within the latter approach, one model breaks down analysis of narratives along two axes: form to content and holistic to categorical. On the form to content axis, a researcher either examines a story for the way in which it is emplotted and structured or what is stated within the story. On the holistic to categorical axis, a
researcher looks at either the entirety of the story or specific parts of the narrative that are broken down into categorical units. This model is conceived as a four quadrant graphic with holistic to categorical listed at opposite ends of the horizontal axis and form to content listed at opposite ends of the vertical axis. This graphic is used to express the idea that stories are made up of each of these four parts and that there is no absolute separation of a story’s form from its content or a story’s specific events from the whole of the story (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Within this conceptualization of analyzing narratives, I first read the stories and interviews taking note of my initial reactions. I approached the interview material from a categorical-content perspective which allowed me to focus on the parts of the story that most closely aligned with the research questions (Lieblich et al., 1998). This form of analysis follows a constructivist perspective (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). The method for content analysis as described by Lieblich et al. (1998) begins with the researcher selecting portions of text that are most relevant to the topic of interest establishing a “selection of subtext” (p. 112). Within these subtexts, content categories are defined through open reading that seeks to strike a balance between establishing categories that are broad and “easy to use” (p. 113), but are also subtle and “retain the richness and variation of the text” (p. 113). These categories were ultimately influenced by the theoretical orientations the researcher brings to the study. For me, these are most notably attending to the construction of one’s career (Savickas, 2013), developing commitments to a particular, social justice oriented profession (Weidman et al., 2001), a life-span approach to LGBTQ identity development (Bilodeau, 2005; D’Augelli, 1994),
and the interplay of professional identity with multiple intersecting and intersectional identities (Bowleg, 2008; Hartung, 2013; Jones & Abes, 2013). The remaining material within the subtext then gets sorted into the categories or is used to establish new categories. Once this process is complete, the content of the categories is analyzed and used “to formulate a picture of the content universe in certain groups of people or cultures” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 114). I used NVivo 11 Qualitative analysis software to sort and categorize data.

The ways in which narratives are constructed and analyzed form an ongoing process throughout the research project. Even as a narrative is being told, “A person is at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). According to Riessman (1993), five levels of representation remove the reader of a study from the original experience as described by the storyteller: (a) attending—the process of the participant choosing what about an experience to notice and tell; (b) telling—the story that comes out in the context of an interview between the participant and the researcher; (c) transcribing—the reduction by the researcher of a storytelling interaction into words on a page; (d) analyzing—pulling out specific sections of narrative in order to construct an argument or interpret meaning in a manuscript; and (e) reading—the assumptions, interpretations, and prior knowledge that a person reading the manuscript brings when comprehending the results of an investigation (Riessman, 1993). These levels are important to consider because “awareness of levels of representation presses us to be more conscious, reflective, and cautious about the claims we make” (Riessman, 1993, p. 16). This awareness also helps sensitize the researcher to
the degree to which claims are being made *demonstratively*—when data is being used to illustrate an argument by the researcher—or *inductively*—when the data more clearly tells its own story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). With this in mind, it was important to explain how recurrent and emergent themes fit and diverge from the theories of professional socialization, career construction, LGBTQ identity development, intercultural maturity and critical consciousness, and intersectionality.

**Subjectivity**

With the five questions asked at the beginning of the chapter answered, I turn to the issue of subjectivity. As Preissle (2011) stated about the nature of qualitative research, “If we can no longer use detachment, distance and neutrality to achieve objectivity, we can at least document and track how what we study is influenced by who we are” (Preissle, 2011, p. 691). I come to this study as someone who identifies as openly gay, cis-gender, male, bi-racial, and adopted. My biological mother and adoptive-father raised me in a Mid-western, all-White household. My interest in this study stems from my own work in diversity, social justice, and activism as a student affairs practitioner. While I have never been charged to work specifically with the LGBTQ population, many projects and positions I have held within Student Affairs have intersected with this population and the issues that affect them. I state this because my work in diversity is subject to many of the critiques Ward (2008) presented on the professionalization and commodification of diversity. Additionally, as someone who identifies as gay, my own journey of coming into who I am has been assisted by wonderful people, some of whom were employed as LGBTQ professionals in higher education.
My interest in this study also stems from my training as a mental health professional who is interested in how people reason through making decisions, commit to these decisions, and maintain the behaviors and mindsets to adhere to their commitments. My particular area of expertise in mental health focuses on wellness coaching which seeks to help people thrive. In practice, aiding someone towards thriving is done by helping people define their values and commit to goals they find to be deeply meaningful. One of the most frequent ways individuals arrive at the point of defining their internal values and committing to future goals in these conversations was through the discussion and selection of future career paths.

To me the choice of being an LGBTQ professional whose work requires activism is a career I have observed and understood to be deeply fulfilling but also taxing to people’s emotional and psychological energies (Daloz et al., 1996). I state all of this to say that this topic is one in which I not only find scholarly interest but also personal interest. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) noted that all researchers have personal narratives that influence their studies through “their own views, attitudes, and ways of thinking” (p. 58). As such, I do not see my personal interest as problematic to this study. However, it was important to be attentive to this personal interest through reflexive processes such as journaling and peer consultation. These are important practices as “reflexivity forces us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process, but with ourselves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in research settings” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p 124). I understand that the identities I have already stated as well as others I have yet to state influenced how
I came to this research, how I coded data and defined categories, and how I approached participants. My goal in being reflexive was not to eliminate these influences but to understand and be transparent about how they influenced the research process I conducting.

Even though my goal in this research process was to represent the stories of participants as close to their intended meanings as I am able, ultimately as Riessman (1993) stated, “All forms of representation of experience are limited portrayals” (p. 15); and therefore the meaning we make as researchers of narratives is imperfect. The sections that follow are descriptions of how I intend to work to reduce that imperfection.

**Study Quality**

Within a constructivist ontology, trustworthiness and authenticity are generally agreed to be the metrics by which a researcher can judge the rigor of a study (Lincoln et al., 2011). In addition to these two overarching constructivist principles for determining the quality of a study, researchers of narrative inquiry have developed their own criteria for judging narrative research. These criteria are primarily concerned with the cohesiveness of arguments made by the researcher given the available narrative data.

**Trustworthiness**

Mishler (1990) defined trustworthiness as “the social construction of knowledge … [with] the key issue [being] whether the relevant community of scientists evaluates reported findings as sufficiently trustworthy to rely on them for their own work” (p. 417). Part of ensuring that this study is trustworthy is clearly defining the methodological protocol for how data is gathered, analyzed, and enumerated as well as explaining
theoretical assumptions that inform and constitute the study. The other part is enacting and adhering to these protocols and making arguments in alignment with stated theoretical assumptions.

**Authenticity**

The construct of authenticity is an umbrella term for several different methods of assessing the quality of research. These methods include “fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 122). Fairness is working to make sure that all voices collected are represented within a study and that no one gets left out (Lincoln et al., 2011). I ensured that all who participated in this study were represented in the findings by drawing upon material from each participant. Further, I worked to represent those stories and ideas that did not necessarily fit with other narratives or defied categorization.

Ontological authenticity concentrates on raising the level of awareness or critical intelligence about a particular issue within the participants. Educative authenticity focuses on the extent to which participants, as a result of interacting with the research study, are able to educate those in close proximity to them about the same issues (Lincoln et al., 2011). My hope is that the publication of this study will make LGBTQ professionals and those who work with them more aware and thoughtful about the work that LGBTQ professionals do. In tandem with that, my desire is that this study helps participants see common issues that they deal with both in their professional development and daily work lives.
Catalytic and tactical authenticities deal with encouraging participants to take action in their lives as a result of what they have learned from their engagement with the study. These authenticities serve as an expectation on the part of the researcher to help train participants in how to take social and political action to better their situations or the situations of others (Lincoln et al., 2011). Based on what the study participants learn to be common issues in their professional and personal work as it relates to activism, my intent is that this information moves them to greater action. I especially hope it will encourage them to take on issues which they have not previously taken action. It is important to note that authenticity as a criterion of study quality “begins to resemble forms of critical theorist action, action research, or participative or cooperative inquiry, each of which is predicated on creating the capacity in research participants for positive social change” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 122).

**Narrative Inquiry Quality Criteria**

In addition to authenticity and trustworthiness as metrics by which to assess the quality of this study, narrative inquiry allows for additional and flexible criteria of quality assessment. Hammersley (2007) suggested that researchers use “a list of considerations, never fully explicit [,] … agreed [based] in local circumstances…[and] always open to revision in the process of being used—[some of] which only gains meaning in particular contexts” (p. 288).

In working to further ensure the quality of this study, I turned to Polkinghorne’s (2007) assertion that the quality of a study be judged on the plausibility of a researcher’s explanations of narrative material when interpreting narrative data and the persuasiveness
of arguments in those explanations. In order to engage in this form of quality assurance, I
had two reviewers serve as secondary reviewers to review my analysis. One reviewer
holds a Ph.D. in Communications who does extensive assessment and research work in
the field of student affairs. The second reviewer holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education and
Student Affairs, has done extensive work on identity formation and development, and
wrote his dissertation on career decision making and career influences in black, male
collegians. These reviewers critiqued my analyses of participants’ narratives to improve
the explanatory and argumentative qualities of those analyses.

Ethics

Ethical conduct within research relationships undertaken in this study was of the
utmost importance. Cannella and Lincoln (2011) have gone so far as to say that
researchers possess ethical orientations that play out “within the personal core of the
researcher as she or he makes decisions about the conceptualization and conduct of
research as either oppressive or emancipatory practice” (p. 81). At every stage of the
research, I made choices that shaped this project into an emancipatory study. Within an
ethical orientation, three key premises of research ethics must be addressed: (a)
participants give informed consent to participate in and may withdrawal from a study at
any time; (b) the researcher guarantees confidentiality of the material to the best of the
his/her/hir abilities; and (c) that the researcher works to protect participants from any
harm that may result from their participation (Josselson, 2007).

In order to guarantee that the first premise was followed, I provided an
opportunity for an informational interview with participants to tell them about the study
and answer their questions about participation. In addition, I provided each participant with an initial consent to participate in the initial demographics survey and a second written consent form to participate in the interviews. Both of these were approved by Ohio State’s Institutional Review Board. To align with the second premise, I de-identified information the participants gave in terms of the location and names of their institutions and persons they mentioned in their narratives. I also asked participants to pick their own pseudonyms and used those when they were given. Audio files were stored in a password protected file on my computer. Further, with the consult of peer reviewers and advisor, I ensured that, to the extent possible, narrative passages do not present details that openly indicate the identity of the speaker.

Respecting confidentiality was driven by my intention to prevent harm from happening to participants as a result of their participation, the stipulation of the third premise. This includes preventing the publication of data which might cause retaliation by a participant’s institution if what the participant says does not cast his/her/hir institution in a positive light. I also wanted to make sure that I represented participants and their stories in ways they see as their narrative truths (Polkinghorne, 2007). This desire is driven by the goal to achieve the ethical objective that Connelly and Clandinin (1990) term “shared narrative unity” (p. 3). A critical humanist perspective drives these ethical choices on the research relationship. This perspective posits that inquiries should be done in such a way that they take care of and have compassion for the persons who engage with them (Plummer, 2011). Even with the motives of care and compassion driving the treatment of participants, Magolda and Weems (2002) advance the argument
that harm to participants is inevitable as its minimization does not equate to its elimination from the research project. As such, in addition to attending to these three ethical premises, throughout the conduct of this investigation I revisited the foundational question posed by Magolda and Weems (2002), “How are my actions harming others?” (p. 505) By considering this question at the initial contact and informed consent, interview, data analysis and write up, member checking, and findings phases of the study, I intended to move my attention to ethics away from a technical checklist towards a recurrent moral imperative integrated throughout the study.

Limitations

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) affirmed, “Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Narrative inquiry is a powerful form of research as it allows for the sharing and interpretation of rich and descriptive experiences that have transferability to the lives of others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and yet, this study has limitations. The results of this study are not meant to speak for the experiences of all LGBTQ professionals nor are the results meant to be generalizable to them. It was based on a sample of 12 persons who were willing to engage in this research project and, therefore, is not representative of a larger population of persons. The theoretical frames that I bring to the data in order to interpret and analyze the narratives participants shared also limit this study. Put simply, other researchers might have generated other interpretations or analyses. Finally, based on the demographics of those who chose to
engage in this study, this research project tended to represent the voices of younger, white LGBTQ professionals.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to clearly document how I intended to conduct this study. I followed a constructivist paradigm that utilizes narrative inquiry as its methodological frame. To collect data, I interviewed participants and analyzed their narratives through categorical-content analysis. My objective was to share the narratives of these participants’ experiences in a way that is rich, engaging to read, and adds to the field of higher education’s knowledge of what it means to be LGBTQ and employed as an LGBTQ professional at institutions of higher education.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to share the stories of 12 LGBTQ professionals in higher education. These stories focus on the description of LGBTQ professional work on college campuses and through the narratives of participants' personal and professional journeys that brought them to their current roles. The story of these 12 professionals is first illustrated through the individual narratives of each participant. The order of presentation for the individual narratives was set by amount of time each person had been in his/her/hir current role at the time of the interview. Persons with less time in role are presented before persons who have been in role for longer periods of time. Table 4.1 provides an overview of each participant. After all narratives are presented, I examine and explicate themes found amongst the individual narratives.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Descriptors: Pseudonym; Preferred Pronouns; Job Title; Institution; Time in Role; Education; Age; Race/Ethnicity; Gender Identity; Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillip; he/him/his; Center Supervisor; Large Private University; One month; M.Ed., Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs, B.A., Psychology; Twenty-five; White/Irish and English Ancestry; Queer Cisgender Male; Gay/Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane; he/him/his; Interim Director; Large Public State University; Two months; M.S., Higher Education Administration (In Progress), B.S., Psychology; Twenty-four; Bi-Racial; Cisgender Male; Queer/Gay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Descriptors:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan; he/him/his or they/them/their; Coordinator; Midsize Public State University; Eleven months; M.Ed., Higher Education and Student Affairs, B.A., Political Science; Twenty-six; Latinx/Mexican American; Man; Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shel; she/her/hers; Program Coordinator; Large Public State University; One year; M.S., Student Affairs in Higher Education, B.A., Graphic Design; Twenty-six; White/German; Cisgender Woman; Queer/Bisexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica; she/her/hers; Program Manager; Large Public State University; One year; MSW, B.A. Social Work; Twenty-five; Multiracial/Black; Cisgender Woman; Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura; she/her/hers; Program Coordinator; Midsize Private University; One year M.Ed., Higher Education and Student Affairs, B.A., Anthropology; Twenty-seven; White; Cisprivileged Femme; Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kara; she/her/hers; Director; Midsize Private University; One year; M.Ed., Higher Education, B.A., Sociology; Criminal Justice, and Spanish; Twenty-six; White/European Descent; Cisgender, Femme Woman; Queer/Bisexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler; He/Him/His; Director; Large Public State University; One year; MSW, B.A., Sociology; Thirty-three; White/Russian, Irish, and Jewish; Trans-man; Queer</td>
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<td>Avery; they/them/their; Assistant Director; Large* Public State University; Two years, M.Ed.; College Student Affairs Administration, B.A., Law &amp; American Society; Twenty-six; White; Genderqueer; Queer</td>
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<td>Frederick; he/him/his; Assistant Director; Midsize Private Religious University; Two years; M.Ed., Higher Education and Student Affairs, B.A., Sociology; Twenty-six; White/Jewish; Man (but often not 100%); Queer</td>
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<td>Marie; any; Director; Large Private University; Three years; Ph.D., Student Affairs in Higher Education, M.A., English, B.A., English; Thirty-three; White; Woman; Queer/Lesbian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel; she/her/hers; Director; Large Private University; Eleven years; MSW, B.S. Psychology; Thirty-nine; White; Cisgender Female; Bisexual</td>
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*Notes: Ph.D. = Doctor of Philosophy; M.Ed. = Masters of Education; MSW. = Masters of Social Work; M.S. = Masters of Science; B.S. = Bachelor of Science; B.A. = Bachelor of Arts. *Sizes were determined using the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.*
Narratives of Work, Career, and Identity Development

The 12 narratives put forward in this chapter are meant to depict the significant concepts and meaning making that relate to each participant’s discussion of his/her/hir work, campus environment, journey to his/her/hir current role, professional and personal LGBTQ identities, and the interaction and influences between these two identities. The narrative findings presented here were created from my analysis of each participant’s interviews and are not summaries of my interactions with participants. In constructing these narratives, I focused primarily on the content and stories that participants chose to share and less on the questions I asked. In doing this, my intent is to share the stories and themes that were important to each participant and not my preconceived notions about what might be important to each of them. As such, these narratives are guided by the central themes that emerged from interviews, thus themes between participants vary as does the cohesiveness of the themes each participants shared.

The primary focus of my investigation in this study is not about any specific institutions at which participants were employed and I have worked to de-identify institutions to protect each participant’s confidentiality. However, throughout the interview and analysis process it became evident that context was deeply embedded both in descriptions of work and campus climate. This included factors such as the institutions being public or private, the state politics in which the institution was imbedded, and the general behavior of the student body at a particular college or university. Due to this, institutional climate and context descriptions are included when relevant.
In presenting these narratives, I limit my personal commentary and explicit interpretations to the summary of the chapter as my construction of these narratives from the participants’ interviews is itself a form of interpretation. The variances in the lengths of each narrative are not judgments of interview quality or depth; rather, differences in length were related to variances between participants in the ways in which they chose to share their experiences. In the course of this research project, I came to deeply respect and appreciate the informed and heartfelt insights each professional shared in the course of his/her/hir interviews.

**Phillip: “I Really Want My Students to See Their Identity as a Gift.”**

Phillip served as the Center supervisor for his LGBTQ Resource Center at an elite, large, private institution in a large urban community. He identified as a white, gay/queer man and held a master’s degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs. He was one of two full-time staff members in the LGBTQ Resource Center. He had worked in the Center for two years as a graduate assistant prior to his current role. This was his first full time role post graduate school.

The full time position he recently acquired “was created based off of student needs” and an assessment of the institution’s climate. Phillip perceived the institution’s climate for students to be better than his undergraduate institution where there was an attempt to defund its LGBTQ Center. At the same time, Phillip also saw his current institution to be conservative in its policies of inclusion for LGBTQ persons, especially for transgender students. Phillip described his role as being focused primarily on supervision of undergraduate students, the coordination of “a large LGBTQ youth
conference” that the University hosted annually, the management of the university’s LGBTQ housing options, and the provision of educational programming to campus. In addition to these functional responsibilities, a major topic in Phillip’s narratives was the partnerships and relationships he and his office worked to create across campus in order to promote LGBTQ advocacy. Connected to this topic, Phillip described the perceptions and barriers that affected his collaborative work on campus.

“I’m a professional and this is my job.” Phillip’s identity as a new professional, and his age, were significant factors in his work experience. He shared, “I still have to assert myself in certain spaces or with certain people who might see me as too young, or they might not realize that I’m no longer a student.” This perception of Phillip’s youth led him to not be invited to meetings that he needed to attend in order to represent his office. When he was present, Phillip discussed feeling like his opinions were not as valued as his colleagues’.

Phillip also discussed feeling like his work was devalued because it was queer work. He stated that many of his student affairs colleagues were “slightly ignorant about LGBTQ organizations” and would make comments that undermined “the legitimacy of my role and my office and my profession.” An illustrative and reoccurring example included frequent confusions of Phillip’s office with queer student organizations. This confusion manifested in inquiries of Phillip for meeting times of that student organization. He also shared that instead of using the office’s appropriate name, “They’ll always give us the label of ‘The LGBT’.” Phillip expressed frustration at these perceived slights, stating, “We are in a professional office on campus…. We have a staff.”
For Phillip, the questions of professional legitimacy in relation to both age and queer identity had come up personally in his interactions on campus. Phillip stated:

I feel like they’re mistaking me for this young gay guy who is just like, “Oh, he’s super cute. Oh, look at him. Let’s pinch his cheeks.” I just feel like … they’re just completely tokenizing me in this cutesy way. That to me is frustrating because … I’m a professional and this is my job.

In response to these belittling perceptions of his age and sexual orientation, Phillip shared that he felt the need to overcome these invalidations. He stated, “I feel like just because I’m gay, as a gay, queer man…I have to do better than everyone else just to prove myself.”

“If something too progressive happened … that’d be bad.” Connected to perceptions of his work as a professional resource within the organization, Phillip described barriers and roadblocks he and his Center encountered in working to advocate for LGBTQ students on campus. For Phillip, he experienced resistance to LGBTQ topics and collaborations most often in meetings with campus partners. Phillip shared:

“Oftentimes, we have these meetings with external organizations. And then it's just kind of like, ‘We're acknowledging your existence. And, oh, maybe we could do some of these things.’” In these meetings, Phillip indicated he felt that he and his office were invited for the purpose of keeping up appearances of engaging with the LGBTQ community rather than to engage in actual collaborations and that after these meetings there was no follow up.

Phillip theorized that part of the reason for the stonewalling he experienced in meetings was due to the perception that the initiatives the LGBTQ Resource Center oversaw might be “too progressive.” He shared:
I think [the University] is just somewhat conservative especially with the Board of Trustees being usually a more conservative group…. Our University worries about its donors and so if something too progressive happened and a donor backed out that’d be bad.

Phillip shared an example of this fear of being too progressive in a specific example related to restrooms. He stated, “Turning a couple of multi-stall restrooms into all-gender, that’s too forward for the Board of Trustees. If they were to find out or just the worry of them finding out can really prevent a change like that from happening.”

In relation to changing policies and making progress on LGBTQ issues, Phillip explained that the private nature of his institution allowed administrators greater autonomy in determining the pace of change relative to state funded institutions. While other institutions in the state were mandated by law to have gender neutral restrooms, Phillip’s was not. In the building in which Phillip worked that contained the LGBTQ Resource Center, there was no all gender or gender neutral restroom. This meant that many students who visited the Center “use a bathroom that they don’t necessarily feel comfortable using” or “have to spend anywhere from five to 10 minutes walking to another building.”

“Maybe I’m too queer for them.” In addition to issues pertaining to resistance to change, Phillip discussed the impact that his colleagues’ disclosures of their personal LGBTQ identities had on his perceptions of inclusivity for LGBTQ people. Phillip stated that having other LGBTQ people engaged in the work was very helpful. Phillip shared an example of a colleague who worked in campus activities:

I actually had coffee with a fellow LGBT professional today. And I really appreciate some of the work that he’s doing. He works in Campus Activities here at the same institution. And… he was asking his colleagues in his office to put
their pronouns on their emails. And one of them was giving him trouble. They
were like, “Why? Why do I need to do it?” And him providing the explanation of
… if a student sees it and they’re gender non-conforming or trans or genderqueer
… they’re able to talk to us and we’re able to be an ally for them.

To Phillip, this professional’s push to include pronouns in emails was an affirming
exhibition of ally behavior. Phillip stated, “Hearing that he’s doing that work…., I just
thanked him.” Phillip claimed that having allies was important in LGBTQ advocacy work
because it meant that his office had less of a “burden” to carry in regards to advocating
for LGBTQ students. Phillip also noted that sometimes the voice of an ally carried further
than his or the Center’s voice. He stated that sometimes he and his office were seen as
“the queers on campus who do queer things and say queer things….” In this statement,
Phillip spoke to the isolation he felt in doing the work when other professionals and allies
did not take part.

Phillip elaborated on his feelings of isolation and discussed fellow LGBTQ
persons in student affairs who chose not to be out. Phillip stated:

I’m the queer token. … If I could just go to someone like that and talk to them
about that, but these colleagues where they’re gay but they’re not out, I just can’t
talk to them. I can’t rely on them or have personal connections with them because
I don’t have that privilege of passing [as not queer]. So that frustrates me on a
personal level, but it also frustrates me because then students who work for them
or see them or interact with them aren’t able to do the same.

In making this statement, Phillip expressed that being out in his perception was an act of
solidarity and a potential for connecting with and supporting LGBTQ students. Phillip
went on to explain why talking with these non-out LGBTQ persons was not an option for
him. He stated:

The fact that they aren’t talking about it makes me feel like if I were to talk to
them about LGBT things that they would feel uncomfortable … because they
don’t want to talk about it. Or because they might think that I’m assuming that they are; which for some of them, I know but they don’t know that I know. I don’t want them to be like, “Oh my god, he found out!” Or, “Who told him?” … I feel maybe I’m too queer for them. So, I feel uncomfortable being too queer around them. I feel more comfortable talking with fellow out queer people who aren’t able to pass.

For Phillip, being out was a source of connection, community, and support. When he perceived people to not take part in that community when they could, he felt isolated and disconnected from them.

In talking about the nature of being out on campus, Phillip discussed another layer of awareness that he was keyed into as a gay and queer man in a queer professional role.

Phillip stated:

In the past there’s been trouble with gay men doing things that they shouldn’t be doing. So me, being a gay man at this queer place, I have to be very careful… like an asexual nun…. I have to be that so that administration … doesn’t see me as this predator.

In sharing this, Phillip discussed his awareness of the political cost of being out. Despite these costs, the wariness of others’ perceptions, and isolation in his position, Phillip saw being out as incredibly important to his work.

“I see my identity as a gift.” Phillip preferred to wear “bright colors” and “rainbow things” as ways of expressing his identity. To Phillip, these markers of his queer and gay identity were important to his work with students. Phillip stated:

A lot of the gay and bi-male students here that we work with will come to me just because I identify openly as a gay man…. I feel I’m really able to help them out and give them whatever they need, whether that be advice or just someone to listen to. I think they’re able to trust me more with that stuff because I’m a younger gay man who they know has probably gone through the things that they’re experiencing.
Phillip’s connection to his students and his shared identity also helped to drive his programming decisions. He stated:

My personal experiences can help me with some of the programing that I plan. We found that there is a strong, strong need for education about PrEP and PEP, pre-exposure prophylaxis and post-exposure prophylaxis, medicines and the strategies that are used to prevent HIV infection… Since I myself am on Truvada, the PrEP medicine, and have had experience with obtaining it and I understand the potential side effects and how insurance works. Since I understand all that, it makes sense that maybe I should educate about it.

By sharing this example, Phillip highlighted the ways in which commonality in experience helped him to create programming that drew from personal experience but was also culturally appropriate for the students he served.

In addition to connecting with students, Phillip expressed a desire to help others affirm their identities. He stated:

I received support from the LGBT Center at my undergrad and so I want to be able to do that for my students… I kind of realized recently that I see my identity as a gift and I really want my students to see their identity as a gift rather than a curse.

Phillip’s desire to affirm his students’ identity was a major force in Phillip’s choice in career. After feeling both supported in his undergraduate LGBTQ Center and working there, Phillip explained, “I went in to my Student Affairs graduate program knowing that I wanted to do LGBT resource center work after graduating.”

Phillip described his current role as an “LGBTQ resource center professional” as being under the umbrella of multicultural work and under the even larger umbrella of student affairs. However, while student affairs in higher education was Phillip’s training he shared that this was not necessarily where he would eventually end up. In future positions, he wanted to work as an assistant director or director of an LGBTQ center.
However, if positions in higher education were not available related to LGBTQ specific work a second option was “moving on to LGBT non-profits” outside of higher education where he felt he could make an impact serving “underprivileged LGBTQ youth.”

**Lane: “I Think it's Critical that we Start to Ask Those Questions.”**

Lane served as the interim director of his institution’s LGBTQ Resource Center at a large public institution located in one of the state’s major metropolitan areas. He identified as a queer man of color. The Center in which he worked was staffed by himself, two graduate students, and several student workers. In this role as director, Lane worked to supervise and train the Center’s staff, support LGBTQ students on his campus and to advocate for them through educational training, crisis intervention, programming, and community outreach. Lane described his role in these words, “I help people to accomplish their dreams … but more specifically I help LGBT students and their allies find ways of being successful on campus.”

Lane was new to his role having just been named interim director three months prior to his interviews. In describing the campus climate, he stated, “It could be better.” He elaborated on this statement by sharing, “We [as a campus] have addressed the needs of LGB people and we've often left out the T, so right now our campus has been critically focused on addressing the needs of transgender folks.” Instances of addressing trans and genderqueer students’ needs included better communication of the institution’s preferred name policy and ensuring that new buildings on campus were constructed with gender neutral or all-gender restrooms.
Connected to the discussion of Lane’s campus climate was a discussion of the campus climate in comparison to other peer institutions. Lane described the pressure to perform:

As the largest institution in our system, it looks really bad if we're not at the forefront of these things and we're having our smaller sister institutions who are saying, "Yeah, we only have 2000 students and we're in a very conservative region; but we already have all-gender restrooms."

Lane went on to share that being behind these other institutions was a significant demerit to the work and perceived worth of the Center. Being ahead of these institution helped “to legitimize the role of the LGBT Resource Center on campus.”

In addition to the pressure to both serve students and measure up to the expectations of performance in comparison to other institutions, Lane stated, “We are not just the LGBT Resource Center for the institution. We're the LGBT Resource Center for the community.” Lane attributed this additional demand due to the lack of community resources for LGBTQ persons. Due to the entwinement of campus and community LGBTQ services, the LGBTQ Resource Center also served as the single largest donor to the local community’s Pride Festival which served as a point of contention with the University’s Student Life administration. Lane shared, “Sometimes their challenge was saying, ‘Well, why do you need to have X thousands of dollars to give to this organization? How does that really benefit us?’” In making the case for supporting the Pride Festival, Lane stated that the festival was “a critical community event” that provided opportunities for students to come together in pride and solidarity and that without the center’s funding “the event couldn't exist at all.”
“They might very well make the recommendation that we not be funded.”

Despite the visible support by senior administration at the University, the Center was not funded through the institution which meant that each year the Center had to ask for funding from the student activity fee. Lane stated:

We come back every year and we say, "Yes, you funded us, and these are all the awesome things we did," but there's a subjectivity that comes to that. If we have just the … the wrong mix of students on Student Government Association who just thought that there shouldn't be an LGBT Resource Center, they might very well make the recommendation that we not be funded.... I think in some ways [that] makes a statement about where we rank still on the list of [University] priorities.

To help better support the LGBTQ Resource Center, Lane had begun to charge outside organizations fees for inclusivity and safe zones trainings, services that used to be free of charge.

“How do we fix the system?” In further describing climate, Lane framed the historical evolution of the issues students faced by stating:

I would say, from the late '90s where people were still struggling with their identity and saying, "What's wrong with me? What can I do to make this better?"… I think that they've done a complete 180, and a lot of the students that I work with are saying, "No, I'm so good with who I am…but everybody else is a bunch of jerks, so how do we fix this system?”

Lane’s perspective was informed by his age and proximity to his students. He stated, “I speak from my millennial experience…. I've had a lot of the same experiences and I grew up in the same relative generation as most of them.” Lane’s age and newness to LGBTQ professional work was a pervasive undercurrent throughout the stories and anecdotes he shared; and in many ways it framed the major themes throughout his interviews including the way he perceived coming to and inhabiting his current position.
“Well, why don’t you throw your name in the ring?” Lane’s director departed unexpectedly between Lane’s first and second years of graduate school. This left Lane uncertain about the Center’s future direction and priorities. After sharing his uncertainties about the center with his partner, his partner responded, "Well, why don't you throw your name in the ring?...It sounds like a really interesting opportunity." Lane put his name forward as a potential appointment for the interim position; and “about a month later I was a director” For Lane his position was “the opportunity of a lifetime.”

In making the transition from graduate student to full-time director while in a graduate program, Lane described expected and unexpected circumstances. In discussing his preparation for the work of being an LGBTQ professional, Lane stated, “I actually find that a lot of the work that I'm doing now was work that I learned in my undergraduate education…. Working with the student organizations, we were given a lot of autonomy to manage our own budgets.”

However, Lane also described two unexpected components of his job. One component was the need to advocate on behalf of all students. He stated, “When you're invited to sit around the table for a diversity committee or a gender committee you're not just there to represent the voices of LGBT students and their concerns and their needs, but the concerns of all students.”

This need to consider the concerns of all student became salient in a recent event in which the Muslim community on his campus felt threatened. Lane shared:

We may have queer, Muslim students who are being impacted by this tragedy … but in some ways I'm not necessarily just addressing queer students. I'm … pulling away from that and thinking, ‘Okay, our work is so important; but right now, our campus is facing a larger crisis and so let's address that so that we can
also continue to have conversations around broader equity and equality on campus.’

In addition to considering the needs of students beyond the LGBTQ students, Lane stated that he strongly adhered to a bipartisan perspective. He stated:

I am 100% bipartisan in my work. In my personal life I would probably be so far left that I would fall off the left cliff. So, I know it's really challenging for the students who are saying, "Oh, well, we want to put this Democratic poster up in the LGBT Resource Center." And, I'm all about them letting them make the space something that's theirs; but I'm always challenging them, “Well, is that nonpartisan? Well, no, it isn't. So is that at least bipartisan?” “Well, no.” Then I'll say, “Well, if you're going to create a Democratic flyer then I need to see the Republican flyer right next to it.”

Lane seemed to express surprise as his staunchness in adhering to a bipartisan outlook, he continued:

In my personal life, I'm like, wow, that's so interesting that you have this strong fervency for some people who are directly opposed to your apparent values. But, we do have students who identify strongly with a political party that may not be aligned with what I think of as traditional LGBT values.

In describing this bipartisan perspective on his work, Lane stressed the importance of ensuring that he and his staff provided space and programming that represented all LGBTQ students.

“**You can't always be addressing all issues at the same time.**” In contrast to the professional expectation that as a director Lane represented the needs of all students, Lane made the argument for an LGBTQ Resource Center separate from other minority serving offices. Lane shared that by having a separate office from a Women’s Center or a Multicultural Center, the LGBTQ Resource Center was able to stay at the forefront of LGBTQ students’ needs. He went on to state:
I would say, this is probably from my previous experience, is that typically when those departments are one and the same…I think it then results in stretching a budget and prioritizing, I don't want to say certain identities, but certain initiatives above others … You can't always be addressing all issues at the same time. My role as a staff member of the LGBT Resource Center on campus means that I can be dedicated to LGBTQ identity and ally initiatives.

In addition to touching on the importance of distinct cultural identity centers, Lane also talked about the experience of supervising two graduate assistants in the LGBT Resource Center who did not hold personal LGBTQ identities. He shared, “It created an added challenge because I think it's often easier to do those Safe Space or Safe Zone trainings when you have that knowledge, when you have that personal experience with LGBT identity.” Having non-LGBT graduates in the LGBTQ Resource Center was a first in the Center’s 18 year history. This meant that Lane had to do all Safe Zone trainings for the first three months of the school year while his graduate students learned to draw upon LGBTQ stories to support the content of the workshops.

Despite this additional work, Lane saw positives from this staffing experience. He felt that having allies give these presentations made them more accessible to other non-LGBTQ persons because they could ask “off-color” questions without offending the presenter. Lane also believed that having allies in these roles was developmental for the graduate assistants and the communities they served as it broke down assumptions and stereotypes that others held about who worked in an LGBTQ Resource Center. Lane stated:

When she says, "I'm working in the LGBTQ Resource Center," for her peers and for her colleagues, they're probably thinking, ‘Is this person a lesbian? Is she transgender? I'm not sure. What does that mean?’ For her, it gives her the opportunity to challenge other people's closely held beliefs and belief systems.
For Lane, being heterosexual did not mean that a person could not do LGBTQ work but he was aware that it changed one’s approach to the work.

“All of these layers are bleeding into each other.” Lane stated, “I know that my role as a director on campus will go a lot further than their [his fellow students] graduate assistantships will.” He went onto clarify that it would likely help him advance faster and that his experiences in graduate school would have greater professional legitimacy.

Despite these advantages, Lane expressed difficulties with assuming a full-time director role while in graduate school. He shared:

All of these layers are bleeding into each other all the time, so maybe I'm in class but I'm getting a message from a graduate assistant saying, “Oh, this crisis came up, and I don't know how to handle it.” So, I'm that student trying to text under the desk and having to step out to take this crisis.

In sharing this, Lane felt he was juggling two distinctly different developmental roles. In one moment, he could simultaneously be a student and a fulltime professional.

Lane’s new role shifted his relationships with his peers as it had for another student who went full time in her second year. Within his cohort he shared, “Everything seems to be a lot more formal. … My friends who are in my program who are not in professional roles, they treat us like we're their faculty now, too.” Lane’s full time position was helpful professionally and at the same time it created a developmental and social mismatch between him and his fellow graduate students.

In considering his future, Lane stated, “I'm very candid about my not returning after this year. Despite it being my dream job … folks know that I'm planning to continue on to pursue a PhD in Sociology.” In his current role and in his graduate program, Lane was working on a thesis to better understand the impact that LGBTQ support centers play.
in “the success and retention of LGBT students.” For Lane, this was an important question because he felt, “It's going to be harder to make the claim that we need more [LGBTQ centers]; and for those that exist, it's harder to continue to make the claim with any real certainty about how we're affecting students when we can't measure them.” Lane believed that sociology provided a discipline through which he could ask questions to determine concrete statistics on the numbers of LGBTQ persons in higher education and measure LGBTQ students’ experiences and outcomes in college. Lane stated, “I think it’s critical that we ask those questions,” because through these questions Lane believed LGBTQ practitioners and institutions could better serve LGBTQ students.

“I try to reflect that in everything that I do.” In describing his personal LGBTQ identity, Lane shared:

When I was a first year student in college,… I would say, "Well, I'm gay and I'm biracial. I'm a student. I have a boyfriend.” … I would rank those in that order. Now, I very specifically identify as a queer man of color.

In describing his shift in identifying as queer as opposed to gay, Lane shared several anecdotes of questioning and struggle. In adolescence, he stated:

I really had to come to terms … with trying to figure out what my identity is in terms of my race and ethnicity. … How will that affect the way I experience other gay people regardless of their identity or, in some cases, with very specific identities? We hear about LGBT history being formed by cisgender white men, and I certainly experienced that as I started to go out and meet new people. Where I thought of us as relating, recognizing that we can't fully relate because my skin color is different, and how does that affect dating and how does that affect friendships?

Lane identified his struggle with relating to being “gay” as that term for him was bound up with whiteness, he went on to state:
There's a lot of gray areas in just identifying as gay because whose voice does that actually represent? In identifying as queer, I'm trying to make a statement of being a lot more critically aware of the limited voices in the identity that is gay.

On this question of representation, Lane elaborated:

Within our gay male community, we have conversations about all of the different subsets of gay. Are you a femme? Are you masculine? Are you a bear, a twink, an otter, a pup? We come out with these different labels for what it means … to be gay. For me, I started to think if we have subcategories for this, then what does it mean to just be gay? Is that just this concept that we have romantic or sexual or fantasy-based attractions to other men, or is there another element of this identity that makes up what it means to be gay?

In identifying as a queer, Lane is able to name the fluidity of his sexual orientation without having to fit into one of the “subcategories” of gay. By identifying further as a “queer man of color,” Lane stated, “I really value a concurrent prioritization of identities in recognizing that each little morsel of our identity really impacts how we show up each day.” Despite this intent to experience his intersecting identities equally, Lane also acknowledged the need to connect with the broader LGBTQ community to prioritize his queer identity at the expense of naming his racial identity. He went on to state, “If I didn't prioritize … my experiences as a queer person over my experience as a person of color or as a man in general, then my opinions about queer identity would be devalued.” In doing queer work on campus, Lane acknowledged the intersectional tension between his racial and queer identities in which his racial identity subverted his queer identity and authority in queer spaces.

Beyond this pressure to prioritize his queerness above his racial identity, Lane’s personal experience with intersectional identities seemed to not only inform but drive his work on behalf of students. Lane stated:
As a queer person of color and recognizing that those voices are being left out and that there really is this intersecting, nuanced, complex, and somewhat murky and messy world of identities, making sure in my work now that I'm able to bring that out, a creative space that allows those voices to be present at the table is really, really important. I try to reflect that in everything that I do.

Intersectionality was central to Lane’s personal experience and his professional work.

**Jonathan: “I Can’t Leave My Identities at the Door.”**

Jonathan was the coordinator for the LGBTQ Resource Center at a midsize, public, state institution located in a small city. Jonathan identified as a queer, Latinx/Mexican American man. He had been in this role for less than a year and served as his institution’s only full time professional specifically dedicated to supporting LGBTQ students. According to Jonathan, the Center was established because there was “a lot of bigotry, and hate, and discrimination happening.” As a result, “students essentially lobbied our cabinet, our President, our Provost, asking for resources for them.” The President’s response was, “No. We're not going to provide resources for queer identified students.” As a result of this denial, a group of students sought the help of the student government which resulted in the LGBTQ Resource Center being funded out of the University’s student activity fee.

Since that time, the LGBTQ Resource Center and Jonathan’s supervisor worked to assess the LGBTQ community’s needs and made changes to the University to better support students. In speaking with Jonathan, it was apparent that he perceived the environment within which he operated to be overwhelmingly positive. He felt that students were “comfortable being themselves,” and that there was active engagement in
the local pride parade. Jonathan also noted profuse support from faculty and staff who invited him into classrooms to talk about queer identity, issues and concerns.

Jonathan described the overall tone of his work as a quest for betterment. He stated, “Even though we're doing good things, and this perception is good, I think there are always ways to improve.” Despite this positive climate, Jonathan still faced challenges in his work.

“We pay for you.” The largest percentage of Jonathan’s role was allocated to directly responding to students’ needs and demands. Jonathan’s role was to supervise eight undergraduate employees charged with programming for the campus, to serve as a confidential reporter for students who disclose they had been sexually harassed or assaulted, and to socialize with LGBTQ students to better understand their concerns as they related to campus life. When Jonathan was not perceived to be doing enough direct student contact in his role, students let him know. He stated, “‘Jonathan, we pay for you,’ is how they say it, ‘Our student fee funds pay for you to support us as students.’ A lot of them not really understanding why I'm making those connections across campus.”

In taking time away from meeting directly with students, Jonathan was engaged in administrative advocacy and support. Through these meetings, Jonathan was able to advocate for issues such as using preferred pronouns in the University’s classrooms or consulting on programs such as the Vagina Monologues and bringing a queer identity lens to programming. Because of this administrative work, Jonathan was working to gain funding from the institution to supplement these activities.
Jonathan pointed to the funding of the Queer Resource Center from student fees as a point of pride. However, Jonathan also saw this as an added duty in his job. He stated, “We actually have to go every year through a budget cycle of actually requesting funds…We have to prove why we deserve the funds that we get.” In order to accomplish this goal, Jonathan tracked the numbers of programs he provided, the number of students attending programs, and the number of students who utilized the Center’s physical space. However, there were limits to Jonathan’s ability accurately assess LGBTQ student services on his campus as his institution did not track sexual orientation or gender identity in its enrollment statistics and thus it was impossible to determine the absolute number of LGBTQ students on campus. Jonathan saw advocating for the ability to capture these statistics as crucial to better supporting and retaining LGBTQ students.

“That's how I see myself … [as] a scholar-practitioner professional.” In the course of describing his work, it was clear that Jonathan’s role was informed by his prior work experience, scholarship on LGBTQ identity development, and his graduate work. In describing his prior work experience, Jonathan stated that housing helped prepare him for his LGBTQ role by giving him supervision skills with his resident assistants. In that role, he helped them to plan and execute programs which was a transferable component to his role as an LGBTQ professional as was being on call and working with students in crisis.

In discussion preparation for his role, the theme of being a scholar-practitioner emerged as a signature element of Jonathan’s self-description. He stated:

When I think about LGBTQ as a profession, I'm looking at promising practices, I'm looking at literature that has been published, I'm looking at ways that I can not only better myself as a professional, but I can better my Resource Center here. That's how I see myself, is this idea of a scholar-practitioner professional.
Jonathan’s mindset of being a scholar practitioner was woven throughout his professional history beginning in graduate school and following him into his full-time roles. Jonathan discussed bringing social justice to the forefront of his work with his students in housing where he served as a full-time housing coordinator for a year post graduate school before coming to his current role:

I would be working with my resident assistants … around social identity development… It wasn't there in the sense of what I had to do in my housing role, but it's something that I … would have trainings with my RAs about thinking about social identity development, and the ways that they're going to be working with their students and the multiple identities that they have.

Jonathan mentioned that his colleagues in housing did not have the same focus on social justice and identity. Jonathan’s focus on these topics ultimately shaped the direction of his career into LGBTQ work. He shared:

As I think about my trajectory in student affairs,… I really wanted to work in diversity and inclusion work. I knew that specifically, but I knew that working in housing is kind of like a stepping stone. You gain that student perspective. It wasn't until I was here on campus that I was working in my housing role that I was connecting with the resource centers. I was making connections with the coordinators … Then, when the position became available, I was like, ‘This is something that I can see where my professional sense would be going, in terms of my career.’

Jonathan’s commitment to social justice shaped his past and future career orientation. He stated:

I know I want to go into a doctoral PhD program, and really engage in the work … specifically around LGBTQ and queer identities. I also know that that is an interest and passion of doing that work, in terms of research, but then also thinking about a broader diversity and inclusion work … I know that down the line, I want to work more broadly for marginalized students, which can include our queer identified students, but also students of color, or veteran status students.
The underpinning of this drive to do social justice, diversity, and inclusion research connected directly to the central theme of Jonathan’s narratives which was that his work was deeply connected to the personal social identities he holds, particularly his queer and Mexican-American social identities.

“Yeah, I’m a queer man of color.” Though at the time of his interviews Jonathan identified as queer, he also shared that his affiliation with the LGBTQ community had shifted over time. Jonathan stated:

First coming out, queer was not the word that I used. It was gay. It wasn't until for me going into college that like I felt like gay didn't really encompass exactly what my sexual identity is … I was in a longer-term relationship where gay didn't really fit the way that my attraction was there.... For me, queer was a term that was kind of all-encompassing and could be open to … the type of physical, emotional, and romantic attraction that I can have.

To Jonathan, identifying as gay meant that he had to be a biological man in a relationship with another biological man. Because he had a history of not strictly adhering to this type of relationship, Jonathan felt queer was a more accurate description of his sexual orientation.

In addition to identifying as queer because of his attraction to non-cisgender persons, Jonathan also felt that the term queer helped to capture his relationship to his gender identity in a way that gay did not. He stated, “When I think about my queer identity,… queerness may [also] equate to feminism.” In Jonathan’s perception, his gender presentation challenged traditional notions of masculinity.

Jonathan drew his understanding of masculinity from his Mexican-American heritage. And it was this particular heritage that his queerness seemed to be at odds with. Jonathan stated:
I feel like the way that I see my queerness, I feel like I see it through this machismo lens where I need to kind of have this dominance or control in some sort of way… The reason I think about that is because of my uncles and being brought up like, "This is what a man needs to do."

Jonathan’s queer identity allowed him to question his traditional notions of masculinity within his Mexican-American heritage; but no matter how much he questioned, the tension between how he expressed his gender identity and how he was expected to express it was ever present.

Throughout Jonathan’s narratives the intersection between his queer identity and his Mexican-American identity could not be separated. When asked by a colleague to consider a social justice issue strictly from a personal racial lens and not a queer lens, Jonathan responded, “No, I can't parse that out.” Jonathan also could not separate his professional identity from his personal identities. He stated, “I can't leave my identities at the door….My identities were constantly coming up in the work that I do. Even when I worked in housing…I was very much articulate of, ‘Yeah, I identify as a queer man of color.’” For Jonathan, sharing his social identities was part of his commitment to authenticity in his work with students and other professionals. Indeed, his current role honored his desire to express all aspects of himself in ways that his former work in housing did not. He stated, “I feel very humbled and very privileged to work somewhere where I don't have to have a specific dress code. I don't have to have a certain way to act.” Jonathan’s LGBTQ work was not only an avenue to help others, it was a commitment to self-expression.
Shel: “I Knew What it was Like Not to Have the Resources When Coming Out.”

Shel worked as a program coordinator at her university’s LGBTQ Resource Center at a large public institution, located in a rural college. Shel identified as a queer and bisexual, white, cisgender woman. Within the LGBTQ Resource Center, Shel was one of four full-time employees. The Center also employed a graduate student and several undergraduate interns. Within her role, Shel oversaw the Center’s mentorship program, discussion groups, programmatic outreach, marketing, and assessment projects.

Shel had been in her first-full time role for just over a year. In describing her Center’s resources, it was well endowed in terms of staff and budgeting compared to her undergraduate and graduate institutions. Shel’s current center had a dedicated programming budget “that comes from student affairs that’s specifically for our Center” which was sizable enough to allow them to invite big speakers like “Laverne Cox” and “Larry Kramer.” Despite being a well-resourced LGBTQ Center, the institution provided a varied climate for LGBTQ students.

“It’s never going to be a completely safe space.” Shel identified three key factors that she perceived to impact climate: the location of the institution, the specific identities within the LGBTQ community that students held, and the specific spaces and micro-climates students inhabited on campus. In discussing the geographic location of the institution Shel shared, “I think that there's still fear for students… It's very in the middle of nowhere and so a lot of times, the students that come to campus, they've never seen … an LGBT person before.” She also shared:

I think that if you were to ask somebody who has never been to anywhere other than [this University], they would probably say, “Oh, this is such a terrible
climate, like, people are getting hurt.” Because, I mean, you can't escape. It's never going to be a completely safe space and there's always going to be people who are bigoted and have issues with people and things are going to happen.

Within the town that surrounds the University, Shel shared that “it’s still a pretty conservative area.” She also shared that while there was an LGBTQ community group, gathering spaces were limited to a “bookstore” and “a bar.”

Shel went on to discuss the differing experiences of various identities within the LGBTQ community. Shel stated:

I think that even just within the L&G community, a lot of resources have been available for a long time; but for those who identify within the bisexual spectrum, a lot of students are like, “I just didn’t know that I would ever even meet another person who’s bisexual and pretty much nobody knows what that means and especially my family.”

In commenting on the experiences of isolation amongst members of the bi-community, Shel discussed programming that was created to address students’ needs to find connection. She shared, “We host discussion groups that are identity-based and …and it's amazing how much students feed off of that space. Just being around other bi people.” She went on to state that there are similar spaces for “trans and gender-nonconforming students.”

Safe spaces were crucial for LGBTQ students both through identity groups and the LGBTQ Resource Center as a physical refuge. She stated:

I had one student that recently talked to me about how they're exploring their gender identity … and they came into the Center recently wearing a top that was not stereotypical to their gender … and [they] had felt good in the Center.

However, when her student was not in the Center they felt uncomfortable. Shel shared that safe places for LGBTQ students were “few and far between.”
Restrooms in particular were an issue on Shel’s campus. She stated, “I don't know if it's ironic or sad or what it is, but there's actually not even a gender-inclusive restroom in the building in which our Center is. Which can definitely be an issue.” Creating more safe spaces for non-cisgender students and expanding the physical size of the LGBTQ resource Center were two key advocacy efforts on Shel’s campus.

“I just love the work that I do and I know that I'm making changes on campus.” Shel described part of her work as bringing conversations about LGBTQ issues and support to other campus offices:

I've been reaching out to different departments that maybe aren't specifically LGBT. I've been working with global programs and our career services office and our cultural center and making sure that there's some LGBT inclusivity amongst all of that.

Shel worked to create inclusive climates throughout campus by providing Safe Zones trainings and consulting with other offices on ensuring that services were inclusive.

Shel volunteered to facilitate dialogues with the fraternity and sorority community and volunteered at homecoming events so that “people saw my face” and “knew I was from the LGBT Center.” She believed that being present helped to combat negative stereotypes and myths about the LGBTQ community for those outside of it and showed support for members within the community. She stated:

I think sometimes when people don't understand what it's like to be LGBT, they have all these notions of what that means. I think when they see somebody who is successfully handling working on campus and being queer…, I think I could see myself being sort of like a role model for people.

Connected to being a positive queer role model for students generally, Shel believed it was important to provide opportunities for students to work in the LGBTQ center for
their professional development. She recently gave a reference to a former graduate student employee who was applying for full time work in an identity based center. She shared, “If they hadn't worked in our center… that might not have happened.” Being a visible role model on campus was a consistent theme throughout Shel’s narratives that was summed up by her statement, “I just love the work that I do and I know that I'm making changes on campus.”

Shel was proud of her work and visibly out on campus. However, off campus, she worried about the repercussions of talking about her work. She stated:

I occasionally also drive for [a ride share service]. And if you're in the [University] area, usually you have some sort of affiliation with the university. So, generally when people ask me … if I work at [the University], I judge on how safe the answer might be…. Maybe I tell them I work in student affairs or … if I'm feeling particularly comfortable, I might tell them that I work in an LGBT Center.

This situation touched on a dichotomy in her professional and personal lives. While Shel prided herself on using her identity to combat stereotypes and bigotry at work, she worried about the repercussions of that bigotry in other settings and felt at times that she could not be open about her identity.

“I think a common thread for a lot of LGBT professionals is wanting to be that person to help out students that you wish you had had.” As Shel’s described her journey to her current role, it was clear that there was a deep entwinement between her personal story of discovering her identity and her desire to help students. Shel was “very masculine presenting” and identified as “queer.” In describing her affiliation the term queer, she said, “It just kind of feels right. I guess that if I were to identify with something that's more specific, [I’d] identify within the bi, kind of continuum.”
Shel’s first awareness of her sexual orientation was in middle school. She shared, “I'm from a small town … so there weren't really any LGBT resources that I could go to, so I found a lot of my information online like, “What does this mean? What different types of identities exist?” When she first got to college, Shel found an LGBTQ community; but it was small. She explained, “It wasn't really accepted at my school. There was a group that met occasionally…. It wasn't like a solid group that was out and proud on campus.” Throughout undergrad, Shel described coming into her queer identity through involvement in activities and the LGBTQ community that surrounded her. During this time, she looked for LGBTQ role models and mentors but could not find many. She shared:

I couldn't turn on the TV and see people like me. … I know as undergrads we were technically considered adults; but there weren't really a lot of adults in my life that identified within the community that I felt like I could look up to and be like, "Oh I can be out of college and be queer or whatever."

In reflecting on discovering her identity without role models, Shel connected her experience to her present work. Shel stated, “I think a common thread for a lot of LGBT professionals is wanting to be that person to help out students that you wish you had had. And I definitely see that kind of in myself.” This experience of questing in her queer identity without a role model set the stage for the beginning of Shel’s professional journey.

“If I were a person that identified as heterosexual, I don't think that I would look towards being in a LGBT center as a full-time career.” Shel served as a resident assistant, orientation leader, and a leadership assistant in her undergraduate LGBTQ Center. She went directly into a graduate program in Student Affairs and Higher
Education. At first, Shel shared, “I really thought housing was my calling…. I did that for my first year and decided that wasn’t for me.”

While in graduate school Shel shared that some of her “grad papers and stuff were on LGBT related things, like gender-inclusive housing and stuff like that.” This work helped spur Shel’s “synthesis of identities” in relation to her bisexuality and queerness such that she better understood and appreciated these identities. While this synthesis was occurring, Shel had an advisor for an LGBT organization she was a part who identified as “a lesbian woman with a partner and adopted children” and whom Shel found to be “a really positive role model.”

This collection of experiences resulted in Shel’s choice to pursue a full-time role in an LGBTQ center. She shared:

I would say that if I were a person that identified as heterosexual, I don't think that I would look towards being in a LGBT center as a full-time career. … Part of the reason that I'm here is because I knew what it was like not to have the resources when coming out.

Shel found that working in an LGBTQ professional role gave her greater comfort in expressing herself in a “masculine way” and that she would “feel a lot less safe dressing in a masculine way at other types of businesses or fields.”

In addition to shaping her career, Shel also believed that her queerness aided her in her work. She claimed, “I think that you almost gain this immediate trust and respect from students that maybe if you weren't out as queer…. I don't know that it would be as immediate.” Shel perceived her queer identity to be beneficial in relationship building with LGBTQ students.
“I would feel a lot more comfortable working in a stand-alone LGBT center…” In addition to acknowledging the role her queerness played in her career decisions, Shel remarked on the impact that her White race also made on her career choices. Shel explained:

Knowing that I am a white person, and I'm white presenting, and I don't have the experiences of people of color, I think that I would feel a lot more comfortable working in a stand-alone LGBT center….Again, looking back at that immediate connection with students and stuff like that, I think that it would be easier as a first, full-time professional job to be in a stand-alone LGBT center than in a multicultural center.

Shel acknowledged the issue of whiteness in the LGBTQ Resource Center in which she worked and the Center’s ability to accommodate persons of color. She stated:

Currently, all four of our full-time staff members identify as white so I've been trying to put the work in to make our space as friendly as possible to our queer and trans folk of color. Trying to do collaborations with other cultural identity centers. Trying to make sure we have spaces that are open to queer and trans people of color, so we have discussion groups that we hold. Trying to make sure I have facilitators for them that I think will be good, just because I don't ... they're closed spaces, so I wouldn't feel comfortable facilitating that as a white person.

In realizing that her whiteness might limit her ability to connect and support queer and trans students of color, Shel worked with her non-white colleagues to provide community spaces for non-white members of the LGBTQ community. At the same time, having the privilege to work in queer-White spaces was not something that Shel critically addressed.


Monica was the Education and Leadership Program Manager in her LGBTQ Resource Center at a large, public, research-intensive institution. She identified as a multiracial Black, queer, cis-woman. Monica had been in her current role for a year and worked previously as a graduate student in the Center while she pursued her degree in
Social Work. Monica’s oversaw assessment, coordinated external trainings, and facilitated internal staff development. Assessment was important for the center as it allowed the staff to determine the effectiveness of programs while also “showing others that this is why our office still matters and this is why you should probably give us more money.”

The LGBTQ Resource Center’s staff consisted of five full-time staff members, six graduate students in graduate associate positions and internship roles, and seven undergraduate students with the majority of these staff members identifying within the LGBTQ community. Due to the size of the center, Monica was charged with creating a cohesive professional development plan for staff, graduates, and students.

“The way I do my hair… doesn't define that professionalism for me.” An ongoing component of Monica’s office’s professional development discussion centered on the expression of one’s queer identity and the way that this expression might conflict with expectations of professionalism. In describing her and her office’s perspective on professionalism and professional dress, Monica stated:

We want our students, and each other, to feel the freedom to still engage in that self-expression … how that might look different than other folks' self-expression, and to engage in the conversations about doing that, [including] potential consequences … that maybe this new job requires you to wear this thing, and how do we still maintain that self-expression?

Monica went on to share that this discussion stemmed from “our own personal experiences” and “wanting to allow our students … to engage in a conversation around, this is what is mainstream expected for professional.”
Monica gave examples of mainstream professionalism and noted “that folks who are read as women … are wearing skirts or dresses,” and that “the folks who are read as men … are expected to wear the dress pants and the button up shirts.” In bringing these topics up in professional development discussions, Monica explained that staff wanted to challenge these traditional gender norms embedded in the concept of professionalism and bring in complexities such as being a man while wearing a “frilly top” and having that be “very professional for you.” The overarching purpose of these conversations was to support “students in feeling confident and comfortable” when their professional choices might violate mainstream norms.

Monica described role modeling as being critically important in challenging the notion of dichotomy between professional dress and queer dress. She shared, “I can show up to work, be wearing jeans, have my triple nose-piercings, and … I can still appear to be professional in my mannerisms or in my interactions.” Strict appearance did not define professionalism for Monica. In addition to the discussion about professionalism and gender norms, staff development also focused on engaging staff “in a lot of personal and self-reflection” about their own identities, to stay current on social justice issues in the world, and to challenge “both our students and our staff to think very intersectionally.”

“It shouldn't have to also be the job of the only black identified person to bring that up.” In her first year as a full-time staff, Monica stated, “We've been…engaging in a lot of conversations around Black Lives Matter and what is our role in that and how does some of that … impact our work or impact us personally.” Specifically, Monica shared that these conversations have brought forward the
intersection of race, queer identity and how race “needs to be constantly at the forefront” of our work and “how sometimes we fail at that and how we need to do better.”

Prior to these dialogues the intersection of race and LGBTQ identity had been “an oversight…on our part in directly addressing the violence that the black community has faced.” Specifically, Monica shared:

> Our campus had some pretty awful racist, anti-black flyers floating around on campus and a neighboring campus as well as had some awful things written on spray paint on a building and we did not immediately kind of say, "Hey this is happening on our campus…. This is something that we need to talk about, and this is something that we need to address and be conscious of because this does affect all of us and may really affect some of us." That did not happen until I brought up that that needed to happen.

Monica found it problematic that she had to be the sole person to bring discussions of race into the Center. Monica stated:

> Typically it would be my job to also bring up some of those conversations; but [I wanted] to call on others to recognize that it shouldn't have to also be the job of the only black identified person to bring that up in the space.

This discussion of Monica’s experiences with her colleagues relating to the intersection of race and queer identity mirrored Monica’s perceptions of campus climate and a lack of awareness of differential experiences within the queer community based on race.

> "What does a safe campus look like for everyone?" Monica shared, “I think because our University … as a whole is fairly White, fairly upper-middle class … people forget that because an area or an environment feels safe or inclusive for one individual, that that doesn't mean it's safe for everyone.” Monica found the institutional climate to be very welcoming and supportive to White and cisgender students, but less so for queer persons of color and genderqueer persons. Issues of inclusion ranged from push back
about the importance of “pronouns on class rosters” to people not feeling physically safe “walking down the street holding my partner’s hand.”

When prompted to ask if she thought a campus could be safe for all students, Monica responded:

"What does a safe campus look like for everyone?"... I don't think it's a space void of conflict or it's a space void of harm, but it's a space where everyone is acknowledging the harm being done and working to do better.... Owning, moving on from harm, and acknowledging that identities matter, and that there's difference in what's experienced in [different] identities.

In working to do better, the Center was focused on creating spaces for persons with multiple marginalized identities and creating more inclusive policies. Monica shared, “In order to do a cultural shift, you also have to have a policy or a foundation to support that.” Along with policy changes, Monica felt that education on policies was a critical component of her outreach work because in order for those policies to be effective.

In considering the intersection of identities, Monica and her colleagues had begun to create programming focused on “the most marginalized students” particularly for queer students of color and genderqueer students. These initiatives were met with resistance as Monica shared:

I had somebody in training the other day … asking me, “Well, Why don't you have a space for gay men?” I was like, “Well we do, but we've gotten this call and this need explicitly expressed from our students to have these other spaces.”

The issue of intragroup privilege within the LGBTQ community, especially when expressed by gay men was frustrating to Monica. “Commonly … gay men get all of the queer spaces. Most of those spaces were created with that identity in mind,” she stated.
“I am interested in continuing to do some diversity and inclusion sort of work.” Monica’s connection to her work was through the lens of Social Work. Monica considered herself a social worker “even before I had my master’s degree” as she also held a bachelor’s degree in the discipline. Although Monica had worked in student affairs as a resident assistant and in orientation in undergraduate, she commented, “I just didn't realize until I got to grad school … that I could be doing social work in higher education.”

Monica’s field placement was in the University’s LGBTQ Resource Center. Her motivation for taking that placement was because, “It kind of melded identity specific work as well as this more broad social justice education type work.” Monica went on to state:

I was not aware of my own queerness at the time, when I started here. I had just begun thinking about it and so it wasn't an, "Oh I'm queer, I'm going to do queer work," sort of introduction. It was a, "I want to do social justice education through an identity based lens and this works."

When an opportunity to become full-time staff occurred upon graduating, Monica applied.

Monica described feeling like an “imposter” professionally. In higher education settings, she felt that “social work is discounted as adding great value to the higher education” and that her colleagues in higher education looked down upon her social work degree. She acknowledge that her social work degree gave her a different background that gave her a code of ethics to draw upon and a specific professional orientation, but that she had to learn how to do social work in a higher education context.
In considering the combination of her social work background, work in higher education, and her current role, Monica was content but ready for a change. She stated:

I'm planning on this being my last year at the [LGBTQ Resource Center]… I plan to stay in higher ed…. Long term, I would really love to be moving into thinking about … racial and sexuality, attractionality, and/or gender development for folks who have been adopted and how we can support people through that identity development. That is my dream and one day when I pursue my own doctorate … But for now, I think I am interested in continuing to do some diversity and inclusion sort of work, but not only through the lens of gender, sexuality, and attractionality.

Monica saw her current role as one step towards a broader focus on social justice work that brought other facets of diversity into greater focus.

“In wasn’t out when I started.” In beginning her work within the Center Monica shared:

When I started it [queerness] was a piece of work that was to be done. It wasn't necessarily something that I was passionate about…. The work became my passion because I was doing the work. I think that has been a huge shift.

When she began her role, Monica shared that “I wasn't out when I started, or didn't have any sense of my own identity when I started.” Instead, she saw herself as an ally.

As an ally, Monica found that her voice in relation to LGBTQ work was ignored in activist spaces. During one demonstration protesting a non-discrimination policy that did not include gender identity or sexual orientation protections that she took part in she was “pushed to the side.” As Monica came to understand her personal queer identity, her voice was given greater regard and her relationship to her professional work shifted. She stated:

When I started, it was harder … because I wasn't providing a direct experience or an idea of what a particular identity could be like and now it's kind of become more second nature because I do feel more comfortable sharing pieces of myself.
She continued:

Working in the [LGBTQ Resource Center] … Is the only reason that I am conscious and comfortable with my identity…. It's sort of forced me along in that development.

Monica felt that sharing her personal coming out experience was imperative. She explained, “It's important to have representation. I think it's also really important to have stories that are not the dominant narrative. … I didn't come out until I was like 23-years-old.” Monica’s narrative allowed others to see a different journey to realizing their queer identities.

“I’m never just…” Monica identified as “a queer, black woman.” Monica avowed:

That combo is really important, because … I'm never just a multiracial, black woman. I'm never just a queer woman. I'm never just a woman. Those have to be lumped together for me, in order to remotely understand … my lived experience.

Monica’s identities were interrelated and multifaceted. For example, in describing her queer identity Monica shared, “Queer really is sort of used as a political term, not just to mean that I'm not straight. … Also, a huge part of that is not living into gendered role and gendered expectations.” Monica further articulated, “Growing up, I pushed back a lot on the gendered nature of everything, the gender roles, and all of the gender stereotypes; but I don't think I ever questioned my identity as a woman.” Later, she had different language to describe her experiences and explained that she was “a cis-woman” who did not subscribe to her “gender role” and pushed back against “the socialization of gender.”

Monica believed that part of the reason she did not come into her queer identity until after college was related to the interplay of other identities. Monica explained:
Multiracial, black woman has sort of … stunted my development in my queer identity.... I needed to come into my racial identity before I could consider my sexual orientation identity, because that was more visible and assumed long before my sexual orientation … I don't think I was necessarily conscious of any other identity until I was conscious of my queer identity. As I was coming into my queerness, I was also becoming more aware of the many other social identities that exist. Then, came into thinking about my own ability, size, and all that stuff.

Monica’s depiction of coming into awareness of her varying identities underscored the statement that she was “never just” any singular identity and that as she came to understand more of her identities, she came to understand how they were interrelated.

**Laura: “My Queerness … Led Me to This Deeper Commitment to Justice.”**

Laura was a program coordinator in the LGBTQ Resource Center at a midsize, private, selective institution in a suburban setting. Laura identified as queer, white, and cis-privileged femme. She reported to a director who was the only staff in the Center prior to her arrival. Laura oversaw programming, educational sessions, and worked directly with students through one on one consultations and leadership support.

The campus had an active LGBTQ group which was started in the ‘90s but the LGBTQ Center was not founded until 2011. It received its funding through the Provost’s Office and functioned to provide outreach to students and administrative advocacy.

“Tracking data” was integral to showing student utilization of the Center and its programs; but without an ability to collect LGBTQ demographic data on students, they had “no way of knowing” the makeup or needs of LGBTQ students who did not use their center. Instead, they relied on “national trends” that were extrapolated to their campus.

Because of this information gap, adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the demographic data was a priority.
Laura’s perspective on climate was informed by information from the University’s bias response team. Laura shared that “overall, there’s a positive campus climate.” Part of the positive climate was due to the institution’s private status which allowed it to resist anti-LGBTQ state legislation impacting public institutions of higher education. However, there were exceptions to that overall statement. She explained:

Particularly our gay and lesbian, our more mainstream students, or students who are more privileged in other ways, generally have an okay time here. It’s our students who are living at those intersections in marginalization that have a lot more challenges whether it’s being a queer student of color [or] … first generation and low income students and that intersection with their queerness.

Laura gave an example of the varied experiences of different identities on campus:

I had a student come to me last spring who wanted to organize a panel on being an LGBTQ student at [the University] in various different settings, being involved with Greek Life, being a student of color, being involved with campus ministries…. The panel drew over a hundred people…. To listen to the stories that our white affluent students who are involved in fraternity and sorority life tell about their experiences being gay or lesbian or bisexual on campus versus our queer student of color who is genderqueer and a part of our campus ministries community, their stories just sound like they can’t possibly even be at the same institution. When we talk to or hear from the fraternity and sorority [community]….some of their biggest concerns about being queer on campus were, one, “Would their groups be accepting if they came out?” But then after that, it’s like, “Will I find a date who wants to join me at these social functions?” Versus, we have these other students who are literally concerned about their physical safety or about being targeted on campus or close to campus and physically harassed and attacked.

Greek students made up “40 to 50% of the student body” which meant that Greek Life was a significant influence on overall institutional climate.
In another example, Laura described an incident of differential policy enforcement allowing for members of the Greek community to feel welcome on campus while making some LGBTQ students and Black students feel unwelcome. Laura stated:

We had some students who are in our new gender-neutral housing. They hung up a rainbow flag and a Black Lives Matter sign in their residence hall window. They were asked to take them down by Residence Life and Housing… They cited a policy that said that nothing could be hung up in windows because it messed up the uniformity of the residence halls, the way that they appeared from the outside.

In contrast to this incident of strict enforcement of a visual policy, Laura stated, “Fraternities and sororities, a lot of members would hang flags or banners with their letters in their windows even in this same residence hall. But this policy was never enforced for them.” Students recognized the inconsistency in policy application and protested.

“We want to support the student activism.” Laura noted that the University had “a very engaged, activist community” who would sometimes utilized the Center to plan protests. Laura’s stated, “We want to support the student activism…We recognize there are issues so we support the students to demonstrate and to organize.” At the same time, Laura aware of her role as “part of the administration.”

Laura articulated a strategy for navigating the line between being an administrator and supporting student demonstrations. She stated:

We had a lot of students who use our space and are also on our staff who’ve led some of the student activists’ response to this action by Residence Life and Housing. It’s funny because they’re literally outside my door…. At one point, I was working in my office; and I keep my door open. I was like, “Oh my gosh, I don’t know.” And I clear it with my supervisor. I was like, “I know I’ve been in here, but I haven’t actually been listening to anything that they’ve been organizing so if somebody comes and tries to tell you that I should have stopped it, I didn’t know. I wasn’t listening, I was giving them their space.”
Non-intervention and intentionally distancing herself from her students’ plans was one way that Laura indirectly supported student activism. Students seemed to be aware of Laura’s dual role of support and administration. Laura explained:

They’ll come and ask me hypothetical questions about policies on campus, and it’s clear they’re keeping from telling me all of the details but also seeking support for and clarification around policies and procedures on campus…So, I get a lot of hypothetical questions like, “Hypothetically if someone were to hang a flag from the administration building, could that person get in trouble for vandalism?”

“When I was coming out, I found that sense of community and support from student affairs professionals.” Laura came to her current role because she was interested in staying in the Southeast. She also felt that her current role was developmentally appropriate:

I specifically was looking for a center where I would be the junior staff member. Because in my first position … when there was an issue happening on campus I had Board of Trustees members calling me and I’m like, “Oh, I am not ready for this.”

Laura’s current role gave her access to a director who handled administrative advocacy and the “institutional dialogue.” This allowed her to “learn about these processes and see them from the outside” without having those responsibilities on her “shoulders.”

Laura saw the start of her “career with a capital ‘C’” as beginning in her freshman year when she was involved in a “leadership program for first-year students.” She went on to become very engaged in student affairs and decided to go into higher education. Laura came out toward the end of her undergraduate career with support from mentors in student affairs. She shared:

When I was coming out, I found that sense of community and support from
student affairs professionals… The fact that I found the community with those people, I think, has really impacted my decision or desire to kind of be that for others.

The experience of having support for her emerging LGBTQ identity combined with a graduate school internship in an LGBTQ office led Laura to realize her passion. After the internship she “dove head first into the world of queerness” and realized that she wanted to provide support for LGBTQ students in the way she had found support. Laura was also invested in ensuring that support for LGBTQ students lasted beyond her tenure in the profession. She stated, “There’s a lot of work to be done in preparing the next generation of leaders and policy-makers to think through these issues in a really critical way in order to make meaningful change.”

“I have always known that I will have a doctorate degree.” Laura believed that other LGBTQ professionals had a profound impact on her professional performance. She asserted, “We’re in a very collaborative field; maybe there are people out there working on their own; but I can’t imagine that being very effective.” Fellow practitioners helped Laura stay up to date on research and best practices and served as role models.

Laura saw her most immediate next step becoming assistant director and then “the director of an LGBTQ center.” Beyond that, Laura was uncertain if she would stay in higher education. Laura stated, “At this point, I’m not sure if I’m more committed or identify more with the field of student affairs or higher education in general or more with LGBTQ identity and activism and organizing work.”

Though her future working in higher education was uncertain, Laura had one clear goal. She explained, “I have always known that I will have a doctorate degree.”
Laura saw the doctorate degree as essential to “move up in Student Affairs” if she chose to stay. If she went outside the field, she saw it a necessary “to be taken seriously as having the knowledge and expertise to be doing whatever work I happen to be doing.” In considering her future career trajectory, Laura reflected, “My queerness is really important, but I’m getting to a point in my life where it’s led me to this deeper commitment to justice, equity, and access, these larger picture issues around structures of marginalization.”

“I can't be queer. I wear pearls.” Laura stated, “I currently identify as queer….I also use bisexual.” However, she also shared:

When I was first coming out,… I knew I wasn't straight; but I wasn't sure what language worked. I was like, “I'm not a lesbian, because I've never actually been with another woman.” … I knew some folks who identified with the term queer and used that term, and I was like, “Nope, I can't be queer. I wear pearls…. I'm not radical enough.”

In struggling to define her identity, Laura landed on the label “pansexual.” She described finding that identifier as “one of those light bulb moments.” Laura explained, “I think, for me, the definition … of pansexual as attraction not being bound by someone's gender really spoke to me.” Laura continued to use that term up until 2014 when she began to use the terms bisexual and queer.

Laura started using the term bisexual to give it visibility, to reclaim it from negative “assumptions and myths,” and “because there was such a divide between who was using bisexual and who was pansexual, and it was causing this kind of rift, particularly with students.” Bisexuality allowed Laura to be more immediately understood by students and allowed her to better connect with them. In embracing the
term queer, Laura felt “a lot more liberated.” She began to understand that she could “define for myself what that looks like.” Laura felt that she moved closer to “what I thought queerness looked like” as the term became more mainstream.

Part of Laura’s movement towards queerness was related to the presentation of her gender, what she termed an “intentional queering.” She shared:

I'm still very feminine in my gender expression….I … added in some combat boots and wear those a lot…. I think my expression is also trying to find ways, as a fem person who is queer, to be visibly queer.

Being visibly queer for Laura was important for both personal and professional reasons. Personally, being visibly queer helped her to connect with her community. Professionally, it helped her “be taken seriously” by the queer students she was serving. Being queer was also political statement for Laura. Through queerness Laura “became much more involved in social justice as a whole” and she reevaluated how “power structures really oppress and marginalize different people and how we can work to dismantle those.” Laura shared, “I don't think I would be doing this work if I weren't queer.” Laura’s acknowledged that her queer identity played a profound role in her career. She explained, “I think that it [my career] has been 100% shaped by my queer [identity]. I mean, I don't think I would be doing this work if I weren't queer.”

The impact of Laura’s queer identity on her career was consistent throughout her narratives.

The process of doing LGBTQ professional work helped to “fast track” Laura’s exploration and the development of her personal LGBTQ identity. Fast tracking was important in Laura’s role. She stated, “I think as a queer person and doing this work,
there's an expectation of knowledge and expertise on some level, fluency in conversations around gender and sexuality. I strive to meet those expectations, because I think they're important.”

“It’s all just so dripping with privilege.” Laura was aware of other identities and their impacts on her career as well. She shared, “Intersectionality is really foregrounded in both my understanding of my identity and the work that I do … It's really the only mechanism that I have for understanding myself and my own experiences.” She continued, “I understand marginalization because of my queer identity; but I've never had this perspective that my experience is just as hard as a woman of color.”

Laura discussed how she believed her White privilege and her cis-gender privilege as a woman impacted her career. In her previous role she stated, “It very much felt like I was being hired to do LGBT work because I was viewed as non-threatening because I was also a white woman” and the “safe option.” In reflecting on her comments, Laura stated, “As I'm saying this, I feel kind of gross, because it's all just so dripping with privilege.” Laura acknowledged that her White and cis-gender identities helped her gain entry into a professional role. She also believed that without her queer identity, she would not have been able to recognize her privilege, see the connection between her personal experiences and larger systemic issues of privilege, or use be committed to dismantling oppressive systems.
Kara: “There's Something Empowering for Me About … Being Able to be Seen”

Kara was the director of the LGBTQ Resource Center at a midsize private institution in a midsize town. She identified as a white, bisexual, queer and cisgender-femme woman. Kara was one of two full-time staff members in the Center. Kara’s work was divided “into four main buckets.” The first two buckets included programming by the Center’s student staff and advising five LGBTQ student organizations. The third bucket was “education and training” which involved creating tailored LGBTQ educational and advocacy programs for “specific teams and offices.” The last bucket was “policy and practice work” which was currently focused on getting institutional systems to honor students’ preferred names.

Alongside these four buckets was a focus on intersectionality, “especially when it comes to LGBTQ students of color.” Kara shared, “We have a pretty substantial percentage of LGBTQ students of color… It's already a huge challenge to be a student of color on this campus that is very predominantly White.” Prior to her tenure, Kara mentioned that there had been no “really intentional outreach or support efforts, specifically focused on LGBT students of color.”

“I want him to be able to do that and bring his full and authentic self to that experience.” Kara was focused on better understanding the LGBTQ student experience at her institution. Using institutional data sets, Kara determined that of the institution’s “5,000 students,” approximately “12%” identified as LGBTQ and that the Center was “only actively engaging about 10% of our LGBT student body.” These findings were used to help form strategic priorities for the office. One instance that Kara described was
finding that a “really high percentage of LGBTQ students are also affiliated in our Greek system.” This finding led to greater investment in the institutions’ “Greek Allies” student group “making sure that they're equipped to create change on the peer-to-peer level.” The findings also led to the creation of a “strong partnership with our Fraternity and Sorority Affairs Office.”

This data driven approach supported the mission of the Center which Kara shared:

It's not our mission or our goal for every LGBT student to enter in through the doors at the Pride Center and to actively engage in one of our student groups….More than anything,… if I'm thinking about a trans guy who wants to be in a fraternity and being fraternity president, I want him to be able to do that and bring his full and authentic self to that experience.

The Center’s mission was helping LGBTQ students integrate with any part of campus life in which they wished to participate; and this mission was met with open arms. Kara shared:

There's a lot of willingness to do what it takes to make our institution better. One example … has been this policy advocacy that we've been working on when it comes to our student records…. We were approached by a team of people from the registrar's office … to say, "Hey, we're putting together a committee, we want the [LGBTQ Resource Center] to be a part of it because we know that our systems are not how they should be.”

For Kara, this sense of inclusion and collaborative advocacy was incredibly affirming and important. In previous work settings, Kara stated, “I had to spend so much of my time at my previous institution making the case for why this work mattered.”

“It’s…a culture of apathy.” Students who came to the Center “have a good sense of their identity, but they're not sure about how to disclose and when to disclose to others.” For those who did not come into the LGBTQ Resource Center, Kara posited, “A lot of students, I think, tend to think that, ‘Oh, if I walk into the [LGBTQ Resource
Center], everyone's going to assume that I'm LGBT.'” Hesitation on being out was fueled by people saying things such as, “‘that’s so gay,’” or jokingly calling each other ‘fags.’”

In describing the climate, she stated, “It's less of a hostile culture, and more of a culture of apathy. [The University is] a pretty privileged a student body.” She went on to share:

Unlike I think what we're hearing on many campuses across the country… where students are finding their voice and finding their power, and realizing that they can mobilize and make demands and cause policy change … that is not happening on our campus.

Even when Kara attempted to organize efforts to respond, her efforts were rebuffed. She shared:

There was a trans woman of color … at [a nearby University], who was also murdered. I held an open space in our Center for any students who wanted to just come and process though what had happened. No one came. I realized later that no one came because they weren't even aware that it had happened.

Kara actively worked to combat apathy as she believed it to be an important component of her role.

“You’d be great for this role.” After undergrad, Kara chose her higher education graduate program “because the program director … does some great research on LGBT students in higher ed.” In graduate school, Kara stated, “I was just focusing a lot of both my academic work and then my practice on LGBT work in higher education…. I thought that a role like this would be one that I would want.” Kara’s first full-time diversity role was in a medical school in a large city. Kara stated, “There were also many things that were very hard about that role…. I didn't really have any colleagues or peers who had a background … in higher education.” Kara leaned “a lot” from that role. After three
years, she saw her current position post and the director at the time “actually reached out to me and said, ‘Hey, I think you'd be great for this role, you should apply.’” The position was a great fit and allowed her to “get back to a community of just fellow higher ed practitioners.”

Kara’s choice to work in both of these roles was driven by her personal LGBTQ identity. She shared:

I think that my decision to initially focus my work in higher ed on LGBT students was very impacted by my identity…. When I initially went to grad school, I had only really just begun to come to an understanding of my own queer identity…. I think that actually helped a lot in terms of me being able to relate to my students in a really real way. I've always brought a lot of myself to my work.

Along with her professional preparation in her previous role, Kara found that her personal identity was an essential component of her readiness for her current position.

“I'm first and foremost a student affairs practitioner.” Kara found her professional community from two sources. In her previous role where she lacked collegial support, the Consortium for LGBTQ Professionals in Higher Education served as a lifeline and a “barometer” of national trends happening with LGBTQ student and their support services. At her current institution, Kara found community amongst student affairs professionals. Kara shared, “I truly feel that I'm first and foremost a student affairs practitioner, and then I'm an LGBT student services practitioner…. I think, many other people in roles similar to mine, who are first and foremost LGBT student services practitioners.” Working with these professionals to serve LGBTQ students meant finding shared understanding in the “common purpose of supporting student growth and
learning.” When she found this, Kara was able to do her work more efficiently and with less resistance.

When she first began her work in diversity and LGBTQ work, Kara often felt “frustrated” by slow moving processes. In finding common ground with others, Kara had “become more patient and compassionate.” She also better understood that “we need to be realistic about our expectations; and we need to be in it for the long haul.” Kara’s current role was the last LGBTQ specific position she intended to hold, but she was committed to incorporating an LGBTQ work perspective into any future position she took. Kara’s personal LGBTQ identity was deeply intertwined with her professional identity and was not something she could leave behind.

“I found how valuable it was to be able to say that I was bisexual.” Kara’s description of her sexual orientation was evolving:

I'll generally describe my sexuality as queer and bisexual. I'll use both of those words. If I have to choose one, over the past three years I've begun to just choose bisexual. That's been intentional. My journey has carried me through once identifying as straight and as an ally to embracing the queer identity to finally again in the last three years or so embracing that bisexual identity as well, mostly for the sake of visibility.

Kara’s identities were foundational to her pursuit of LGBTQ work on college campuses and her identities. She shared, “[I] grew up in a pretty conservative Christian family…. [I] was certainly taught very traditional views about LGBT people being sinful.” Kara “made an intentional choice” to go to a “really large public state institution … to be exposed to new and different things.”

Kara’s coursework in Sociology, involvement in campus life as a resident assistant, and participation in “Leadershape” instilled in her “a desire to pursue social
justice.” At the same time, Kara shared:

I began to build really close relationships with people who were LGBTQ and started really wrestling with what I had always been taught [and] my love for those folks in my life and my belief that they were who they were and that was okay. It shouldn't be my responsibility to try and change them. All of those things combined in my journey to identify as someone who was an ally.

As an ally who throughout college dated cisgender men, Kara decided to travel with the Equality Ride across the United States the summer of her senior year. The group visited schools where LGBTQ students could be kicked off campus. During this experience, Kara shifted from being an ally to identifying as queer. Kara shared, “Pretty quickly on the Equality Ride, I … started dating a person who at the time identified as a woman. That person was my partner for over three years.” In the course of their relationship, Kara stated:

He came to adopt a to trans identity and ended up transitioning while I was with him… The initial spurring of my queer identity was dating him. That's how I came out to my family and friends, "Hey, this is the person I'm with now."

Kara’s partner spurred her adoption of a queer identity and his continued transition and her professional experiences continued to shift her ascription to identities within LGBTQ umbrella. Kara explained:

As my partner started questioning his gender, as I started doing more and more of this LGBTQ work in a professional setting, I found how valuable it was to be able to say that I was bisexual and to have my queerness validated by that, by myself and not based on the gender of my partner. Not having to out my partner as trans, I could say, “Hey, I'm bisexual.”

Kara found that when she used the term queer in connection with her high fem gender presentations, conversations about her own sexual orientation became complicated. She stated:
After he began transitioning and using different pronouns, I found that a lot of people when I would say I was queer and then they heard me talk about my partner in that way, they would assume I was a straight person who was claiming that label as a political choice; or they would be really confused and it would become the topic of conversation or they would assume he was trans and all these things. I think that’s a piece of why that label started to feel on its own a little less comfortable for me.

Kara was separated from her partner when she came to her current role and she found that “a lot of people assumed that I was straight, which was super weird for me.” In reaction, Kara continued to openly share her bisexual identity. She also shared it to address stigma toward bisexuels. She explained:

People joke about being a gold star lesbian or being someone who's never had sex with or been in a relationship with a cis guy. There's this privileging of people who are gold stars over people who are not… There's so much wrapped up in that label. Being able to say I'm bisexual also provides visibility too. I've had relationships and been attracted to lots of different kinds of people with lots of different genders and sexualities. That doesn't make me any less queer.

Kara also experienced stigma in queer spaces because of her gender presentation. Kara stated:

I've just been in spaces where I've been the only fem presenting person. I think that sexism and misogyny is real in queer communities too. We're not immune from that. Things will happen like I'm talked over or I'll have an idea. Someone else who's more masculine will have the same idea. It's a great idea when they say it. Nobody thinks it's a good idea when I say it.

Being high fem was an authentic identity for Kara and she used it as a tool to combat negative assumptions. And still, Kara was figuring out her identity. She explained:

I think there's some expectation that I have every piece of my identity figured out and put together and that I have completed my own identity journey. Which I don't think any of us ever do…. I think it's helpful to be able to share that with them [students]…. that hopefully gives them a little bit more freedom to embrace their own journeys.

Kara believed that being visible and authentic in her own journey was essential and a
necessary component of her work.

“There's something empowering for me about being able to be visible…” In explicating how her personal identity informed her work, Kara stated, “I personally think you have to have it. I don't think you're able to do your work as effectively if you don't.” Kara’s conviction in having a personal LGBTQ identity was founded firstly in representation. She shared, “There's so few particularly LGBTQ people and people of color in positions of authority and power within higher education still that I think it's especially important that folks that are overseeing those areas share those identities.” Kara believed that students needed to see queer persons in these positions, have “queer voices” advocate on their behalves, and have queer persons with which to connect. She expounded:

I started trying out and using the word bisexual and more and more I had students coming out to me all the time as bisexual. I was like, "Wow, there's something really powerful about openly claiming this label,” and other people seeing and saying, “Oh my God, that's me too.”

Being openly queer for Kara meant proclaiming membership in the LGBTQ family and seeking connection with others:

Like many queer folks I feel a sense of commonality and a sense of community with anyone who holds an LGBTQ identity. Many people in the queer vernacular will say, "Yeah, that person is family." They really mean that.... I see other LGBTQ folks as kin and as family and as folks who I have something in common with. I guess it seems a little silly, but I have love and affection for my community and for my people. I think that really that's what I think about more when engaging with other folks in the community and less, "I identify as bisexual and you identify as gay, here are the differences between us.” That's just not something that's usually on my mind. Usually, I'm thinking more about commonalities and solidarity.
Visibility also impacted Kara’s connections with persons outside the LGBTQ community. On one hand, Kara shared, “I think that in some spaces being less visible in my queer identity makes people less uncomfortable. We both feel like they can ask questions that maybe they'd feel uncomfortable asking if I was really visibly queer.” On the other hand, Kara thought “that if I'm being assumed to not be queer, then that makes me less legitimate. People will think, ‘What do you know about that?’”

Kara felt that is was overwhelmingly important in her professional role to be seen as bisexual. In fact, she expressed, “There's something empowering for me about being able to be visible and being able to be seen … because my title is director of the [LGBTQ Resource Center].” She went on to state that when she is no longer in her current role, “I think it'll be a hard adjustment at first; and I'll have to renegotiate and re-figure out how I am going to name and claim my identity.”

**Tyler: “We’ve Honed Our Story.”**

Tyler worked as the director of the LGBTQ Resource Center at a large, research-intensive, public institution. He identified as a White, queer, transgender man. Tyler had been in his current role for a year serving previously as an interim, associate, and assistant director for the LGBTQ Resource Center. Within his Center, there were four full-time staff members, five graduate assistants, seven paid undergraduate students and over 50 undergraduate student volunteers.

Tyler held a master’s degree in Social Work and identified strongly with that field. Tyler described LGBTQ work in higher education as “a distinct profession” but did not see himself as an LGBTQ professional. He stated, “I don’t think I am a student affairs
professional. I am a social worker; my work is in higher education student affairs.” This distinction meant that whatever work he engaged in was examined through the lens of Social Work and was tied to a Social Work licensure and “a code of ethics … that you are bound to.” A key part of Tyler’s code of ethics was his focus on social justice. He proclaimed, “It shows up in everything I do.” Tyler was charged with general oversight of the Center, organizational development, and communications.

“I feel like we are at a place of accommodation.” Tyler stated: “We’re really good as an institution at hearing a need and creating this other thing that you can do to meet that need so we don’t have to really change our core ways of being.” Operating in this mode, Tyler stated, “I feel like we are at a place of accommodation. And I would love to see us at a place of inclusion.”

To describe this additional mechanism, accommodation approach, Tyler explained the arrangement for gender inclusive housing at his institution:

An example of that would be we continue to place students in housing based on a binary. If that doesn’t work for you, we have this other thing. And we try to make it look like really great and, you know, call it a program … do all of these things; but at the end of the day, we have that and the structure that shouldn’t be based on a binary.

Questioning the core structure or a system meant challenging deeper notions of social arrangements within society which was not something Tyler felt the University was willing to tackle. Tyler found this accommodation solution problematic because he believed it continued to reinforce problematic notions of a gender binary and that LGBTQ students should not have to navigate a housing system that was not inherently structured for them and that they might be maligned by if they did not know about the
housing accommodation.

Working within a system of accommodation meant that accommodation policies needed to be paired with adequate education in order to ensure that LGBTQ persons knew about them and could benefit from them. To illustrate the pairing of policy and education, Tyler shared:

Today’s an exciting day in that we just got email that went out to every student and every faculty, which on our campus is a really big deal because that’s a lot of people, about pronouns being added to class rosters. Students can go in and designate a pronoun in their student information, and it will be pushed to their class rosters.

The work for Tyler moving forward was informing people about the details of the policy and how best to abide by it. He explained, “There’s a lot of understanding and education to be done of gender and attractionality … on non-binary gender identities.”

Without this educational component, Tyler felt the pronoun policy would become a non-performative commitment; and if left in that state, would be ineffective because no one would act upon it.

“I’m responsible for solutions.” Even though Tyler at times faced opposition in his work, he was quick to mention his motivation for continuing to advocate for change. He shared:

This year a student … a PhD student emailed me and said that they emailed their class of 75 people from inside our [Campus Communication System] where the class roster exists. And, it emailed the entire class with their birth name….it was just really horrific for them.

Negative experiences like this one was one reason Tyler worked to get pronouns added to class rosters. He sought to prevent harm caused by institutional systems. He also worked to identify harm happening to students through anecdotal stories and the creation of an
undergraduate advocacy board within the LGBTQ Resource Center. This group served as a forum where undergraduates could consistently bring ideas forward and inform LGBTQ Center staff of issues happening to the LGBTQ community on campus.

In describing the function of the board, Tyler also highlighted that a crux of his work was identifying problems facing students. The other keystone of his job was finding solution to those problems:

My supervisor told me … that as a director the expectation is that if I’m complaining about something then I’m not doing what I need to do to make sure it’s solved…. I’m responsible for solutions and that’s part of my role.

This meant that although he wished his institution were at a place of inclusion, often times Tyler found solutions through accommodations.

“I utilize my story.” Tyler identified as a transman and as queer or fluid. Throughout his stories of professional work, these identities appeared as both companions and informants to the ways in which he engaged in his work, “I utilize my story a lot with administrators because those are the tables that I’m at. What I try to do is bring that personal narrative to things like pronouns on class rosters and other big things.”

Tyler used a combination of his professional expertise and personal experience to shape compelling narratives in advocating for change.

Tyler was acutely aware of his audience when performing his narratives. He explicated:

Part of it is reading the room and figuring it out when I get there…. When I’m going somewhere to advance an agenda,… I have to go with a package. I have to hit on the points that are going to advance that agenda.
Tyler described his interactions in advocacy meetings and training sessions as being focused on specific issues or outcomes. This was expected of Tyler in his role and was something for which he readied himself. Tyler shared:

My vice-president, my supervisor, asked me to come to their Presidents’ Leadership Meeting, which is like 20 people that spans all three campuses, like Chancellor and President and all kinds of people. And we’re in the meeting and we’re talking about pronouns on class rosters and gender identity … It was going fine, but I looked at my boss and she gave me this look … like, you need to say something personal…. I don’t exactly remember how she even looked at me or how I knew that that’s what she meant. But she looks at me; and I just knew that she needed me to lose the professional [Tyler].

Tyler went into the meeting expecting to share “facts” and stick to a specific agenda, but when asked, he brought his personal experiences as a transman into the room. After he did, he noticed a difference:

You could feel the shift in the meeting and it was so effective. It was such an effective change and I think that’s a skill set lots of queer people in this work have, that we’ve honed our story; we’ve been able to craft our narrative and use it in ways that are effective.

The instance in that meeting was a profound “learning moment” for Tyler as he understood the power of shaping his experience into a specific message.

“That type of complication can be taboo.” Sharing his identity helped Tyler to connect with students. He shared, “I also do meet directly with students, mostly trans students, to navigate health insurance and physical transitions and social transitions…. By being in front of them as another trans person, is comforting to people.” In these settings, instead of having a prescribed message he valued openness, authenticity, and vulnerability. Expressing these values helped Tyler find commonalities with students and bridge differences. Tyler felt he gave “permission” to others to also be “really
vulnerable” and “bring things up that are taboo” so that people “could share their full selves.” This space was important as it allowed students to more fully explore who they were without the pressure of completely understanding their identities.

He expounded:

A lot of times we want to wrap the experience in a box and deliver it to people so it has the best image and perception…. but I prefer to not. I prefer to talk about what is real… I can talk about the ways that I don’t know how I’m reproducing masculinity in an authentic way and how I’m reproducing it in order to maintain power.

Tyler felt some pushback in sharing an authentic and complicated narrative as he felt “that type of complication can be taboo.” And yet despite the taboo, Tyler offered “all of who I am,” because that was to him “how we build connections.”

“**It was those conversations that drove my own transition.**” Tyler described his journey to comprehending his sexual orientation and gender identity as an evolution.

In regards to his sexual orientation, Tyler pointed out that his first awareness of it was as a junior in college, “I often sit on panels and talk about this distinctive moment of kissing another woman and … how big that moment was. Because it wasn’t something that I’d thought about or contemplated. It was just something I did.” Prior to graduate school, Tyler identified as lesbian and interacted mostly with a lesbian community. In graduate school, this changed. Tyler stated, “It wasn’t until graduate school when I met and interacted with someone who identified as a transman that I had any concept about that identity or that experience.”

After this initial encounter, Tyler continued to identify as a lesbian as this “was a central part of my social awareness and where I was developmentally.” Tyler also found
the lesbian community to be extremely supportive. However, Tyler’s work in the Center pushed him to question his sexual orientation and gender identity. Tyler expanded:

When I started here, I identified as a lesbian…. It really was talking with students and meeting with students and talking about the benefits of being able to make your choices for you and what that looks like growing up…. It was those conversations that drove my own transition.

Tyler realized, “I was stunting myself.” He went on to confide:

It was scary because it was a lot of those things I didn’t want to know because they were things that would cause strife and challenge. It was also liberating in a lot of ways. There was an aspect of being liberated by having some freedom in my own mind to explore and gain clarity and make decisions instead of being closed off to those things or not allowing that as a possibility. But it was scarier than it was liberating because with that kind of truth then comes a recognition of where you’re at not being that person.

Tyler realized in acknowledging his trans identity that he had intentionally chosen to not explore the furthest reaches of his gender identity and in failing to do so was not the person that he wanted to be. The gravity of this discovery in Tyler’s words “first led me to a place of despair, but eventually [I] was able to recognize it wasn’t sustainable to do this work and not engage these questions for myself.”

Avery: “It’s a Long Game.”

Avery was the assistant director for the LGBTQ Resource Center at a large public institution located in a mid-size city. They identified as queer and genderqueer and held a master’s degree in College Student Affairs Administration. The Center in which they worked had two full-time staff members, a graduate assistant, half-time administrative assistant, half-time student support specialist, and 10 undergraduate student volunteers. Within the Center, Avery’s primary role was to oversee student engagement advising,
support 14 LGBTQ organizations, and direct racial justice and intergroup dialogue programming.

“If it was a short game, it would've ended a long time ago.” When Avery began their role, she said, “We know what the issues are. Let’s just jump in.” Initially Avery shared, “I used to really judge folks who I saw doing the work. I'm like, ‘I don't think you care. You're not spending every waking minute on it.’” However, they came to realize:

I think how part of my understanding of how the system really maintains domination and control and the capital ‘S’ system, the broad system. It's to exhaust you…. Slowing down as a radical act has been really important for me in the last six months.

Slowing down also meant practicing self-care. Avery shared, “There's a personal connection you have to this work because you don't leave the work when you leave the office.” This was exacerbated by feeling like they were always “behind, because the moment we try and think we're ahead, we are somehow not paying attention to what we need to be doing.” Self-care was one way that Avery assuaged the pressure to stay on top of current events, persist in the work, and focus on long term goals. They expounded, “It's a long game. It's not a short game. If it was a short game, it would've ended a long time ago.” Keeping in alignment with a long term vision, Avery kept a “restless hopefulness for the future” focused on a “just community” where “we are caring and thriving with and alongside of each other.”

“We will never do this work.” During undergraduate, Avery worked with a gay and lesbian community center because there was not “a designated LGBTQ resource center” at their school. In graduate school, Avery was able to locate their “community-
based advocacy” in a higher education context through their student affairs administration graduate program.

At first, Avery’s experiences with LGBTQ work in graduate school turned them off to the work. They shared, “My colleague and I both said, "We will never do this work." we were both in this multicultural practices class and were really experiencing constant resistance from … a fair amount of our cohort mates.” Avery continued, “Both of us were consistently tired in this course, of having to battle logics of our classmates that really were based in heterogenderism [and] white supremacy.” This fatigue took hold in Avery’s second year and were it not for a mentor, Avery’s job search would have excluded LGBTQ identity work. Avery explained:

I think what flipped it was … a mentor who does LGBT work, actually, said, "What are you considering in your job search?" … I told him leadership service and he said, "Well, it's interesting because I figured you'd be applying for multicultural work." I said, "Why?" He says, "Well, you're good at it." I explained to him a little bit what I was feeling and he was like, "Well, education is only one part of it and I think that you also really get your energy from community-building and working with people one-on-one who need the help.”

This comment gave Avery a more balance perspective on multicultural work:

For me at that moment it was realizing that while, yes, there is a conversation and battle to be had around inclusion, there's also these really rewarding experiences when you're working with people who are within community who need help.

The desire to help others led Avery to their current role. Avery’s future professional goal was to obtain a Ph.D. in higher education and become a chief diversity officer.

“I don't know which office to go in right now.” Avery stated, “The environment really protects a lot of our White, cis, LGB students from a lot of the harassment we see described in the literature.” Other students had different experiences.
Avery continued, “Our trans students, our queer students of color, our trans students of color, still face some really negative, hostile environments. Those are often the students that we see in the Center the most.”

Due to the negative experiences of trans students and queer students of color the Center tended to focus on “the most marginalized folks.” This focus was crucial to Avery as trans and queer students of color experienced discrimination from both non-LGBTQ persons and within LGBTQ student groups which were “mostly led by white folks.”

Avery had heard some queer students of color describe incidents that were “very racist” while also hearing from White students “I can't be racist,” and “I'm LGBT so I get it.”

Issues of inclusion were compounded by the “bifurcated” structure of support services for LGBTQ persons and minority raced persons residing in two separate offices. Avery stated, “My boss and I are both white.... There is a tension in that ... are we doing anti-racist work right?” In working to respond affirmatively to that question, Avery and their director created programs and initiatives to resist racism, even as these programs alienated some of their White students. Avery noted, “It is difficult when we have such a commitment to anti-racism but there's not an equivalent [commitment] from our partners on being anti-heterosexist, to be anti-trans-phobic.” The resistance on the part of the University’s Multicultural Center to collaborative programming on LGBTQ issues negatively impacted students. Avery shared:

One of the students who I most closely advise who is a trans person of color was in the middle of the hallway one day when I was walking by and they literally said to me, “I don't know which office to go in right now based on what I'm feeling.”
In addition to the institutional separation of services queer and trans students of color, some students also resisted intersectional programming:

There was a particular instance in which a person was making it sound like, "Well, we need more 101 events," because they were deciding on speakers for the year. Speakers that were disabled, queer—I believe the person was Latinx. How that person was too complicated for folks to understand immediately, but we needed a White cis, bi-woman to come in and she would reach a wider audience. The more and more that language was being used it was being to say that queer and trans people of color's lives are too complicated for cis, White folk to hear. I finally stepped in and was like, "I think what we're saying is really racist, y'all. I'd really caution us to not go down this route." It was clear that when I said this I shut down the room. At the same time, the one person of color was so upset they got up and they left.

Combating racism with the LGBTQ community was a necessary and difficult component of Avery’s job and involved balancing a student’s efficacy in leadership while preventing harm to the larger group.

“There is a level of nicety to have to play into to gain access into spaces.”

Knowing how to code initiatives and being “nice” were foundational tools in Avery’s work. They stated, “We have what is called the “flexible housing” here. It is sort of our gender-neutral option, but we don't explicitly say it is for trans folk or gender non-conforming folk.” Students felt that there needed to be “more advertising … of the housing option” and a change in the name to something more “recognizable.” At first, Avery was on board with the students requests but then discovered that the name came directly from their President’s office “because the President [was] trying to somewhat manage the Board;” and the President worried that calling the program “gender-neutral housing” would call it to the attention of “a particularly anti-LGBT Board of Trustees member” who would try and shut it down. From this instance, Avery learned that they
worked “in a system in which we have to code things a certain way to make them happen.”

In addition to names as codes, Avery experienced coding through “niceness” which operated at their institution as a result of the region they lived in and the profession in which they worked. In describing the regional “Midwest niceness,” Avery offered:

When I got to the Midwest experiencing this Midwest niceness,… I wasn't surprised at the experience of conservatism, it was more so the experience of the dodging of the issue…. It was more honest living in the South because people will still name stuff. They'll just go and tell you how they really feel, whereas I feel people are so dodgy here … to the point where they don't talk about these issues openly.

Avery experienced niceness as an avoidance tactic that limited the ability to address social issues which meant that in their work it necessary to address “the coded-ness of being Midwest nice to really actually have the conversation in a meaningful way.”

Midwest nice was “overlapping” and “interconnected” with “Student Affairs niceness” which assumed that because people were in the field of student affairs they understood and valued social justice even when their actions stated otherwise. Niceness also allowed people to avoid uncomfortable issues impacting marginalized persons. The function of niceness was resilient to infractions. Avery shared, “When you move past that [niceness] then people invoke civility and the need to … not feel like we're attacking anyone or anything.” Moving past these registers of niceness was important Avery because “to violate [niceness] means that we start addressing the systems and structures that keep the success chances and life chances of students down.”

Niceness could be violated at times but could not be thrown out entirely, because to do that meant social and organizational exclusion. Avery explained:
I think there is a good level of isolation that will happen if you don't go about things in the proper way or the right way. You stop getting invited to certain meetings…. There is a level of nicety to have to play into to gain access into spaces. It's how I’ve gone about breaking the niceness or breaking how we talk about civility, and then looping back around to getting us back to nice by the end of the meeting sometimes.

Avery had to adhere to niceness in order to remain an engaged person within their university.

“**My body in particular is used as a token.**” One theme throughout Avery’s interviews was the discussion of voluntarily sharing about their identities versus being tokenized. As an instance of tokenization, Avery explained:

[My boss] said to me, "I'm meeting our Chief Diversity Officer. I need you to come out. I'm meeting her about a meeting I had last night with our gender non-conforming student group about their demands—because they had drafted demands…. She's like, "I really think you would be a better person to … help them understand how these students are feeling." That was coded in such a way that I was like, “Oh, I don't think it's actually more so because I've talked with these students more or I've understood and heard their experiences more.” It was more so sounding like, “Well because you're this, you can argue on behalf of folks like you better than I can.”

Avery felt in this instance that their “body in particular is used as a token to advance or convince people” of an issue or situation.

Alongside Avery’s experiences with tokenization, they also understood that, they were expected to speak about issues connected to their personal identities as part of their roles. Avery shared, “One of our schools put out these guides to help people in their profession be better around diversity .... and they asked me if I would be willing to do it and I said, ‘Yes.’”

Avery did not feel tokenized by their request and explained that the difference between this request and her bosses’ request was “me having choice, me really thinking
about it.... Is it going to be best for me to do or would it be best for someone else to do?”

They went on to state, “When there's a piece of tokenization is more so when I am not given consent in the process.”

Avery also experienced people predetermining their narrative. People hearing their story tended to believe that Avery’s parents were either “really supportive” or “aren’t in my life” and that they had either a “non-accepting coming out experience” or an “incredibly accepting coming out experience.” Avery believed that these assumptions lead to “stereotypes about people either being broken or completely all right.” Avery did not believe that anyone was owed their story. However, Avery shared their story as a form of advocacy so that people understood LGBTQ people were “not all one and the same person.” This helped to break the “master narrative” of LGBTQ identity struggle which had made Avery feel incomplete in discovering their genderqueer identity and which they hoped would help others author their own identity stories.

“We just want to be in deeper connection with you.” For Avery the journey to identifying as queer and genderqueer was largely dependent on their environments and context:

I think my awareness has deepened over time. Strategically because of different people who have been in my life at certain points…. I went to a really small high school and so I only knew only one out gay person in high school; because I was definitely not out in high school. I went to college and was surrounded by much more supportive folks…. It was really key for me that there were folks in my life who I knew, no matter who I was, would be very supportive of me and [I] came out as gay the summer before my junior year of college.

Avery continued:

That was the same year I started working [in the LGBTQ community center] … and it deepened the sense of this wasn't just about who I loved but a greater
commitment to a community and a culture that had done a lot before me. Learning to develop a socio-historical context of what it meant to be gay. Then when I got to grad school, having a queer professor … who I wanted to get to know more and learned more about what queer culture could mean more broadly. That's when I started identifying as queer and taking on more of this activist orientation to inclusion work.

For Avery, their sexual identity preceded and provided an entry way into a community where they could explore their genderqueer identity. Avery explained:

In the midst of grad school, [I] developed a personal relationship with someone who was a trans-identified higher education professional. Even though I worked in these LGBT spaces, they were still very lacking of trans people…. Through talking and dialogue I came to a further understanding of, yeah, absolutely, these are all the ways I feel about my gender and there was more of an active experimentation, so days that I would come into work with my nails done or more jewelry or different styles of clothing. How I developed my own trans aesthetic over time and got over that to be trans means to medically transition, that means I must be a woman or all of these other things and really unpacking all of that for myself over time has been really key. It's really been the people at different guideposts in my life that have been really important to me in developing and evolving my personal understanding of myself.

In outlining their evolving identity, Avery highlighted the central role that relationships and community played in their development. This has meant finding friends and a community that were supportive in Avery’s exploration of their gender. It also meant being out in different ways to different people in their family.

These same considerations of authenticity and closeness in relationships were essential to Avery’s work with students. They admitted, “I used to have a lot more boundaries around my personal life…particularly with our fellow LGBT students.” This dynamic changed after an LGBTQ leadership retreat in which Avery received feedback from students that they felt Avery was “intentionally guarded” and that they wanted to
know more about Avery because “we feel like you desire these deeper connections with us and we just want to be in deeper connection with you.”

**Frederick: “I See Myself as a Renegade, as a Radical Co-Conspirator.”**

Frederick served as the assistant director for the LGBTQ Resource Center at an elite, midsize, private, religious institution in a large city. He identified as queer, White, and Jewish. Frederick described himself as “resource” and “helping professional” who helped students who were coming out and students who were victims of sexual assault or relationship violence. He provided administrative support for the office, education and outreach across campus, and oversaw Center programming.

While the LGBTQ Resource Center was guaranteed some funding from the institution, endowments provided a substantial portion of the Center’s budget and were a major focus of the director’s strategic priorities. Frederick explained:

> Fundraising has become a priority so that this institution will at least have a nice fat endowment to motivate the work to happen. So, even if they put a totally useless person in here in the next couple years, at least there’ll still be money to support the programs.

Frederick’s discussion on fundraising helped to frame the institutional climate for the Center and LGBTQ students.

> “At any point in time, this could be snuffed out.” The climate on Frederick’s campus was connected to the institution’s historical connection to religion. Frederick stated:

> Catholic social thought about LGBT stuff is the overarching culture on campus so what that meant for so many decades was that gay people didn't exist … and, if you were gay, it was an illness that needed to be rooted out.

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Remnants of this exclusionary belief system persisted through concessions that were meant to include LGBTQ persons while simultaneously working to “minimize, diminish, minoritize, [and] marginalize” the extent of each inclusion practice. Frederick shared an example:

We will even allow students to choose a name that will be their chosen name that they would be referred to on our internal documents. However, the rhetoric for that is because we’ve got international students who want to take on a Christian name. While trans and gender non-conforming students were able to use preferred names within the institution, they were merely benefactors of an allowance made for another group of students.

Frederick’s work was audited in other ways. He stated:

The offices that do race work on our campus can do events in their offices, in their departments, where they talk about sex…. If our office ever tried to do something like that, the President’s Office would be calling right away and we would have HR violations filed, if not be terminated.

This perception was informed by a past marketing incident for a program with an invited speaker. Frederick shared:

I had a student draft up a bio about her this summer…. I didn't notice that it had abortion rights work in it and her Planned Parenthood work in it. I just wasn't paying attention…. The blowback for that was so severe that I have a note in my file.

Frederick understood that his work was subject to stringent reviews and he worked to perform in ways that were both exemplary and that strictly conformed to written and unwritten policies to mitigate any potential “blowback.” This standard of performance and production was vital. He stated, “We are only allowed to exist in peace by the grace of the highest level of administrators on campus…. What students don't feel … is that at any point in time this could be snuffed out.” With this ever present looming threat,
Frederick maintained a state of constant vigilance in considering how information was to be framed to advocate for LGBTQ students while falling in line with University guidelines. He explained:

"I can't talk about condoms … and I can’t talk to them about sex or I would risk losing my job. Instead, I talk about some of the deeper fundamental foundations for understanding self and care of self…. and they value themselves and how …. we come to understand ourselves in the context of the relationship to that person. Care of the other person inevitably becomes care of self, and they become intertwined. Something like using a condom is symptomatic of care of deeper self and care of each other."

In learning to approach his work from directly addressing sex to shifting the focus to relationships, Frederick asked:

"Do you let go of the things that are important to you and conform and settle and compromise or, what inevitably ended up happening and is still the most difficult part of this and an ongoing journey, is do you find the deeper way to understanding self in the context of this new environment?"

This deeper understanding of self in relationships helped sustain Frederick in his work.

"The pain now comes from the direct devaluing of a life because they’re LGBT." Frederick felt assaults on his personal LGBTQ identity. He shared:

"I'm a very colorful person. I like loud colors. I like bright colors, and I often wear pinks and purples because they make me feel good. I had another gay staff … come in with a student to meet with me … and I was wearing blue that day. The first words that came out of his mouth when he came to my office in front of the student, who is also gay…were, “[Frederick], I just can't tell you how great it is not to see you in a shade of purple or pink.”"

This was deeply troubling to Frederick:

"I pulled him aside afterwards and I said, “Please don't ever color-shame me again in front of a student.” Because I could see it on that student’s face that in his mind there’s nothing wrong with wearing the pink or the purple. But the minute that other gay professional, who he thinks of as a role model, made that comment, it quickly becomes clear that the colors that we're allowed to wear are blue and grey and black and white and that's it. I just refuse to do that. At face value, I think it
becomes an assault on your wardrobe and your presentation; but I'm not separate from my presentation. It’s not just a tie that I'm wearing or a shirt that I'm wearing. I am wearing my heart.

Frederick shared other ways in which his appearance was audited:

I still get comments like, “Oh, your pants are too tight.” Would they be saying that to a straight man? Because my pants are not tight. They’re so baggy on me I feel frumpy; but to this institution if you are gay, because there’s so much of this obsession, literally I will catch people staring at my thighs and my butt and my crotch.

Along with the attention to his appearance, Frederick felt his institution devalued the lives of LGBTQ people:

Recently at my university, we had a student seroconvert and come out as HIV positive. The institutions response was clearly that this student made the decisions they made and so now they have to live with these life choices versus if a student were to become pregnant at my institution…. If they decided to keep the child, the University would put them up in a house and sponsor their living arrangement.

This contrast in the treatment of these two students was hard for Frederick. He shared:

People can say, “Certainly you feel for that student.” And I said, “No. No. It’s no longer about the student. The pain now comes from the direct devaluing of a life because they’re LGBT and that also means that my life is not valuable as a LGBT person. So while the administrators may be thinking that this is only about a student, because who the person is and what we do as professionals are so closely aligned, it doesn't feel like it's a response to the work; it feels it's a response to me as a person.

Despite the pain of this circumstance, resisting this mistreatment drove Frederick’s work and his desire to support student protests. He confided:

At a fundamental level, I see myself as a renegade, as a radical co-conspirator with my boss in that what we're saying out of one side is, “Don't worry institution. We've got you.” And out of the other side we’re saying, “Let’s fuck shit up, let’s do some shit. If you want to go sit in the bathroom and get arrested, if that's what you’re offering and that's what you're planning, let’s talk about how you can do that in a way that’s not going to hurt your academics.” That's what we're doing. We're fostering and fomenting civil disobedience within the institution.
This work got Frederick “jazzed up” and animated about work which he confessed “will never be done.” Frederick knew that when he could no longer found joy in the resistance, it would be time for him to leave his position.

“I don't think that you're fit for this, prove me otherwise.” Frederick’s professional journey began in undergraduate where he worked to found a national fraternity at his undergraduate institution for gay, bisexual, and trans men and served on a committee to bring gender neutral housing to his campus. He also served in his undergraduate institution’s LGBTQ Resource Center which gave him a sense of purpose and belonging. He shared, “The director of the LGBT Center at [State University] who was there said, “I don't care how much of a mess you are. Bring it all into my office and we'll figure it out.””

In tandem with these experiences outside the classroom, Frederick’s degree in sociology helped him to consider the ways in which he could push against injustice and learn about “taboo” topics which “started with race” and then “became about sexuality and sex.” This led him to pursue a master’s in Higher Education which he believed would enable him to do sexual advocacy and education with undergraduate students. He taught courses, trained other educators on topics in sexual health, and oversaw an office which gave him the experiences he needed for his current position.

However, when he initially applied for his current role, he was told he was “inexperienced” and would “not fit in.” Frederick saw these misgivings as the challenge of “I don't think that you're fit for this, prove me otherwise.” Frederick applied and later discovered that he did not make the initial application cut, but that those who did were
not “great in person.” Frederick was selected in the second interview draft and the search committee ended up picking him.

Fredrick drew upon his master’s degree and prior experience in legitimating his work to avoid having his knowledge dismissed as an opinion. In describing using his education to build credibility, Frederick explicated:

If I say, “Well, based on my experience teaching, same-gender relationships offer individuals a different way of relating than in different-gender relationships.” Not to say one is more valuable than the other. But just to offer that there are many ways of loving and that we can see from studies that people who experience same gender attraction live more fulfilled, more efficient self-actualized lives when they’re with a same gender partner…. I can say that. That's true and that’s research-based, and it means something more than saying, “It’s okay to be gay.”

Frederick’s next professional goal was to be “the director of an LGBT Center” and potentially to “get a doctorate at some point” so he could eventually become a Chief Diversity Officer.

**Coming out “is just the beginning.”** Before becoming an LGBTQ professionals Frederick shared, “I had a lot of romantic ideas and I still do…. I was not prepared for the politics associated with this work.” Frederick’s nickname in college was “Sparkles-and-Rainbows” because he only saw the positive benefits of LGBTQ work and not the difficulties. Formerly, he believed that LGBTQ work only dealt with coming out, “What we have as a result is this entire field … that is built on … shallow notions of self where all people have done in their life is push themselves to come out, and that’s their burden of proof.” Frederick found this foundation to be powerful but limited. He expounded:

It’s such an amazing part of the process, it feels like the entire world. When you come out and … you see all these other people are gay, it’s like, “Wow, there’s so much here.” And to think then that that’s the whole world and not to realize that it is just the beginning.
In moving beyond coming out, Frederick believed that being queer and in particular being a queer professional meant battling systemic inequality and the interconnectedness of oppression.

“I am just queer.” Frederick admitted that he identified as a queer man. However, he stated, “I would say historically I'm a bisexual man.” He continued:

I can remember as early as the second and third grade, being attracted to both my male and female peers … to fast forwarding to high school, middle school, where I'm having sex with both men and women, to college where I have shifted now exclusively to men. To graduate school … where it becomes so out of control that I was having sex with different men on every single day and using substances to reduce my barriers to access…. To moving in with [my partner] and … having a really intense, fiery, passionate sexual relationship.

Frederick initially defined his sexual identity by his “sexual desire;” but as his sexual libido declined and behaviorally he was not engaged in any sexual acts, he defined his sexual orientation by those with whom he held intimate relationships. He shared:

I understand that I can experience intimacy in the absence of sexual behavior, with both men and women…. In that way I would say that queer becomes the most easily accessible because it gives me the most options, and it also clearly defines that I am not simply gay, I am not simply bisexual, and I am certainly not straight. I am just queer.

Frederick saw his adoption of the term queer as liberating:

It opens up all these other doors for how to experience intimacy with other people, and there's so much more there. Versus not coming to that place and aging out of your sexual behavior anyway, and then being this 40-, 50-, 60-year-old man who is desperately trying to have sex with young people to hold on to some way of knowing the world.

Becoming queer allowed Frederick to redefine his social world.

“This has been the most enriching professional part of my life.” Frederick’s job was crucial in helping him to understand and navigate his evolving perception of his
sexuality:

I think that having this job helped me to open the way of thinking about my identity and my own development…. I think I probably would have resorted back to my old habits of binge drinking and binge consuming drugs as a way to cope and respond to that if I hadn't been in a job where someone … was saying, "There's so much more depth here. Keep looking. Keep searching. Keep digging. Here let me show you the artifacts of my own journey on the way, and you can find yours." If I didn't have that, I don't know where I would be right now…. This has been the most enriching professional part of my life.

Frederick further shared that his diminishing libido has made him “a better professional.”

He was able to “step outside” his desires and “draw hard lines” stopping him from partying, smoking, drinking, or sleeping with students. At the same time, Frederick’s deeper understanding of himself allowed him to be authentic and “real” with students.

He reflected:

When students don't feel like we understand where they're coming from, and when we're not real with them about what's happening in our own life, they're not going to be real with us about what's happening in theirs and we're less available to help them.

Frederick’s drive to be real stemmed from his own experience:

When I was having a really hard time, and I was abusing drugs and alcohol to the point where it was becoming life threatening for me, it was the staff member who had the open door—we can talk about anything, I'll be there for you—policy that saved my life and led me to get into this work.

Being real also meant being present for students in times of crisis, focusing on building relationships, and empathetically holding space for students to authentically express themselves.

Marie: “I do Queer Work within Student Affairs.”

Marie was the director of the LGBTQ Resource Center at an elite, private, large, research-intensive institution located in a large city. She identified as queer and lesbian.
She served as the sole full-time employee of the LGBTQ Resource Center. The LGBTQ Resource Center was founded in 2013 with Marie becoming the director shortly after its creation. Having the Center made a political statement on behalf of the institution that LGBTQ students could proclaim, “We are known, we are seen, we exist, and we are being supported by the institution.”

“Well, you know, that’s just what they’re into.” Marie shared that the climate at her institution was fairly segmented. She explained:

If I'm a queer student, I may be a part of the queer student group; but I don’t necessarily talk about that to people who are in my acapella group, because there’s sort of a sense that that’s your thing. I’ve got my thing, and it doesn’t really affect me for you to have this identity.

This separation of identities and spheres of participation made it difficult to get students to programs and to foster a cohesive LGBTQ community. Students tended to gather in smaller “queer spaces” where they found a sense of “connection” but in larger experienced only “silence.”

Along with a sense of fragmentation of identity, there was an equation of LGBTQ identity to casual interests. Marie cited an instance in which a student was asked to confront an incident of bias towards an LGBTQ person. She recounted, “Well, you know, that’s just what they’re into. They’re just into that LGBT stuff, and you have to respect that, just the way that you might be into your Pokémon Club.” This answer was problematic for Marie because the student did not see LGBTQ identity to be “core or central” to a person.

A bigger issue related to identity segmentation was that persons with marginalized identities did not feel welcome in many spaces on campus whether it was
because of their sexual orientation or race. Creating welcoming spaces where their identities were honored was a priority for Marie; and yet, she reported resistance to this work, particularly when her work was framed as a “personal vendetta.” Marie commented that colleagues would make remarks such as, “[Marie’s] area does this or this,” or, “[Those are Marie’s] students,” or, “[Marie’s] office is down there.” This was troubling because in Marie’s opinion it equated and limited LGBTQ work to a personal interest. Marie expounded:

The office exists because we, as an institution, have said … we're going to care about the experiences of LGBT students…. To make it sound like, "Well, that's just Marie’s idea or Marie’s project," it absolves everybody else's responsibility to do that thing and it also puts me in the position of a feeling like I'm just an individual actor.

Equation of LGBTQ work to her personal interest made Marie feel as though her colleagues were delegitimizing her work.

Marie commented on some of her efforts to improve the institution for LGBTQ students:

We’ve been able to get trans-inclusive health benefits for the students and the staff. We have gender-inclusive housing that includes first-year students. We have preferred name policies. We have a lot of the structural, legal kinds of things in place.

Despite these structural pieces, Marie noted that having policies in place “doesn’t stop your classmates from saying something dumb in a course session … [or] stop a faculty member from making an assumption or saying things about people with AIDS.” To combat these unwelcoming actions, Marie engaged in educational outreach through “Safe Zones.” The continued press for LGBTQ inclusion could at times “feel really isolating”
and Marie drew support from a national consortium of LGBTQ professionals to combat her feelings of isolation.

“If I was not doing this particular job…I would still be doing diversity work.” Marie’s initiation into LGBTQ work began through her undergraduate coursework and involvements. While studying the topics of queer theory, queer history, and lesbian literature that Marie came to realize that LGBTQ work “was a job that people could do.” Marie shared that while she was an undergraduate she had an opportunity to work in a newly opened LGBTQ center and “really enjoyed it.”

Marie continued at her undergraduate institution and pursued her master’s degree. She narrated:

During that summer between my undergrad and my graduate program, the director of the office left. While that space was vacant, the Dean of Students approached me and asked me to sort of do what I could to help keep the office open. So, I did that entirely as a volunteer for maybe five months.

Marie sat on the search committee to find a new full-time staff person for the Center and realized that “once I had a master’s degree, my volunteer experience and my intern experience actually would give me nearly as much qualification as anybody else who was applying for the position.” With this awareness, Marie connected with the national LGBTQ Consortium and after receiving her master’s degree got a job doing LGBTQ work at another institution. Marie then moved to a second institution for four years where she completed her doctorate in Higher Education.

Marie’s decision to come to her current role was due to a mixture of personal and professional factors. Personally, it was important for her to move to a city where at the time there was a “queer community,” “marriage equality,” and “a big enough city where
we [she and her partner] could both find jobs.” Professionally, it was important to Marie to find a city where there was more going on in terms of service for the queer community than just her position at a University. In her previous position, Marie shared that the local hospital contacted her to do a training on LGB issues. Although Marie did not want to do the training because it was the hospital she used for her own medical services and felt it might be awkward, she admitted, “I did wind up doing it because I felt like that was an obligation that I had to try to improve the area, to do things for that community.” For Marie, this external service to the community presented an additional pressure that she felt would be mitigated in moving to a community with a larger LGBTQ community.

In describing her work and profession, Marie stated, “I do queer work within student affairs.” She saw herself as a “diversity educator” who focused explicitly on queer work. This professional alignment enabled her “to tap into a body of research around diversity education, around racial identity development, around queer identity development, research on sexism, and things like that.” However, Marie was firm in her belief that queer work was a separate discipline from broader diversity work. She explained, “I think it takes specialized skills that are distinct from somebody who does race-based work…. I think there is particular queer literature that someone should probably be familiar with.”

Marie stated that her connection with student affairs in her work was through understanding both “student development” and “knowing how higher education works” which allowed her to be more effective in her advocacy efforts. Marie went on to share, “If I was not doing this particular job, I feel like I would still be doing some diversity
work or advocacy work or diversity education.” Marie’s next steps were very much connected to her passion for diversity work; however, she found difficulty moving into a broader and administratively higher diversity role because of what she termed the “lavender ceiling.” Marie described experiencing this phenomenon as “this idea that once you have queer stuff as a major part of your resume, it’s seen as that’s all you can do.” This was deeply frustrating to Marie who explained:

There was a new position created…. My supervisor really encouraged me heavily to apply…. In fact, I was in that position on an interim basis for about six months and helped create some of the groundwork and lead the things that were going on. … [However], I was, ultimately, not hired for this position.

Marie received feedback that her “scope was not big enough to be able to take on this associate dean position.” This was difficult for Marie to accept and she reflected, “I think my scope is partnering with a lot of different offices….. I feel like the folks on the committee weren’t seeing that. They were seeing the LGBT stuff.” The lavender ceiling continued to be a barrier for Marie as she considered her next professional steps.

“Maybe these are my people.” Marie’s professional journey was replete with cross connections between her personal identity and professional identity. In describing her personal identity development, Marie recalled that her awareness began in high school as an ally, “I had an awareness that being gay was the thing that existed in the world, but it was never really even close to being an option for me.”

However, Marie found “a group of people at my high school who wanted to start a Gay Straight Alliance.” In talking with them, she said, “They asked me to be a part of it. I thought, ‘Yeah. I think that people shouldn't be discriminated against, and I think that's good and everything.’” After joining the group, a girl “threw herself at me.”
Following this, Marie’s awareness shifted as she realized, “Maybe I like this.” In coming out, Marie found that her parents “were not at all supportive.”

In undergraduate, along with fostering her initial work with LGBTQ initiatives on campus, Marie discovered that her coursework in English allowed her to explore queer and lesbian literatures, and she came to see herself as both lesbian and queer. Marie attended the Creating Change Conference for queer activism and community organizing where she met “queer people from all over the place.” In attending, Marie realized, “It was just really exciting to feel like, ‘Oh, wow. Maybe these are my people.’”

“I have a responsibility to build a relationship with some of the younger folks on campus.” In addition to discussing the initial awareness of her identity and finding an LGBTQ community, Marie described the ways in which her expression and the importance behind her expression of her lesbian and queer identities shifted over time.

She recounted:

When I was in college, I had this feeling that people needed to know that I was a lesbian. … How could I come to enter into a community if nobody knew that I was a part of it? I cut my hair short. I joined all the different groups.

Overtime, Marie found it was less important that everyone know she was lesbian, but it still mattered. She stated:

It matters to me that when my wife and I are in places that we are seen as a couple…. We sporadically get asked if we are sisters. We don't look anything alike…. but people will ask us if we're sisters. It actually makes me really mad because I think what is happening is that they see that we are close. They recognize closeness, but they do not have a framework for it…. They just put this assumption on us.

Having her relationship mistaken as familial love as opposed to romantic love was incredibly frustrating and an assumption she actively worked to correct.

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Marie’s considered how her lesbian and queer identities showed up in professional settings too:

I'm not really sure how if I showed up in a very, very masculine way...if I would be seen as aggressive, or pushy, or anything along those lines. I think about that, how do I show up? How do people perceive me and are people relieved when I show up and I don't seem very, to use the unspoken word here, “dykey?”

While Marie did not feel that she was inauthentic in the way she appeared in her expression and performance of her lesbian and queer identities, she stated that she knew “there would be a lot more obstacles” professionally if she were more masculine.

Masculinity was not the only consideration that Marie had when it came to expressing and articulating her identity in professional settings. Marie shared that when she was doing educational trainings “I try to be really cautious about personal anecdotes I use in training.” Marie chose stories that she had emotional distance from because she often felt called to talk about issues of gender expression and privilege to rooms “full of strangers.” Marie also noted that she used her personal experiences to connect with students who may have had similar experiences ones; but Marie was cautious sharing with students, making sure “that they are not trying to assume that, because I had an experience, it's going to be their experience.” For students with whom she did not share a common identity or a common experience, Marie drew from research and readings and worked to create identity-specific spaces where students could connect across their commonalities. Marie disclosed:

I’m really fortunate in that one of my students or colleagues on campus is a trans guy, and he has been willing to be the host for the trans and genderqueer group that meets every once in a while.

Identifying and having other LGBTQ staff with whom students could connect with was
critical important to Marie. She stated, “One of the things I've been trying to do is help
courage students to connect to other LGBT people on campus who are our staff
members or who are faculty members.” These important because they helped to
normalize life after college for LGBTQ students by providing them with role models.

In addition to educational trainings and working with students, Marie’s queer and
lesbian identities also impacted the collegial connections she made at work. She shared:

I do try to pay attention to student affairs stuff and other staff on campus who are
out queer people or who have come out to me in some way … and just try to go
out to lunch with them every once in a while…. It's not a part of my official job
… but I do want them to feel like they are a part of a community too.

In addition to community, Marie saw connecting with younger and older queer staff
members as a form of mentoring and professional development. She explicated:

There are a couple of senior staff people on campus who are queer or LGBT
identified, and … there's some part of me that wants them to reach out to me and
feels like they have a responsibility to build a relationship with me in the same
way that I feel like I have a responsibility to build a relationship with some of the
younger folks on campus. That hasn’t happened. My feelings aren't hurt because I
know there's a ton of other things going on, but that was something that I secretly
wish for.

Marie felt an obligation to mentor and connect with younger professionals and expected
older professionals to mentor her.

**Rachel: “The Door was Going to be Open.”**

Rachel was the director of the LGBTQ Resource Center at an elite, large, private,
research-intensive university. Rachel identified as a bisexual, White, cis-woman. In the
current iteration of her role, she supervised an assistant director and oversaw all aspects
of LGBTQ Student Life at her university including setting priorities, budgeting for the
center, determining programming and outreach, and working with the institution to create policies and systems that supported LGBTQ students.

Rachel asserted that in her state “we have pretty phenomenal laws and supports for folks with regard to gender identity and sexual orientation at least” and LGBTQ students benefitted “tremendously from that.” One example was that all residence halls at her university had gender inclusive restrooms. She believed that even if state laws did not translate directly because she worked at a private institution they initiated conversations pertaining to access and putting LGBTQ students’ safety “first and foremost.” Throughout Rachel’s interviews, she enumerate examples that supported the notion that laws had a positive influence on climate. Rachel stated:

There are dorms that are known to be more LBGTQ friendly than other dorms on campus. One of the dorms that isn't rated as highly as LBGTQ friendly wanted to change that climate…. They hosted their first ever Rainbow Breakfast…. It was a big deal…. It said, “This is your home. We love you. We know who you are. We want you to be a part of the community.”

Laws coupled with action created positive experiences for LGBTQ students, but LGBTQ students’ experiences on her campus were varied. She elaborated:

It really depends on what specific space you're talking about on campus and which particular individual you're talking about. Because students can have such a range of experiences, some of which are very, very troubling.

Some students at her institution had experienced “homophobic slurs, racial slurs within their living spaces, at their fraternities/ sororities, on their athletic teams, and especially still, unfortunately in classrooms.” Additionally, gender neutral restrooms were not readily available across the entire campus and with students reporting “it taking up to 45 minutes just to find a space where they feel comfortable and safe.” The variance in
experiences highlighted the connection between historical treatment of LGBTQ issues and present circumstances.

“Sometimes that just meant getting the right person in the room.” Rachel’s entire professional career had been with her current institution. She lamented that her general budget “hasn't grown in the past 10 years at all. Not a dime. It's also one-third of what I need every year just to keep the programs going that we offer…. Things like having speakers.” To make up for the funding shortfall Rachel pursued grants, organized internal and external fundraising, and courted donors. Rachel was successful in securing funding but found it difficult to develop a long-term strategic plan for the Center because of the uncertainty in funding.

Beyond funding, Rachel faced demands that limited the time she had to directly serve students. Faculty and staff asked her to conduct trainings which she felt was “tokenizing.” She shared that, “I'd much rather be doing the work that I was hired to do, which is to train student leaders and to support students and student groups.”

While funding limitations and demands on her time continued to be areas of contention, Rachel found that the overall climate of the institution had improved over the past decade. She shared:

In the beginning of my career here at [the University]… I would receive death threats over the phone. I would walk into materials left in my office saying I was going to hell. It's a really, really hard space to navigate professionally when you're feeling like your own life is at risk.

Rachel continued, “I didn't feel like any other colleagues on campus could empathize with that feeling. Now I think that's different.” Rachel attributed the decline in experiences with hostility and isolation to two factors. One was that far fewer blatant and
outright acts of homophobia and hostility were being directed toward LGBTQ persons. The second was an increased societal awareness of the experiences of Muslim persons being targeted because of their religious identities and the mounting news of African-American persons being victims of racially-motivated violence. This heightened consciousness helped drive intersectional and collaborative work which was important to Rachel:

I think all aspects of oppression are in an interconnected web … I can't really chip away aspects of homophobia and transphobia at the institution without also addressing issues of racism, sexism, ageism, and an awareness of folks with disabilities.

In providing an example of resisting oppression, Rachel highlighted the importance of relationships and patience:

Five years ago we had asked the registrar's office if we could change the policy on how students are able to change their gender marker within the registrar's records. As it stood students needed to show proof that they had had some sort of surgery related to their gender. Not only was that an antiquated policy,… it also was very problematic for students. They would go to the registrar's office, and they would hear from staff in the registrar's office, "Have you had THE surgery?"…. For a year we talked with the registrar's office and heard the most transphobic remarks in every meeting, making no progress. And then we just asked to meet with the registrar, the head registrar. She said, "Absolutely. This makes a ton of sense. We'll change it this week."

Rachel learned from this that change sometimes rests on getting “the right people in the room and then also maintaining good relationships with those folks for long periods of time.”

In considering the totality of her experiences and how she persisted in the work over the long-haul, Rachel reflected:

I work very closely with someone who talks to the space station…. At the end of the day I'm like, "Wow, I can't believe you and I know each other." When those
kinds of people are struggling with their identity, … to be able to give back to someone who's able to give so much is an incredibly valuable thing; I wouldn't trade it for the world.

It was clear that for Rachel, helping LGBTQ students was the central focus of her career.

"I wasn't even aware...” Rachel had worked at her University for over a decade and was the first person to have held a full-time role explicitly focused on serving LGBTQ students. In describing her initial awareness of the two-year, LGBTQ program coordinator opening at her institution, Rachel recollected:

I wasn't even aware when I was job hunting that this was an area or a career path. I was so excited that [this institution] was piloting a position in this area, and it felt like such a good fit with my skillset at the time…. I definitely didn't know of any other centers, of any other queer and trans folks in these roles with centers in their colleges and universities at all. That was really exciting to come into a field and get to know that there were other people doing this work.

Rachel’s first step in the role was “getting as many people as possible to inform the next steps for the office.” In the course of her first two years, Rachel created a white paper in which “over 100 people participated.” This paper included “feedback and data and context about the need for the position, the need for the office, [and] the benefits that people had felt from the position.” Rachel’s hard work resulted in the conversion of the two-year temporary role serving LGBTQ students into a permanent one.

Rachel had no specific education on working with LGBTQ students but she leveraging other experiences to help her in her position:

The social justice focus I think has come more so probably from my experience at [my graduate institution] and other life experiences. I feel very strongly that the extra coursework I was able to take, the language component through the social justice education, that specific course on race and racism, public speaking, grant writing, those urban leadership components of my social work degree really set me up so well for the systemic and institutionalized change that I’ve been able to support here.
In sharing these skill sets, Rachel articulated the scaffolding she used to advocate for the creation of a permanent LGBTQ position and the advancement of that position from program-coordinator to director.

“IT'S NOT EXPECTED THAT PROGRAM COORDINATORS WILL HELP GROW AN INSTITUTION.”

Over her time at her institution, Rachel’s position underwent significant transformations. In describing the evolution of her professional role from program coordinator to a director, Rachel stated, “I think there's very little power and influence and change that you can make at the program coordinator level. It's not expected that program coordinators will help grow an institution, help change policy procedure.”

Rachel came to this awareness a couple of years after she started her role and began the difficult process of working to advance the stature of the position. “In the past 11 years the effort to change the title to “director” was a really uphill battle. I was allowed to use that term but not be compensated at that level up until the past two years really.” In embarking on advocating for her role and for LGBTQ students, Rachel found that her personal experiences and the needs of students served as her guides. She shared:

I had an experience in college of being very closeted, not being comfortable being out even to myself…. Not really having resources around my bisexual identity, not even really having the language for that. Then one time … mustering up the courage to go to an LBGTQ student meeting—and it was run by students—so for whatever reason they didn't meet that day. I came to this stark, empty, locked room and just felt like … the only queer person in the universe and very scared and very alone, very isolated.

She continued:

I wanted … to make sure that students never have that experience [of feeling alone or abandoned]. …. The door was going to be open. The lights were going to
be on. They would have access to a space that was specifically going to be supportive to who they are and their whole self.

In volunteering this experience, Rachel drew a connection between her professional LGBTQ work and her personal bisexual identity, highlighting her professional work’s foundation in her personal experience.

“All those things are just a call to action.” In describing her own experience with being bisexual, Rachel contemplated:

I guess I've always fallen in love and been attracted to people and not parts…. I don't know that there was any sort of revelation. It was just my journey into young adulthood and adulthood consisted of partners of multiple genders. Most of my memories are around finding other people who identified that way and also being ostracized for that identity.

Rachel shared particular moments that stood out:

I remember the first time that I heard the term [bisexual] and understood it was at Creating Change, the conference…. It was after college, before grad school. It felt very liberating to talk to other people who had a similar identity. Then over time there have been many more resources that have popped up for the bisexual community.

Along with these moments of affirmation, Rachel had negative experiences disclosing her identity. She shared, “The first time I remember feeling different was my roommate's girlfriend saying that I was greedy.” Experiences like these “hurt.” These negative experiences popped up in Rachel’s professional work as well. She shared:

I actually came out one time as bisexual on a retreat that I lead for students. There were 40 of them in the room, and there was a lot of biphobia as a reaction to me coming out, which I was very surprised by because I had worked very hard for their respect…. I thought our relationship was strong enough to weather or to dispel stereotypes about bisexual folks, and it certainly wasn't at the time…. I took a leap of faith and it didn't work out very well.
This experience along with other negative experiences informed Rachel advocacy work. She stated:

That was another pretty big moment for me and my identity because I didn't feel safe, and I am charged with creating safe space. I had a good sense then at that point about what students might be going through, and I started to build bi, omni, and pansexual communities among students. They were very grateful to have spaces like that, similar I think to what I maybe felt when I first found people who identified that way.

To Rachel, building communities for LGBTQ students was foundational to supporting and empowering them. She averred, “Seeing biphobia and transphobia in the queer community or racism for example in the queer community or sexism, all those things are just a call to action.”

“I feel like there’s not enough of this profession.”

In the course of describing both the nature of her work and her journey to being the Director of LGBTQ Services on her campus, Rachel noted that in her day-to-day work:

It's very draining. It's very isolating and it leads to burnout. It's really hard to negotiate and navigate. Other people see it as a problem, actually. The consortium is a great resource in lots of ways, but there is something about having a network of people very close by to turn to, and that's been pretty hard to find.

Rachel attributed the difficulty of finding a professional network in part to being the only person at her institution doing LGBTQ work for much of her tenure there and also to the fact that “…there’s not enough of this profession… I think last I heard about 200 or so centers in over 4,000, four-year liberal arts colleges.” Rachel highlighted an interesting facet of LGBTQ professional work, that although she finds it to be complex, deeply compelling, rewarding, and meaningful, “it's hard to cultivate long-term professional
mentorship and professional development with turnover happening and with so few schools offering roles like this.” In sharing these sentiments about the campus LGBTQ professional, Rachel underscored a theme of isolation as being an undesired but indisputable characteristic of LGBTQ professional work.

**Narrative Themes: The Work and Journeys of LGBTQ Professionals**

Each narrative of these 12 LGBTQ professionals tells a unique story of personal and professional identity development and varied understandings of the nature and scope of LGBTQ work on college campuses. Across these narratives common themes emerged that highlighted an underlying commonality of experience as it related to being an LGBTQ person and performing as an LGBQT professional at an institution of higher education. These themes fell into four constellations: (a) the pervasive influence of personal LGBTQ identity; (b) defining the LGBTQ profession; (c) perceptions, reactions, and navigation of institutional climate; and (d) defining the current scope of LGBTQ work. It is important to note that not all themes appeared in all narratives but rather were exhibited across multiple narratives with facets of each theme showing up within individual narratives. It is also important to note that while these themes highlight a commonality of experience across multiple participants they are not meant to supplant individual narratives nor are they meant to speak for the experiences of all LGBTQ professionals outside of this study. Given the broad ranging scope of these findings that touch on the development of LGBTQ personal social identities, the development of LGBTQ professional identities, and the intersection of these identities, I provide a summary table of the most significant findings as they relate to the initial research.
questions. I also provide a summary of findings as they relate to the arrangement of LGBTQ work in higher education settings and the impact this arrangement had on LGBTQ professionals’ understandings and enactment of their LGBTQ professional roles. While not an initial research question, the arrangement of LGBTQ work was an important contextual factor in understanding the identity narratives of LGBTQ professionals.

Table 4.2

*Summary of Significant Findings*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding 1: How do professional identities develop for persons working as LGBTQ professionals in higher education?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 1:</strong> A common professional identity amongst these participants was found through descriptions of their roles, not through a common professional label all espoused.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 2:</strong> Professional preparation and identity development was a result of para-professional LGBTQ work and formal graduate training related to higher education, social work, or queer oriented studies of the humanities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 3:</strong> Professional identity based on credentialing and previous professional experience had to be asserted by participants in order to overcome perceptions that participants were carrying out personal agendas.</td>
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<td><strong>Finding 4:</strong> Professional identity as related to appearance was challenged by LGBTQ professionals especially as it related to the policing of clothing dictated by gender binaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 5:</strong> Developing a political acumen and understanding of how to navigate collegial and institutional needs and pressures related to advocating for LGBTQ students was one of the most crucial components of creating an LGBTQ professional identity.</td>
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Continued
### RQ 2: How do the personal LGBTQ identities of LGBTQ professionals develop?

| Finding 1: | LGBTQ professionals’ personal LGBTQ identities tended to converge on queer as a common identifier. |
| Finding 2: | Having a personal LGBTQ served as a nearly universal impetus for beginning and continuing in LGBTQ professional work. |
| Finding 3: | Professional LGBTQ work caused participants in this study to re-examine, redefine, and refine their personal LGBTQ identities. |
| Finding 4: | The exploration of personal LGBTQ identity was a continual and unending process. |
| Finding 5: | The intersection of race, gender, and LGBTQ identity was essential to understanding the development and enactment of personal LGBTQ identity. |

### RQ 3: What are the intersections and influences between personal and professional LGBTQ identities for LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings?

| Finding 1: | Personal LGBTQ identity was performed explicitly and intentionally in order to accomplish goals related to LGBTQ professional work and to moderate the degree of queer visibility LGBTQ professionals exhibited. |
| Finding 2: | Personal and professional LGBTQ identities reciprocally shaped one another and spurred development in one another. |
| Finding 3: | Possessing a personal LGBTQ social identity and identifying visibly as a member of the LGBTQ community was seen as an expected and essential pre-requisite to identifying as an LGBTQ professional. |
| Finding 4: | Professional LGBTQ identities did not exempt LGBTQ professionals from experiencing social stigma or social sanctions related to their personal LGBTQ identities. |
| Finding 5: | Personal identity informed the priorities of LGBTQ professionals’ work agendas and advocacy efforts. |

Findings related to the arrangement, enactment, and understanding of LGBTQ professional work within institutions of higher education.

Continued
Table 4.2 continued

**Finding 1:** Queer persons of color and trans students were seen as experiencing greater harassment and discrimination relative to their cisgender presenting, gay/lesbian, and White peers. Thus, these students tended to receive the greatest amount of attention and support related to LGBTQ advocacy on college campuses from the professionals in this study.

**Finding 2:** Institutions tended to create accommodative services for LGBTQ students in addition to their services for other students. This accommodation based service model was in opposition to integrating LGBTQ services throughout institutions.

**Finding 3:** For LGBTQ professionals, isolation from peers and resistance to LGBTQ inclusion efforts were two of the biggest facts contributing to feelings of ineffectiveness and burnout.

**Finding 4:** LGBTQ centers that were not combined with other multicultural offices tended to be overwhelmingly staffed with White persons, had difficulty engaging in social justice issues related to race, and struggled in engaging with queer students of color.

**Finding 5:** At times, LGBTQ professionals needed to navigate competing priorities between enforcing the policies and will of the institution and supporting student efforts to protest and engage in activism.

The rest of this chapter discusses the findings presented in this table in greater depth.

**The Pervasive Influence of Personal LGBTQ Identity**

Personal LGBTQ identity was perhaps the most robust and complex theme constellation within participants’ narratives, influencing and intersecting with nearly every other theme. Personal LGBTQ identity served as a foundational animus for pursuing and persisting in LGBTQ professional work and was reshaped by evolving understandings of self through interviewees’ involvements in LGBTQ work. Personal identity was reciprocally impacted by LGBTQ professional work in several ways. In
order to break down the complexity of personal LGBTQ identity and its impact on LGBTQ professional identity, I start with the formation of personal LGBTQ identity. I then look at ways in which being an LGBTQ professional has defined their conceptions of their personal LGBTQ identities. Lastly, I examine the complicated intersections that make distinguishing between personal and professional identity difficult, if not impossible.

**Development of a personal LGBTQ identity.** In chronicling the development of personal LGBTQ identities, the majority of participants described coming into and understanding their personal LGBTQ identities prior to beginning their work as LGBTQ professionals. Awareness of LGBTQ identity began with an awareness of a non-heterosexual attraction which morphed into an understanding of oneself as non-heterosexual. First non-heterosexual attractions ranged from grade school to post graduate school. Along with the development of non-heterosexual attraction, several participants also described seeking out LGBTQ activism opportunities, whether that was joining gay-straight alliances in high school or looking for opportunities to do LGBTQ advocacy work as an undergraduate.

Within this group of participants, most entered the LGBTQ community identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Overtime, all but one migrated towards identifying exclusively as queer or using the term queer in conjunction with another identifier such as bisexual or gay. The adoption or addition of a queer identity descriptor happened for various reasons. These included an ascription to a queer politic of LGBTQ inclusion that sought to disrupt exclusionary systems, a queering of gender presentation
moving away from an ascription to gender binaries, or the insufficiency of another term to describe a participant’s sexual or gender identity.

**Identity development through LGBTQ work.** The act of doing LGBTQ professional work was explicitly cited by some in this study as furthering the evolution of their personal LGBTQ identities. Monica discovered her queer identity as a result of doing LGBTQ work on a college campus. Prior to her role in an LGBTQ resource center, she considered herself to be an ally. Tyler too credited his exploration and ascription to a trans identity as stemming from his work. He entered LGBTQ work first identifying as a lesbian but, through conversations with students about their evolving sexual and gender identities, came to understand himself more fully. He went so far as to state that were it not for his professional work he likely would not have come to identify as trans. Avery also began to explore their gender queer identity in the course of their professional work, and several other participants talked about how identifying as queer correlated to their work with the broader LGBTQ community.

The most succinct way to summarize the impact that being an LGBTQ professional has on personal LGBTQ identity is through the proposition that it is possible for a person to go their entire lives without developing a professional LGBTQ identity. However, once a person begins to develop an LGBTQ professional identity, it is nearly impossible for that person not to re-examine and redefine one’s relationship with his/her/hir personal LGBTQ identity. Of the persons in this study, Frederick seemed to be most actively engaged in the process of engaging in a reexamination of his personal LGBTQ identity.
Breaking monolithic representations of the LGBTQ community and coming out. In sharing their journeys of coming to understand their personal LGBTQ identities, several participants were keen to note that their stories did not fit into typical coming-out stories. Most notably, Monica and Tyler’s stories pushed back against the notion that, in order to do the work of LGBTQ professional service to others, one must have a fully formed understanding of one’s LGBTQ identities. This perceived requirement to have their identities fully figured out was something that Laura, Kara, Frederick, and Avery also expressed. The most common strategy used to combat this pressure was to be authentic and transparent about their own identity evolutions and struggles. There was a shared notion that modeling uncertainty and growth with personal LGBTQ identity gave students permission to do the same. In addition to elaborating on narratives of identity exploration and discovery, the stories participants shared also showcased the varied of identities and intersecting identities within the LGBTQ community helping to further articulate the LGBTQ experience beyond cisgender, White, gay, males.

The role of intersecting and intersectional identities. Participants’ multiple identities helped to shed light on the intersecting and intersectional experiences that shaped their queer or LGBT experiences. Examples of intersecting experiences were shared by Phillip and Frederick who stated that their male identities in conjunction with their same-sex attraction made them suspects of impropriety in which others assumed they were likely to cross boundaries and prey on male students. For Marie, there was an intersection between her queer/lesbian identity and her identity as a cis-gender woman in which people saw her relationship with her partner as platonic and sisterly as opposed to
romantic. In both of these examples, participants had same-sex attractions, but their genders moderated others’ assumptions about their intent when expressing or suspected of same-sex intimacy. Phillip and Frederick had to guard against suspicions of impropriety while Marie had to assert her relationship in order for it to be recognized for what it was, an expression of her identity and affection for her partner.

In addition to these intersecting experiences, Lane, Monica, and Jonathan discussed their intersectional experiences with race and sexual orientation. For each of them, race impacted the way in which they understood, interpreted, and performed their sexual identities. Specifically, they each indicated that their awareness or consciousness of their races arose before their awareness of their LGBTQ identities. They also recounted the ways in which for them they could not separate their experiences with their race/ethnicity from their experiences with their sexual orientation. Indeed, they resisted requests by colleagues and others to interpret their experiences through a single identity lens as to do this was to deny the fullness of their experiences. Much like the queer students of colors they served, these participants expressed feeling marginalized at times within the LGBTQ community because of their non-White racial identities.

**Personal foundations in LGBTQ work.** A pervasive theme throughout each participants’ narrative was the direct and indirect impact each person’s personal LGBTQ identity had on the motivation and understanding of his/her/hir work. Laura shared this sentiment baldly when she stated she did not think she would be engaged in LGBTQ work if she were not LGBTQ. Phillip wanted others to see their identities as a “gift” in the same way that he saw his own identity. Shel likewise worked to become the support
for LGBTQ students she wished she had had in undergraduate. For each participant, personal experience begat how they showed up and inhabited their roles as LGBTQ professionals.

**Identity performance and boundaries.** Another major theme participants in this study described was the need to perform identity for the purposes of outreach, education, and advocacy and the negotiation of boundaries, particularly as it related to access to one’s personal identities and stories. Tyler described the use of his story in educational and advocacy settings in order to advance the agenda for pro-LGBTQ policies at his institution. He felt that this was an important tool as it helped to generate positive change in people’s perceptions of LGBTQ persons.

The central theme as it related to identity performance was that these LGBTQ professionals realized the expressions of their queer identities were performatives that they could choose to modify and use as tools of resistance, protest, and advocacy. This was useful as it allowed the participants to filter their identities in ways that made them legible and well received depending on their audience. It also helped them create some distance between visceral personal experiences and hurtful, awkward, or difficult situations that might arise in their professional roles.

Related to the performance of identity were boundaries connected to sharing personal experiences and histories as they related to personal LGBTQ identities. These boundaries were permeable and contextual and determined on an individual basis for each professional. The general notion shared amongst these participants was that the sharing of personal stories were student-led and student-focused and used to encourage
students to confide in them. In this mode of operation, very little was off limits when it came to sharing stories and experience. However, firmer boundaries were asserted when it came to engaging in personal activities with students, like partying with students or engaging in sexual relationships. The issue of boundaries had to be continually managed.

*The everyday impact of professional work on personal LGBTQ identity.* Despite intentional choices made by these LGBTQ professionals on the way in which they shared their identities or asserted boundaries, inevitably people and institutions attempted to define their identities and boundaries for them. Avery described the phenomenon of being tokenized and having their identities used without their prior permission or foreknowledge to advance institutional agendas. Frederick shared his experiences of having his appearance audited and scrutinized by others. Phillip reported feeling ostracized and delegitimized in his work. In each of these instances, other people were asking and/or insisting that these professionals frame and perform their identities in ways other than how they wanted or needed to do in order to maintain a coherent and authentic sense of self. These were examples of the everyday impact and infringement of LGBTQ work on personal LGBTQ identity that sought to wear these professionals down. In response to this, self-care was of the utmost importance.

**Defining the LGBTQ Profession**

It is difficult at times to determine where personal identity ends and professional identity begins; and yet it is important to define the LGBTQ profession in order to more fully elaborate the ways in which personal and professional identity diverge and converge. Specifically, it is important to analyze participants’ career narratives, their
understandings of professional identities, the evolution of their professional identities, and to further articulate the intertwining of personal and professional identities when a person is a member of the community he/she/ze serves.

**Journeys to the LGBTQ profession.** For this group of professionals, the journeys to their current roles were varied. For many, there was a typical progression to becoming an LGBTQ professional and for others there seemed to be an atypical progression. In the typical progression, LGBTQ professionals first had a personal experience with discrimination and/or affirmation of their personal LGBTQ identities. From this experience, they then developed a personal drive to want to help other LGBTQ persons navigate their experiences with coming out. This commitment to help usually involved some kind of internship or paraprofessional experience working with a campus LGBTQ resource center or LGBTQ advocacy organization. Next these professionals went into graduate programs in higher education, which might include graduate assistantships in LGBTQ centers or other advocacy work, to prepare them for roles as LGBTQ professionals. After graduate school, these professionals applied to full-time roles working in LGBTQ centers.

However, despite sharing typical routes, individuals encountered a great deal of variance in the specific timing of experiences and the exact degrees people sought at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Of the 12 participants, one person had partially completed his masters in higher education and seven had completed master’s degrees in higher education administration. Three participants received their masters in social work
while another held a masters in English with a PhD in higher education and student affairs.

For the participants with social work degrees, their trajectories were a bit more varied than those who held degrees in higher education. One person came into their role and worked to evolve it over the course of a decade from a program coordinator role to a director role. Another person came to LGBTQ work as an ally interested in doing social justice work and ended up discovering her queer identity in the course of her work. The further exploration of personal identity as a result of LGBTQ work was a common theme amongst these professionals.

**Developing professionalism.** Within the journey to becoming an LGBTQ professional was the experience of developing a sense of professionalism. Professionalism was instrumentally connected to an understanding of one’s scope of role and function within an institution. Graduate programs and undergraduate internship experiences helped to prepare these LGBTQ practitioners for their roles. Most notably, these shaped participants’ motivation and drive to work as LGBTQ advocates. Through the experiences they learned preliminary administration and budgeting practices and basic counseling skills to aid students in crisis and need.

In addition to the professional preparation they received, these LGBTQ professionals also described a great deal of on the job learning. This type of learning gave them a better understanding of the institutional demands, pressures, and politics required for them to be successful in their jobs. They learned the importance of things like student affairs and higher education discourse, what Avery referred to as “student affairs
niceness.” On the job they acquired an appreciation for the politics of naming services as Avery discussed when describing the naming of gender neutral housing at their institution. Lastly, through job-related experiences they developed a sense of resiliency and patience in pursuing LGBTQ advocacy work that allowed them to be tireless in working to move issues forward without burning out. This sense of resiliency was also connected to an understanding that in addition to advocating for students, LGBTQ professionals were also charged, as Laura and Frederick shared, with representing the institution and its interests to students.

**Asserting one’s professionalism.** Along with the development of professionalism, another theme to emerge within the cluster of professionalism was the need to assert one’s competence and expertise. Marie shared her frustration with the equation of her work to her personal “vendetta” and the way in which people used that to diminish the institutional commitment and prioritization of her work. In order to combat this diminishment of LGBTQ work as professional work, the use of assessment was a fundamental tool in highlighting the importance and impact of LGBTQ-focused programs and services. Frederick shared his intentional evocation of his role as an educator in helping to provide professional legitimacy to his personal experiences as a gay and queer man and his student support work with LGBTQ issues.

**Queering professionalism.** Concurrent with the perceived need of some participants to assert their professionalism in doing LGBTQ work, other participants felt the need to challenge visual conceptions of professionalism and professional dress. Monica was most vocal about this as she challenged the way in which requirements of
professional dress often resulted in the entrenchment of gender binaries and heterosexism. For Monica, it was important to role model professional behavior above notions of professional dress. For Frederick, queering professionalism meant challenging ideas of masculinity as it related to his clothing choices.

**The many professional identities of LGBTQ professionals.** While LGBTQ service professionals converged on a common understanding and common skillset they needed to utilize in order to do their work, their personal descriptions of their professional identities were greatly varied. Monica and Tyler saw themselves as social workers doing the work of social justice in a higher education context. Jonathan viewed himself as strongly identifying with his higher education background and recognized himself as a scholar practitioner whose work was deeply influenced by his understanding of student development theory. Frederick perceived himself to be an educator who was focused on LGBTQ issues. Phillip thought of himself as an LGBTQ resource professional who happened to work in a higher education context. Rachel conceived of herself as figuring out her role and position as she went. Marie, Kara, Laura, and Avery acknowledged themselves to be diversity professionals within higher education who at the moment were doing LGBTQ specific work but were looking at broader diversity positions in the future. Shel defined herself as a higher education professional who was currently working in an LGBTQ position. Lane characterized himself as a budding sociologist who was working a temporary position as an LGBTQ professional.

In addition to diverse professional journeys to their roles, these participants had diverse future plans for their careers. The majority of them had a desire to continue to
work in higher education with some intending to continue in LGBTQ work. The intent of this majority was to continue to bring LGBTQ issues to the forefront of their next administrative roles in higher education even if they were not employed in LGBTQ specific positions. Several participants intended to continue their educations and attain doctorate degrees in the belief that these degrees would help them advance professionally. At least one participant, Marie, discussed the phenomenon of the “lavender ceiling,” this was the idea that LGBTQ specific work could block an LGBTQ professional from advancing in the field of diversity or higher education due to the belief by others that an LGBTQ professional’s work was too narrow and non-transferrable to other roles. Phillip was the one exception to the intent to continue in higher education. Although he hoped to continue to advance in LGBTQ specific roles, he also saw himself as working in LGBTQ services outside of higher education.

More than following a prescribed path of advancement, these professionals’ transitions through various professional roles seemed to follow values-based career paths. Within these career paths, LGBTQ professional roles seemed to most participants to be a stop along their broader career journey and not necessarily the final role or culmination of their professional lives.

**Being an LGBTQ community member as an LGBTQ professional.** The last theme within the thematic cluster of professionalism was the consistent belief that one’s personal LGBTQ identity was a helpful and, in some instances, a necessary component of being an LGBTQ professional. Personally identifying as LGBTQ aided in doing LGBTQ work along two fronts. The first was that it allowed the professionals to connect with
LGBTQ community members. Multiple participants discussed the ways in which their personal LGBTQ identities helped them identify with their students and the issues they were going through. For many participants, like Rachel, their experience with their personal identity served as a primary drive for working on behalf of others. As Kara observed, having a personal LGBTQ identity also gave participants a perceived legitimacy within the LGBTQ community they served.

The second front was that having a personal LGBTQ identity seemed to aid LGBTQ professionals in advocacy with administrators. Tyler addressed this when he discussed the need to perform his story before specific audiences in order to help them understand issues facing the LGBTQ community he served. He shared an instance in a meeting with senior administration in which the presentation of facts related to the LGBTQ student experience on his campus was not enough to help advance a policy issue for trans students. In this meeting, Tyler had to use relevant personal experience in combination with the facts of his students’ experiences in order to be compelling and persuasive in his advocacy. The use of personal stories within advocacy work was another theme throughout participants’ narratives.

Whether or not having a personal LGBTQ identity in order to do LGBTQ work was a make or break factor for qualifications was a point of contention. Monica felt that allies were an untapped and underappreciated resource in LGBTQ advocacy and professional work; indeed she came into LGBTQ work as an ally who later discovered her own queer identity. Lane felt that being LGBTQ was helpful to understanding LGBTQ issues and advocacy but not necessary. He described working with straight allies
to train them on LGBTQ inclusivity and having them be helpful in outreach to non-LGBTQ persons. Kara, on the other hand, felt that being LGBTQ was an important requirement for LGBTQ professional work as it gave a person an important connection to the LGBTQ community and because it was important to have LGBTQ representation in these professional roles. Despite contentions that being LGBTQ was a requirement for their roles, all participants saw important connections between their jobs and their personal LGBTQ identities that helped to inform and motivate their work.

**Perceptions, Reactions, and Navigation of Institutional Climate**

Perceptions of institutional climate were non-objective and deeply bound to each person’s individual experiences and identities. However, despite the influence of individual experiences, certain themes across participants arose and were described through two distinct perspectives. The first was the experiences of students on college campuses and the second was the professionals’ personal experiences doing the work of LGBTQ student services and advocacy at those campuses.

*Not all identities within the LGBTQ community are treated equally.*

LGBTQ professionals described a bifurcated climate for the LGBTQ population. At several institutions, gay and lesbian students who were cis-gender presenting and White tended to have positive experiences in that they were able to participate in campus activities, clubs, and traditions with little or no incidents of harm or discrimination. In contrast, queer students of color, gender non-conforming students, and bisexual students often encountered more persistent and harmful acts of discrimination from such situations as interpersonal exclusion by their peers to policies and facilities that could not or would
not accommodate them. These differences in experiences with climate meant that practitioners had to create specialized programming for different segments of the LGBTQ populations on their campuses.

Specifically, practitioners focused on transgender and gender non-conforming persons concerns such as preferred names policies, gender neutral housing, and inclusive restroom policies. Practitioners also worked to created segmented and specific identity spaces for queer persons of color, bisexual students, and gender non-conforming students where these students could come together without feeling that their spaces were overtaken by typically gay and lesbian and White students.

**Climate without a sense of community is negative and isolating.** In addition to individual experiences of LGBTQ students and thoughts related to safety for all members of the LGBTQ community, practitioners described climate in terms of the cohesiveness and movements within the LGBTQ community on their campus. For some practitioners, particularly those at professionally focused schools such as Rachel and Marie, the climate at their institutions was one of isolation and separation with students experiencing limited connectedness through their LGBTQ identity. In these climates, one of the major priorities was creating communities for LGBTQ students to come together. At other institutions, climate seemed to be shaped by attention to social justice issues. Kara saw student climate being defined by an apathy to larger social justice issues within the LGBTQ community and society. In contrast Laura noted at her institution the climate was shaped by students interested in challenging policies they saw as discriminatory.
Still for others practitioners, climate was defined as fairly cohesive and positive in that the community came together for events like Pride. This was the case for the institutions at which Jonathan and Lane worked. At these institutions, the priority centered on continuing to do good work on LGBTQ issues as well as continuing to show the worth of their services; incidents of bias and hate were not seen as negatively impacting campus climate. Narratives on the cohesiveness of the LGBTQ community brought to focus a critical component of climate beyond the mere safety of students. For these practitioners, engagement was a key factor in goal fostering, understanding, and examining climate.

**Accommodation not inclusion.** The focus at many of the institutions in this study was the accommodation of LGBTQ students. Tyler described the accommodation trend as one of creating additional systems of accommodations instead of changing the nature of systems that were problematic for LGBTQ students. Tyler gave the example of having gender neutral housing options for students that LGBTQ students could elect into instead of upending the current default system of gender segregated housing for all students.

LGBTQ resource centers too were benefactors of the accommodation model for LGBTQ students. These centers served as additional services for LGBTQ students providing programming and support for LGBTQ students instead of embedding LGBTQ services throughout the institution. A common factor amongst all issues connected to climate for LGBTQ students at the institutions in this study was that these colleges and universities had both staff and centers dedicated to addressing the needs of LGBTQ
students. This was a rarefied sample as having a standalone professional or LGBTQ center was not the case at the majority of institutions of higher education in the United States.

**Standalone centers: White people only?** The rest of the themes discussed in relation to climate centered on LGBTQ professionals’ personal experiences in doing LGBTQ advocacy and service work on college campuses. The first issue of climate from a staff perspective was the limited number of institutions that had LGBTQ specific roles and LGBTQ specific centers. Rachel in particular felt like there was a dearth of LGBTQ specific practitioners in higher education noting that she believed there were about “200” centers in contrast to over “4,000” four-year institutions. Having a standalone center was perceived as imperative by LGBTQ professionals. Lane noted that having a separate center allowed for an explicit focus on LGBTQ issues; they would receive consistent attention and not be subsumed by other identities, most notably women’s issues or race/ethnicity issues.

However, standalone centers also seemed to reinforce the dichotomy between multicultural and LGBTQ student services with LGBTQ student services being primarily for White persons. Avery described the experiences of students with intersectional racial and sexual orientation identities as being negatively impacted by the stand-alone LGBTQ center model as those students felt they had to choose between their identities when seeking support services. Shel who identified as White felt that she would be uncomfortable working in a center in which LGBTQ students services were combined with multicultural student services. The consensus among participants seemed to be that
having LGBTQ standalone centers, while problematic in serving students with non-White identities, was nevertheless important in holding institutions and colleagues accountable to including and supporting LGBTQ students.

The impact of institutional type on the march towards inclusion. There were three institution types represented in this study: public, private, and private religious. Despite their differences, across these institution types having an LGBTQ resource center indicated a degree of progressiveness. For public institutions, the impact of state legislation was a looming factor in the degree to which progressiveness could be either enhanced or restricted. Laura, who worked at a private institution, was grateful that her institution was able to filter its response to pending discriminatory legislation towards LGBTQ persons in ways that the public institutions in her state could not.

In contrast, Phillip was aware that in working at a private institution in a state in which public institutions were being compelled to be more genderqueer and trans inclusive, his institution was not as progressive as the public institutions in his state. This meant that while his institution had historically been more progressive on LGBTQ issues, changes in restroom accommodation laws creating more gender inclusive facilities was not something with which his institution had to comply. As a result, he felt his institution was at risk of falling behind on efforts associated with LGBTQ inclusion. Frederick working at a private religious institution was most concerned with the impact that Catholic dogma had on his ability to advocate for LGBTQ students.

Regardless of the institution type, there was an awareness amongst LGBTQ practitioners of the need to consider the political implications of their actions, including
how decisions about LGBTQ inclusion looked to institutional board members. Avery discussed the need to be political in naming services for gender inclusive housing in order to avoid board pushback. Phillip discussed the fear of alienating the board as a factor limiting the pace of change and inclusion on his campus.

**The toll of isolation.** In the work of peer education, policy advocacy, and challenges of institutional practices that appeared to be discriminatory to LGBTQ persons, there was a shared perception of isolation and alienation from other higher education colleagues. Participants in this study identified the Consortium of Higher Education for LGBT Resource Professionals as a strong resource for professionals who felt isolated on their campuses. This group allowed LGBTQ professionals to share resources and data and find community in their work. For some, this group was a lifeline in their work as it allowed them an outlet to share their extreme frustration and feelings of isolation.

For LGBTQ professionals like Kara and Jonathan, feelings of inclusion came from the active participation of other staff and faculty outside their LGBTQ resource centers on issues of LGBTQ inclusion. Having others start discussions about identity, take up the work of advocacy for LGBTQ students, and invite LGBTQ professionals into collaborative programs and decision making correlated with feelings of LGBTQ inclusion on a professional level. When others joined in the work, these LGBTQ professionals felt like they were fighting less of an uphill battle for change and also had allies they could confide in and trust in doing the work of LGBTQ inclusion.
**Resistance to LGBTQ inclusion.** Despite the highlighting of some positive relationships with non-LGBTQ resource professionals, resistance to LGBTQ advocacy work was a common theme when discussing climate. I use the term resistance to describe actions or practices that work to slow, halt, or prevent the work of advancing LGBTQ issues and inclusion on college campuses. Resistance came in several forms including apathy, fellow colleagues who were uneducated on LGBTQ issues, lack of follow through, rhetorics of niceness, differential policy enforcement, and the direct devaluing of LGBTQ lives. For Kara, apathy showed up in students’ complete lack of engagement of issues linked to social justice and inclusion. For Rachel, resistance came in the form of being required to go beyond the bounds of her job and train her fellow colleagues on LGBTQ issues, pulling her away from her direct work with and advocacy on behalf of students. Phillip discussed a lack of follow through from university partners as another form of resistance.

Avery described niceness as tools of resistance that prevented them from directly challenging their colleagues on issues or exclusion and discrimination. Laura discussed differential policy enforcement in residence halls as a mechanism for restricting LGBTQ visibility and activism. Frederick described the devaluing of LGBTQ lives as a form of resistance to LGBTQ inclusion.

**The constant pressure of LGBTQ work.** A final theme impacting the climate of work for LGBTQ professionals was pressures and expectations related to performance of duties related to supporting the LGBTQ community both on and off campus. For some practitioners, the issue of funding was an ever-present concern. Whether this manifested
itself in the need to engage in fundraising to sustain programs, combat possible institutional defunding plans, or seek annual funding to continue operation, some LGBTQ practitioners felt pressure to find the means to support their work. This fund-seeking component added the demand to show empirical evidence of their work and took time away from supporting students.

Parallel to this perceived need to show positive evidence about their work, LGBTQ practitioners described the stress to go above and beyond in their projects in order to be seen as legitimate and to sidestep criticism. This drive was directly connected to the desire to prevent their work from being derailed on the basis of some perceived error or lack of professionalism. The need to go above and beyond was associated with a pressure to be on top of social justice issues, community trends, and legislation as it related to LGBTQ people in order to best serve students.

This necessity to be on top of news and community issues was additionally compounded by calls to serve other persons beyond students. Whether this was serving faculty and staff needs or working for the community apart from the university, these additional responsibilities added to the workload of the professionals. Beyond LGBTQ specific issues, these practitioners felt compelled to attend to issues of intersectionality and advocacy for groups outside those associated with the LGBTQ community. Perhaps the best way to sum up the theme of pressures and expectations is the constant requirement to provide opportune and excellent service to a diverse community in real time even when one did not feel they had the resources to do so. This imperative was held in place simply by the belief that not doing so was not an option.
Defining the Current Scope of LGBTQ Work

The last theme discussed in this summary are depictions of the nature and scope of LGBTQ work. LGBTQ practitioners exercised a great deal of autonomy in their roles both in the execution of their administrative duties and in their work with students making decisions on how to allocate their times and selecting strategic priorities for their work. Discussions of work fell into three major categories: administrative duties, student and staff engagement duties, and negotiating tensions between administrative and engagement responsibilities. Articulating the scope of this work is critical to understanding the performative and dispositional pressures LGBTQ professionals face in pursuing their duties to their institutions and their students.

**Being the administration.** A large proportion of the work that LGBTQ professionals were called to do was concerned with advancing the interests of LGBTQ students within the institution. Administrative duties included (a) assessing programs and services, (b) managing programming and center budgets, (c) being aware of issues and advocating for policy, (d) marketing and outreach for programs and services, and (e) supervising staff and managing professional development. Assessment was crucial to these practitioners not only to set programming agendas but to prove the efficacy of programming, numerical utilization of spaces and services, and legitimate the continued funding of things like physical LGBTQ resource center space and LGBTQ specific programming.
For instance, in connection to managing the budgets of programs and LGBTQ resource centers, assessment was used to help determine priorities and make decisions about how limited resources would be used most efficaciously. Respondents utilized assessments such as institutional surveys, white papers, and student programming boards to gather information on issues most directly impacting. When assessment on an LGBTQ professional’s individual campus was lacking or unavailable, these professionals turned to colleagues at other institutions for information on national trends that they could then apply to their campuses.

In addition to assessment, knowledge of current institutional policies was crucial for LGBTQ each professional. No single institution had the same set of circumstances when it came to serving LGBTQ students. In order to move the institution towards greater LGBTQ inclusion, LGBTQ professionals had to form advocacy efforts that specifically addressed the institution they served.

Once programs and services were established, these LGBTQ professionals described the need to manage marketing and outreach in order to make the campus populations they served aware of their services. Outreach was difficult for many LGBTQ professionals as their databases for potential LGBTQ students were limited; they were not allowed or did not have mechanisms for capturing LGBTQ identity demographics for all students. This resulted in a skewing of services towards students who were most out and engaged in the community.

Connected to all of these administrative duties as well as these professionals’ engagement duties was the need to engage in their own professional development or
provide professional development opportunities for other LGBTQ professional staff. This professional development allowed LGBTQ professionals to understand better the nature of their roles and develop the skills necessary to better serve their students. However, finding professional development opportunities could be difficult depending on limits to professional development funding.

**Being a conduit for community building with students and staff.** Associated with but distinct from administrative duties was the call to engage with the LGBTQ community on campus. The foundation of engagement was fostering and supporting a visible and cohesive LGBTQ campus community that could come together for social and political events. This often meant serving as a visible resource and connector in which LGBTQ professionals worked to be located within the nexus of LGBTQ life on their college campuses. This position gave them an understanding of issues facing the LGBTQ campus community and to advocate and design services accordingly.

LGBTQ community engagement occurred with students in six primary forms: a) one-on-one interactions, b) student cohort advising, c) programming and educational connections, d) mentoring and preparing future professionals for LGBTQ work, e) crisis response, and f) fostering activism. Participants in this study described engaging with students in one-on-one interactions for the purposes of advising students on issues of disclosing their personal LGBTQ identities, managing relationships, mentoring students, and helping students to navigate career and life post college. In student cohort settings, these professionals described advising student organizations in relation to leadership development and assisting students to build community and plan programs. Along with
advising student groups on putting together programs, these LGBTQ professionals were directly responsible for creating or working with student employees to plan and execute social and educational programming for students. Many professionals shared their roles as trainers working with Safe Zone programming which was meant to help educate people on LGBTQ identities and issues and foster more inclusive environments for LGBTQ persons.

In the midst of these interactions, LGBTQ professionals also described serving as mentors to students working with students beyond one time programming or training experiences. Professionals such as Laura viewed mentorships as pathways to helping students see their lives beyond colleges. Shel saw herself as a role model for students to consider as they worked on the task of better understanding themselves and navigating the world. In addition to personal navigation within the world, mentorship and role modeling was also a way to prepare future LGBTQ professionals by exposing them to the work of LGBTQ professionals in undergraduate. This exposure not only allowed students to experience the work and determine if it was a good fit, it also enabled these students to have a platform to apply for full-time roles in the field of LGBTQ student services.

In addition to these intentional and planned interactions with students, LGBTQ professionals mentioned being open resources with whom students could discuss their issues and problems and even seek out in crisis when they did not have anywhere else to turn. For some of the interviewees, this was formalized in their roles as a confidential reporters for issues pertaining to sexual assault as was the case with Jonathan. For others,
it was more of an informal role in which they drew upon counseling skills in order to provide students.

Lastly, these LGBTQ professionals saw allowing for and fostering student activism as another key component of their roles. For professionals like Laura, protests by students were ways for them to express their dislike and disagreement with unfair or biased policies. For Frederick, student activism was a means for students to advocate for changes in institutional policies. Laura saw herself intentionally staying away from details on protests in order to give students the ability to participate without jeopardizing her job. Frederick labeled himself as a “radical co-conspirator” helping students to strategically plan their protests such that they were able to avoid the most extreme and negative consequences of voicing their opinions and concerns.

In addition to working with students, LGBTQ professionals described the integral role that relationships with other staff played in their work on behalf of students. These LGBTQ professionals described themselves as resources to their colleagues. Being a resource ranged from planning collaborative programs with other offices to working with professionals to bring about policy changes to training fellow staff on LGBTQ issues. These relationships were crucial as they helped to establish LGBTQ professionals as trusted assets on their campuses and enabled them to advance the work of LGBTQ inclusion beyond the bounds of the LGBTQ resource center.

**The dissonance of being an administrator and an advocate.** While seemingly straightforward, the reality of administrative and student/staff engagement duties was not without tensions and contradictions. In understanding and interpreting policies as they
related to LGBTQ students from an administrative standpoint, LGBTQ professionals were also called to hold students, staff, and faculty to the non-discrimination policies at their institutions through advocacy and educational trainings. In advocating for LGBTQ persons on his campus, Phillip described a sense of isolation and dismissal. Avery described feeling tension with students. In one instance, in order to uphold institutional policies and personal values related to racial non-discrimination, Avery had to call out a White LGBTQ person on the person’s racist statements creating tension between Avery and the group with which they were working.

Along with holding students and colleagues accountable to existing policy, these LGBTQ professionals recognized the necessity of basing advocacy on the needs of students. However, there was tension in this as well because schools sometimes limited the ways in which data on LGBTQ students could be collected. As such, LGBTQ practitioners not only had to advocate for their students’ needs but also for the basic ability to assess those students’ needs in order to provide adequate support. This requirement to meet their students’ needs put some professionals in spaces where they had to advocate for students against prevailing institutional policies and/or against other administrators.

The third area of conflict between administrative duties and student engagement duties occurred because the former required the professional to represent the interests of the institution while the latter required representation of the students’ interests. These two competing interests clashed particularly in relation to student activism. This meant being able to advise students on the limits and consequences of protesting while making sure
not to engage directly in protests themselves even when an issue might violate one’s own morals. If an LGBTQ professional were to represent too heavily the interests of an institution, he/she/ze might be seen as being unsupportive of students. Conversely, if an LGBTQ professional were to overly support the protests of students, he/she/ze might be seen as acting insubordinate to the institution.

In addition to these tensions, LGBTQ professionals described the need to be politically bi-partisan in working with students. This meant allowing and encouraging LGBTQ persons with different political affiliations to have their voices equally represented within the LGBTQ community through forums and programming. Lane described this tension as confounding especially when an individual LGBTQ person’s political values seemed to conflict with traditional LGBTQ advocacy values. This call to create forums for political activism without dictating political content was another area of tension for LGBTQ professionals. It opened up the possibility of supporting LGBTQ students who were actively working against LGBTQ inclusion and, thus, against the LGBTQ resource centers that were instituted to serve LGBTQ students.

Alignments and misalignments between institutional policy and the needs desires of LGBTQ students were important points of contention that LGBTQ professionals were aware of and worked to mitigate. Mitigation was achieved through advocating for policy and cultural changes at institutions such that their institutions treated LGBTQ persons in the ways that LGBTQ persons both desired and needed to feel included, welcome, and safe. It required constantly recalibrating one’s demeanor in order to be empathetic, supportive, and conciliatory towards students while simultaneously being supportive,
solution oriented, and positive to colleagues and their institutions. This resulted in change oriented work that was anchored in improving the plight of LGBTQ persons and moderated by the amount of change institutions would allow. Successfully negotiating this balancing act was a key component of being successful in one’s role as an LGBTQ professional.

**Making Connections between Thematic Clusters**

In revisiting the four thematic clusters of (a) the pervasive influence of personal LGBTQ identity; (b) defining the LGBTQ profession; (c) perceptions, reactions, and navigation of institutional climate; and (d) defining the current scope of LGBTQ work, it is important to describe the relationships between these themes. The major finding of this research project was that personal identity is interwoven and inextricable from these LGBTQ persons’ professional work. Personal LGBTQ identity served as an initial guidepost directing participants to LGBTQ professional work and reinforced their continued engagement in working on behalf of LGBTQ others.

In order to engage with the profession of LGBTQ work in higher education and develop a professional LGBTQ identity, having a personal LGBTQ identity was seen as a prerequisite that helped LGBTQ professionals establish legitimacy within the communities they served. At the same time, this personal LGBTQ identity led to questions of professional legitimacy to which LGBTQ professionals responded by drawing upon their educational backgrounds and prior work experiences.

Ultimately, each participant needed to understand the ways in which the LGBTQ community and specific identities within the LGBTQ umbrella were treated at the
institutions where they worked. While working at these institutions, LGBTQ practitioner’s personal LGBTQ identities were subject to the same mistreatments and sanctions imposed upon the LGBTQ communities they served. Learning to navigate these environments, manage isolation and resistance to LGBTQ advocacy efforts, and evoke and perform personal identity in certain spaces and in certain ways was critical to persistence in LGBTQ professional work.

Lastly, related to the scope of LGBTQ work, personal LGBTQ identity was used by LGBTQ professionals to connect with and gain the trust of the communities they served. Personal LGBTQ identity was invoked in ways that LGBTQ community members could see that LGBTQ professionals were personally invested in their inclusion and advocacy on campus. In fact, this investment in LGBTQ students and in particular students’ self-advocacy through protest at times put LGBTQ professionals in the difficult position of simultaneously representing the institutions for which they worked and supporting students. In these moments, LGBTQ professionals had to carefully monitor the degree to which they could professionally side with LGBTQ students even if personally they were in complete support of those students’ protests.

Summary

This chapter presented findings for twelve participants collected through in-depth interviews. These findings are truly narrative in nature as they represent stories positioned between researcher and subject (Raggatt, 2006) and were demonstratively shaped by the theoretical lenses I brought to the research project (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I told the individual narrative of each participant along with the broader narrative
clusters composed of the themes that emerged from across the twelve individual narratives. The four thematic clusters to emerge from the research were scope of personal identity, professionalism, climate, and role. Within these clusters, individual themes arose across individual narratives that illustrated the robust facets of these clusters.

In spite of variations between the individual stories, the collective story of these professionals created a cohesive narrative of LGBTQ professional work on college campuses as performed by persons who defined themselves as personally LGBTQ. This included a clearly defined role that was focused on advocacy, education, and community building for LGBTQ students. The collective story also contained the necessary awareness of an attentiveness to climate as it related to LGBTQ students and performing work that was campus and context specific.

In addition to the descriptions related to scope of role and the climate in which these role duties were performed, the LGBTQ professionals were driven to help LGBTQ students and community members on their campuses because of their personal experiences with LGBTQ identity and because of their desire to help other LGBTQ students feel supported, cared for, and welcomed. Ultimately, these professionals’ personal LGBTQ identities were influenced and reshaped by their work, resulting in more robust and complex understandings of their own identities and the LGBTQ communities they served.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that the formation of a professional LGBTQ identity is deeply grounded and intertwined with one’s personal LGBTQ identity. In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of the findings as they relate to the research questions that shaped the study, pertinent literature and conceptual frames introduced in Chapter Two, and implications for future professional practice and research. Finally, I examine the limitations and strengths of the study and conclude with a postscript on recent political events.

Summary of LGBTQ Professional Narratives as Related to Research Questions

The objective of this research project was to explore the nature of higher education LGBTQ practitioners’ understandings of personal and professional LGBTQ identity. The study focused on full-time LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings across the United States with particular attunement to overlaps between personal and professional LGBTQ identity, the development of these identities, the influence of other social identities such as race, descriptions of LGBTQ work, and explanations of career trajectories. I utilized a narrative inquiry approach (Riessman, 1993) to study the experiences of these practitioners. Three questions stewarded this study: (1) How do professional identities develop for persons working as LGBTQ professionals in higher education; (2) How do the personal LGBTQ identities of LGBTQ professionals develop; and (3) What are the intersections and influences between
personal and professional LGBTQ identities for LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings? I discuss the relationship between findings and these questions in the next sections.

**How Do Professional Identities Develop for Persons Working as LGBTQ Professionals in Higher Education?**

The experiences of LGBTQ professionals in this study lend empirical support to the Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) Graduate Socialization Framework. Specifically, these narratives addressed the concepts of backgrounds and predispositions and stages of socialization for LGBTQ professionals. For the practitioners in this study, the matter of how LGBTQ professional identity developed was a combination three factors: (1) motivation based on personal LGBTQ identity, (2) active para-professional participation in the field of LGBTQ support services, and (3) attainment of appropriate credentialing. In relation to the first factor, motivation based on personal experiences took one of three forms which included rejection of isolation or mistreatment, affirmation of one’s identity, and/or a commitment to broader social justice issues that converged upon LGBTQ advocacy. While the Weidman et al. (2001) model briefly notes the influence of personal backgrounds and predisposition, it does not elaborate or provide specific examples of the ways in which these two factors may influence or motivate one’s career and in no way examines the impact that LGBTQ identity status may have on career choice.

In her undergraduate career, Rachel experienced intense isolation. Rachel rejected this negative feeling, turning it into motivation to pursue a career in LGBTQ advocacy, where she felt she could keep others from having an experience similar to her own.
Rachel experienced what Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996) termed a violation in what she believed to be true about the world—all people should feel included and valued and have access to spaces where they are welcomed for their identities. She then took this feeling a step further and engaged in an act of imagination which Daloz et al. (1996) found to be crucial in allowing people to work towards theoretical, socially-just futures that are better than their present circumstances. This act of imagination allowed her to pursue a graduate degree in social work which laid the foundation for her to be able to step into a role working with LGBTQ students despite a lack of explicit training or work with this population. In taking this route, Rachel skipped the anticipatory stage of professional socialization and instead moved to the formal and informal stages (Weidman et al., 2001).

Laura was motivated by affirmation. As she came to understand her queer identity in her undergraduate career, she had the support of student affairs professionals to affirm her in her identity. This experience led her to become a student affairs professional who could support other LGBTQ students, and also challenge injustice and oppression.

Laura’s experience is perhaps best captured by the anticipatory stage of Weidman et al. (2001) model of professional socialization. In working with student affairs professionals, Laura encountered encouraging student affairs professionals that led her to believe that the work of student affairs was to affirm students and that she could take part in that. This early concept of student affairs professionals, while nuanced with a deeper understanding of the profession through progressive socialization, remains at the core of how Laura relates to student affairs.
Monica’s motivation to do LGBTQ work was a result of convergence between her passion for social justice through her background in social work and her experience as a Black Woman and her emerging personal queer identity. Unlike other participants in this study, whose personal LGBTQ experiences created the motivating conditions that set each of them on paths towards LGBTQ work, Monica discovered her personal queer identity through her professional work; and as she explored that personal identity more, she become more comfortable with her professional work. Her narrative of identity development challenges the implied directionality of professional LGBTQ identity being an outgrowth or extension of personal identity discovery (D’Augelli, 1994). It also defied Weidman’s (2001) model of socialization. Rather than experiencing a typical progression through the anticipatory, formal, informal, and personal stages of professional socialization, Monica’s professional socialization seemed to begin at the informal and personal stages with only tangential input from her graduate program on working with LGBTQ students. For Monica, her current position seemed to be a stop along the way to other diversity and social justice work that she found more meaningful. Her narrative seemed to fit better with the theory of Career Construction than with Weidman et al. (2001) model. It was Monica’s protean drive for social justice that brought her to her current position; and this same drive seemed to be leading her to other social justice and diversity positions (Savickas, 2013; Kaplan; 2014).

The second factor related to the development of a professional LGBTQ identity was participation in LGBTQ activism, clubs, or advocacy work as an undergraduate student. Frederick spoke of making his time in undergraduate and graduate school
“count” by accruing para-professional experience related to LGBTQ advocacy. At the graduate level, these professionals either found assistantships working explicitly in LGBTQ resource centers or, post graduate school, they found ways to incorporate LGBTQ and social justice focused work into non-LGBTQ specific appointments. In the former case, assistantships or internships with LGBTQ centers allowed emerging professionals to participate in the informal stage of professional socialization allowing them to learn the norms and standards of the profession. These positions also allowed them to engage in the personal stage of professional identity formation as they began to modify adapt to the expectations of the role and create professional LGBTQ identities (Weidman, et al. 2001).

For persons who took other full-time roles, the primary mechanism by which they engaged in LGBTQ work was incorporating LGBTQ elements into one’s work outside of an LGBTQ center as Jonathan did. This prolonged the professional socialization process into the LGBTQ field as Jonathan spent a year in housing working to redefine the position to focus on social justice and social identity in alignment with his own experiences and identities (Slay & Smith, 2011). However, Jonathan realized there were limits to the degree to which he could redefine his housing role and when the opportunity came open, he transition into the LGBTQ role having socialized himself to be ready for it. Finding forums to participate in the informal and personal stages of professional socialization was a crucial step in becoming a full-time LGBTQ professional.

The third common factor among participants was the attainment of a master’s degree. Although few participants spoke directly about master’s degrees being required
for their positions, all seemed to imply that a master’s degree was a mandatory
requirement for their positions. Lane addressed this when he noted that his appointment
to his position as a person still in graduate school was a rare exception. Marie realized
while volunteering in graduate school to oversee the LGBTQ center that with a master’s
degree she would be as qualified as the applicants she was helping to interview. These
comments indicate that the technicalization of LGBTQ work on college campuses is
entrenched, requiring both advanced study and training (Swan & Fox, 2010, p. 569). Due
to this mandatory credentialing requirement, the Weidman et al. (2001) model is the most
appropriate lens through which to frame and conceptualize LGBTQ professional
development as it takes into account the specific circumstances of socialization through
graduate education.

For this set of LGBTQ practitioners, no one described a turning point at which
they suddenly saw themselves as an LGBTQ professional. Instead, participants recounted
their profession and professional identities through depictions of their work. These
narratives showed that LGBTQ work was a distinctive entity that fulfilled the six criteria
of a profession (Moore & Rosenbloom, 1970). However, these professionals did not
ascribe to a singular or uniform professional identity term. Instead, they almost always
described themselves through other professional identities such as being a social worker
doing LGBTQ work in a higher education. I further discuss the concept of professional
identity later in this chapter and elaborate on Career Construction Theory (CCT)
(Savickas, 2013) as a way to frame the further development of professional identity
beyond a specific graduate program; needless to say, practitioners in this study developed
an LGBTQ professional identity through the process of engaging in LGBTQ work in their undergraduate and graduate training, nuanced by their particular academic degrees.

**How Do the Personal LGBTQ Identities of LGBTQ Professionals Develop?**

The discovery and development of participants’ personal LGBTQ identities were complex and varied. Nevertheless, there were some common factors, namely that the discovery of a personal LGBTQ identity began with one of four forces: (1) interactions with the LGBTQ community, (2) entering into a relationship with someone outside a heterosexual paradigm, (3) internal understandings of oneself as being different from heterosexual or cisgender peers, and (4) service on behalf of the LGBTQ community. These common factors provide descriptive evidence and validation of D’Augelli (1994) and Bilodeau’s (2005) conceptual models of LGB and transgender identity development.

Marie described her first understanding of her lesbian identity as originating from her participation in a gay-straight alliance. Kara’s identity emerged from her relationship with a woman during her time with Soul Force. Frederick felt that he was different and had attraction to same sex peers in grade school. These initial moments of the participants encountering LGBTQ others led to continued engagement with LGBTQ others following McCarn and Fassinger’s (1997) model of awareness, begetting exploration of a minority sexual orientation. In addition to these initial discoveries of personal LGBTQ identity, changes in the gender of one’s partner in an intimate relationship and serving the LGBTQ community as a professional seemed to spur continued adoption and evolution of and reflection on one’s personal LGBTQ identities. This finding further validates D’Augelli’s
(1994) and Bilodeau’s (2005) assertion that LGBT identity development is a continuous, life-long process with no developmental end point.

One notable finding within this group was that there seemed to be sequences by which persons discovered their identities. For Monica, Lane, and Jonathan who identified as persons of color, consciousness of their racial/ethnic identities preceded awareness of their LGBTQ identities. This confirms Bowleg’s (2013) findings of the greater salience of race over sexual orientation. For all participants, aside from Monica, their sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, or pansexual) seemed to precede the adoption of a queer identity. Queer identity arose from either political or social justice commitments or because of a lack of descriptive fullness that personal LGBT identities seemed to provide. Lane stated that his ascription to queerness was a result of the term “gay” being bound up in Whiteness and demands that he identify as a gay subtype (e.g., bear, twink, otter). These subtypes did not capture who he was. Lane’s statement reinforces Poynter and Washington’s (2005) assertion that persons with non-White racial identities may not see themselves as LGBT. This choice to eschew these terms was not due to their uncertain of their same-sex attractions or non-cisgender identity presentations but because they see these terms as bound to a White racial identity that excludes them. In total, the choice to identify as queer for 10 participants did not mean that their former LGBT identity was left behind, rather most participants held dual identities (such as gay/queer or bisexual/queer).

Transitions in identity was not limited to identifying as queer. Two participants, Avery and Tyler, discussed entering the LGBTQ community through their gay and
lesbian identities. Later, Avery came to identify as genderqueer and Tyler as a transman. The sequence of discovery for participants appeared to be a result of the availability of models, which is persons in the LGBTQ community who shared common experiences and identities with each of the participants. For Lane and Jonathan, there is no indication that their race/ethnicity existed before their sexual orientation; rather, their awareness of race had salience because they were socialized into that identity by parents or siblings who shared that identity. This evokes the concept of vertical identities or identities a person shares with one’s parents as playing a key role in one’s awareness of a particular social identity (Solomon, 2012). Horizontal identities in contrast are not shared with parents and thus may develop later as evidenced by persons in this study. Once Jonathan and Lane found gay persons with whom they could explore and develop their own personal sexual orientations, they were able to develop their horizontal LGBTQ identities (Solomon, 2012).

This study also sheds light on the impact that shared horizontal identities may play in the exploration and development of one’s gender orientation; and it extends McCarn and Fassinger’s (1997) work on lesbian identity formation as it relates to group membership identity into the realm of genderqueer and transgender identity formation. Over the course of their lives, Avery and Tyler first encountered gay and lesbian persons and for a time found temporary resonance with these identities. However, when they later encountered trans and genderqueer persons they realized that these identities better fit their internal perceptions of themselves. This experience was similar to Cashore and Tuason’s (2009) finding for transgender person “coming face to face with who I wanted
to be gave me hope to realize that it was possible” (p. 380). Identifying on the trans spectrum for Avery and Tyler involved restarting individual and group identity formation process.

Along with extending McCarn and Fassinger’s (1997) theory, Avery and Tyler’s narratives iterate the importance of viewing identity development from both a psychological and sociological perspective. While the potential for an identity may exist within one’s psychological makeup, exposure to others who share that identity can be a crucial factor in allowing a person to understand, express, and develop an identity (Solomon, 2012). For the participants in this study, the most significant finding was that LGBTQ work in higher education further influenced their explorations of personal identity and its development.

**What are the Intersections and Influences between Personal and Professional LGBTQ Identities for LGBTQ Professionals Working in Higher Education Settings?**

The influences and intersections between personal and professional LGBTQ identities are numerous. Personal LGBTQ identity can emerge in multiple settings from childhood onward (Bilodeau 2005; D’Augelli, 1994). Professional LGBTQ identity is typically delayed until young adulthood and results from specific extensive vocational training (Weidman et al., 2001). Because of these differential conditions for the formation of personal and professional LGBTQ identities, many participants in the study exhibited professional LGBTQ identity as outgrowing from or being driven by personal LGBTQ identity. Often this outgrowth, of professional identity and conviction was a
result of feeling a sense of injustice around mistreatment or isolation. The Landreman, Rasmussen, King, and Jiang (2007) model helps to conceptualize this process for LGBTQ professionals of developing a commitment to social justice based on experiences of marginalization. I discuss this in greater detail later.

Other narratives in the study contradict the notion that personal identity provides a unidirectional platform to foster professional identity development. As both Monica and Tyler shared, their personal LGBTQ identities grew out of their professional work because it provided the social conditions necessary for the exploration of those identities. Rather than the linear development of personal LGBTQ identity begetting professional identity, the results of this study indicate a circular and overlapping relationship between personal and professional identities reinforcing the D’Augelli (1994) and Bilodeau (2005) assertion that entering an LGBTQ community and becoming politically active within that community can occur prior to identifying as LGBT or having a romantic partner who is LGBT.

Overlap between personal and professional identity occurred in three capacities: (a) participants’ jobs required them to embody queerness and share personal experiences, (b) actions by colleagues, students, or by institutions had ramifications for both professional roles and personal identities, and (c) the intrusion of the professional role into personal identity spaces. In the first overlap, participants described the embodiment of queerness through serving as role models, performing their stories for the purpose of advancing an LGBTQ agenda on campus, or feeling tokenized because of their identities. Their experiences are reminiscent of the need to embody an aesthetic or performative of
queerness in order to do LGBTQ work on college campuses (Adkins, 2000; Wilchins, 2004). Being seen as authentically queer gave practitioners an added legitimacy when working with queer students. They were seen as possessing shared experiences with students that allowed them to talk about sensitive issues such as coming out with students. Additionally, being open about their queer identities allows practitioners to serve as role models. Shel saw serving as a role model as an important function of her job as it gave LGBTQ student an exemplar into which they could live. Her beliefs echoed Markus and Nurius’ (1986) assertion that role models who are similar to one’s self are critical to the formation of one’s future possible self.

In addition to serving as role models, Tyler and Avery described the use of embodiment as a commodity to be traded in to promote advocacy or respond to student’s needs. In alignment with Adkins (2000) study, beyond being authentic about their personal identities, Avery and Tyler described being required to perform their identities in particular circumstances and in certain ways in order to be seen as effective. For Tyler, he needed to divulge his status as a trans man and share his personal struggles with institutional policies in order to make them impactful to administration. Avery’s genderqueer presentation was used by the administration to make trans students feel more comfortable and to add to the authenticity of these students concerns when the LGBTQ center staff spoke with other administrators.

Closely connected to performing identity was the requirement that participants share personal stories when working one on one with students or when educating campus communities about LGBTQ identity. These stories helped build trust and authority but
also required vulnerability on the part of these LGBTQ professionals. However, there were limits to sharing their stories. Marie made sure there was some distance between the stories she shared and their emotional rawness. Being guarded about how much to share of one’s personal identity is shown in the literature to be a result of threats of harassment and stigmatization of one’s identity (Irwin, 2002). For educators, this can include accusations of impropriety from students and parents as well as mistreatment and blatant discrimination from colleagues (Irwin, 2002). Choices to disclose one’s identity were also a result of positive or negative past experiences with disclosing identity (Evans-Santiago, 2015; Irwin, 2002).

In turning to the second overlap, Rachel shared an instance in which her disclosure of her personal bisexual identity was met with backlash similar to the biphobia other bisexual persons have reported experiencing (Mulick & Wright, 2002). This experience seemed to make Rachel much more apprehensive in disclosing her bisexual identity in the future for fear that she would feel unwelcome and lose students’ respect. Rachel’s situation explicates the negative impact that LGBTQ work can have on LGBTQ practitioners. As they work to make others feel included and safe, they themselves may experience threats to their own safety and belonging. Further, negative or undesirable perceptions of their sexuality may challenge their credibility as professionals.

Frederick provided another example of this second overlap between personal and professional identity when he discussed a student who tested positive as HIV. In addition to being discouraged professionally, this incident hit close to home for Frederick as he believed that in the eyes of the institution his life and the lives of other LGBTQ persons
were less valuable and less deserving of support precisely because they were LGBTQ. Frederick’s experience of feeling denigrated through his students’ experiences is akin to the secondary traumatic stress other helping professionals experience in reaction to having empathetic connections with others and witnessing them in difficult or unfair circumstances (Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Overtime, successive incidents of secondary traumatic stress can lead to the more severe issue of vicarious trauma leading to negative and severe outcomes for helping professionals including compassion fatigue and burnout (Newell & MacNeil, 2010).

Phillip experienced isolation as a result of his professional and personal LGBTQ identities for being “too queer” with other gay members refusing to speak to him for fear that by association they would beouted. This distancing by other gay staff inhibited Phillip’s ability to work productively and connect personally with those individuals. Trauma and isolation are risk factors for burnout highlighting the importance of self-care (Newell & MacNeil, 2010; Schlicte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005).

In contrast to Shel’s experience as a role model that seemed to affirm her LGBTQ identity, Phillip, Frederick and Rachel detailed the ways in which LGBTQ work can belittle, ostracize, and have negative consequences for one’s personal LGBTQ identity and for LGBTQ people. Both the second and third overlaps between personal and professional identity extend Rofes’ (2000) deliberation on the choices one must make on how to exhibit and how much of one’s personal queer identity can be shared in avowedly queer spaces. Each of the examples given by participants articulate a balancing act in
which the scale oscillates between showing up as an impartial and neutral facilitator versus showing up as an authentic queer community member.

The third overlap was detailed in Marie’s account of providing LGBTQ trainings at her local hospital. In this situation, her personal relationship with her health care provider was reshaped as she was called to provide a service to her community due to her professional role. Marie’s experience was a manifestation of Avery’s comment that the work “comes home with you,” and that it is something that is always present whether a person is at work or not.

These narratives of identity imply that for LGBTQ professionals the personal and professional LGBTQ identities are one in the same. Rather than two independent intersecting identities, these two identities intrasect and share a commonality that keeps them from being experienced as separate (Abes & Kasch, 2007). The occurrences of intrasectionality within the study provide further empirical support for both an Intersectional MMDI and Queered MMDI understanding of selfhood and social identity which will be discussed below (Jones & Abes, 2013).

**Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature**

In this section, I discuss how the narrative findings relate, inform, and augment the literature presented in Chapter Two. The discussion is organized through an interpretation of the findings as they relate to the major themes of the literature review: (a) the enactment of LGBTQ work, (b) queering and redefining the student affairs profession, (c) LGBTQ career construction and socialization, (d) committing to the profession, and (e) the intrasection of personal and professional identity.
The Enactment of LGBTQ Work

Beyond confirming the content and trajectory of LGBTQ work, this study advances the literature on LGBTQ professionals by delving into the processes through which these practitioners make advancements on behalf of the LGBTQ communities on their campuses. This is what I have termed the “enactment” of LGBTQ work particularly as it relates to understanding institutional politics, managing resistance to change, and engaging in specific types of performative in order to conduct LGBTQ work (Cross, 2012). Overall, the narratives of LGBTQ work by participants matched descriptions of LGBTQ work from the literature when it came to day-to-day activities and applied tasks (CAS, 2006; Renn, 2010). The enactment of LGBTQ work by practitioners in the study was focused on finding accommodations for LGBTQ persons and making college environments more welcoming. This focus aligns with Renn’s (2010) analysis of the historical movements in LGBTQ advocacy that have moved from banning LGBTQ persons on campuses towards their inclusion.

The devil is in the doxa. One of the instrumental tasks in assuming a full-time role was learning and placing into context the doxa of the institution local, state, and national politics, and the institution’s treatment of LGBTQ persons. For Lane, his instrumental task was understanding importance of the local pride parade to the LGBTQ campus community and the communities and the community’s dependence on the university’s LGBTQ center. Lane also recognized the need to showcase the center’s work and construct a progress narrative about LGBTQ issues on his campus that framed the staff’s work as avant-garde in comparison to other state institutions which did not have
dedicated LGBTQ centers. Lane understood that if his university was not at the forefront of LGBTQ issues, administrators might question the utility of the resource center when these other institutions were making greater progress without the aid of LGBTQ professionals. Lane’s remark highlights the neoliberal and market based forces impacting higher education in this instance diversity work (Giroux, 2002). It is not enough for institutions to do good or responsible work on behalf of their students. They must also consider the return on investment for diversity work and the ways in which their services and expenditures in diversity work make them more or less competitive in attracting students from peer institutions (Gordon, 1995). This layer of peer institution comparison adds a market driven layer to LGBTQ social justice work.

In addition to understanding the local and peer institutional context, doxa also included understanding the history of LGBTQ advocacy efforts on one’s campus. For Jonathan, this included being beholden to an uncertain, year-to-year funding allocation from the student government. This funding model was an institutional manifestation of the pervasive heterosexism and genderism that exist on college campuses (Bilodeau, 2005; Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2011; Preston & Hoffman, 2015). Student services that receive permanent funding are framed as normal, necessary, and worthy of future funding commitments. By refusing to fund the center on a permanent basis, the institution through its actions place LGBTQ student services as potentially unnecessary, an anomaly, and unworthy of guaranteed future funding. This positioning of the LGBTQ center creates additional burdens and work for Jonathan as he must spend time both worrying about the
viability of future funding and legitimating his work in ways other student affairs peers at his institution do not.

Lane and Jonathan’s examples highlight an important facet of social justice work. Practitioners must make explicit the social norms, institutional processes, and unspoken collective assumptions and expectations. This enables them to uncover power relations within their institutions (Hall, 2001). Without naming these doxa, it is difficult if not impossible to resist oppressive systems or mistreatments because when left unnamed doxa is assumed to be the natural and just order (Blank, 2012).

**Discourses of diversity.** Attending to the concept of discourse is important. As Hall (2001) deliberated on Focault’s concepts of discourse as power, specific language provides insight into the power relationships between concepts and identities. As part of learning about the context of their institutions, practitioners were required to learn proper discourses for talking about LGBTQ issues. For Avery, this meant attending to the registers of niceness. Avery defined “Midwest nice” as the necessity to approach issues of diversity with indirect tact. “Student affairs niceness” meant evoking civility in conversations about diversity, social justice, and social injustice. Westerman and Huey (2012) cautioned that the depoliticization of diversity conversations serves to “obscure power relations and trivialize systemic discrimination” (p. 226). Left uncritically examined, the niceness of Avery encountered may indeed have served to truncate Avery’s quest for social justice. However, Avery was acutely aware of their engagement in code switching—using language in mainstream interactions (i.e. with persons who were non-LGBTQ) that would protect the LGBTQ community at their university (Cross,
2012). In attending to the coding of language, Avery shared that to push too hard or to address issues too directly violated these registers and resulted in sanctions such as being excluded from important meetings and meaningful work partnerships. A specific example of code switching was trading out the term “gender inclusive housing” for “flexible housing.” Working in a religious institution, Frederick described the need to code his conversations on sex and sexuality into the topics of love of self and love of others. This allowed him to address issues pertinent to the LGBTQ community he served while also honoring his University’s instance that explicit talk about sex or contraception not be discussed with students. These strategies for engaging in specific discourses of niceness or coding terms to make them seem less progressive and activist oriented aligned with Hamaz’s (2008) study of diversity professionals. In both Hamaz’s (2008) study and this one, practitioners were concerned less with specific diversity terms and more with using whatever language kept people from disengaging with equity discussions and activated behavioral change for those with whom they worked.

**Tempered radicalism.** Knowing the context in which they were advocating and the acceptable ways to discuss LGBTQ issues touched on another theme within participants’ narratives: preserving the status quo while being an agent of change. Laura illustrated this when sharing her desire to support student activism while simultaneously knowing that she needed to be a representative of the institution. In order to maintain balance, sometimes Laura engaged in selective “un-knowing” about the specifics of student protests.
When practitioners engaged in advocacy or change efforts, it was not their role to merely point out problems to their superiors. Tyler spoke of this when he noted that he was “responsible for solutions.” Failure to be solution oriented, aligned with Ahmed’s (2012) finding that diversity practitioners often become seen as the problem because they point out problems. Being solution oriented served the dual function of moving institutions forward while simultaneously protecting and guarding LGBTQ professionals from being seen as contrary and problematic which might lead to ostracism. In this solution focused role, Tyler and other practitioners were expected to identify issues within their communities and universities and find proactive, ideally non-disruptive solutions for their administrations. Once these solutions were approved, LGBTQ practitioners engaged in change efforts built on furthering their institutions’ commitments to supporting and retaining students. In this capacity, LGBTQ professionals aligned with Ahmed’s (2012) analysis of diversity professionals as commitment carriers, persons who ensure that the actions of a university align with its stated inclusivity policies.

The call to balance change while at the same time representing the institution and administration relates closely to Meyerson and Scully’s (1995) term tempered radical. Their definition for this term is persons who “identify with and are committed to their organizations and also to a cause … that is … possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization” (p. 585). Frederick’s words echo Meyerson and Scully’s language, “I see myself … as a radical co-conspirator…. What we're saying out of one side is, ‘Don't worry institution. We've got you.’ And out of the other side we’re saying, ‘Let’s
fuck shit up, let’s do some shit.”’” For Frederick, this dual speak was a form of resistance to “hegemonic ideas and practices” (Westerman & Huey, 2012) within the institution.

LGBTQ professionals embody the concept of tempered radicalism. Indeed, it is crucial to their continued existence at institutions. To violate the rules of an institution too radically, as Frederick did when he allowed a poster with the word “abortion” to be publicly distributed, threatens their continued employment. The threat of separation from their universities served to cull extremely radical action on the part of LGBTQ practitioners as many of these professionals planned to continue their careers in higher education.

**Queer performatives and aesthetics.** Participants described the intentional and strategic deployment of their personal LGBTQ identities throughout the execution of their roles. Their choices about enacting various aspects of their personal LGBTQ identities based on environmental circumstances is what Cross (2012) termed drawing from a “repertoire of enactments (p. 210). Identity performance was interwoven with learning about institutional doxa and history and maintaining a tempered radical stance. Performance included considerations of what participants chose to wear, what personal examples they chose to share in meetings and educational sessions, and how they approached the ability to pass as cisgender and/or heterosexual. Frederick spoke to aligning his appearance with institutional context when he talked about the tightness and color of his clothing. Wearing clothes that were too tight or too bright was seen as over-exposing himself and his sexual orientation. For this reason, he actively altered his wardrobe by wearing looser clothing in order to bring his appearance into greater
alignment with the expectations of his institution. Frederick’s engagement in limiting the queerness of his appearance was an act of covering (Yoshino, 2007) that served to suppress LGBTQ identity in the institutional setting by creating separate spheres for LGBTQ persons. He could be queer as long as certain expressions of queerness remained in his personal life and spaces. Failure to maintain a level of covering resulted in sanctioning similar to the experiences of the participants in Giuffre, Dellinger, and Williams’ (2008) study.

For others in this study, such as Marie and Kara, there was a need to make their queer identities explicit by naming themselves as queer and sharing their queer experiences. This amounted to a form of within-group bridging in which identity was invoked to highlight common experiences with LGBTQ students that helped to foster trust and attachments (Cross, 2012). Failure to name and make explicit their affiliations with the LGBTQ community gave rise to assumptions that they were both heterosexual women due to their cisgender and feminine presentations. In heterosexual spaces, this failure resulted in an erasure of their identity and in queer spaces, as Kara mentioned, it amounted to a loss of credibility within the campus LGBTQ community. This need to not only be lesbian or bisexual but to repeat the performance of these identities for new audiences echoes Butler’s (1993) insistence that performing sexuality is a necessary form of “drag” (p. 310). To combat invisibility, other participants queered their visual presentation. Laura spoke about wearing combat boots to make her queer identity more visible. Monica too queered her professional appearance. These actions are similar to what Adkins (2000) identified as using an aesthetic of lesbianism to do work. For both
Monica and Laura, being seen as lesbian gave them cultural capital in working with the queer community.

Similar to Rofes’ (2000) deliberations, participants struggled with and discussed the intentional portrayal of their identities as well as the synthesis and symbiosis between these identities. This convergence resulted in identity performances that strove towards a tempered radical nature such that expression of personal LGBTQ identity status was queer enough to push the boundaries of social convention and to show affiliation with the queer community. However, their presentation was not so queer as to cause these professionals to be excluded from institutional life.

In summary, performing identity became intertwined with all aspects of LGBTQ work on college campuses. The performance of LGBTQ identity was non-uniform and based on each participant’s specific positionality within the LGBTQ community and their current environment. But for each person, performance served as a tool that could provide access to vital advocacy and student outreach spaces or as a barrier that could derail these efforts. Performance of identity was the embodiment of each professional’s work.

**Diversity culture.** The collective practices of doing LGBTQ work on college campuses for LGBTQ professionals amounted to the pursuit of a diversity culture—an environment in which a broad range of people feel ownership and responsibility to addressing social injustice (Ward, 2008). Phillip spoke to this when shared his excitement that a cisgender, male colleague in student activities had made a point to include pronouns in his email signature line in order to advocate for greater trans awareness.
The activities of Phillip’s colleague highlighted another component of diversity culture which was the phenomenon of “members of dominant groups … speak[ing] authoritatively … about forms of oppression they have not experienced” (Ward, 2008, p. 29). Talking about the oppression of others was encouraged and modeled by LGBTQ professionals. Contrary to Stone’s (2009) finding that gay and lesbian activists expressed disdain and anger towards transgender issues being included in the work of LGB advocacy, most practitioners in the study, regardless of their particular LGBTQ identity, were well aware and expressed passionate concern for trans persons and the issues they faced. In fact, much like Ward’s (2008) findings, the ability to discuss issues around trans identity and queer persons of color seemed to be a requisite for success in LGBTQ position on college campuses.

Queering and Redefining the Student Affairs Profession

Regardless of the particular label used by an individual participant such as “social worker,” “educator,” or “LGBTQ resource professional” the results of this study indicate that all persons working on behalf of LGBTQ students engage in a standard set of practices that meet the definition of a profession. These persons have a specific knowledge base with which they attend to the needs of others. They have formalized language and credentials that set them apart from non-professionals. They have long durations of training and have highly specialized and esoteric knowledge from which they perform professional duties. They have a cohesive sense of expectations and are committed to behaving in ways that align with LGBTQ work. And lastly, they have a great deal of autonomy within their work (Moore & Rosenbloom, 1970).
Sanlo (2000) described LGBTQ work in higher education as the new profession within student affairs. This study confirms Sanlo’s assertion that LGBTQ resource practitioners clearly fall under the modern purview of student affairs. In alignment with the five guiding principles for the student affairs profession articulated by Reason and Broido (2011), LGBTQ resource practitioners focused on the holistic needs of LGBTQ students. These professionals took into account the influence of environment and context on student development, utilized empirically grounded work for best practices, acknowledged their accountability to the broader LGBTQ community and society, and maintained an active commitment to social justice. Further, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2006), an organization that referees the profession of student affairs, articulated a set of best practices for LGBTQ practitioners. While student affairs has made excellent strides to incorporate LGBTQ resource professionals within the umbrella of student affairs, it is important to honor that some divergences exist between LGBTQ professional work and student affairs work.

The first divergence exists on a peer-to-peer level. Although the work of LGBTQ practitioners falls in the field of student affairs, not all student affairs practitioners align with or positively contribute to the work of LGBTQ resource practitioners. Frederick and Laura clearly noted ways in which student affairs colleagues overtly or covertly excluded them or the issues of their communities through differential application of policies, social slights, and the diminishment of LGBTQ work. The second divergence was on a structural level. Jonathan noted that while he reported up through the student affairs department administratively, he was not officially funded by the institution as other
student affairs officers were. The existence of these slights, exclusions, and differential treatments between LGBTQ services and other areas of student affairs implies that LGBTQ work is sometimes grudgingly included within the manifold of the field.

The experiences of Frederick, Laura, and Jonathan highlight a continued incongruity and distance between the practice of student affairs and the aspirational values of that profession. This study illustrates that the march towards greater LGBTQ inclusion at institutions of higher education is an incomplete project. LGBTQ practitioners in higher education are inheritors of a lineage of practices by student affairs practitioners that originally sought to exclude LGBTQ persons from higher education (Renn, 2010). Remnants of those practices in terms of segregation based on LGBTQ identity persist today.

As such, to state without qualification that LGBTQ resource practitioners are student affairs professionals is to ignore the historical and continued battle towards inclusion. To view student affairs and LGBTQ student services as ahistorical and having always been intertwined is to gentrify the history of the LGBTQ movement on college campuses. It creates a narrative that LGBTQ persons were always and without question supported by student affairs professionals when even today this is not universally true. Shulman (2012) calls LGBTQ persons to resist this simplification and elision of history; for when they do, they forget the importance of acts of resistance in creating change.

As was shown in the most recent publication of the NASPA/ACPA (2015) professional competencies, LGBTQ work, along with other forms of social justice work, has dramatically reshaped the values of the student affairs profession making inclusion a
central component of the field. Slay and Smith (2011) used the term redefinition to describe the process by which marginalized persons reshape a profession.

Professionals in this study engaged in a redefinition of the student affairs profession by pushing back against heterosexist and traditionally gendered notions of professionalism and professional practice. This process has allowed and continues to allow LGBTQ resource practitioners to critically examine student affairs from a queer lens. In doing so, the profession is reshaped and with the concerns of queer people being brought into all areas of student services. Rachel’s narrative illustrates the process of redefinition at a particular institution. She was able to redefine her role and services for LGBTQ students within her institution. Rachel’s work went from being focused on celebratory program creation to tackling serious policy issues and road blocks to inclusion.

In addition to making the field of student affairs bend to better serve LGBTQ students, the integration of LGBTQ professionals into the field of student affairs allows LGBTQ professionals additional opportunities for advancement. Within most institutions, LGBTQ specific roles are singular or at most exist across three administrative levels (e.g., program coordinator, assistant/associate director, or director). By aligning with the student affairs profession, LGBTQ practitioners have opportunities to leverage transferable skills and advance in institutions of higher education beyond LGBTQ specific roles. This advancement allows LGBTQ professionals to enact and embed policies of LGBTQ inclusion at higher and broader levels of institutional governance. With these positive trends for both LGBTQ students and professionals, the ultimate goal
is not to resist the mainstreaming of LGBTQ services. Rather, LGBTQ professionals are
called to attend to the history of LGBTQ work on college campuses in order to maintain a
tempered radical stance that allows them to continue to queer the student affairs field
making its values and practices more inclusive of LGBTQ persons.

**LGBTQ Career Construction and Socialization**

The results of the study lend support to the utility of Savickas’ (2013) concept of
career construction in framing the career experiences of LGBTQ professionals.
Specifically, this study demonstrates the applicability of career adaptability and attending
to Savickas’ (2013) three narratives in career construction of actor, agent, and author
when examining the lives of LGBTQ persons within LGBTQ professional roles. As
Savickas (1997) stated, “Adaptability … involves planful attitudes, self and
environmental exploration, and informed decision making” (p. 254). In describing their
paths to their current roles, all participants exhibited a high degree of career adaptability.
They described the ways in which they were both planful of their careers while at the
same time engaging in opportunities for self and environmental exploration that allowed
them to take advantage of and make informed choices when opportunities arose.

Frederick’s journey serves as an exemplar for the utility of framing the
construction of one’s career through a Career Construction Theory (CCT) lens. As an
actor, Frederick worked as an undergraduate and graduate student to ready himself for
work within LGBTQ centers. He intentionally sought a higher education and student
affairs degree which he felt would give him the credentialing he needed to apply for full-
time LGBTQ jobs. When he found out about the availability of his current role, he made
a point to have an informational interview prior to applying to it in order to have a better understanding of the position.

As an agent, Frederick was extremely intentional in taking part in actions that progressed him towards his end goal of becoming an LGBTQ professional. This allowed him agency in preparing for his goal. Rather than waiting for an advisor to make decisions about how he should prepare for his role, he was able to take self-directed action and ownership of his decisions. This ultimately allowed him to secure a position for which he was at first not considered viable.

Beyond these instrumental behaviors, Frederick authored his career path through the lens of working to make change for the betterment of LGBTQ persons. He saw his role as “holding space” for LGBTQ students to bring their full-selves to conversations and to develop an understanding of their queer identities beyond the mere act of coming out. The central themes of Fredericks’ narratives of career were pushing for social justice, finding deeper meaning in his own queer identity, and helping others to explore and embrace their LGBTQ identities as acts of self-care and self-love. He was assisted by his supervisor in finding greater meaning in his personal queer identity beyond being a man who slept with other men. Frederick in turn helped students to see their queer identities beyond attraction and coming out, something he could not have done if he had not first developed a deeper relationship to his own LGBTQ identities. His supervisor’s role highlighted the important part LGBTQ practitioners can play in helping future LGBTQ professionals scaffold and author their careers.
In addition to highlighting the utility of CCT, this study showcases the foundational role that personal LGBTQ identity plays in the work lives and professional identities of LGBTQ resource practitioners. As such, personal identity should be seen as integral to the career construction process. Personal LGBTQ identity for these participants served as a lifestyle-based drive that allowed them to live authentically in their queer identities. For several participants, this personal identity also created a protean-based drive to actively pursue their current careers (Kaplan, 2014). The protean drive reflected Sanlo’s (2000) finding that LGBTQ professionals sought to make future LGBTQ students’ experiences with college “better than their own” (para. 26). Through engaging in CCT as an active career intervention, future professionals are able to build increasingly cohesive future work selves that eventually become fully formed professional identities (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012).

**Becoming respectably queer.** Rather than LGBTQ professional career paths being boundaryless and ill-defined (Kaplan, 2014), participants in this study shared common experiences that indicate a relatively structured path to accessing LGBTQ professional positions in higher education. The common career path amongst participants makes the utilization of the professional socialization model as proposed by Weidman et al. (2001) extremely relevant to the narratives of these professionals. Part of the alignment with the Weidman et al. (2001) model comes from the protracted preparation and professionalized nature of these LGBTQ positions which includes the requirement of advanced degrees in student or human development. All persons in the study held at least a master’s degree regardless of whether or not they held an entry-level position. The
technicalization of LGBTQ professional roles served to create a diversity culture and to render LGBTQ professionals as respectably queer, giving them greater legitimacy and social capital in institutions of higher education (Ward, 2008). Jonathan spoke of this when he evoked his professional identity as a “scholar practitioner” or rather someone who was able to go beyond his individual experience and incorporate theoretical models in order to imbue his work with greater credibility in the eyes of faculty and staff.

Managing credibility around one’s queerness was a persistent discussion point that other scholars have also deliberated (Rofes, 2000; Sapon-Shevin, 2004). Credibility or rather being seen as credible allowed LGBTQ practitioners to better challenge systems of inequity by drawing on their professional expertise.

In examining the career construction process through the lens of the Weidman et al. (2001) model, participants in the study engaged in the anticipatory stage of professional socialization first through their undergraduate involvements with LGBTQ student organizations and initiatives. Engagement led to enrollments in graduate programs and the pursuit of internship experiences that allowed them to transition into the formal stage of professional preparation. It was in these internships that participants began the process of informally engaging with their profession; it was also in these internships that participants began to personalize the profession and develop a professional identity.

For LGBTQ professionals, the Weidman et al. (2001) model is an apt descriptor of their entry into and alignment with the field. This study helps to further articulate aspects of the model including the non-linear, circular nature of professional socialization.
and the role that personal factors play in relation to this developmental process. Multiple participants described a stark contrast between undergraduate and graduate experiences with LGBTQ work and full-time professional experience in the field. As students, participants seemed to be shielded from institutional barriers, but as full time professionals, they became privy to an entirely new dimension of LGBTQ work: the politics of advancing change initiatives and dealing with resistance to LGBTQ work. This added dimension amounted to a resocialization into the LGBTQ profession in which struggle and setbacks were considered a normative part of the role. Frederick captured this in his pivot from a “sparkles-and-rainbows” perspective to one that acknowledged the emotional and spiritual tolls of combating oppression.

Although Weidman et al. (2001) noted that personal backgrounds and predispositions play a role in professional socialization, this study suggests that those factors should be considered as central to the professional socialization process for LGBTQ persons in identity based roles. The development of one’s professional identity seems to be both an outgrowth of personal identity and a driver of its development. The Queered MMDI (Jones & Abes, 2013) provides a theoretical bridge for the interface between the Weidman et al. model and Bilodeau (2005) and D’Augelli’s (1994) life-span development models for trans and LGB persons. It does this in two capacities. First, it provides a framework through which to locate the positions of professional and personal LGBTQ identities in relation to one another. Second, it incorporates the concept of meaning making and self-authorship which helps to explain how identities grow, mature, and develop overtime (Jones & Abes, 2013). However, before turning to the interplay
between personal and professional identities from a theoretical perspective, I address the core elements required for the development of professional identity development in LGBTQ practitioners: knowledge acquisition, involvement, and investment.

Knowledge acquisition. Knowledge acquisition relates to the cognitive- and skills-based components of socializing into a profession. This construct also encompasses the affective components of a profession which dictate normative expectations from other professionals in the field and internal and external assessments of competence within a profession (Weidman et al., 2001). In relation to the cognitive requirements, knowledge of student development theories, lifespan development theories of LGBTQ identity development, administrative skills, and a historical and current contextual knowledge of the experiences of LGBTQ persons are all vital components of the LGBTQ professional socialization process.

The affective competencies of the profession relate to an LGBTQ professional’s ability to connect with persons who identify as LGBTQ on campus, assist them in building communities and networks of belonging, advocate on behalf of them to challenge exclusionary institutional policies, and foster environments in which collective community action can take place. The acquisition and development of these affective skills is best captured by the concept of intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Maturity allows professionals to be centered and self-authored in their personal LGBTQ identities while also being able to engage and work skillfully with others who possess different social identities from their own.
Shel and Laura both provide a marked contrast to levels of competency within the profession as it relates to intercultural maturity. In the interpersonal realm, Laura was able to provide concrete examples of her interactions with students. She was also aware of the interconnected nature of oppression as it applied to issues of race and LGBTQ inclusion. Shel supplied less descriptive examples of oppression as it related to students’ experiences and stated that she was less comfortable working with queer persons of color as opposed to queer White persons. Shel also perceived that she had less in common with queer persons of color and, therefore, did not think she would feel affirmed or competent in her LGBTQ work with them.

From an intrapersonal perspective, Shel saw her White racial identity as a tool of affirmation in which she could feel competent and comfortable in her ability to work with White others in the LGBTQ community. She was not critical of her privilege of being able to limit her work to a single marginalized identity. Laura, in contrast, was critical of her Whiteness and the privileges it afforded her. She saw her White identity as a position with which she could advocate for students and challenge systemic injustice.

Lastly, within the cognitive dimension, Laura was able to articulate, through specific examples, the difference between singular and intersectional experiences of oppression. Laura also furnished a detailed contextual history of her institution and the ways in which it impacted both institutional policies and the student experience. Shel did not produce specific examples of intersectional oppression. In addition, she provided less contextual history on LGBTQ issues at her campus. It is worth noting that Shel was in her first full-time position after graduate school while Laura was in her second. As a
result, Laura had had more time than Shel to develop within the profession. Overall, Shel seemed to exhibit an intermediate level of intercultural maturity while Laura displayed a mature level of development (Perez et al., 2015).

The purpose of the lengthy examination of intercultural maturity between Laura and Shel is to illustrate the centrality of this developmental process to the professional socialization and development of LGBTQ professionals. This discussion helps to further answer the question of how professional LGBTQ identities develop. Because LGBTQ professionals are called to work with and advocate on behalf of all members of the LGBTQ community regardless of race, ability status, or other social identities, these professionals must strive towards intercultural maturity. Otherwise, they risk being unable to work with large portions of the LGBTQ community on their campuses, resulting in an abrogation of their professional duties and a neglect of students’ needs.

**Involvement.** Involvement as defined by Weidman et al. (2001) was restricted to the notion that a new professional needed to be involved with other LGBTQ professionals in order to develop a professional identity; that need for other LGBTQ professionals was demonstrated. Participants identified professional role models who had enabled them to begin to construct their professional identities. The persons in this study also described the importance of continually engaging with other members of the profession.

As shown, for LGBTQ persons at institutions with two or more LGBTQ professionals, socialization occurred locally. However, for persons who were the sole LGBTQ practitioner on campus, national networks of LGBTQ professionals were vital.
Professional networks provided forums for participants to examine their work reflexively, a sense of belonging, and affirmations that these solitary participants were pursuing the right agendas for their students. Both belonging and affirmation of one’s professional identity are essential to its formation and maintenance (Gibson, 2003; Strayhorn, 2012; Weidman et al., 2001). For LGBTQ professionals, these affirmations may have been particularly salient and important due to the resistance and exclusion some faced in the pursuit of their duties.

Moreover, this study showed a need for involvement with others outside of the profession which was not a concept broached in the Weidman et al. (2001) framework. Interactions with staff and students outside the LGBTQ profession helped participants understand the expectations others had of them and allowed them to reshape their behavior and professional activities accordingly. Reshaping further defined their roles and provided the interactional exercise necessary for them to practice and further refine their professional skill sets. For the reshaping to take place, assessments of students’ needs was vital.

**Investment.** Investment is the third key component of professional socialization. Weidman et al. (2001) defined investment as committing items of personal value to the active pursuit of a professional identity. The authors of this model named the giving of time, the giving up of alternative career choices, and the reshaping of reputation as possible investments. Participants in the study met these criteria for investment through the time spent on preparing for their profession, their choices not to pursue other possible careers, and their public embrace of their roles which centered their professional
reputations on queer services and queer issues. While this discussion of investment rounds out the three core components of professional socialization, it leaves wide open the more foundational question of what leads LGBTQ practitioners to commit to an LGBTQ professional socialization process.

Committing to the Profession

Commitment is defined as a pledge or agreement to take action (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017). In literature on professional socialization, cognitive commitments, cohesion commitments, and control commitments are seen as springing from professional competence and a sense of obligation to one’s profession (Weidman, et al. 2001). The motivation behind these commitments originates from knowledge about the profession, peers within the profession, and feelings of responsibility to one’s profession (Weidman, et al. 2001). Although these motivations make sense for a person who is thoroughly socialized into a profession, they do not address the initial animus by which a person comes to LGBTQ work and what drives that person to engage in the socialization process originally.

For LGBTQ professionals in higher education, the critical consciousness model by Landreman et al. (2007), based on multicultural educators at universities, provides theoretical confirmation of the experiences of the participants in this study. In that model, a person is exposed to difference, experiences dissonance related to the unfair treatment of themselves or others because of that difference, and examines one’s place in the world in relation to critical incidents of unfair treatment. For each of the professionals in the current study, there came a moment at which they realized they and other LGBTQ
persons were treated differently and even unfairly because of their marginalized sexual orientations and/or gender identities. This resulted in an examination of the LGBTQ identity relative to other social identities and further realization that such treatment was unacceptable.

The realization of unfair treatment that LGBTQ professionals in this study felt is similar to what Landreman et al. (2007) described an “Aha moment[s]” in which persons realized that individual acts of hatred, bias, or discrimination were related to a system of privilege and oppression that serves to regulate and maintain the power and privilege of certain social identities to the exclusion of others. Upon this realization, people moved to a phase of critical consciousness. This involved the intentional choice not to shy away from persons who were different from oneself or to remain complicit with these systems but to actively challenge oppression. Each of the participants in the study framed this system of privilege and oppression as occurring in a university context, and viewed LGBTQ professional positions as a conduit through which they create social change for the betterment of LGBTQ persons.

In addition to providing a confirmation of the findings of Landreman et al. (2007) in the area of LGBTQ specific work, this study adds helpful descriptions to the idea of engaging with people of difference in coming to critical consciousness. For the persons in the study, difference did not necessarily mean engaging with others they perceived to have social identities that varied from their own; many of these professionals framed the LGBTQ community as a cohesive group. Kara’s sentiment that she perceived all LGBTQ persons to be “kin” is an example of the cognitive grouping that occurs for LGBTQ
persons where difference is framed as any identity that diverged from the normative privileged group which LGBTQ practitioners identified as heterosexual and cisgender persons.

In creating this grouping of all LGBTQ persons, Kara created what Daloz et al. (1996) termed a tribe for herself or the reference identity group with which she found a sense of belonging. Despite seeing LGBTQ persons as her tribe, Kara and other professionals were also aware of intragroup differences and privileges within the LGBTQ community, particularly racism within the LGBTQ community and the greater experiences of discrimination facing queer students of color and bisexual students (Piontek, 2006; Whitfield, Walls, Langenderfer-Margruder, & Clark, 2014). Understanding of intergroup dynamics led the practitioners to challenge intragroup oppression while maintaining their commitments to addressing intergroup oppression. Avery provided an example of this when they challenged a White, presumably cisgender LGBTQ student, on their racist statements. In recognizing the forces of privilege and oppression operating within a group of students who held both privileged and oppressed identities, Avery demonstrated both a critical consciousness and a mature level of intercultural maturity (Landreman et al., 2007; Perez et al., 2015). The above example provides a partial framework for the relationship between critical consciousness and intercultural maturity in which critical consciousness addresses the motivation behind acts of social justice while intercultural maturity provides a scale for assessing the complexity of one’s reasoning for engaging in these acts.

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In considering the experience of oppression from the perspective of a person who possess a target marginalized identity, the Landreman et al. (2007) model touched on the deeply personal nature of critical consciousness. Indeed, participants shared the ways in which their personal LGBTQ identities were impacted and reshaped by their professional roles and the stories of discrimination their students shared with them. In showing a willingness to challenge oppression, participants exhibited not only critical consciousness but evidence of living lives of commitment (Daloz et al., 1996).

Two additional factors in living lives of commitment beyond actively working to combat oppression and injustice were (1) a demonstration of perseverance and resilience and (2) a congruence in adhering to values across multiple domains (Daloz et al., 1996). Multiple participants demonstrated perseverance and resilience in their work despite opposition to their work or setbacks. Participants also highlighted ways in which their work was deeply personal and went beyond simply being their profession. At times, their professional work and identity were so intertwined with their personal identity that they were inseparable.

The Intrasection of Personal and Professional Identity

In describing the connection between personal and professional LGBTQ identity, Jones, Abes, and Kasch’s Queered MMDI (Q-MMDI) (Jones & Abes, 2013) is perhaps the best model to explain the experiences of LGBTQ practitioners as it centers on the queer experience of navigating the world in ways that the MMDI and the R—MMDI do not (Abes & Jones, 2004). Throughout their narratives, participants explicated experiences with their identities that deeply resonated with this model. Frederick
provided the clearest example of the intrasection of his personal and professional LGBTQ identities. In describing the performance of his queer identity through his clothing and his subsequent color-shaming he stated, “I'm not separate from my presentation…. I am wearing my heart.” At the moment in which he felt audited by a colleague, Frederick experienced an auditing of his self-hood. However, he persisted in his colorful visual presentation because it was embedded in his desire to challenge the heteronormative context of his institution which insisted that men wear only certain restricted colors. In his struggle both to resist and also to continue participation in the institutional environment he sought to change, Frederick’s understanding of his queer identity and the foundational ways in which he related to others was transformed by his work. The primary driver of the transformation was his institution’s focus on the spiritual dimension of its students’ growth. By taking part in these discussions, Frederick found himself moving from a sex-centric approach of connecting with others to one based on mutual interests and attraction. He also found that his relationships to his queer identity shifted from one predicated on the joy of coming out to a greater understanding of queerness as a political act of resistance and learning to advocate and care for others in the LGBTQ community.

Transformation was a common thread among participants’ narratives. Working on behalf of the LGBTQ community gave each person a greater appreciation for the political underpinnings of queerness as resistance, love, and compassion for those who have been marginalized. D’Augelli (1994) and Bilodeau (2005) captured this narrative thread as entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans community and positioned it as a parallel process to
developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans identity and developing a
lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans social identity. The Q-MMDI would suggest that, rather than
running parallel, these processes are helixed and even intrasecting as they mutually
influence one another. The findings of this study show particular intrasections between
personal and professional identities, further reinforcing the validity of the Q-MMDI as
explaining the relationship between these constructs.

This study also provides explicit examples of the non-linear sequence of the six
developmental processes within the D’Augelli (1994) and Bilodeau (2005) models.
Monica’s narrative was one of the best examples of entrance into an LGBTQ community
begetting the development of a personal LGBTQ identity when most other persons
experienced these processes in reverse. Additionally, this research clearly denotes that the
processes for LGB and Trans/Gender non-conforming identities should not be conflated
with one another. While there are potential overlaps in experiences with marginalization
and discrimination that may be shared by the LGB and trans communities, the
development of identities centered on sexual orientation and those centered on gender
identity are distinct and need to be honored. This is particularly important because of the
intergroup stigma and oppression that have historically existed and continue to exist
between the LGB and trans communities (Piontek, 2006). When such stigma and bias
exist, persons who are trans may not be able to find community with LGB persons as
they are excluded from those social groups.

“Queerness” served as an umbrella term under which most participants in this
study identified. Nonetheless, because of the broadness of its utility as an identifier,
queerness emerged as a multifaceted term to describe (a) a queering of gender presentation, (b) a political orientation towards queer activism, (c) the inadequacy of other LGBT identity terms to capture one’s sexual orientation identity, and (d) a description of one’s intimate relationships that defied other descriptors. The common thread amongst the various interpretations of queerness was an ascription to this identity as a defiance of expectation; in spite of that, due to of dual identification with queerness and other terms, queerness intrasected with LGBT identities, reshaping the ways in which they were performed and interpreted and also breaking with singular interpretations of any particular LGBT identity. The political importance of defying expectations and assumptions around identity expression and formation was expressly stated by Monica. Monica felt that she had to challenge “dominant narratives” of the coming out process. Her sentiments were in alignment with Butler’s (1993) who expressed concern of certain performances of gay and lesbian identity becoming fixed and no longer open to revision. Such fixture or “foreclosure” (p. 313) on LGBTQ identity creates conditions under which identity defines and limits a person’s experiences and options. In resisting this foreclosure, LGBTQ practitioners help to ensure that LGBTQ students get to define their own identities as opposed to having these identities define them.

In further breaking with monolithic presentations of the LGBTQ community as Ferfolia (2009) implored others to do, participants provided greater nuance to the ways in which heteronormativity worked to belittle, invalidate, and marginalize specific identities within the community. For gay men, there was a tendency of environments to oversexualize their appearance and actions. As such, they felt the need to monitor their
appearance and modify their behaviors to guard against these accusations. Cisgender, femme presenting women fought issues of invisibility in which they felt the need to name and claim their identities in order to have their queer, bisexual, and lesbian identities recognized and honored. Tyler, a trans person with the privilege of passing as a cisgender man, had to name his trans identity in order to have his queerness made visible. Avery, the gender non-conforming person in this study, had to deal with the appropriation and commodification of their appearance for political utility. And, queer persons of color within the study battled the invalidation of their racial identities as not mattering in queer spaces. The persistence of racism in queer spaces highlights the utility of the I—MMDI as it allows for a theoretical understanding of how people from an oppressed identity group (e.g. queer persons) might oppress another group (e.g. non-White persons queer). Rather than White queer persons seeing discrimination against queer persons of color as something to combat, this discrimination is instead left unexamined and seen as natural as it emanates from the larger societal doxa in which people live. Put another way, the I—MMDI serves as a reminder that racism persists in spite of queer contexts.

While the I—MMDI explains how oppression can operate within queer contexts at the social or group level, the Q—MMDI provides theoretical insight into better understanding the inseparable experience of racial and LGBTQ identities at the personal or internal level. While other persons may see the identities of race/ethnicity and LGBTQ status as intersecting factors, the concept of intrasection seems to capture more precisely the lived experiences of persons who possess these dual identities. Lane, Monica, and Jonathan each expressed the convergence of their racial/ethnic and LGBTQ identities, not
as a place of eventual intersection but a space of origination in which both identities spring forward as one. From the perspective of intrasection, it becomes even more evident that to battle oppression for one identity is to engage in a battle against oppression for all identities.

**Implications for LGBTQ Professional Preparation and Practice**

The findings of this study suggest five areas for improved practice as it relates to preparing for entry into and persisting in the LGBTQ profession including (a) professional training, (b) professional competencies, (c) internship participation, (d) self-care habits, (e) personal reflection on identity, and (f) explicit discussions on the entanglement of personal and professional identity. In relation to the first area, based on the experiences of the majority of professionals in this study, student affairs Masters’ programs provide the most direct training into the profession. Programs that wed the development of practitioner expertise in student and young adult development with practical internship experiences in LGBTQ higher education services settings seemed to provide the best outcomes for graduates wishing to go directly into a full time LGBTQ role.

Along with the recommendation that future practitioners attain master’s degrees in higher education and student affairs, a second recommendation is that future practitioners develop competency in social justice and inclusion, law, policy, and governance, advising and supporting, and assessment, evaluation, and research (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). These particular professional competencies were described by persons in this study as being central to their roles. Within the domain of social justice
and inclusion, training for LGBTQ practitioners should include information on systemic oppression, tempered radicalism as a tool to change organizations, queer theory, power and privilege, intersectionality, and LGBTQ identity development theories and models. Connected to knowledge of social justice is a knowledge of law, policy, and governance. Practitioners need to be well versed in First Amendment protections for their students, and limits to first amendment rights for themselves in their capacities as agents of the institution. This knowledge allows LGBTQ practitioners to advise students on the bounds of protesting. It also allows them to know the extent to which they are allowed to protest policies with which they may disagree. In addition to knowledge about First Amendment issues, LGBTQ practitioners should be knowledgeable of applicable state laws, university policies, and student conduct policies that may impact their students experiences and abilities to stage protests. In the realm of advising and supporting, practitioners should be able to articulate the historical lineage of discrimination towards all segments of the LGBTQ community and the ways in which exposure to bias may activate or exacerbate underlying mental health diagnoses (Bostwick et al., 2014). Practitioners also need to be trained in responding to trauma and students in crisis including those who have suicidal thoughts or ideations. Lastly, in regards to professional competencies, knowledge of assessment, evaluation, and research is critical in LGBTQ professional practice. This skill allowed the practitioners in this study to understand the current climate and issues preventing LGBTQ students from being retained and persisting in college. This also empowered practitioners to advocate for policies such as preferred name policies, gender variant housing options, and gender neutral or all gender restrooms. Having a solid
foundation of assessment mitigated personal bias in creating programming such that programmatic needs were derived from an assessment of the community and not solely from practitioners’ personal experiences. Foundational to assessment was having the means to collect data on students. As such, having a firm understanding of assessment and research practices allows LGBTQ practitioners to advocate for institutional support in the collection of demographic data and contact information for LGBTQ students which helps to further the legitimization of LGBTQ student support services.

Finding internship opportunities was the third recommended facet of improving preparation for the profession. These work experiences provided key sites of learning the professional competencies enumerated above. These positions should be sought out by persons interested in joining the LGBTQ profession within higher education. At the undergraduate level, internships provide exposure for undergraduate students to LGBTQ work and at the graduate level they provide essential training for full-time roles. Due to the crucial role internships play in propagating the profession, current LGBTQ professionals should work to create these opportunities within LGBTQ resource centers. Creation of these positions has the added benefit of extending the personnel size and reach of centers which often face limited staffing. They also provide an additional conduit of communication for full-time LGBTQ professionals to better comprehend campus climate for LGBTQ students.

A fourth recommendation for professional practice was self-care, particularly in the form of social networks. Feelings of isolation and alienation were significant issues for participants as these two conditions can lead to burnout. Practitioners in this study
who felt socially connected expressed more positive attitudes towards their work and less problems with resistance to their work which brought them greater professional satisfaction and enjoyment. One social network of particular importance for LGBTQ practitioners are other LGBTQ persons on campus not working specifically on LGBTQ issues. Another support network were national professional organization such as the Consortium.

A fifth requirement for emerging LGBTQ professionals is a critical and reflective understanding of their own personal identities. In being called to serve all LGBTQ persons on a college campus, it is important that practitioners coming from their own particular queer identity understand the impact that their particular identity might have on others. This includes understanding the privileges associated with one’s own identities and being careful not to conflate one’s personal experiences with the experiences of others. In practice, this may mean examining issues of White privilege when in predominantly minority-raced spaces or understanding the privileging of gay experiences when working with bisexual, lesbian, or trans students.

Lastly, it is likely from the results of this study that many LGBTQ professionals or future professionals are aware of the impact their personal experiences with queer identity have had on their motivation to become LGBTQ professionals. However, they may not have considered all of the costs associated with rendering one’s personal LGBTQ identity in service of other LGBTQ persons. This topic of identity entanglement, performatives, and enactments, needs to be an explicit part of the professional training
and preparation of LGBTQ professionals as it seemed to be an unspoken requirement of the profession for which many of the persons in this study were unprepared.

**Future Research Implications**

This study helps form a conceptual foundation to frame the complexity of professional identity development and the integral role that a personal, marginalized identity can play in shaping one’s career. The focus of this study was on LGBTQ professionals in higher education settings who also possessed an LGBTQ personal identity. One of the biggest and consistent research themes to emerge was the interrelation and equation of White racial identity and queerness. Several participants noted the exclusion of non-White queer persons from LGBTQ-focused student groups. Two participants also directly addressed issues of Whiteness within LGBTQ resource center staff, Monica felt that issues of race were ignored within her center and Shel felt greater comfort working in a non-multicultural-focused LGBTQ resource center.

These experiences beg the research questions: Where are the spaces for non-White queer persons on college campuses? How do queer persons of color find community, connection, and belonging? What are the experiences of queer persons of color with standalone LGBTQ resource centers? What are the experiences of queer persons of color with standalone multicultural centers? The answers to these questions would assist in further dispelling notions of a homogenous LGBTQ student experience and would help LGBTQ centers to redesign services in alignment with best practices for working with all queer persons but especially queer persons of color.
Dovetailing these explorations of queer professionals of color experiences are questions concerned with mixed LGBTQ/multicultural centers. Answering these questions would also be useful in determining the path for persons who work in blended centers. What are the experiences of queer persons of color with access to blended LGBTQ and multicultural student services? What are the role descriptions for persons doing LGBTQ work in blended centers? What personal identities do persons who work in blended centers possess? How do these identities inform the choice to work in blended centers? What professional identities do persons in blended centers ascribe to? What are the interactions between personal and professional identities for persons in these centers? What competencies do these persons need in order to navigate both multicultural and LGBTQ spaces? What are the competing priorities that persons serving multicultural students, queer White students, and queer students of color face in the pursuit of their duties? These questions would clarify how people bridge the gap between the LGBTQ movement that was constructed without reference to race (Piontek, 2006) and the creation of multicultural centers that were conceived without reference to sexual orientation or gender identity (Schmidt, Githens, Rocco, & Kormanik, 2012). They might also explain the institutional politics that allow for the formation of blended centers.

While this study included practitioners who identified as transgender and gender queer, a follow-up study could center these persons’ experiences. Centering on the experiences of transgender LGBTQ practitioners would help to expand understandings of transgender identity development. It would generate greater understanding of how persons with trans identities navigate serving student populations predominantly
composed of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. In contrast, an identity not studied in this research project were persons with heterosexual identities who served as LGBTQ practitioners. Interviewing these persons might extend insight into the experiences of professional LGBTQ allies (Ryan, Broad, Walsh, & Nutter, 2013). It might additionally effectuate an exploration of representational diversity within the LGBTQ professions in higher education.

An intersection that rarely emerged, but which Frederick described in great detail, was the impact that working at a religious institution had on the way in which he went about his work. Frederick’s discussion brought forward two potentially productive research strands. One is a focus on institutional type and the ways in which LGBTQ work may be framed at religious, socially conservative, socially liberal, public, and private institutions. The second is an explicit attention to the intersection between religiosity, spirituality, atheism, agnosticism, and LGBTQ identity might help address how LGBTQ professionals navigate two identities that at times may be at odds. Questions would help to illuminate these intersecting identities: What are the faith-based, spiritual, or moral and ethical orientations of LGBTQ professionals? How have LGBTQ professionals navigated their spiritual or faith traditions in relation to their personal LGBTQ identities or to their professional LGBTQ work? As Frederick hinted, the religious environment in which he worked both mandated and allowed him to renegotiate his relationship with his queer identity. In that process, he found meaning within his queer identity that went beyond sexual attraction. While research has looked at the negotiation of lesbian and gay identities and religion (Abes & Jones, 2004; Halbertal & Koren, 2006) less research has
been conducted examining trans persons experiences with religion. As such, a study of the experiences of trans persons negotiations of their faiths would also contribute to the limited research on the experiences of these persons (Bockting & Cesaretti, 2001; Levy & Lo, 2013) and provide a fruitful area of understudied literature in higher education.

The present study also provided insight into the pathways of career construction for LGBTQ practitioners. Connected to the findings are questions about future career construction. Many of the professionals interviewed described future career plans that involved pursuing more schooling. An investigation of persons doing LGBTQ work and the pursuit of terminal degrees would help to explain the choices and factors that lead to the seeking of degrees beyond the master’s level.

Many of the LGBTQ professionals in this study were in entry level positions in which advancement seemed to be the attainment of higher positions within the field of LGBTQ work. However, for those at the director level, questions abounded as to what was next as these persons had risen as high as they could within the functional area of LGBTQ work. An examination of persons who formerly worked in LGBTQ practitioner roles would shed light on career paths after explicit LGBTQ work ends. Potential topics mentioned by participants were LGBTQ work outside higher education, preparation for non-identity based roles, pathways out of LGBTQ specific work, professional identification, and addressing the undertheorized concept of the lavender ceiling and other barriers to professional advancement of LGBTQ persons (Hill, 2006).

In addition to questions related to identity and the career paths of individual actors, this study also provides future direction for investigations of organizational
dynamics and institutional politics for LGBTQ resource centers. One of the most consistent themes not to surface directly connected to practitioners’ individual identities, were the histories of the institutions at which these professionals worked. Research into the founding directors of LGBTQ centers might provide insight into how these new centers were created and, thus, help persons at higher education institutions without LGBTQ centers advocate for their creation on those campuses.

Lastly, findings in this study also revealed the issue of apathy within the LGBTQ community, either towards forming community based on shared personal LGBTQ identities or towards issues of social justice within the LGBTQ community. To the former issue, questions proliferate in relation to community formation and networks of belonging for LGBTQ students who do not find a primary identity affiliation through their queer identities. These questions include: Do LGBTQ students find community and belonging through other avenues? What does belonging and community look like for LGBTQ students who do not affiliate with the LGBTQ community? What role does personal queer identity play in forming connections? What types of support or engagement resources do non-community minded LGBTQ students seek out? A study of these issues might allow LGBTQ resource center professionals to further understand the roles of support they can play for students.

In connection to the question of social justice within the community, much of the collective identity for LGBTQ persons has been a result of shared experiences of discrimination and the struggle of coming out. Some students see themselves as part of the LGBTQ community and are less impacted by social stigma; the professionals in this
study indicated this was especially true for those with cisgender, White, and lesbian/gay identities. From this, questions for future study could examine the formation of community: What are the mechanisms by which community forms? What are the primary concerns of these students in relation to their lesbian and gay identities? Do lesbian and gay students see LGBTQ centers as supportive spaces as attention is shifted to other marginalized identities within the LGBTQ community? A study centered on these persons would further reveal intra-group privileges within the LGBTQ community. It might also uncover the expectations of students who are not personally asking for advocacy.

**Study Limitations**

Several limitations of this study relate to its qualitative design: the ways in which participants were recruited, the criteria for inclusion in the study, and the commonplace bound nature of the study. In addressing the qualitative nature, while the narratives shared are meant to have transferability to the lives of others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) these results are not meant to be generalizable as this is not the purpose of qualitative research. As such, these narratives are the result of these particular participants’ experiences and do not represent the experiences of all LGBTQ professionals.

In examining the second limitation, all participants were recruited through the Consortium of Higher Education for LGBT Resource Professionals. Because of this common tie, these participants represent a distinct cohort within the wider field of all LGBTQ resource professionals who are both aware of the Consortium and have access to
it. Other LGBTQ professionals might belong to different professional organizations or belong to no professional organization. Thus, pressures of isolation within the profession and those isolated practitioners’ understandings of the national state of the field for LGBTQ practitioners might differ significantly from the persons in this study as they would have no national cohort with which to relate. Including persons not part of the Consortium might have resulted in different representations of the LGBTQ profession.

A third limitation of this study was the nature of the requirements for inclusion, namely that participants be LGBTQ and that they be employed full-time in LGBTQ work. This excluded non-LGBTQ persons doing LGBTQ professional work. These professionals might have shared additional career paths as well as different motivations for pursuing LGBTQ work on college campuses. Also, in requiring that participants be employed full-time in an LGBTQ role, this study may have missed representing the heterogeneity of configurations of LGBTQ positions within higher education. For example, those roles in which LGBTQ responsibilities are taken on in addition to a person’s functional role, are shared part time with other duties, or rest solely with a graduate student were not considered here.

The requirement of persons being employed full-time in LGBTQ specific roles as opposed to roles split between LGBTQ issues and race-based multicultural issues may have unintentionally Whitened the sample. As was examined in the literature review, the historical LGBTQ rights movement limited the participation of non-White LGBTQ persons (Piontek, 2006). Participants noted remnants of this exclusionary past when Monica shared issues of racial awareness and Shel remarked on her desire to work in a
“standalone” space (i.e., a space in which racial or ethnic student services were not mixed in with LGBTQ services). Both of these participants highlighted the exclusion of persons of color from the LGBTQ practitioner field.

Finally, this study, as with all studies, is bounded by the constraints of place, temporality, and sociality (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Participants in different locations may have yielded different accounts of LGBTQ work. Alternatively, the same participants sampled at a different time may have represented their work and the focus of their work differently due to significant changes in the sociopolitical landscape of the United States. These limitations are in alignment with the constructivist perspective that all research is a product of specific times and conditions (Charmaz, 2008).

**Strengths of the Study**

The greatest strength of this study was its participants. These incredible professionals took the time not only to share their stories, but as Will stated, they were able “to give back to our profession.” When asked the question of why they chose to participate, Marie captured their collective sentiments: “I was just really excited by the project.” Excitement extended from the awareness that there was a need to increase the body of limited research on LGBTQ professionals in higher education.

In sharing their narratives, these professionals illuminated potential paths to the profession, struggles they faced in working to advance the interests and rights of LGBTQ persons on college campuses, and the foundational skills they needed in order to be successful in their roles. These elements made explicit the narrative truths that the journeys to LGBTQ work in higher education are diverse and that identify development
can be non-linear. These stories help to make the path to LGBTQ professional work in higher education more explicit and the portrayal of LGBTQ identity more robust.

Another strength of this study was the use of narrative inquiry as the methodology for understanding these professionals’ stories of identity and work. This approach allowed for open-ended questions in which participants could shape and take ownership of their answers. It also allowed for rich descriptions of their experiences that could be used to get a feel for these participants and their lives (Lieblich et al., 1998). It created a space for the expression of complex and evolving answers that reflect the complicated and constructivist nature of human experiences.

A third strength of the study was the diverse identities represented by participants within the LGBTQ community. By having persons in this research project who inhabited trans, gay, lesbian, queer, and bisexual identities, this study showcased the varied and heterogeneous experience of personal identity as it connected to professional LGBTQ work. This cross-section of identities, while by no means all-encompassing, broke apart the notion that there is a singular path to or way of being an LGBTQ professional in higher education.

The last strength of this study lies in its fulfillment of the aim to construct “emancipatory knowledge” (Lincoln et al., 2011 p. 120) that resists a gentrification of the mind (Shulman, 2012) that would seek to erase the practices of self-care, persistence, and resistance described by these participants. By sharing these stories and these knowledges, future persons who desire to be LGBTQ professionals in higher education have historical
records of those who came before and helped to make their professional journeys possible.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

The animus of this project stemmed from my own work with diverse students and from my observations of LGBTQ colleagues who served LGBTQ students. Seeing them in action helped fuel my continued interest in this research project. Throughout the research process, I saw parallels between my own journey of discovering a career path oriented towards social justice and advocacy and the journeys of these participants. I also found myself resonating with their stories of coming to their personal LGBTQ identities.

At the same time, I recognize that our stories vary widely. Throughout the research process I sought to differentiate between the assumptions I made about my participants experiences and the experiences they chose to share. In the presentation of findings, I attempted to share data inductively so that their words would tell their stories. Finally, in the discussion, I attempted to highlight ways in which their narratives converged and diverged from theory. Nevertheless, I am aware that because of some similarities in our experiences, I could not completely step outside my assumptions about their experiences.

**Conclusion**

This study illustrates the personal and professional journeys of 12 LGBTQ professionals doing advocacy work in higher education and the intertwined and intimate relationship between personal LGBTQ identity and professional LGBTQ work. In doing so, this research helps to challenge traditional notions of career socialization as being
removed from personal identity by demonstrating how personal identity can be a driving force in shaping one’s career choice. In the same turn, this study bolsters the application of career construction as a useful theory for understanding the career development of LGBTQ persons. Lastly, this research project contributes to the cataloguing of the modern LGBTQ civil rights movement on college campuses which began in the 1960s and captures illustrations of modern day LGBTQ professional advocacy work on college campuses.

Postscript

Shortly after I finished collecting data for this study, President Donald J. Trump was elected to be the 45th President of the United States of America. With his election and subsequent inauguration, the political and social world in which LGBTQ persons live changed. This included the specter of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric from senior level lawmakers including the erasure of the LGBTQ rights page from the White House website (Itkowitz, 2017). It involved the election of a Vice President who took resolute stances against the expansions of LGBTQ liberties (Mandell, 2016). And, it included the Dear Colleague letter issued in February 2017 by the White House with the consent of the Department of Education and the Department of Justice which rescinded federal protections for trans persons ensuring access to restroom facilities that aligned with their gender identity (Vogue, Mallonee, & Grinberg, 2017). Each of these actions represented a renewed assault on LGBTQ protections coming directly from the highest office in the land. While it is difficult to say how the narratives of these participants might have differed had they been captured post-election, there is little doubt that now more than ever their acts of
advocacy, resistance, and support for LGBTQ students are vital to the health and well-being of queer persons on campuses across the United States.
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Appendix A: Recruitment List-Serv Posting

Subject: Requesting Your Participation in a Qualitative Study of LGBTQ Professionals

IRB Approval Number 2016B0304 – The Ohio State University

Dear Colleague:

My name is Bowen Marshall and I am a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University. I posting to this forum to request your participation in a study of LGBTQ professionals.

The purpose of this study is to interview persons currently working on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities at colleges and universities who also identify as members of the LGBTQ community.

In particular, I hope to understand how you came to work with LGBTQ students at your university. I am also interested in understanding how your personal LGBTQ influences and is influenced by your professional LGBTQ work.

Your participation in this study has the potential to make a significant contribution to higher education research and practice by shedding light on the experiences of LGBTQ professionals at colleges and universities.

Participation in this study involves the completion of a brief survey to collect demographic information and to ensure eligibility and two individual interviews conducted either in-person, by phone, or via Skype lasting approximately one hour each during summer, fall and winter 2016. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Your participation will be confidential and you will select a pseudonym for the study. Gift cards in the amount of $25 to Amazon.com or Starbucks will be given for successful completion of the study.

If you are interested in participating, please follow this [LINK] and complete the initial demographics/eligibility form. If you are not interested in participating, please disregard this posting.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at marshall.572@osu.edu or 913-375-8654.

Thank you,
Bowen Marshall
Doctoral Candidate | Higher Education and Student Affairs
The Ohio State University

Susan R. Jones (doctoral advisor)
Professor | Higher Education and Student Affairs
The Ohio State University
Appendix B: Initial Demographics and Eligibility Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please review this eligibility survey and demographics questionnaire in its entirety to be considered for participation in this study.

About this Study: This is a narrative study of LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings. The purpose of this study is to understand the professional development, work experiences, and identity negotiation of LGBTQ persons who work with LGBTQ students on college campuses. This is a two phase study, in phase one participants fill out the initial demographics and eligibility survey. In phase two, participants participate in two one hour interviews.

About this survey: This survey is being used to collect information about potential participants for the purpose of determining eligibility and to provide a brief sketch of selected participants in the final write up of the study. This survey should take 5 minutes to complete.

If you are selected: You will have an opportunity to participate in phase two which consists of two individual interviews lasting approximately one hour each, held either in-person, by phone or via Skype during summer and fall 2016 or Spring 2017.

Informed consent: The information on this form will be kept confidential. If you are selected to participate in this study the information you provide may be shared but will not be connected to your actual name or any other identify information. To read the full informed consent document follow this [Link]

By stating that you consent to participate in phase one of this study, you are stating that you have reviewed the informed consent document for this survey and are consenting to the collection of the information you provide in this online form.

Consent to Participate:

Do you consent to participate in the survey portion (phase one) of this study? (yes/no)

Contact Information:
Name:
Preferred Name:
Preferred Pronouns:
Email:

309
Phone: 
Skype contact: 
Will you be generally available in late summer, fall or winter 2016 to interview?

**Employment Information:**
Are you currently employed full time (approximately 40-hours a week) at a college or university?

Is your position primarily concerned with working for or on behalf of LGBTQ community members of your institution?

What is your current job title?

What is the name of the institution at which you currently work?

How long have you served in your current full-time role?

Can you briefly describe roles or positions you have held prior to this?

**Educational Information**
What is your educational background (i.e. areas of study, degrees completed)?

Are you currently in school? If so, what degree are you pursuing in what area of study?

**Demographic Information**
In order to contextualize the narratives of participants, I would like to include selected demographic information. If you would prefer not to answer any of the following questions, please leave the field blank. How would you describe yourself in respect to the social identities listed below?

Age: 
Race: 
Ethnicity: 
Gender Identity?: 
Sexual orientation: 
Dis/ability: 
Any additional social identities you would like to share?:

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey and for expressing interest in this study. I will respond to your interest within five business days.

For any questions related to this study or demographics form, please contact me, Bowen Marshall, at marshall.572@osu.edu.
Appendix C: Informed Consent for Demographics Survey (Phase I)

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please review this eligibility survey and demographics questionnaire in its entirety to be considered for participation in this study.

About this Study: This is a narrative study of LGBTQ professionals working in higher education settings. The purpose of this study is to understand the professional development, work experiences, and identity negotiation of LGBTQ persons who work with LGBTQ students on college campuses. This is a two phase study, in phase one participants fill out the initial demographics and eligibility survey. In phase two, participants participate in two one hour interviews.

About this survey: This survey is being used to collect information about potential participants for the purpose of determining eligibility and to provide a brief sketch of selected participants in the final write up of the study. This survey should take 5 minutes to complete.

If you are selected: You will have an opportunity to participate in phase two which consists of two individual interviews lasting approximately one hour each, held either in-person, by phone or via Skype during summer and fall 2016 or Spring 2017.

Informed consent: The information on this form will be kept confidential. If you are selected to participate in this study the information you provide may be shared but will not be connected to your actual name or any other identify information. To read the full informed consent document follow this [Link]

By stating that you consent to participate in phase one of this study, you are stating that you have reviewed the informed consent document for this survey and are consenting to the collection of the information you provide in this online form.

Consent to Participate:

Do you consent to participate in the survey portion (phase one) of this study? (yes/no)

Contact Information:
Name: 
Preferred Name: 
Preferred Pronouns: 
Email: 

311
Phone:
Skype contact:
Will you be generally available in late summer, fall or winter 2016 to interview?

**Employment Information:**
Are you currently employed full time (approximately 40-hours a week) at a college or university?

Is your position primarily concerned with working for or on behalf of LGBTQ community members of your institution?

What is your current job title?

What is the name of the institution at which you currently work?

How long have you served in your current full-time role?

Can you briefly describe roles or positions you have held prior to this?

**Educational Information**
What is your educational background (i.e. areas of study, degrees completed)?

Are you currently in school? If so, what degree are you pursuing in what area of study?

**Demographic Information**
In order to contextualize the narratives of participants, I would like to include selected demographic information. If you would prefer not to answer any of the following questions, please leave the field blank. How would you describe yourself in respect to the social identities listed below?

Age:
Race:
Ethnicity:
Gender Identity?:
Sexual orientation:
Dis/ability:
Any additional social identities you would like to share?:

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey and for expressing interest in this study. I will respond to your interest within five business days.

For any questions related to this study or demographics form, please contact me, Bowen Marshall, at marshall.572@osu.edu.
Appendix D: Declination Email to Potential Participants

Subject: Follow-Up to Your Interest in the Study of LGBTQ Professionals

DATE

Dear __________,

Thank you for expressing interest in this research project. Based on your responses, it does not look like you fit the criteria for study participation. –or— Based on the current level of interest received by the survey interest form, I will not be able to interview you at this time. I thank you very much for your time. I hope in the future there are opportunities for us to work together wish you the best.

Respectfully,

Bowen

Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education and Student Affairs
The Ohio State University

Susan R. Jones (doctoral advisor)
Professor
Higher Education and Student Affairs
The Ohio State University
Appendix E: Acceptance Email to Potential Participants

Subject: You’ve Been Accepted

DATE

Dear _________,

Congratulations! You’ve been accepted to take part in the study of the experiences of LGBTQ professionals. I would like to set up a time to conduct your first interview you during [Insert two week period here]. Times I am available are: [insert times here].

If these times do not work for you, please suggest two or three others that work better for you.

Please also download, review and sign the attached consent form in your response email. A signed consent form is required for you to participate in phase two of this study. You may sign electronically or print, sign and scan or hand deliver a hard copy back to me.

Please note that before the first interview, I’ll review the informed consent document and answer any additional questions you may have prior to starting the interview. Once questions begin, the interview is expected to last about an hour.

Thank you again for your interest in this study and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Bowen

Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education and Student Affairs
The Ohio State University

Susan R. Jones (doctoral advisor)
Professor
Higher Education and Student Affairs
The Ohio State University
Appendix F: IRB Informed Consent (Phase 2)

**Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry of LGBTQ Professionals

**Researcher:** Bowen Marshall, Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education and Student Affairs

**Research Advisor:** Susan R. Jones, Professor, Higher Education and Student Affairs

**This is a consent form for research participation.** It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

**Your participation is voluntary.** Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be consenting to Phase 2.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of my study is to interview persons currently working on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities at colleges and universities who also identify as members of the LGBTQ community.

**Study tasks or procedures:** This study two phases. The first phase involves filling out a brief demographics and eligibility form. If the participant moves forward, this survey is followed by the second phase of the study which consists of two individual interviews each lasting approximately one hour. This second phase will have a separate consent form. These interviews will be audio recorded and conducted either in person, over the phone, or via Skype.

**Duration of participation:** Total participation time in the study is estimated to last for 2-2.5 hours. This includes time (5 min.) to complete phase one of the study. And up to two hours and twenty five minutes to complete phase two of the study consisting of two individual interviews lasting approximately one hour each.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.
**Risks and Benefits:** The information collected in this study will be used to expand research and knowledge about the experiences of LGBTQ professionals in higher education settings.

While inferences may be made about participants identities based on information shared, information recorded from interviews will be kept in a secure location. In addition, pseudonyms will be used as replacement for the names of participants and other persons mentioned in participant narratives. Institutional information will be obscured through use of institutional pseudonyms and generalized descriptions.

Participants may feel uncomfortable as a result of answering questions, but that this risk is the same as risks encountered during everyday life.

**Confidentiality:** We will work to make sure that no one sees your survey responses without approval. But, because we are using the Internet, there is a chance that someone could access your online responses without permission. In some cases, this information could be used to identify you.”

Additionally, efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices; The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

**Incentives:** Incentives for participation in this study are prorated. For participation in Phase 1, there is no incentive. For participation in Phase 2 - interview one, you will receive a gift card of $10 for your choice of either Amazon.com or Starbucks. For your participation in Phase 2 – interview 2, you will receive a gift card of $15 for your choice of either Amazon.com or Starbucks. A participant may receive up to $25 total in incentives for participation in this study.

**Participant Rights:** You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.
An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact Bowen Marshall at marshall.572@osu.edu or Susan R. Jones at jones.1302@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the consent form: I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject ________________________________ Signature of subject ________________________________

AM/PM

Date and time ________________________________

Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable) ________________________________ Signature of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable) ________________________________

AM/PM

Date and time ________________________________
**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Printed name of person obtaining consent</th>
<th>Signature of person obtaining consent</th>
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**AM/PM**

**Date and time**
Appendix G: First Interview Protocol

(Semi-Structured Interview Format)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Are you comfortable and in a good location to conduct this interview?

Before we begin, I’d like to take a few minutes to review the informed consent document I sent you and answer any questions you have about it. I would also like to answer any questions you have about the purpose of the study or use of the information you choose to provide.

[Review and confirm/obtain informed consent, answer any questions about study]

I’d also like to discuss the pseudonym you’d like me to use for this study, preferred pronouns you chose as well as the LGBTQ identity term you would like me use in our conversations.

[Review demographics form and use preferred LGBTQ identity term throughout interviews for interviewee when personal LGBTQ identity is discussed.]

In this interview, I am interested in how you came to your current role of working on behalf of other LGBTQ people on your campus, how you describe your work, and learning more about the work that you do in relation to the LGBTQ community? To begin:

Table G.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Protocol 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Question or Area for Discussion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>What interested you in participating in this study?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Question or Area for Discussion</th>
<th>Possible Follow Up Questions</th>
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</table>
| What is your current role and how would you describe it? | • Can you tell me the story of how you came to your current role?  
• How did you learn about this current position?  
• Can you describe the circumstance or situation that let you to apply or pursue this position?  
• Has your understanding of your role changed from when you initially started to now?  
• Can you describe a particular instance that highlights this change? |
| How would you describe the current climate of your institution for LGBTQ persons? | • Can you describe an instance that informed how you describe the climate on your campus?  
• Does climate vary for different stakeholders (i.e. faculty vs students) and what instance has given you that insight?  
• What major issues has your LGBTQ campus community faced?  
• Can you describe how the community responded to ____ issue?  
• What priorities are you currently focused on? |
| What pressures do you face in providing service to the LGBTQ community on your campus? | • How do you negotiate competing demands?  
• Can you describe a particular situation in which you faced competing demand from the community?  
• How do you persist when the work is difficult?  
• Can you describe a particular instance in which you persisted? |
| In thinking about the LGBTQ community you serve, what work still needs to be done? | • Who are the stakeholders in your community?  
• Where are the gaps in service?  
• How do you advocate on behalf of the LGBTQ campus community?  
• Can you describe a particular situation in which you served as an advocate? |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main Question or Area for Discussion</th>
<th>Possible Follow Up Questions</th>
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</table>
| What profession do you most identify with? | • How would you describe your profession?  
• How does your current role align or not align with that profession?  
• Can you provide an example of the interaction between your role and profession?  
• What values do you hold as a professional?  
• Can you describe a time when you enacted these values professionally?  
• What or who was most influential in how your formed your understanding of your profession?  
• How would you describe your fit with your profession?  
• Can you give an example of how you came to decide upon your fit? |
| Looking back, how has your education or professional background prepared you for your current profession? | • What specific prior roles helped to prepare you for this role/profession?  
• Could you describe those roles?  
• Did your education provide training to allow you to be part of this profession? If so, what?  
• How and when did you realize you wanted to be part of this profession?  
• How and when did you see yourself as a member of your profession? |
| What role do other professionals play in your work? | • Can you talk about a particular situation in which another professional helped or shaped your understanding of your role?  
• How have other professionals influenced your professional identity?  
• Can you describe a particular instance where your identity was impacted by another professional? |
| How has your understanding of your profession changed since you became a part of this profession? | • Can you think of a specific situation that you would have interpreted or handled differently now, than when you began in your profession? |
| Can you describe your next professional steps? | • How has your current role shaped your decision about future career steps?  
• How has your professional history as a whole shaped your thinking about future career choices? |
| Is there anything else you would like to add? |  |
| Do you have any questions for me? | *Finish interview and set up time for next interview.* |
Appendix H: Second Interview Protocol

(Semi-Structured Interview Format)

Thank you for taking time to meet with me again. Are you comfortable and in a good location to conduct this interview?

Thank you for looking over those with me. In this session, I’d like to delve more deeply and ask some follow up questions to our last session as well as ask some questions about your personal LGBTQ identity development and the ways in which it may impact your professional identity and work.

Are you ready to begin?

Table H.1

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<th>Main Question or Area for Discussion</th>
<th>Possible Follow Up Questions</th>
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| Thinking back to your first interview, is there more you would like to say on…? | • Can you describe more about ______ particular experience?  
• How did this ______ experience impact your professional development? |
| How would you describe your personal LGBTQ identity? | • Can you describe your first awareness or early understandings of this identity?  
• Can you talk about instances of how your personal LGBTQ identity changed overtime?  
• Can you describe how your expression of your personal LGBTQ identity changed over time?  
• What events or people have been influential in shaping how you understand your personal LGBTQ identity? |

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<th>Main Question or Area for Discussion</th>
<th>Possible Follow Up Questions</th>
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| In thinking about your LGBTQ identity and career, can you tell the story of your career? | • What do you consider to be the start of your career?  
• Can you describe instances in which your personal LGBTQ identity has shaped your career choices?  
• Can you describe how your personal LGBTQ identity has shaped your professional alignment or identity? |
| What impact has your career had on your personal LGBTQ identity? | • Can you describe how past roles/work places have impacted the expression of your personal LGBTQ identity?  
• Can you describe how your current role/workplace shape the expression of your personal LGBTQ identity? |
| In working with the campus community in your current role, what role if any does your personal LGBTQ identity play? | • How does your personal LGBTQ identity shape how you connect with other LGBTQ people?  
• Can you provide particular examples?  
• In thinking about the diversity within the LGBTQ community, how does your personal LGBTQ identity shape your relationships with persons who don’t share your personal LGBTQ identity within the community?  
• How does your personal LGBTQ identity shape how you connect with non-LGBTQ people? |
| What expectations are placed upon you in your professional role because of your personal LGBTQ identity? | • Can you describe a particular instance in which your personal LGBTQ identity was called upon in your professional role?  
• How in that instance did you manage the professional demands placed on your personal LGBTQ identity?  
• Can you describe how you set boundaries between your professional role and expectations that are placed on your personal LGBTQ identity?  
• Are there instances in which your professional identity is questioned because of your personal LGBTQ identity? How do you manage that? |
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<tr>
<th><strong>Main Question or Area for Discussion</strong></th>
<th><strong>Possible Follow Up Questions</strong></th>
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| What influence if any have other identities such as race, ethnicity, gender or ability status played in the development of your personal LGBTQ identity? (race, ethnicity, ability, etc.) | • Can you talk about an instance in which these other identities influenced the way in which you express or engage with your LGBTQ identity?  
• How has your LGBTQ identity impacted how you express or engage with these other identities?  
• Have you had an instance in which you have been asked or expected to separate these identities? Can you describe one? |
| What influence if any have these other identities had on your professional LGBTQ identity or career development? | • Can you talk about an instance in which this or these other identities influenced your career development?  
• Can you talk about an instance in which these other identities impacted the development of your professional identity?  
• How have these other identities contributed to how you show up as an LGBTQ professional? |
| Is there anything else you would like to discuss or add? Questions I didn’t ask about your job role or personal or professional identities that are important to you? | *Thank participant for their time and discuss the gift card incentive.* |