AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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This study investigated the experiences of lesbians who are school counselors. A naturalistic/grounded study paradigm was utilized. The participants in the study were five lesbians who were school counselors from rural and urban settings. In-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants. During the interview process, analysis occurred via researcher immersion.

Data analysis reveals a descriptive account of being a lesbian and a school counselor and how those two identities interact. General themes identified are: being a school counselor; development of a dominant view/the construction of homosexuality; participants' perceptions of homosexuality by the dominant view; participants' experiences in living the dominant view/defining of self; and redefining the dominant view/redefining of self. An emerging theory of the interaction of power and identity development is presented, along with the proposal for developing an epistemology of homosexuality.

Examining the Experiences of School Counselors who are Lesbians

by

Jennie L. Miller

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Framing the Study

The Research Problem

The issue of homosexuality and sexual orientation in the public schools conjures up intense emotions and irrational fears. Forty years ago, Hooker (1957) challenged the worldview by conducting a study which demonstrated that homosexuality was not a pathological behavior that needed to be treated and cured. After more empirical studies which supported Hooker's original concepts and results, in 1973 homosexuality was no longer classified as a pathology by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (Fassinger, 1991). Although, the field of "helping professionals" has made tremendous strides in shifting to a paradigm where homosexuality is defined as developmentally appropriate for individuals, the educational system in the United States continues to maintain and promote a norm of heterosexuality.

Today, the norm of heterosexuality in American society is being questioned and confronted in the midst of deep rooted resistance and fear (Singer & Deschamps, 1994). It is important to note that the school reflects the community within which it exists; and, in our communities there are individuals who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Individuals are realizing that school administrators, teachers, counselors, staff, and students are not all heterosexual; many believe that, to continue to perpetuate a facade of heterosexuality

only reinforces the negativity and hatred which fragments our communities (Jennings, 1995).

To date, no research or literature is available specifically regarding the experiences of elementary, middle, and secondary school counselors who happen to be gay or lesbian. A limited amount of literature exists examining the experiences of educators who are gay or lesbian in the public schools (Griffin, 1992a; Harbeck, 1992; Jennings, 1995; Olson, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Literature also exists in terms of counselors' perceptions of gay and lesbian issues in school settings (Price & Telljohann, 1991; Sears, 1992) and various aspects involved in working with gay and lesbian adolescents (Powell, 1987; Price & Telljohann, 1991; Reynolds & Koski, 1995; Robinson, 1994; Sears, 1992).

Although counseling professionals are beginning to understand more about gay and lesbian issues (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993) and the experiences of gay and lesbian educators (Griffin, 1992a; Griffin, 1992b; Jennings, 1995; Olson, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), nothing is really known about the experiences of gay and lesbian counselors. Counselors function in a very different role within the school and develop unique relationships with students and staff (Anderson & Reiter, 1995; Welch & McCarroll, 1993). This unique role of the school counselor creates a different set of experiences and circumstances for counselors who are gay or lesbian (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993; House & Miller, 1997). Literature has examined the role and effectiveness of school counselors, but it has not considered the sexual orientation of counselors (Anderson & Reiter, 1995; Fairchild & Seeley, 1995; Kaplan & Geoffroy, 1990; Lee & Workman, 1992; Welch & McCarroll, 1993).

The purpose of this study is to examine the "lived" experiences of lesbian public school counselors by describing the overall phenomenological experiences and meanings constructed by them. The intention of this study is to contribute data and findings to a developing theory in regard to lesbian school counselors and how their sexual orientation impacts their role and effectiveness. This study adds information and data for future studies and applications as well as contributes information to building a theory base (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Various themes/attributes are identified which could be quantified in future studies.

Some themes or attributes which appear and which are explored in the study are: identity management strategies employed to conceal or cope with sexual identity, factors which influence the participants to perceive being in a high risk situation, and behaviors perceived as risk taking in disclosing sexual identity. In addition, systemic factors are examined in identifying elements which enhance change in relationship to attitudes toward sexual orientation in the public schools. For example, this study increases the understanding of factors within our educational systems which possibly inhibit school counselors who are lesbian. Overall, this study acknowledges the experiences of lesbian school counselors and contributes to the realization that not all school counselors are heterosexual.

<u>The Researcher</u>

In utilizing a naturalistic and grounded theory research paradigm, it is important that the researcher provide details of oneself to add to the trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 1990). The researcher is a white, lesbian female who is completing her doctorate in Counselor Education at Oregon State University (OSU). Previous to being in the OSU Ph.D. program, she was employed as a licensed and professional counselor for two years at a community agency working with individuals, couples, and families in an office and home-based setting. Prior to this experience, she worked as a public school teacher for four years in the secondary setting teaching English and humanities courses to grades 8-12. The researcher was not publicly "out" while teaching nor while working in a community based agency but did make limited disclosures to colleagues and community members.

The researcher made a conscious decision on entering the Ph.D. program at OSU to be publicly and professionally "out" in regard to her sexual orientation. More recently, the researcher has done extensive research and service with gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents and has a strong interest in the educational setting and training of school counselors. The researcher has also done extensive research and service in the overall area of gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. The researcher completed an internship at a middle school as a partial requirement of the Ph.D. program and was "out" about her sexual orientation during this experience. Throughout this experience and the overall nature of the Ph.D. program, the researcher has realized that everyday is a "coming out" process in one form or fashion in the professional setting.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature: Foundations of a Journey

The following review of literature contributes in defining the theoretical framework of examining lesbian school counselors at the present time. It is important to note that as the research project progressed, the review of literature evolved as the researcher began to identify themes and patterns emerging from the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This review represents some of the "known" biases that the researcher is bringing into the study.

There is no literature exclusively regarding gay or lesbian school counselors. A limited amount of literature exists regarding gay and lesbian educators, and some of these studies mention counselors who were participants (Griffin, 1992a; Jennings, 1995; Olson, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Choosing to be "out" or publicly acknowledging one's sexual orientation is a complex and ceaseless task encountered by gay and lesbian individuals. Several factors are intertwined in this disclosure process which is unique for each individual. Not only do gay and lesbian individuals deal with "coming out" issues in personal settings and relationships, but they also deal with "coming out" issues in their vocation and career settings (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993).

A General Overview of "Coming Out" and Disclosure Issues

The review of literature in this section does not examine the many and various sexual identity development models because the process of "coming out" or identifying as lesbian is not the purpose of this proposed study. This particular study explores some of the issues related to the sexual identity development theory. Examination of additional literature is dependent on the data and analysis that emerged.

It is important to note that publicly identifying oneself as gay or lesbian is a difficult issue and needs to be a personal choice. Circumstances vary for each individual even though there is evidence that being "out" is imperative for self-worth, self-acceptance, and overall personal integrity (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993). As House and Miller (1997) commented, "coming out is a never-ending process, and decisions about whether to come out occurs on a daily basis [but] hiding does irreparable harm to their sense of integrity and leaves them in a stressful and dissonant position, detracting from their mental health and well-being" (p. 411).

The disclosure of one's sexual orientation to others involves many factors. The individual not only deals with issues which affect him/her on an intrapersonal level, but also on an interpersonal level. It is a process which has tremendous impact on all aspects of the individual's life. Factors such as self and family acceptance, personal and professional relationships, career choice, geographic location, community and personal values, leisure and social activities, legal concerns, and personal safety issues are just a few of the factors which influence the decision to disclose one's sexual orientation (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993; Singer & Deschamps, 1994).

The literature also indicates that disclosure of sexual orientation not only involves one's self-acceptance of being gay or lesbian, but is also dependent on various social contexts (Franke & Leary, 1991). Cass (1979) and Coleman (1982) pointed out in their identity development models that the ability to come to terms with being gay or lesbian leads to a greater self-acceptance and a sense of being more comfortable in disclosing sexual orientation to others. Franke and Leary (1991) postulated that not only does self-acceptance play a significant role in disclosure, but that "coming out" also involves an individual's willingness to be socially rejected.

Franke & Leary (1991) further found that an individual's willingness to disclose sexual orientation to others is very much dependent on the degree to which the individual is concerned about the reactions or perception of reactions being negative, and that this fear of rejection is a primary determinant of individuals concealing their sexual orientation. Thus, not only does self-acceptance of sexual orientation influence the disclosure process, but the social/personal setting impacts the individual's choices and actions.

In relation to disclosure of sexual orientation being dependent on self-acceptance and the social context of the individual, Anderson and Randlet (1994) examined the influence of an individual's self-monitoring behaviors. High self-monitors were described as individuals who guide their behaviors with careful attention to group norms and behaviors displayed by others; and, low self-monitors were described as individuals who utilize internal cues, like attitudes and values, to direct their behavior (Anderson & Randlet, 1994). Low self-monitors give little attention to situational norms whereas high self-monitors adapt their behavior to the various situational cues. Anderson and Randlet

(1994) investigated disclosure of sexual orientation and self-monitoring behaviors hypothesizing that self-monitoring behaviors would be positively correlated with satisfaction with one's sexual orientation.

Anderson & Randlet (1994) found that high self-monitors were more satisfied with disclosure of their sexual orientation and self-concept than low self-monitors. In addition, high self-monitors were much more skilled at choosing situation-specific strategies for self-disclosure of sexual orientation which appeared related to an enhanced sense of self-confidence and social skill interactions (Anderson & Randlet, 1994). Anderson and Randlet commented that high self-monitors "could skillfully diagnose each situation for the safety and propriety for divulging their sexual orientations...[they were able to] mask or confirm their identity with sufficient craft and sincerity to achieve their personal ends in each situation" (p. 796). Low self-monitors were not as attentive to situations or social settings in choosing to disclose their sexual orientation and had a slightly lower sense of self-satisfaction when adhering to a "principled strategy" in which the "either-or strategy of self-presentation may generate high intrinsic satisfaction but it is also likely to invite social censure and possible damage to the self" (p. 798).

Disclosure of sexual orientation is a complex issue which appears to be dependent on internal perceptions of self, external values and norms, along with the various social/cultural settings (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993; Singer & Deschamps, 1994). An individual's sense of self-efficacy is contingent upon his/her internal acceptance and pride in being gay or lesbian. Congruence with intrapersonal and interpersonal values and principles also seems to have a vital role in the decision of publicly acknowledging one's sexual orientation (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982).

Disclosure of sexual orientation to family or a group of select friends is very different than being "out" in a professional or work setting (Fassinger, 1996; House & Miller, 1997). There appears to be several factors involved in choosing to disclose or not disclose one's sexual orientation or choosing to be in a setting where being "out" is a high risk behavior.

Disclosure of Sexual Orientation in Relation to Vocational Issues

The literature review in this section is limited to literature which examines vocational issues and does not include vocational/career decision models. The purpose of the proposed research study does not specifically involve examining career development or vocational factors in choosing specific vocations.

In the vocational setting, gay and lesbian individuals face unique concerns which include career choice, work-related issues, and various aspects of discrimination (Croteau & Bieschke, 1996). Fassinger (1996) asserted that vocational identity is interrelated with personal identity, and that sexual orientation influences the vocational experience. More specifically, she identified internal/self barriers and external/environmental barriers to vocational choice, implementation, and adjustment for lesbians. The internal/self barriers Fassinger identified for lesbians are: lack of self confidence, decision-making skills, self doubt, guilt, and fear of others' attitudes. Whereas, the external/environmental barriers are: occupational stereotyping, limited perceived choices, bias in counseling and testing, lack of role models, lack of family and

peer support, multiple role issues, harassment, "old boy" systems, and attitudes of family, employers, and co-workers.

After reviewing the current literature, Fassinger (1996) asserted there needs to be more research and rethinking of assumptions in the area of vocational psychology of women and specifically more understanding of the lesbian experience as it relates to vocational factors. She identified heterosexism and homophobia in conjunction with sexism as affecting the vocational experiences of lesbians.

In addition to identifying the barriers affecting lesbians, Fassinger (1996) pointed out that there may also be some facilitative aspects related to being a lesbian. One aspect is a tendency for lesbians to be more nontraditional, androgynous, and less conforming to gender roles than heterosexuals. This tendency may lead lesbians to make vocational choices and decisions which are less conforming and accommodating to social norms. Another tendency for lesbians is to avoid financial dependence on another individual and instead, maintain a degree of financial independence, even within partnerships. And finally, there may be a tendency to develop a strong vocational focus which buffers the "coming out" process and provides stability for the individual who is in flux or struggling with identity development issues.

Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest & Ketsenberger (1996) conducted a qualitative study interviewing 10 lesbians about their identity development process and its effects upon their career path. They utilized a semi-structured questionnaire with four areas of interest: timing and quality issues in the "coming out" process, how identity development helped or hindered career development issues, effects of external and

internal homophobia on career issues, and the influence that associating with a lesbian community had on career development.

Boatwright et.al, (1996) findings suggested that the lesbians in the study experienced a second, adolescent-like period in terms of identity development which influenced career issues and choices. Participants mentioned experiencing delays in career choices, a period of new career exploration and re-examination which in some cases led to new career paths as they integrated their lesbian identity with their vocational identity. All the participants reported experiencing overt and covert discrimination in terms of their sexual orientation. Those participants who were not "out" at work or selectively "out" reported the difficulty of feeling like themselves as they monitored their interactions with others and lived in secrecy; in addition, they had a sense of guilt and sadness in recognizing their own internalized homophobia. In the Boatwright et.al, (1996) study, there was also a reported sense of isolation and loss of career opportunities due to not being able to be "out" in the work environment. The participants did report there were positive effects of experiencing a second adolescence in terms of lesbian identity and association with the lesbian communities. These positive effects included: increasing self-confidence, improved integrity, a stronger sense of direction, referrals and support from other lesbians, and the development of useful skills in leadership, advocacy, and communication.

Schneider (1986) studied 228 lesbians analyzing the relationship between various workplace determinants and the sociability of co-workers in choosing to disclose sexual identity. She developed a regression model which asserted that:

Discrete features of work and lesbians' experiences at their jobs will have

differential impact on their level of sociability with coworkers and the

extent of their disclosure of sexual identity. Further, sociability and

disclosure are casually related, with each reciprocally influencing the

other. Finally, sociability is affected by several biographic characteristics

and nonwork social commitments. (p. 471)

Schneider (1986) found that the following dimensions had significant impact on deciding

to reveal sexual identity to co-workers: risk variables associated with level of income,

working with children, socioemotional climate variables of gender structure, human

service work, and prior job loss as a result of disclosure of sexual identity.

Schnieder (1986) concluded that her model indicated that lesbians are more likely

to be "out" in the workplace when it is a small, nonbureaucratized setting, involves

human services, deals mostly with adults, and is female-dominated. According to these

findings, lesbians who are in positions of power or influence, work in a large setting, deal

with children, and have relatively high incomes are the least likely to be "open" about

their sexual identity. Schnieder (1986) also asserted that revealing sexual identity at

work happens when a lesbian thinks the individual is "trustworthy, sensitive, or

politically aware—knowledge gained over time and an assessment over which a lesbian

has some measure of control" (p. 482).

Discrimination and Coping Skills in Vocational Settings

Lesbians encounter a variety of discrimination in their work settings. This discrimination leads to an assortment of unique methods in dealing with environmental stresses. A few studies have been done examining the various work experiences of lesbians which include information on discrimination, identity management skills, disclosure decisions, and coping mechanisms employed (Driscoll, Kelley, Fassinger, 1996; Hall, 1986; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Schachar & Gilbert, 1983).

Levine and Leonard (1984) examined employment discrimination against lesbians through a questionnaire of 30 open and closed ended questions completed by 203 participants in the New York City area. Levine & Leonard included factors such as job type, working environment, work history, experience of perceived/actual discrimination, and openness of sexual identity. They found that discrimination occurred in a variety of forms and that fear of discrimination, demotion, and job loss were major concerns; in addition, coping strategies which included passing as a heterosexual or partial disclosure held little satisfaction. Levine and Leonard (1984) stated that preliminary analysis of their data indicated that "age, occupation, education, and income have minimal impact on anticipated and actual discrimination or coping strategies" (p. 708). Further they found that "lesbians working in public institutions were far more apt to anticipate discrimination than those in private settings, although the latter in fact experienced discrimination more frequently" (p. 708).

Hall (1986) interviewed 13 lesbians who were employed by large corporations and focused on strategies that women used to conceal their sexual identity along with

counter-strategies to avoid feeling dishonest for the deception. She found that each participants' strategies were unique, and ranged from an automatic response to more deliberate and stressful responses. Hall noted that there was a "heightened awareness, a sensitivity toward the usually hidden matrices of behavior, values, and attitudes in self and others....the basic fabric of focused consciousness, what was important and what was not, was altered" (p. 65).

Participants also reported having a greater sense of self confidence because of their lesbianism and saw it as being a source of strength (Hall, 1986). In terms of changing the environments they worked in, the lesbian women wanted to demonstrate more personal conviction in terms of their sexual identities in relation to homophobia and heterosexism, but most of them felt it was a hopeless situation to change the environmental attitudes. Hall identified four strategies that the participants utilized in terms of counter-balancing the dissonance they felt in concealing their sexual orientation: denial and dissociation, avoidance of social interactions and co-workers, distraction or conveying difference by associating with feminist or liberal images, and token or partial disclosure.

Schachar and Gilbert (1983) examined interrole and intrarole conflicts, coping mechanisms, and levels of self-esteem in a questionnaire completed by 70 lesbians. They found that overall, participants felt their lesbian identity had little to do with interrole conflicts such as work-lover conflicts, and that the coping mechanisms employed did affect self-esteem and confidence levels. On the other hand, participants viewed their lesbianism as highly related to intrarole conflicts with the roles of work and daughter being paramount. The various coping mechanisms employed did not affect self-esteem

and confidence levels, although they reported less satisfaction in dealing with intrarole

conflicts (Schachar & Gilbert, 1983). Overall, the coping strategies used for intrarole

and interrole conflicts differ and self-esteem and confidence levels appear to be affected

by the various coping strategies one chooses to utilize.

Driscoll et al. (1996) conducted a study to test a path model of coefficients with

proposed variables in which the disclosure of sexual identity and the work climate would

influence occupational stress and coping, which in turn would affect overall work

satisfaction. The study consisted of 123 participants throughout the U.S. who completed

six measures ranging from demographic information to level of disclosure, climate, stress

and coping resources, and work satisfaction. The findings indicated that only 24% of the

participants were totally "out" in their work settings, with 44% "out" to their immediate

supervisor. The researchers also found that workplace climate was influenced by

occupational stress and coping which affected work satisfaction; climate had a direct

effect on work satisfaction; and, that disclosure had no significant influence on

occupational stress, coping, or work satisfaction.

In addition, Driscoll et al., (1996) found two statistical significant correlations in

their study. One correlation was the duration of a lesbian relationship and disclosure

(.26, p = .004); whereas the longer the individual was in a partnership, the more she

disclosed her sexual identity at work. The second significant correlation was between the

duration of a lesbian relationship and stress (-.22, p = .02); whereas the longer one was in

a partnership, there was less occupational stress perceived. The findings of this study

indicated that being in a relationship or partnership and the duration of it impacted work

related factors.

Overall, these studies (Driscoll, Kelley, Fassinger, 1996; Hall, 1986; Levine &
Leonard, 1984; Schachar & Gilbert, 1983) suggested that sexual identity impacts work
experiences and behaviors. These studies indicate that discrimination, whether actual or
perceived, alters the perception of the work environment and limits opportunities for
lesbians. Various coping mechanisms employed by lesbians appear to be situational
specific and offer little personal satisfaction (Boatwright et. al, 1996; Schneider, 1986.
Self-esteem and self-worth are affected by homophobic and heterosexist attitudes which
seem prevalent in the work setting (Boatwright et. al, 1996; Fassinger, 1996; Levine &
Lonard, 1984). Few lesbians seem to feel comfortable being totally "out" in their work
settings; although paradoxically, their sexual identity seems to provide them with a sense
of strength and resiliency (Boatwright et. al, 1996; Fassinger, 1996; Hall, 1986).

Sexual Identity Issues in Educational Settings

In relation to sexual orientation issues, individuals who work in the public schools
deal with a much more complex environment than individuals in the private sector. As
Schneider (1986) pointed out in her study, lesbians who work with children, are in
positions of power or influence, have relatively high incomes, and who are employed in
larger work environments are less likely to feel comfortable to disclose their sexual
identity. Lesbian educators and counselors certainly experience these factors in their
school environment and may respond similarly.

One of the first studies regarding gay and lesbian teachers was conducted by
Olson (1987) who surveyed 97 teachers who were currently teaching or had been

teachers. She concluded that education is probably one of the most discriminatory professions in terms of homosexuality. The survey contained eight open-ended questions and was distributed nationally using the Gay Yellow Pages, the National Gay Teachers Association, and snowballing technique. The sample was proportionately male (53%) and female (43%) with the average participant having taught for over 10 years.

Olson (1987) reported that the majority of individuals who had left teaching had gone into administrative positions or the business field. Olson found that 20% of those who left teaching did so partially because of their sexual orientation, and 32% stated that their sexual orientation was the only reason they left teaching. In terms of revealing sexual identity, Olson reported that 81.9% of the participants had told at least one person in the community with 18.5% not telling anyone. Sexual identity was only told to other teachers (44.2%), and administrators, teachers, students (15.6%). Reactions from both sets of individuals were mostly positive (70.1%).

In response to the question "what aspects of teaching do you or did you find fulfilling" the most common response of participants in the Olson (1987) study was watching the students learn and grow. Participants answered that acceptance from superiors and peers, fear of job loss, denial of tenure or promotions were the reasons for not being "open". In terms of stereotypes conveyed to them by the school environment participants reported that: it was okay to be gay, but one shouldn't act on the feelings, homosexuals were child molesters and diseased, and that homosexuals taught their students to be homosexual. Participants experienced resentment, fear, anger, frustration, and believed it necessary to conceal their identities and lead double lives in response to the previously mentioned stereotypes.

Olson (1987) asked what unique qualities gay and lesbian teachers could offer to education because of their sexual orientation. The majority of the participants reported being more sensitive to differences, being better able to know the needs of students, having more tolerant attitudes, being more creative, having more time to spend on their careers, being able to demonstrate self worth and have a sense of self purpose, along with "the notion that they had provided role models for homosexual students in their classes" (Olson, 1987, p. 79). In terms of making educators more sensitive and aware of gay and lesbian issues, participants reported that more gay and lesbian teachers needed to be "open", in-service programs should be provided, and overall more education on sexuality needed to be available.

Several of the findings that Olson (1987) reported in her study continue to be identified in the literature by others (Griffin, 1992a; Griffin, 1992b; Jennings, 1995; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Woods and Harbeck (1992) focused on identity management strategies utilized by lesbian physical education teachers. The qualitative study focused on 12 participants who described their experiences and the strategies they employed to conceal or reveal their sexual orientation (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Three interviews were conducted with each participant with one focus question for each interview: (1) provide personal and professional background; (2) recreate day-to-day experiences in specific details; (3) reflect on the meaning you make of your experiences as a lesbian physical education teacher (Woods & Harbeck, 1992).

Two underlying assumptions emerged from Woods & Harbeck's (1992) data in regard to overall experiences: (a) job loss would occur if sexual identity was revealed; and (b) female physical education teachers are frequently stereotyped in a negative

manner as lesbians. For the participants, being a teacher was more important that being "open" as a lesbian. Identity management strategies employed were listed as: passing, self-distancing from others, and self-distancing from issues related to homosexuality.

Risk taking behaviors for lesbian physical education teachers were also identified as: sharing personal information with peers or students with vagueness, honest manner; actively confronting, educating, and providing information around topics involving homosexuality; and lastly, revealing or not denying sexual orientation to someone in school (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Woods and Harbeck noted that "a consistent pattern with respect to how and when participants concealed or revealed sexual orientation did not evolve....each decision was made on a case-by-case, day-to-day, person-to-person basis, contingent upon numerous factors" (p. 160). Overall, the emotional cost of concealment for participants in this study was frustration, fear, self-hatred, difficulty in accepting sexual identity, isolation, unable to be a fully functioning teacher, immense amount of wasted energy in self-monitoring, and unable to be a positive role lesbian role model.

Jennings (1995) conducted a study with 36 openly gay and lesbian teachers. The sample consisted of mostly male (n = 23), high school level (n = 30) teachers who were recruited using the snowball method. Some of the factors identified as inhibiting participants to initially "come out" on the job were fear of job loss, adverse reactions from administrators and parents, and negative responses from students. Participants reported that the choice of "coming out" was precipitated by the following reasons: a desire to reduce stress, wanting conditions toward homosexuality to improve, and hoping experiences for homosexual students would improve in school. After revealing their

sexual identities, several participants reported feeling a more positive self image and self esteem, more effective in the classroom, and more comfortable dealing with discrimination or harassment. Overall, participants felt that they were making conditions better for gay and lesbian students and believed it was important to be a role model. Jennings concluded that the participants were more satisfied with being "out" and that the benefits outweighed the costs of remaining "closeted."

Griffin (1992a) did a participatory, longitudinal study with 13 gay and lesbian educators. She not only reported the experiences of the participants but through collective reflection and action attempted to empower them. This was done by giving each participant a copy of their interview transcript, having them compose a profile, and share the profile with the other participants throughout the 15 months. Participants shared their experiences, identified common themes, and ended up planning two collective change actions.

Griffin's (1992a) sample consisted of educators from all levels; a principal, a librarian, and a counselor, with ages ranging from 36 to 45 and years of experience ranging from 6 to 23 years. The researcher also noted that "none of these teachers was publicly out at school, nor were any of them totally closeted when the project began" (p.169). At the end of the study one participant "came out" publicly to peers and students with two other participants "coming out" to peers.

Participants in the Griffin study (1992a) reported making decisions in regard to managing their sexual identities on an individual level and a day by day basis with constant reevaluation occurring. Fear of losing one's job and loss of credibility were the two major concerns that participants identified. Self-betrayal, a sense of living in a

divided state, and fear of being "outed" permeated their existence and affected what they did as educators. "The conflict between concealing and revealing their lesbian or gay identities was as much a part of every school day as were lesson plans and faculty meetings" (Griffin, 1992a, p. 173).

Identity management strategies in the Griffin (1992a) study were noted as: relying on reputation as a quality educator, as an educator who would fight back, or an activist of controversial issues; careful and advanced preparation on how to deal with direct confrontation or homophobic statements; regulation of information about themselves to others; and lastly, separation of personal life with professional life and creation of a psychological distancing. Participants felt more comfortable taking risks if they were in their own classrooms or in a private setting, were interacting with trusted peers, or dealing with students who were struggling with their own sexual identity. In managing their identities in school, participants chose to pass, cover or censure, be implicitly "out", or explicitly "out"; in addition, they typically used more than one strategy and were explicitly "out" to at least one peer with the entire process being described as an "exhausting and stressful process" which took "tremendous energy" (Griffin, 1992a, p. 179).

Participants in the Griffin study reported their lives as being compartmentalized with careful monitoring of interactions in their professional circles. Griffin reported that the majority of the participants believed that "being gay or lesbian had nothing to do with their abilities as an educator" (p. 181). She identified this position as a "defensive and protective response to the social stigma attached to lesbian and gay people who work with young people" (p.182). Participants believed that their sexual identities provided

them with a "special perspective" which was described as understanding marginalization, stigmatization, ostracism, discrimination, and prejudice of individuals. Participants concluded after being in the study that they "could be even more productive if they did not have to expend energy hiding and protecting themselves from the prejudice and ignorance of a homophobic community" (Griffin, 1992a, p. 194-195).

Griffin (1992b) summarized the patterns and themes emerging from studies (Griffin, 1992a; Jennings, 1995; Olson, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) that have been done in regard to educators. She stated that gay and lesbian educators:

-believe, almost universally, that to be "out" in school would cost them

their jobs;

-think that it is necessary to strictly separate their personal and

professional lives;

-live with a daily fear in school that they will be discovered;

-isolate themselves from students and other teachers to avoid detection;

-resent the injustice of having to maintain a double lie, lie to colleagues

and students, and endure the anti-gay attitudes and actions they encounter

in schools; and

-hope that being an excellent and conscientious teacher will protect them

if their sexual identity becomes known in school. (p. 25)

It is important to note with Griffin's (1992b) conclusions, that these studies (Griffin, 1992a; Jennings, 1995; Olson, 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) also described personal strengths or positive qualities that gay and lesbian educators identified specifically emerging from their experiences of being a sexual minority.

Summary

Investigating the work experiences of gays and lesbians is a new frontier, especially in terms of exploring these experiences in the school setting. No literature specifically examines the experiences of gay or lesbian school counselors. It is uncertain whether the themes and patterns identified in previous studies will emerge in a study examining the experiences of lesbian school counselors. Certainly school counselors receive different training than educators, perform different functions than educators in the school setting, and interact uniquely with students and staff. Because of these factors, it is possible that unidentified patterns and themes will emerge in a study about the experiences of lesbian school counselors.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Paradigm and Design

The purpose of this study was to begin to build theory in regard to the experiences

of lesbian school counselors and in doing so the study followed a grounded theory

format. The basic design of the study was a constant comparative format where the

pattern was interviews, analysis, theory development, more interviews, and more analysis

until the themes and patterns clearly emerged (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1990;

Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Methodology consisted of a design which employed in-depth

phenomenological interviews and profiles developed by the researcher and participants

after reflecting on their interviews. Interviews were conducted with the participants until

saturation or a reoccurrence of themes/patterns occured in the data (Strauss & Corbin,

1990). Focus was on capturing the meanings that participants brought to and obtained

from their environment.

In utilizing a grounded theory approach, this study was based on a naturalistic

paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A naturalistic paradigm adheres to the idea that

reality is constructed, holistic, and that there are multiple perspectives. The relationship

between the knower and known is interactive, inseparable, and capable of influencing

each other. The aim of inquiry is not to postulate generalizations of truth, but to develop

time-bound and context-bound statements or working hypotheses. All entities are "in a

state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from

effects" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38). Inquiry is value-bound by the researcher, the participant, and the context within which the research takes place.

This naturalistic perspective includes the following axioms: that humans are the primary data-gathering instruments; purposive sampling is preferred; meanings and interpretations of data are negotiated with human sources; a case study reporting mode is preferred over a technical/scientific mode; inductive analysis is utilized; tentative statements are made from the data to reflect multiple and different realities; special criteria are devised for trustworthiness or validity, reliability, and objectivity; and lastly, an emergent, grounded theory design is utilized to allow the data to unfold rather than assuming it is preconceived (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A way of illustrating the research design is to identify specific steps in the process based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) interpretation of naturalistic or grounded theory. It is important to note that this is a circular and ongoing process:

Natural Setting

Human Instrument

Engagement→Purposive Sampling→

Qualitative Methods of data collection (interviews, field notes)→

Inductive Analysis (Beginning immediately and ongoing)→

Grounded Theory→Emergent Design.
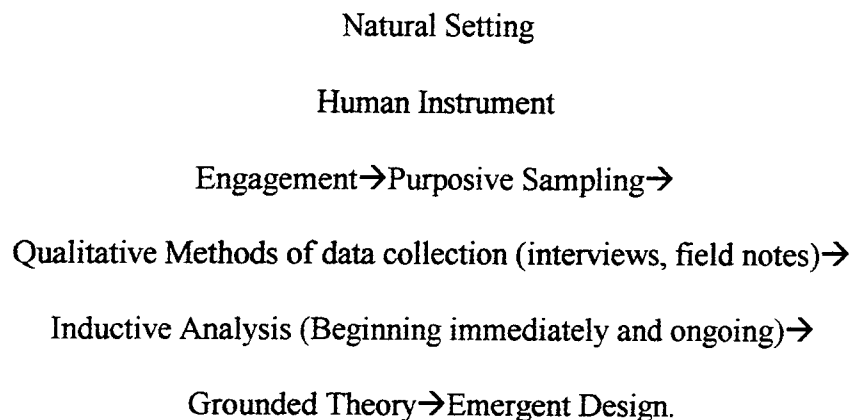
The grounded theory approach was suitable for the purpose and intention of this particular study. In utilizing this approach, the researcher did not begin with specific hypotheses or theory, but allowed theory to emerge from the data itself. Grounded theory

is inductively obtained from examination of the phenomenon itself (Strauss & Glasser, 1990). The collection of data, analyses, and theory were in a reciprocal relationship throughout the research process. As Strauss and Glasser (1990) stated " grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (p. 24). Since no literature or theory exists in studying lesbian school counselors and their experiences, a grounded study approach based on a naturalistic paradigm was the appropriate design to utilize for this study.

<u>Sample</u>

Purposeful sampling was utilized to obtain "information-rich cases" so that more depth could be obtained on the experiences of the participants (Patton, 1990). Criteria included in the study was that the individual had to identify as a lesbian, and also function in the school in a professional counseling role. The researcher recruited five participants for the study utilizing a snowball technique.

Individuals were personally contacted by the researcher by first contacting individuals who were involved in the schools and were interested in lesbian/gay issues. Initial participants also referred individuals for potential inclusion in the study (Gall, Borg, & Borg, 1996; Hickey, 1986; Patton, 1990). Four participants were recruited from the Northwest region of the United States. The sample also included one individual from the Western region of the United States.

The participants' reactions to being in this study varied. Two participants were quick to reply and appreciated the opportunity to think about the topic. One participant expressed initial reluctance, but during the first phone conversation regarding the study she expressed consent. After the initial interview, she commented on how she had never really talked about being a lesbian and a school counselor in the same context, and she appeared truly thoughtful. One participant wanted to meet at a coffee shop which gave the interview a sense of not moving into intense issues on a personal level. Yet, this participant shared experiences which were extremely insightful and personal. One participant who was very fearful of others finding out she was a lesbian and led a "closeted" life, was more than cooperative to meet and began to share information the first evening on the phone.

All names the researcher received for possible inclusion in the study were followed-up with a commitment to be a participant. No participant contacted refused to be in the study. After the initial interviews which were more formal in nature, the researcher and participant developed a relationship which was more confessional in nature and less formal. It was this context which provided an understanding of the participant's nature and philosophy in life.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A specific questionnaire was not utilized in this study due to the nature of the methodological design. Instead, the researcher developed a general interview guide with a list of questions (see Appendix A). After reviewing the literature to ensure coverage of

basic topics (Patton, 1990), the interviews began with broad questions which asked the participants to discuss how being a lesbian influenced her role and practice as a school counselor. It was essential that during the initial interview questions were broad and flexible to explore the depth of the experience; during and after analysis of the initial data, specific questions were developed to aid the researcher in identifying thematic relationships which could contribute to building theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The goal of the interviews was to create a process of in-depth reflection which contributed to understanding the meanings participants brought to the experience of being a school counselor and a lesbian (Seidman, 1990). Open-ended interviews were conducted utilizing a combination of an informal conversational interview, and a general interview approach (Patton, 1990). In using an informal conversational interview mode, the researcher was be able to "maintain maximum flexibility to be able to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting" (Patton, 1990, p. 281). For example, framing questions were available to the researcher, but she also allowed the participant to introduce or discuss related issues that might not have been included in the original framing questions. The researcher attempted to create a sense of consistency by asking questions of all the participants which were in essence similar (Patton, 1990).

Interviews were double audiotaped, and field notes were completed by the researcher during the interview process. This procedure ensured "fidelity" or the ability to reproduce the data as it becomes evident in the field. In addition, this procedure provided the researcher the opportunity to access information during the interviews, and

to record insights or personal thoughts throughout the interviews (Lincoln & Gubba, 1985).

Interviews were conducted at a time and place that the participant chose. The researcher explained why she was conducting the study and provided personal background of herself to each participant to develop a sense of disclosure and purpose. The initial interviews lasted approximately one hour to ninety minutes. Follow-up interviews occured in person or by phone and ranged in length from fifteen minutes to one hour. The follow-up interviews included member checks to enhance trustworthiness of the data in the form of providing participants with copies of their profiles and the researcher's initial inductive analyses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seidman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The number of follow-up interviews depended on the emerging data and analysis, and consisted of two to three per participant. The researcher reached a point of theoretical saturation or a re-occurrence of themes and patterns after these follow-up interviews and terminated data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

Data Analyses and Interpretation

Analyses of data utilized a constant comparative method which is most conducive to building theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher was immersed in the data allowing themes and patterns to emerge with the goal of moving from the descriptive data to higher abstractions and theory (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) delineated the constant comparative method

into four steps which was adhered to during the study: (1) compare incidents in the data which are applicable to each existing category or emerging category; (2) integrate categories and their properties so that the researcher moves from comparing incident to incident to the process of comparing incident to the properties of categories, keeping a series of memos on the process; (3) delimit theory in that saturation occurs, and the theory begins to emerge and solidify; (4) and lastly, to write the theory based on the coded data, memos, and emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This general constant comparative format utilized by the researcher consisted of reviewing the data numerous times. Data were placed on note cards, along with color coding techniques, folder indexing, and the creation of a master index list for convenience of handling the data and unitizing it with the criteria that: it be able to stand or be interpretable by itself, and that it is heuristic in the sense that it serves to move the researcher toward understanding or action which is relevant to the purpose of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The essence of the analytic process was to move from an open coding format to constructing a coding frame in order to conceptualize and build theory (Berg, 1995).

The process of analysis was ongoing throughout the study, but the following is a linear description of the procedure followed. The researcher read through the data several times making notations and comments. Profiles were generated describing the participants' experiences. As themes and patterns began to emerge from the data, a master index list was created. Each time a theme was identified it was put in a folder or on an index card. Several themes emerged through this process. Major themes centered around the concepts of: homophobia; heterosexism; identity management, development,

and disclosure; and, the role of school counselors. The researcher then moved to a higher abstraction level focusing on larger themes and patterns from the original categories which had emerged. Thus, the end result was a pattern of themes/categories based on sub-categories or sub-themes.

In conjunction to previously mentioned steps and procedures, the researcher attempted to engage in a process of "Epoche." Epoche is an on-going process of removing or attempting to become aware of preconceived assumptions, biases, viewpoints, and an overall suspension of perspectives to enable the researcher to examine the data for itself in its purest form without contamination from the researcher's reality (Patton, 1990). In addition, the researcher kept a journal of the research process which recorded thoughts and reflections as well as procedural information.

Trustworthiness and Credibility Issues

Trustworthiness is composed of four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established in this study by prolonged engagement; specifically, spending sufficient time building trust with participants, learning from them, and testing inductive analyses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). In addition, persistent observation was utilized to identify characteristics and elements which were pertinent to the emerging design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which adds to credibility. Lastly, triangulation was implemented by utilizing an analytical method and member checking was utilized to ensure credibility.

The analytic method consisted of having the participants review the various findings, profiles, narrative vignettes, and conclusions (Patton, 1990).

The researcher also searched for and conducted negative case analysis to ensure credibility (Berg, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process consisted of the following four steps: (1) hypotheses were made regarding the data; (2) the data was examined for cases or situations that did not fit the hypotheses; (3) if a negative case was found, then it was eliminated or the hypotheses was reformulated to explain the negative case; (4) all pertinent cases from the data were reviewed before making any specific conclusions. The ultimate goal was for the researcher to make the "data more credible by reducing the number of exceptional cases to zero" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 312).

Transferability was accomplished through the use of "thick description" which allows readers of this study to make judgments about the research process and conclusions about how these findings might transfer to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). "Thick description" is a difficult concept to define and various theorists describe it differently; but, in essence it is an attempt to present descriptive data in a manner that others can understand and make their own conclusions and interpretations regarding analyses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). In terms of this study, the researcher relied on descriptive summaries, narratives, and direct quotes.

Dependability was addressed by keeping track of the emerging design of the study and the research process along with reviewing the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail consisted of keeping a journal or history of the research process to aid in determining the dependability. Audits were done several times with individuals involved in the study, such as committee members;

and, individuals not involved in the study, such as professors from previous classes, who were associated with the College of Education.

Confirmability, was established by reviewing the audit trail for synthesis of data, analytic processes, and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail for this study consisted of reviewing the research process and data to ensure accountability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Basically, dependability was established by keeping track of the research study's process, and confirmability was established by being able to review the process of analyses.

Most importantly the researcher kept a reflexive journal of the study, process, and personal reflections which contributed to all four measures of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). Overall, these rigorous techniques and methods, the competence of the researcher, and consistency with the research paradigm enhanced the credibility of this study (Patton, 1990). The final goal of this study was to ensure that, "the researcher's conviction about his [sic] own theory will be hard to shake....this does not mean that his [sic] analysis is the only plausible one that could be based on his [sic] data, but only that he [sic] has high confidence in its credibility" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 225).

In summary, the following guidelines and techniques, based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, were employed to establish trustworthiness of the study:

Criterion	Activity
Credibility	-prolonged engagement -persistent observation -triangulation (analytical method and member checking) -negative case analysis

Transferability	-thick description
Dependability	-audit trail focusing on research process
Confirmability	-audit trail focusing on conclusions drawn from the data
All of the Above	-reflexive journal

Ethical and Confidentiality Considerations

The researcher applied and received approval from the Oregon State University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for this project (See Appendix B). There was no linkage of the actual data and the participant except for a file which contained the participant's name and numerical code. All linkage information, tapes, transcripts, and other materials which were of a sensitive nature were kept under lock by the researcher. Profiles/narrative vignettes and analysis were presented to the participants for confirmation of data and analysis. Through the process of member checking, participants were invited to review data analysis to ensure anonymity.

Chapter 4

Analysis: Defining, Perceiving, Experiencing a Dominant View

<u>Writing/Reporting Qualitative Inquiry</u>

In reporting the analyses and conclusions of this study's findings the researcher presents them in "first person." This is done to emphasize to the reader that these are the researcher's perceptions, and to keep continuity with the qualitative research design which emphasizes a style of ethnographic and first person prose (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The paradox of reporting and writing qualitative analysis is reflected on by Richardson (1994) who pointed out that the researcher takes "inductively accomplished research"(p. 516) and attempts to report it deductively. She pointed out "there is no single way – much less 'right' way – of staging text....it is a process of discovery" (p. 523) where "writers relate more deeply and complexly to their materials" (p. 524). Ultimately the reporting of qualitative research "has been and will continue to be changed by and through it" (Richardson, 1994, p. 524).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) along with Patton (1990), emphasized the importance of maintaining the essence of the researcher's journey in reporting analysis to add further creditability and trustworthiness of the process. Thus, the overall analysis ameliorates the researcher's journey between inductive and deductive processes.

Qualitative reporting contains three generic components: description, analysis, and interpretation (Patton, 1990; Wolcott, 1994). Wolcott (1994) noted that all three

elements need to be included but there is "no single combination [that] can be regarded as best, nor is a researcher required to include all three, although in our work it is as hard to imagine a pure analysis or interpretation as it is a pure description" (p. 49). Kirk and Miller (1986) described the qualitative process as an interplay between "invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation" (p. 60). Lather (1991) envisioned the struggle between developing one's own voice and at the same time helping the reader follow that voice, as a mutual process.

The categories developed in this analysis attempt to demonstrate my research process. Within these developed categories I include the various elements of description, analysis, and interpretation. These elements are not proportionate in each of the categories. Some categories contain a reflection of my journey back to the literature for understanding and information; other categories contain larger portions of description and summary; and there are categories where the writing within depicts new thought, adding to the generation of an emerging theory.

My analysis was ongoing throughout the study. I continued to read materials on related topics, listen to the interview tapes, read the interview transcripts, and write down ideas and questions in my research journal. It is important to note that this analysis is biased, as well as the data itself. "Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Guba, 1994, p. 12). Erickson (1986) noted that in analysis the researcher's purpose is "not proof, in a causal sense, but the demonstration of plausibility" (p. 149).

The intent of this analysis is to inform the reader of the results in a "creative and meaningful manner" or through creative synthesis. Patton (1990) called this "the bringing together of the pieces that have emerged into a total experience, showing patterns and relationships. This phase points the way for new perspectives and meanings, a new vision of the experience" (p. 410). I have also used simple abbreviations, such as "AA" and "BB" to denote the different participants in this study. The following is my analysis or creative synthesis based on my experiences and interpretations of the data. It is based on patterns/themes which emerged from the data and is presented in a framework which describes the components of my perspective.

Emergence of Themes/Categories Framework

During the first round of interviews I initially relied on the framing questions, then the interviews moved more to a conversational/dialogue format. The more relaxed and comfortable that I appeared, the more relaxed and reminiscent they were in the interviews. My preliminary analysis for categories focused on descriptive and vocational issues. Themes and patterns were more concrete rather than abstractions representing higher levels of cognition. It was a time of gaining a sense of the participant's background and personal interpretations of perceived reality.

As I finished up the second round of interviews, I was beginning to see from the new data collected, affirmation of selected categories which were emerging from the first contacts with the participants. As the patterns/themes grew from the data, I recorded them onto a master index list. After examining the completed master index list, I also

realized the categories of patterns/themes themselves created a design in and of themselves. This design centered around constructs of oppression, the effects of these constructs, and attempts to redefine the constructs. Thus, my analysis consists of two strands. One strand is composed of the patterns/themes of the data which emerged during my initial analysis. The second strand of my analysis is the design which emerged after reflecting on the first strand of the master index list.

Both strands are presented in a linear fashion for readability; but it is more realistic to envision the strands in constant motion and the various components interacting simultaneously upon each other. I have incorporated these strands into the beginnings of a theory about school counselors who are lesbians which I labeled "Power and Identity Development." This paradigm explores how an oppressive construct is developed and defined by a majority or dominant group; how it is perceived by a submissive group; how the submissive group copes under an oppressive construct; and, how one may possibly redefine or shift a construct which is oppressive, to a state of empowerment. These two concepts, oppression and empowerment, are primary to my analysis and emerging theory which is expanded in Chapter 5.

Developed Themes/Categories

This section provides an overview of the themes/categories and the overall design which emerged in analysis. There are six major themes with each of them having sub-themes. These major themes are arranged in a pattern reflecting my emerging theory which is presented in more detail in Chapter 5 (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Themes/Categories of Data

Demographics/Vocational Influences
Level of school counseling experience
Previous teaching experience
Current size/setting of school
Vocational issues/decisions
Vocational experiences & sexual identity

Being a School Counselor & a Lesbian
Qualities & role of a school counselor
Best/Worst aspects of being a school counselor
Support in and from performing duties
Involvement with high/at risk populations
Perceived strengths/weakness from being a lesbian

Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of Homosexuality
Myths, stereotypes, disbeliefs
Heteroprivilege
Heteroprejudice

Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View
Perceptions by students
Perceptions by faculty/peers
Perceptions by professionals
Perceptions by communities
Perceptions by family

Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self
Assessment of safety
High risk behaviors
Risks willing to take in exposing/outing self
Self-monitoring skills
Internal homophobia or submissive posturing
Paradox
Oppression

Redefining the Dominant View: The Redefining of Self
Social advocacy
Empowerment

The initial two themes "Demographics/Vocational Influences" and "Being a School Counselor and a Lesbian" were developed from specific questions I asked in the interview process. "Demographics/Vocational Influences" category is composed of: level of school counseling experience, current size/setting of school, vocational issues/decisions, and vocational experiences in relation to sexual identity. "Being a School Counselor and a Lesbian" category entails: qualities/role of a school counselor, best/worst aspects of being a school counselor, support in and from performing duties, involvement with high/at risk populations, and perceived strengths/weaknesses from being a lesbian.

The following four major themes which emerged from the interview data, are the components which formulate the core of my emerging theory of Power and Identity Development (see Chapter 5): Development of a Dominant View/The Construction of Homosexuality, Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View, Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View/Defining of Self, Redefining the Dominant View/The Redefining of Self. Each theme has sub-themes which develop the overall meaning of each category.

The theme "Development of a Dominant View/The Construction of Homosexuality" includes: myths, stereotypes, disbeliefs; heteroprivilege, and heteroprejudice. The theme "Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View" includes: perceptions by students, colleagues, other helping professionals, communities, and family. The theme "Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View/Defining of Self" consists of: assessment of safety, high risk behaviors, risks willing to take in exposing/outing self, self-monitoring skills, internal

homophobia or submissive posturing, paradox, and oppression. The theme "Redefining

the Dominant View/The Redefining of Self" includes social advocacy and empowerment.

The Participants

Profile AA

Participant AA worked in a rural community that she described as not being safe

to be "open" about her sexual identity. She lived in a nearby larger community which

she described as being somewhat safer but still felt great concern about others knowing

about her sexual identity. She gained great satisfaction from her role as a school

counselor, although if she had it to do all over again she might have pursued some other

career. She was not out to family or to the school community, but she felt most people

who were sensitive knew her sexual identity. She described her identity experience as a

"Don't ask, Don't tell" philosophy which also reflects the overall culture of the area. As

long as individuals did not have to deal or be confronted by her sexual identity she

believed it was okay. She felt that her sexual identity was an obstacle in some respects,

but in other respects she believed it was a resource. One of the most important things to

her was to make sure her parents or family were never confronted, embarrassed, or found

out about her sexual identity.

Profile BB

Participant BB also worked in a rural community which she depicted as not being safe to openly reveal her sexual identity. She too lived in another larger community which she described as being very accepting, for the most part. She had little to no fear in being "out." She had a sense of frustration in negotiating two very different environments in terms of acceptance of her sexual identity. She was "out" to family, friends, and a few peers at work. She had the sense that individuals at school assumed she was a lesbian, but no one discussed it. She believed her sexual identity was a great source of strength for herself and also contributed to her role of advocate for injustices overall. Her greatest frustration in life was not feeling "honest" about herself or in her interactions at work.

Profile CC

Participant CC lived and worked in an urban setting. She described the community as being accepting and supportive, for the most part, in terms of diverse sexual orientations. At work she was primarily "out" and felt confident because of contractual protection for district employees. She had experienced fear and isolation in her career before there was protection from discrimination of district employees in terms of sexual orientation. She commented that she made an effort to be "open" and would not hesitate to share her sexual identity with others. One of the most important values she held was empowering others who were gay or lesbian, and she was constantly doing this through personal interactions, staff trainings, and curriculum involvement. She was

also an advocate for women's rights and others who experienced discrimination. She felt she held a unique perspective because not only was she a lesbian working in the schools but also had a child who was part of the school system.

Profile DD

Participant DD lived and worked in a rural community. She believed it was not safe to reveal her sexual identity at work or in the community. She was "out" to a few coworkers who had made the assumption that she was a lesbian. She was constantly frustrated by not being able to be honest in her interactions with others because of her sexual identity because it would be an issue and not be safe. She did not want her sexual identity to be a focus and this created a sense of frustration and dishonesty for her. Her greatest satisfaction at work was interacting and feeling like she made a difference for children. Personally, she admitted struggling with her sexual identity in terms of self acceptance and feeling comfortable being and expressing herself.

Profile EE

Participant EE lived and worked in a urban setting where her overall sense was that it was safe and accepting to be "open" in terms of sexual identity. She described that it had not always been that way, but with contractual protection at work and changes in the district's policies it was not really an issue to be "out." She had been active in creating these anti-discrimination changes, and now saw herself as multi-focused in terms of advocacy. She described herself as still very committed to gay and lesbian

issues, but believed that the real focus of advocacy had to be on overall diversity. She was "out" with colleagues at work but believed that she could not be "out" with children or parents because it would take away from her effectiveness.

Demographics and Vocational Influences

This category describes the participants' experience and training as a school counselor as well as vocational background and experiences. It also examines the participants' perceptions in regard to how sexual identity might have influenced or impacted their career experiences.

Level of Experience and School Setting

Participants had experience as school counselors at the elementary, middle, and secondary level grade levels. Two participants were currently at the secondary level, one was at the middle school level, one was at the middle and secondary school level, and one was working K-12. Years of experience as a counselor ranged from 6 to 9 years for their current position; for total years as a school counselor, the range was 6 to 14 years. Two participants were still at the schools where they started their careers. All the participants were European American descent with ages ranging from early 30's to early 50's. In terms of teaching experience, two had no experience in the schools prior to being a counselor, one had taught for 10 years, and the other two had substitution or teaching practicum experience. The school sizes where they were currently employed as counselors ranged from 285 students to 1300 students. Three participants were in rural

settings and two were in urban settings. Two participants were the only counselors in the building or area; the size of faculty of the schools ranged from 35 to 70 participants (see Table 4.2 and Table 4.3).

Table 4.2

Participants' Experiences as a School Counselor

Participant	School Level of Current School Counseling Experience	Number of Years at Present Position	Past School Levels of School Counseling Experience	Total Years as a School Counselor	Ethnicity & Age Range of Partici-pant
AA	9-12	9	K-12	13	Euro-Am (40-45)
BB	9-12	6	None	6	Euro-Am (30-35)
CC	6-12	6	K-12 (8 yrs in 6-8)	14	Euro-Am (45-50)
DD	K-12	7	None	7	Euro-Am (35-40)
EE	6-8	7	K-5	9	Euro-Am (50-55)

Table 4.3

School Environment of Participants

Participant	Size of School	Number of Counselors	Number of Faculty	Type of School	Setting
AA	285	1	35	9-12	rural
BB	1300	4	70	9-12	rural
CC	900	3	45	alternative/ 6-12	urban
DD	250-600	1	20-30	Pre-school to 12	rural
EE	650	1	35	6-8	urban

Vocational Issues/Decisions

This sub-theme emerged from the answers to questions about the participant's vocational and background experiences. Only one individual, AA, reported making the decision to become a school counselor based on a series of unrelated events and experiences rather than a conscious and deliberate decision. All but AA was satisfied with her career decision, but she was also one of the few who did maintain a professional stance or awareness of current issues. She stated that "I don't know if I'd do it again. I would probably be an engineer or something." AA also felt her formal training as a counselor was not useful whereas the other participants believed their course work in school counseling was helpful to their professional role. Personal reasons and background experiences cited by the participants as influential in deciding to become a school counselor included: exposure to youth with problems, role models/friends, work experiences, an interest in the educational setting, previous academic experiences, and a desire to work with youth.

The participants also reported that experiencing personal conflict in their own lives was an influential factor in choosing to be a school counselor. AA and BB contributed that their struggle with sexual orientation and their family's religious values was important. As BB stated, "My family is a religious family. It was tough and confusing dealing with 'coming out' but I think it helps me be better at being a counselor and at my job."

Vocational Experiences and Sexual Identity

This sub-theme explores vocational experiences and the participants' sexual identity. None of the participants reported their sexual identity as a consideration in choosing or becoming a school counselor. BB and DD stated that their sexual orientation came up in their training program. BB came "out" in her program to her classmates as she was ending her program saying that she "talked in real vague terms" since she was really dealing with her identity for the first time. DD also was dealing with her sexuality for the first time during her training program. The issue of sexual identity came up when a professor had a discussion with her, which she viewed positively, regarding appearance. She was not out to any peers in her training program because "it was so new to me... I might feel a little more comfortable now, but back then it was so new to me. I couldn't even admit it to myself."

Being a School Counselor and a Lesbian

This category depicts how participants defined school counseling, what the participants did as counselors, the best/worst aspects of the role, and where they received support in doing their duties. It also describes their concentrated commitment to high/at risk populations, and their perceived strengths/weaknesses from being a lesbian.

Qualities and Role of a School Counselor

Participants described the qualities of a counselor as being: open, honest, understanding, trusting, nonjudgmental, able to communicate, ethical, supportive of kids, helpful in the growing/learning process of kids, supportive to families, a leader/trailblazer, a role model, an advocate, and able to overcome or resolve the experience of a difficult personal crisis. Personal crises were defined as issues around sex abuse, addiction, and spiritual/value conflicts with family of origin, but no pattern of crises were noted.

In reporting their role as a school counselor, the participants believed they did an enormous amount of work with little resources and support from the educational system. The participants described their roles as: role model, a resource/consultant/liaison, a counselor for teachers, and an advocate. They felt that their roles were not utilized to their potential in terms of providing services in key areas, and that frequently they were dealing with duties such as paperwork and logistical planning that did not require an advanced degree. BB commented that, "The nature of school counseling these days is, we're not afforded the opportunity to do a lot of counseling stuff….we've been kind of dumped on as far as more paperwork, schedule changes, you know, things that just, you don't need a masters in."

Overall the participants' duties were described as: substituting for the administration and the classroom teacher, scheduling, completing paperwork, testing, career guidance, education for parents, staff trainings, program development, group counseling, and individual counseling. As one participant put it, "A counselor has to be

like a jack of all trades." BB said, "We do a little bit of everything." The essence of this theme was that counselors were expected to be generalists and also specialists depending on what was required and expected at any given situation.

Best/Worst Aspects of Being a School Counselor

Participants also reflected on the best/worst aspects of their job. According to the participants, the best part of being a school counselor was interacting with the kids. They felt great satisfaction when kids appreciated them, utilized them as a resource, or came back for visits after leaving. Most importantly, was the sense of making a difference, or as AA described it, "When a kid comes back and says 'Look where I'm at, look what I'm doing....thanks for helping me'....you touch them and they touch you." BB described the experience of connecting with kids as the factor that "keeps me coming back for more....they're fun and curious and tragic." EE commented that she loved the kids, and was "amazed at the resilience and their capacity to cope."

The worst part of the job of school counselor was described as having too much paperwork, a lack of resources, being overworked, dealing with the political/administrative aspects of their job, parents that didn't care about their children, and children who have given up. One of the most frustrating aspects of being a school counselor was described by one participant as "the kid that isn't willing to have the problem but isn't willing to do anything to change it."

Support in and from Performing Duties

Participants described drawing personal, emotional support in performing their job from the "Best Aspects of Being a School Counselor" sub-theme e.g. seeing kids be successful and having a sense of making a difference through various actions and encounters with others. Although the two categories do appear to have some overlap, this category differs in that it includes other sources of support which were not identified in the previous category as best aspects of being a counselor. As one participant stated, "It's great when they [the students] let you know that you've done something…or they're able to turn something around to work for them."

Personal friendships, intimate relationships, close peer relationships, family relations, and advocacy groups were also indicated as sources of support for finding energy to perform school counseling duties. As one participant confided, "I would die if I didn't have outside support….there would be big burnout without my partner and a life."

Involvement with High/At Risk Populations

All of the participants reported an intense amount of commitment to and involvement with "high/at risk" populations at their schools. These populations included youth with severe behavior problems, youth with drug/alcohol issues. Participants had worked in or were working with: alternative schools, communities experiencing high levels of drug/alcohol issues, domestic violence, and poverty. Participants also

commented, with strong emotion, on their interactions, experiences, and beliefs regarding sexual minority youth.

All participants discussed the dilemma of wanting to be a role model for sexual minority youth, and their personal fear in taking on or assuming the role as a lesbian school counselor. They talked about the frustration of dealing with this dilemma. AA reported having four kids in 13 years "come out" to her. She described constantly analyzing how to approach sexual identity issues: "You know, when you're talking to those kids, you really just want to say you understand...and I do. I did say, you know I understand what you're going through, but then you just keep going....and it is very difficult." She also commented that in counseling she emphasizes the potential negative responses that sexual minority youth might encounter when "coming out" to their friends and/or parents.

BB said she had only a couple of sexual minority youth "come out" to her. She said, she keeps her "own stuff out of it and just allows them to explore...let it be their own process...and it feels good that there's at least a couple kids out there who think that there's at least one safe person on staff they can talk to and explore their sexual orientation." She also struggles with knowing that there are no visible role models or support groups for sexual minority youth: "There's no real role model as far as someone who's an out gay or lesbian who lives their life, you know, honestly and freely and does that with grace and strength" nor are there support groups. She admitted, "My own fear, gets in the way of me addressing some of those issues for the kids."

CC discussed how it felt to see sexual minority youth at gay/lesbian functions outside of school and experiencing a sense of uncertainty in dealing with the situation.

"Several lesbian girls who have been in our projects and I've bumped into at certain political functions, you know, and that's always, been fun, 'hi'... 'hi CC,' like, ah, well here we are." She also felt frustrated in wanting to feel more personally comfortable as a role model for sexual minority youth. "How unfair it is that we still, it's so uncomfortable to be a role model, you know, we've gone a long ways... but it's a little uncomfortable for people to be out and about in school." The other two participants did not report having any experiences with sexual minority youth.

From the comments regarding sexual minority youth, it appears the participants empathized with the struggle of "coming out." And, they experienced discord in negotiating their role as a school counselor and a lesbian role model in an unaccepting and fearful environment. In a sense, the emergence of youth identifying at an earlier age as gay or lesbian, appears to be creating new situations of tension for the participants.

Perceived Strengths/Weaknesses from Being a Lesbian and a School Counselor

When examining perceived differences and strengths/weaknesses in being a school counselor and a lesbian, I noticed the participants responses were full of paradoxes. Their responses were inconsistent in relation to the comments they made throughout their interviews about the impact their sexual identity had on their role as a school counselor. At one moment, they felt their sexual identity had no impact on their role; and, five minutes later they would identify some attribute related to their sexual identity.

When asked directly, AA was uncertain about the impact her lesbianism had on her role as a school counselor. "You know, I'm not sure I know how to answer because I don't know what it's like to be a straight counselor...I don't have anything to compare it to." She also commented that her sexual identity didn't hinder her from working with or relating to clients.

BB stated that she interacted less with peers and distanced herself from them because of her lesbianism. She revealed this was the first time she thought about the concept of being a school counselor and a lesbian: "This is kind of breaking new ground for me....I don't think about how the two intertwine apart from, oh God, you know, I hope the kids don't find out and parents find out. Oh God, how am I going to handle their reactions? You know, that kind of stuff."

CC was somewhat uncertain how her lesbianism impacted her role, but then believed it did have some impact: "I don't know how, I guess, I was thinking more of a feminist. How I, I don't know if it's a lesbian, being a lesbian kind of influences your, or my, you know, the politics around women." She was certain that there was a difference in being a lesbian in the sense that she believed she suffered from internal homophobia, (which I define as negative cognitions) that took away from her being or feeling integrated as a person. This lack of integration, at times, took away from being effective in her role.

DD stated that her sexual identity impacted her by making her "more open" in her role as a school counselor and "pretty understanding....so many people are trying to fit these little round pegs into these square holes." She also sensed her lesbianism distracted from communicating with people who might have perceived her sexual identity. She

also reported not really thinking about the combination of being a lesbian and a school counselor prior to the study. She believed that being a lesbian and being a school counselor were in one sense very separate concepts; on the other hand she also stated there were connections.

When politically active, EE viewed her sexual identity as having tremendous influence on her. She now saw her lesbianism "not as impacting as it once was," since she didn't define herself as "one cause oriented anymore." In terms of enhancing her effectiveness as a counselor, she was uncertain. "That would be like, flip side, how is being a heterosexual counselor enhance somebody's effectiveness....I don't think it plays a huge role for me at this point...maybe it did before....in the past I might have said that it would have made me more sensitive to issues in discrimination."

Participants identified perceived strengths from lesbianism in comparison to heterosexism as: able to see multiple perspectives, more open minded, insight because of own struggle with sexual identity, more sensitive, more empathy, more of an advocate, more awareness of women's issues, and more self-esteem/assurances/confidence from being different. Perceived weaknesses were identified as: fear of losing employment, having to be dishonest in fear of others finding out about their sexual identity, practicing self-monitoring behaviors, believing negative cognitions/internal homophobia, having the inability to develop close working relationships that have a personal component, being unable to be a role model for sexual minority youth, fear of speaking or advocating for gay/lesbian concerns, and having a basic belief that sexual identity takes emotional energy all the time: "There's always that question there."

Overall, the participants related they had distanced the two constructs of "sexual identity" and "school counselor" because of cultural/social climate surrounding the construct of "homosexuality," the participants' perceptions of the dominant culture, and prior experiences within the culture. Yet, they all identified feeling a deep-seated tension and incongruence between the two identities as they shared how the distance affected them and ultimately others.

Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of Homosexuality

This section describes the data which reflects and defines the social/cultural construct of homosexuality as perceived by the participants. It represents the messages that participants receive from their social/cultural context regarding homosexuality. "Myths, stereotypes, disbeliefs," are explored as well as "heteroprivilege" and "heteroprejudice" in an attempt to analyze the category : "Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of Homosexuality."

Some aspects related to the meaning and analysis of this category focus on the concept of constructivism. As stated earlier, humans are interactively constructing their realities and are not passive agents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each of us perceive and interpret reality in an unique manner based on our cognitive abilities and past experiences to process and interpret information. Basically, we create our constructs to negotiate reality, and strive to develop an overall consensus of reality. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated: "One person's reality will undoubtedly be another's mystical allegory, and still another's hogwash" (p. 75). At best, our constructs or "constructed

realities" are "undoubtedly incomplete or erroneous to some degree" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 84). Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized that "under this ontological position, the constructed realities ought to match the tangible entities as closely as possible, not, however, in order to create a derivative or reconstructed single reality (or fulfill the criterion of objectivity), but rather to represent the multiple constructions of participants (or fulfill the criterion of fairness)" (p. 84).

In examining the construct of "homosexuality" there are many meanings embedded in cultural/social myths, stereotypes, and disbeliefs which perpetuate two intertwined phenomena, heterosexism and homophobia – both exist on a cultural and individual level. The results of heterosexism and homophobia create an atmosphere of subtle and blatant intolerance or hatred of gay and lesbian participants. An atmosphere of prejudice, discrimination, violence, and harassment are the results of heterosexism and homophobia (Jung & Smith, 1993).

Myths, Stereotypes, Disbeliefs

This sub-category explores perceived beliefs regarding homosexual behavior and actions which are held by the dominant or majority group. These myths are also a part of the participants' belief systems and depending on the context take on various meanings in regards to homosexuality.

All the participants commented on their belief that "if one speaks or advocates for gay/lesbian rights or issues" then others will believe her to be a lesbian. Another cultural belief identified by the participants, was that all female physical education teachers are

seen as lesbians. Not only did the participants report that others believed this myth, but they also perpetuated it. As BB commented: "My undergrad is P.E., if you might guess." Another participant stated, "We have a gay, lesbian P.E. teacher of course."

One of the most popular myths that these participants reported others believed was the idea that lesbians are child molesters and out to recruit youth. The participants described that they felt the dominant group believed that lesbians in general were constantly looking for opportunities to have sexual relations with female youth, and that by in engaging in such behavior lesbians were able to "create more lesbians." This myth was offensive to the participants, and as CC commented, "We are not out to get people…recruitment." DD described how this myth was so dangerous in performing her job. "It's quite common for those kids to come up and give me a hug. It's quite common for me, when they are really hurting and something's going on to kind of touch them on the leg or shoulder, 'It's okay, you're going to do all right.' Somehow having that being misconstrued [as recruitment]."

Other myths held by the dominant group and reported by participants included: believing that gay/lesbian individuals are "abnormal, weird, demented"; if you are a lesbian, then you hate or dislike men; if you are considered to be in prime marriage age range and are not married, you must be a lesbian; lesbians do not have or want children of their own; if your mannerisms/actions are not gender appropriate, you are a lesbian; and lastly, if you are attractive, you cannot be a lesbian.

Participants reflected on not only receiving these messages from others, but felt that it was common for participants in the gay/lesbian community to perpetuate or contribute to these myths.

Heteroprivilege

Heterosexism is a subtle and covert action which assumes that heterosexual norms are or should be the "only acceptable sexual orientation," and that "heterosexism demands heterosexuality in return for first-class citizenship" (House & Miller, 1997, p. 405). "Heteroprivilege," which is a more descriptive and perhaps meaningful term than "heterosexism," is used to examine heterosexist themes that emerged from the participant interviews. "Heteroprivileges" are those privileges and rights that exclusively apply to heterosexuals, and are sanctioned by legal and moral standards of the dominant group.

Another common theme of the sub-category "heteroprivilege" was around the issue of relationships. The "relationships" theme included inability to legally sanction personal relationships through marriage, being unable to share with others the richness that their personal relationships provide, and the inability to access benefits/policies available only to those individuals able to legally acknowledge their relationship. AA shared that she would "love to be married and have kids." BB reflected, "My partner and I had a wedding ceremony a couple of years ago and I wear a wedding ring and so, oh, are you married? Yes. I mean legally I'm not, so on one end, sense I'm not lying, on the other sense it's like yea, I'm married... we own a house together, we are gonna have children together...I'm as married as anyone around here is married, but I can't share it." AA confided, "You have no family, you have no kids, you have nothing that makes you the real type of person at school. Everybody else can take a day off, if their spouse were

to get sick....if my live-in spouse is sick, I have to lie and say I'm sick. That kind of stuff just chaps me!"

Other heteroprivileges that participants expressed were related to job benefits and security, having the opportunity to grow and explore sexuality safely, gender and appearance expectations, having children, the act of taking a partner/date to a school function, and sending or receiving gifts such as flowers. Another heteroprivilege was the luxury of confronting gay/lesbian injustices or discrimination without being accused of only addressing these myths because of being a lesbian. "[If I was heterosexual] I could see myself doing more [around gay/lesbian issues in school] because there would be no question, oh she's straight, she's married, you know, she's just doing this because she thinks it's a social injustice, that there's discrimination."

Heteroprejudice

The term "homophobia" comes from Weinberg (1973) who described it as a fear, dread, or loathing of homosexuals. Since then, the term or concept has broadened to include the fear individuals have of others who are "perceived" to be gay or lesbian (House & Miller, 1997). Perhaps, a better term to use today instead of "homophobia" is "heteroprejudice." I describe heteroprejudice as actions, behaviors, and practices which display a negative or discriminatory attitude by heterosexuals toward gay/lesbian individuals or the construct of homosexuality.

Heteroprejudice is the fuel behind the category, "Myths, stereotypes, and disbeliefs." There is a synergistic relationship between the two categories which overlap;

but, my distinction is that heteroprejudice is acceptable negativity whereas "myths, stereotypes, and disbeliefs" are thoughts and cognitions based on heteroprejudice or negative/false assumptions regarding homosexuality. Heteroprejudice justifies discrimination based on a belief that heterosexual identity is superior to a homosexual identity.

One interview experience in particular captures the meaning of heteroprejudice. This participant at one time had been put in a supervisory role yet was receiving no support from a male administrator. A colleague at the school came to her:

> In fact she set me up by saying, 'You know when I was younger and I had a really, my supervisor took me aside off the record and gave me some good advice. Can I do that to you....I think it's your lifestyle that they are having trouble with.' And sarcastically, I've never had had anybody say that to me before, so I said to her sarcastically, 'Well, I tell you what I'll do. I'll put pictures of my children on my desk and I'll wear a dress more often.' And she said, 'That would be a good idea.' And my mouth dropped on the table, I thought, God she thought I was, actually thought I was serious....I just thought how terrible that was that she did that to me. She thought she was helping me, and that really sort of, it was like, be somebody else, don't be who you are.

Comments and behaviors which denote homosexuality as a deviant behavior and imply the approval of denying cultural/social/legal rights to homosexuals is heteroprejudice. In the same vein, behaviors which isolate, along with behaviors which perpetuate and accept myths are heteroprejudice. AA related an incident with a young

boy who was perceived as being gay by the principal. "The principal told me to go fix him, and I just laughed. 'He's too feminine, he's going around---, you go fix it.' And that was his statement...and I just laughed....it was quite a joke." Heteroprejudice was also reflected in the teacher's lounge. "I get really tired of jokes and slanderous things about gays." As CC stated, "That feeling of fear and insecurity about something that's not socially...we have a lot of, a long way to go." The essence of heteroprejudice is captured by BB who simply stated "As long as they don't have to be confronted with it [homosexuality....it is okay]."

Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View

Besides a cultural/social construct, there is also an individual construct of perceptions of homosexuality by the dominant view. This individual construct is categorized by perceptions relative to the participant. This category is a reflection of how the participants' perceived the dominant or majority group's perceptions around the construct of homosexuality. Participants' perceptions consist of views they receive from students, colleagues, other helping professionals, the overall community, and family.

Overall, the messages and experiences that the participants' perceived in relation to homosexuality and their own sexual identities were negative. Some positive connotations were expressed by the participants which related to them being accepted by others as "participants of diversity" and not "participants of deficit." Heteroprivilege and heteroprejudice were two factors constantly influencing the participants and their

interactions with their environments. Their environments were characterized as reflecting and feeding the constructs oppressive to being a lesbian.

Perceptions by Students

According to the participants, heterosexual students' perceptions regarding homosexuality were very negative. BB commented, "I'll walk into a classroom and I can just kind of tell, um, that they may be talking about gay sorts of things, and I...you know, just kind of blow it off." One participant recalled the experience of being a counselor during an anti-gay initiative campaign. "There were such a huge fraction of students that were wearing stop special rights or whatever [pins], and would have rallies....I would wear my little pin, and they would just accost me, how can you la...la...la."

Those participants who knew teachers brave enough to address gay/lesbian issues in their classrooms, believed student reactions to the teachers were negative. As DD stated, "I've done classroom presentations and kids will start to say something like, oh those gay people should all be shot or some real hideous type of remark."

Perceptions by Colleagues

The participants recounted their perception of faculty/peer responses and belief systems. The participants said that it would be hard for them to be "out" and "open" around their colleagues. Colleagues who were identified as being safe were characterized as having a gay/lesbian relative, or someone who took notice and spoke against overall social injustices. All of the participants identified colleagues who were

safe to be "out" to; three had revealed to at least one, and the other two had thought

about the possibility of revealing their sexual identity. The essence was it was not safe to

be "out" and ultimately the school would probably not be supportive if the participants'

sexual identity became known. "If they knew they had a gay counselor...I don't think I

would be there."

For the most part, the participants felt their colleagues' responses were negative

and unsupportive of gay/lesbian issues in general. But on an individual level, the

participants believed that their colleagues would support them if their sexual identity

ever became an issue in terms of retaining employment. They held onto the belief that

their colleagues would recognize who they were, as people, and the quality of their work.

Perceptions by Other Helping Professionals

Perceptions of "homosexuality' by other helping professionals, or professionals

outside their own school environment, varied with the participants. Three of the

participants felt attitudes were changing since there seemed to be more presentations at

professional conferences around meeting the needs of sexual minority youth. Two of the

participants had not kept up professionally and had no sense of current stances or

attitudes. There was a sense from all the participants that professionals in general needed

to be more committed to diversity, and needed to include gay and lesbian issues in the

discussion of discrimination. When one participant, CC, went to a conference session on

diversity, she noticed that homosexuality was not included and asked why. The

professional presenter, responded that "'If I had put that nobody would have come.' It was like what? You're going to say that right out loud? I said to a couple of people around me, would you come still? And they went, 'Yeah.' I was like, 'Did you hear what they said?' She didn't want to lose people from her workshop, that would push people away."

Perceptions by Communities

According to the majority of the participants, the perception of "homosexuality" in the overall community setting was primarily negative. All the participants believed that community perceptions were slowly improving, but there was still a long way to go in making significant changes and creating a sense of safety.

Participants who worked in more urban settings described them as "more open than most cities"; they described rural settings as "rednecked and not safe." Those living/working in more urban areas or districts believed that the community attitude was more "open" which made it easier. Two participants lived in not only a different community but also a more diverse community than where they worked. This made a positive difference to them.

Perceptions by Family

Participants recounted that their families' perceptions toward homosexuality were mixed. One participant said that in terms of her lesbianism, "No one in my family knows for sure. I'm sure they suspect, and think about it, and all that, but I don't want it to be

aunt is coming. How do I introduce her to my friends?" At least two participants

explained that their families knew and were supportive. Three of the participants

described family support as being a "weird situation" with some family members

knowing and others not.

Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self

The previous categories "Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of

Homosexuality" and "Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant

View" can be perceived as external representations of how a construct is developed and

maintained by the cultural/social influences. This category is the representation of the

participants' experiences of living in a culture where they are not a part of the Dominant

View. It is the internal representation of how an individual creates meanings and

constructs regarding self.

As Prilleltensky and Gonick (1994) stated, "The dynamics of oppression are

internal as well as external. External forces deprive participants or groups of the benefit

of self-determination, distributive justice, and democratic participation. Frequently,

these restrictions are internalized and operate at a psychological level as well, where the

person acts as her or his own censor" (p. 153). Thus, I view the sub-themes of this

category "Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining Self" as

being related, and I can envisioned on a continuum (see Figure 4.3). On one end of the

continuum is assessing how safe it is to reveal sexual identity. One the other end, are

ways to cope with the extremity of oppression, or the negative effects of accepting the dominant view regarding homosexuality.

Each participant was exposed to heterosexuality as the accepted, approved, and sanctioned sexual identity. Each participant was unable to conform or adapt to a heterosexual identity and sought ways to express their different sexual identity. They all chose to act on this inability to adapt or conform and instead came to terms with their homosexual identity. They all recognized in various degrees a change in the way they viewed the world as a lesbian. They related this as a constant process of giving up a dominant position, a position of safety, a position of power for a position of inferiority, a position of fear, and a position of weakness.

Identity for these participants became a process of shifting their world view from heterosexual, to accepting their homosexual status in terms of cultural/social constructs. Each explored the "homosexual" construct on an individual level by creating meaning and defining her natural sexual identity.

It is important to point out that all the participants reported their lives being satisfactory overall. They described creating existences which gave them pleasure, satisfaction, love, and a sense of feeling mostly good about themselves. And, all of the participants reported a sense of always being aware of safety issues in terms of their sexual identity; a constant struggle of how to negotiate in a world that does not value and affirm diverse sexual orientations.

Assessment of Safety

Participants reported thinking about the process of "coming out." All had made assessments in terms of what factors contribute to a sense of personal safety, and what behaviors are considered "high risk" when revealing one's sexual identity. Some of the factors used by the participants to assess for safety in revealing sexual identity to others were: having close relationships in place; an individual who had first hand knowledge or experience with gay/lesbian issues; an individual who spoke against social injustices; and most importantly was "how accepting" a person was of them. High risk situations were described as situations where actions took place which were perceived as creating an atmosphere of fear or suspicion of others in regard to homosexuality.

Each had created a personal map of boundaries in terms of what risks would be worth taking relative to "exposing" or "outing" herself. In a sense, what the participants described was a code book, always written in with pencil because each situation called for a modification or change in behavior. Thus, these participants' identities were never fixed or totally integrated because new information or experiences occurred constantly which shifted and modified previous cognitive patterns. Cognitive shifting and cognitive modification appeared to be the processes used in adapting and adopting constructs. One example of this was when BB reflected that, "If the opportunity arose in conversations and I felt like the time was right and I really wanted to share that with this person, then I would feel comfortable doing that."

High Risk Behaviors

All participants believed that being "honest" was one of the highest risks they could take. "Honesty, being honest, answering questions honestly," CC explained was the greatest risk. Whether to take this risk or not frustrated her immensely. Intertwined with this risk factor was another one, that of simply being "out" and "open" about sexual identity. This was more of a struggle for those participants who were not as "open" as others. Those who were "out" in other settings had a much easier time dealing with settings where they were assessing whether to be "out" or not.

Other "high risk" behaviors identified by the participants were: taking a same-sex date to a school function, supporting sexual minority youth, experiencing direct confrontation by others, not being married, challenging religious thoughts, being assertive, having conversations without reference to male relationships, gender expectations and interests, being "out" or associating with the gay/lesbian community.

All the participants agreed that an extremely high risk behavior in terms of identifying one's sexual identity, was that of addressing gay/lesbian injustices in the school. Injustices were described as inappropriate jokes, derogatory names, or the perpetuation of stereotypes and myths. AA related how she had to "not be too defensive, when somebody starts talking about the femmy, faggy boy at school...you just have to be careful." Or as CC shared in terms of her thoughts about other participants' beliefs: "Oh yeah, why would you defend them? You must be one of them, you know."

Risks Willing to Take in Exposing/Outing Self

All the participants thought about what risks they were willing to take in

"exposing" or "outing" themselves. The participants were willing to be dishonest in

regard to following policies and contracts which did not recognize their intimate

relationships; three had partners call them at work; three believed in addressing anything

which jeopardized or denied the value of their intimate relationships; all would address

social injustices in various degrees depending on the context; and one was constantly

"coming out," refusing to deny her sexual orientation and maintaining that "people have

a right to be who they are."

A few of the participants reported being confronted by students in terms of their

sexual identity whereby avoidance, abstractness, and distancing techniques were used.

Only one participant said that if she ever went to a new school she would be "out" to the

children and parents. "The people will know and parents will know. But I'm not going

to go back, I know that too! You know, I don't like that, the way that was, the

schizophrenic way of living....and I know it will be an issue and I know I'll have to work

through it. It's a little scary in me."

Self-Monitoring Skills

The next group of sub-themes in this category of "Participants' Experiences in

Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self" are linked to the previous sub-groups of

safety and risks. Themes from these sub-groups include descriptions of participant self-

monitoring skills, submissive posturing, and paradox. They are represented by behaviors

the participants taught themselves in order not to challenge the "Dominant View' or the majority position.

"Self-monitoring skills" have been by defined others to include those behaviors, perceived or actual, that have to be monitored or censored because they could reveal one's sexual identity (Griffin, 1992a, 1992b; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). All the participants had practiced various self-monitoring behaviors that helped with feeling safe. Some participants did little or no self-monitoring dependent on the context and the amount of perceived risk involved. For example one participant stated: "For the most part, and really where I live, I'm out to my dentist, my doctor, gas attendant, store clerk, the whatever. So in a lot of ways I'm really out except for at my job, which is the difficult one." All believed that self-monitoring skills limited them and took away from other aspects of their identity that needed nurturance.

These self-monitoring skills' labels are based on a combination of reviewing literature (Griffin, 1992a, 1992b; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) and my own interpretations and categorization. The extent to which these skills are utilized by participants demonstrates how conscious they were with their language in daily interactions. It is uncertain what skills they employed on an unconscious level.

For example in terms of, *speaking in abstractions*, one participant shared: "I had a student ask me and said, I have something to ask you, but I'm afraid you might be mad at me sort of thing...I knew that's what she wanted to ask. [I said to the student] If I don't want to tell you I won't. I'm not going to be mad. I said, you know that's none of your business. I didn't say no, I didn't say yes, I didn't feel comfortable with lying or affirming that." *Cover-ups*, or lies to cover a slip of language while engaged in

conversation is typified by DD who commented: "Things start to come out of my mouth, and then I catch them later and then I find myself back peddling to make up for the little bits or pieces of what I've said." *Avoidance,* not addressing issues or to resorting isolation, is found in the following statement: "I started off by trying not to use pronouns, and then I couldn't stand it so I stopped talking." The self-monitoring skill, *distancing,* was used by the participants not only in their language regarding gay/lesbian issues in the school setting but also by living in a different community or area from the school.

Another self-monitoring skill identified by the participants was "passing" (Griffin, 1992a, 1992b; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) which was depicted as intentionally allowing others to believe you are heterosexual. This self-monitoring skill had a negative connotation for at least two of the participants, and the others seemingly did not perceive it necessarily as negative. One of the participants said she would never allow herself to pass or deny her sexual orientation. "I will be out," and "I have no idea how they'll react, but I feel like that, you know, I need to do that." In contrast, one participant said "I've dated a few guys over the years. I've been there so that helps. A lot of people won't do that. They're like, that's just lying and I'm well, whatever. My whole life is a lie, so...and that's kind of the way it is."

Internal Homophobia or Submissive Posturing

Related to the self-monitoring skills of the previous theme is "internal homophobia." Another term for internal homophobia and perhaps a better description is

"submissive posturing." Negative beliefs are often internalized resulting in psychological

dissonance, confusion, and fear (Herek, 1994). Blumenfeld and Raymond (1993)

asserted that internal homophobia can lead to the denial of one's sexual orientation,

disdain for participants who may be more "open" or obvious, projection of prejudice onto

others, living a life of "passing" as a heterosexual, withdrawal, and even suicide in some

cases.

The participants noted that the most intense time of experiencing internal

homophobia or submissive posturing was when they were first negotiating their sexual

identity as a lesbian. "I just got so many messages that it was bad, sinful, evil, the work

of Satan. And, so I just kind of put my sexuality on the back burner for years and tried to

date men and whatnot." Another participant reflected on struggling with expressing her

affection to her partner because of the pervasive messages she had received from society.

"It really bothers me that I can't hold her hand or give her a kiss in public...even doing

that at home, but even that is difficult at times." Those participants who were, or

appeared to be more "out" and "comfortable" with their sexual identity, expressed less

"internal homophobia" or "submissive posturing."

Another example of internal homophobia or submissive posturing, related to lack

of relational affirmation by colleagues. One participant commented that she had been

with her partner for many years and no one at school had even met her partner. She

struggled with sharing and acknowledging her relationship. "That's something that I feel,

I can't quite think of the word I feel, dishonest, ashamed of myself that I don't...ashamed

that I'm ashamed and afraid. I don't think I'm ashamed, I'm afraid....Yeah, I'm

ashamed that I'm afraid. And so that's not a good feeling at all."

Another participant reflected on the struggle to be "open" and dealing with her own feelings about being a lesbian. "I'm not totally integrated....in the back of my mind you know, every once in awhile I wonder...do they really think we're all just a bunch of perverted people or something? Why don't these lesbians and gay people just shut up and leave us alone...you know, little undermining every once in awhile." Another participant simply stated, "I just feel like it's just so unacceptable, and I can't get past that...I'm still struggling with that." One individual commented, "My sexuality in so many ways just has nothing to do with what I do, any more than you know, your Vietnam vet or your, anyone else's life experiences."

All of these examples demonstrate how the participants' perceptions and constructs are influenced by the dominant view or majority position. The results of a negative environment creates an atmosphere of inner turmoil for the participants. The dominant view places blame on being a lesbian and defines lesbianism as an unacceptable construct.

Paradox

The next sub-theme of "Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self" is "Paradox." I define this theme as the amount of incongruence experienced between two similar concepts, ideals, or beliefs – a sense of separateness and yet togetherness. Examples of paradoxical processes for the participants included: participants reporting that they were not "out" to peers or family, and also saying that they were sure their families were suspicious or had the capacity to "figure it all out"; the

belief that sexual identity did not influence or impact their role in the schools, and at the same time reporting strengths/weakness of being a lesbian and a school counselor. During the study, all the participants began to recognize for the first time that a potential connection between these two identities (lesbian and school counselor) might exist.

Two participants also commented that they had never had a homophobic experience after expressing the opposite through a story or an example. All participants experienced "paradox" in the sense that they struggled with passing behaviors and at the same time talked about being or the desire to be "out." Confusion and incongruence seemed to be key components to their descriptions of being a lesbian and a school counselor.

Oppression

Prilleltensky and Gonick (1994) described oppression "as a condition where externally produced deprivation of rights and privileges leads to either internal representations of self-dejection or psychological immobility" (p. 154). Developing a sense of identity and integrating sexual orientation into that identity is an ever-challenging task for all the participants. The difficulty appears to be related to living in a cultural/social environment which does not value diverse sexual orientations. This creates a sense of continuous turmoil and also a sense of learned hopelessness that these participants struggled to shed in various degrees. Overall, the participants' experiences in living within a dominant or majority position created a sense of oppression for them. Examples of oppression included: self-monitoring skills, submissive posturing, and the specific constructs of shame, guilt, isolation, fear, misinformation, and a lack of voice.

The milieu of oppression is captured by one participant as she confided, "I think for the people that are aware...there's some fear of it. Does that make sense? And I think that, that distraction, that's sometimes hard because when I talk to participants who are aware of me being a lesbian, you can sometimes sense it in their eyes that there's just this fear, this unknowingness, or lack of understanding." She related seeing this fear as oppressive in that it was difficult to feel self-esteem and to develop relationships with others. Another participant reflected, "These people believe all the lies, it's fear, they don't know something so they are fearful and that fear has just turned into this hate and it's scary, and they believe these lies. I want them to not believe the lies anymore that people have told them all along."

The external factors institutionalizing oppression against lesbians seem to be absorbed by the participants in varying degrees. From the interviews, it seems as though there was some type of association made between external oppression and internal oppression. I cannot suggest causality in a traditional sense, but I can suggest that there appears to be a relationship.

Redefining the Dominant View: The Redefining of Self

This category depicts the participants' behaviors and thoughts which were in response to perceived injustices. The participants' actions varied in degree and were dependent on the context of the injustices.

Social Advocacy

All participants depicted actions and comments which challenged current cultural/social perceptions regarding homosexuality. Some of the actions and comments were more extreme than others, but all grew from a perceived need for change or empowerment. The participants had acknowledged to themselves they were lesbians; subsequently, they experienced a position of inferiority, fear, and weakness. There was always a sense of resiliency and tenacity along with a belief that self-empowerment is possible.

One participant related her reaction to discrimination based on sexual orientation. "Who do they think they are anyway....not everybody's the way you are and we have a right to be who we are and it's your responsibility to educate." One participant commented that when she does staff trainings and development she tells people: "You're going to get uncomfortable with the things I have to say, and just think about where you are with that, but you know, and you can keep thinking that, I can't change people. I can't tell them if they believe homosexuality is wrong, that they have to believe that it's right, what I'm saying is that you have no right to treat people with disrespect because of who they are. It doesn't matter what they are." Another individual shared that in the teacher's lounge faculty were discussing recent issues in Utah around gay/lesbian issues in the schools. She said several teachers were "ranting and raving....so I just couldn't sit there and listen to it. I just presented some other issues, you know they could have done it this way or that way. I just wish they would open their minds a little bit, be a little bit more open minded about everything."

Empowerment

Other participants played key roles in addressing and making changes in district policies and contracts which recognized domestic partnerships and benefits along with protecting employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation. In terms of educational changes or reforms, in regard to gay/lesbian issues, participants cited the following suggestions be implemented in the schools: develop policies and contracts that are not discriminatory in relation to sexual orientation; change curriculum to "debunk myths" and broaden the definitions of diversity; increase awareness of inclusive language; institute safety and protection of gay/lesbian students from harassment; add more staff trainings and professional presentations; and lastly, support educators and counselors who address gay/lesbian issues. "People are scared to death to raise the issue in the classroom... cause they're afraid that a parent might call."

Reframing or redefining the dominant view and attempting to eliminate internal oppression appears to be evident in one participant's insight:

> There's so much more freedom in just realizing that, what people are
> doing to us? We can't allow this. Much more powerful feeling than
> always apologizing for who you are, who I am, and you know, feeling
> good about who you are and feeling really good, somebody's going to like
> you and then wow, you accept me, wow how kind of you kind of thing.
> Thanks for letting me be here. It's like, who the Hell do you think you
> are?

Overall, "empowerment" was depicted by the participants as: doing, action, being honest and out, having a sense of pride and assertiveness, and experiencing continuity or self-satisfaction.

Summary of the Themes/Categories

This section contains an overall summary of final reflections and commentary on the themes/categories which emerged in my study. In review, the six major themes which emerged from the data collected are:

* Demographics/Vocational Influences
* Being a School Counselor & a Lesbian
* Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of "Homosexuality"
* Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View
* Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self
*Redefining the Dominant View: The Redefining of Self.

Demographics/Vocational Influences

There appears to be no pattern in terms of the type, size, or location of the school where the participants were employed. In terms of vocational background all of them were satisfied with their vocational choice and had gone through a deliberate thought process in choosing their vocation, except for one individual. The biggest motivation in becoming a school counselor was their desire to work with youth even though they had a variety of background experiences. Overall, this was the only factor that all the participants shared in this category.

Sexual identity was not a consideration for any of the participants in choosing to become a school counselor. The two participants who were dealing with their sexual identity during their counselor training program did not seem to be anymore integrated in terms of identity than the other participants. It does appear that counselor training programs provide an opportunity for individuals to deal with unresolved personal issues such as struggles and confusion in relation to sexual identity.

Being a School Counselor & a Lesbian

This was the first category where paradoxes began to emerge. The participants said that being a leader/trailblazer, role model, and advocate were important qualities in being a school counselor; yet, they were not able to completely act on these qualities because of fear of their sexual identities being revealed or becoming an issue for them in and out of the school.

It is amazing to think about the environmental factors that these women chose to place themselves in for a large majority of their lives. Their dedication and commitment to work with youth was not only identified as one of the best aspects in being a school counselor, but it also gave them the greatest satisfaction and energy in doing their job. This factor must provide them incredible strength to deal and cope in an oppressive and traditionally homophobic environment. They had enormous belief in the idea that they did and were capable of making a difference for youth; thus, they were willing to place themselves in a hostile and unaccepting setting.

The participants did not think about being a school counselor and a lesbian in the same context. They appeared to separate or compartmentalize these two constructs in their daily lives. It seems that the participants did not believe these two concepts could exist together or complement each other; yet to some degree, all the participants were able to identify, directly or indirectly, perceived strengths and weaknesses from being a lesbian which impacted their role as a school counselor. They all had a strong commitment and dedication to work or serve "high/at risk" populations. The participants believed dealing with their own sexual identity gave them insight and an edge in working with these populations even though they did not put school counselor and lesbian in the same context.

In terms of working with or wanting to be a role model for sexual minority youth, once again there was evidence of paradox. The participants wanted to be role models and let youth know that being a lesbian was not "weird or demented," and that being a lesbian could bring richness and a sense of overall satisfaction. Yet, the participants had difficulty and were fearful of being an open role model and an advocate for sexual minority youth. The participants felt that by discussing with youth the consequences of "coming out" they did not necessarily have to reveal their own identity. It seems that the myths, stereotypes, and disbeliefs held them back from self-disclosure along with their own internal homophobia or submissive posturing.

Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of Homosexuality

The participants reflected on how they resented, felt angry, and were hurt by the dominant view's myths, stereotypes, disbeliefs in regard to homosexuality. Yet, the

participants themselves contributed to the perpetuation of these myths. Perhaps, this perpetuation is a part of the socialization process that occurs by being raised and continuing to live in a predominantly heterosexual world.

They expressed the desire to advocate for injustices in the school setting but believed by addressing gay/lesbian issues that they were placing themselves in jeopardy. Once again there was paradox in their lives in the sense that they wanted to be role models and advocates, yet they aided in the perpetuation of heteroprivileges and heteroprejudice by being unwilling to address the myths, stereotypes, and disbeliefs.

Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View

The participants believed that it was not safe to be "out" and that ultimately the school at large would not be supportive if their sexual identity ever became an issue. In a sense it was like being an unwelcome guest; knowing if anyone ever found out the "secret" that they would be asked to leave. Yet, all the participants made a conscious choice to place themselves in such a high-risk place where they could be outcast.

Another pattern in this category was the sense that larger or urban communities seemed to be more accepting of diverse sexual orientations than small or rural communities. This may relate to larger and urban areas having more diversity overall and the possibility of participants living in urban settings being able to have a sense of anonymity.

Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self

In terms of the participants' perceptions, they recognized and dealt with, on a daily basis, the constant process of giving up a position of dominance for a position of inferiority. At the same time they reported giving up safety and acceptance for fear and rejection; they also reported feeling satisfied with their lives. This makes one wonder how they could express satisfaction when they lived with constant discrepancy. For the most part these participants could not be who they were as a total person in their work settings. This could to be related to their developed ability to compartmentalize various aspects of their lives to reduce the tension and paradox.

It seemed that those participants who were "out" in various settings had an easier time assessing and choosing to be "out" in other settings. The risks participants were willing to take or to lie about was because of their belief in "the principle." The "principle" was defined as believing that they, as lesbians, deserved the same legal rights of heterosexuals. It was in a sense a display of not buying into the accepted heterosexual constructs; yet, being fearful in addressing them. Participants were also willing to address injustices in the school setting and in the community to various degrees; but, they were not necessarily willing to be open about their sexual identity in those situations.

All the participants believed that self-monitoring skills took away from the other aspects of their identity. When I think about the amount of energy and time these behaviors took it presents some interesting questions. Certainly self-monitoring behaviors are draining and consuming in maintaining the concealment of lesbianism. The self-monitoring skills, arranged to address the matrix of "what I can say" and "what I

cannot say", seems to take more energy than being "open" about one's sexual identity. I wonder what contributes to the myth that it takes more energy to hide and reveal being a lesbian. And, I wonder what it would take for someone concealing their lesbianism to believe that at some point in their lives it may take less energy to be "open."

They all expressed intense amounts of internal homophobia or submissive posturing when first negotiating their sexual identities. And, even though the intensity of internal submissiveness seemingly lessened the longer they were "out," it never did go away. At times, it seemed so ingrained and embedded in their identities that they were incapable of recognizing it themselves. This phenomena was expressed through remarks such as "I have never experienced homophobia." They struggled against the messages of the dominant society everyday. It seems to be a process of negotiating identity whereby the individual is constantly and actively integrating their sexual identity in a hostile environment.

Redefining the Dominant View: The Redefining of Self

Despite the constant process of negotiating their sexual identity in a hostile and unwelcoming environment, all the participants maintained a resiliency and internal optimism. They all believed that change was necessary and possible. Some were more willing than others to confront their own role in addressing injustices; the degree of willingness seemed dependent on the amount of risk perceived, the individual's stage of "coming out," and the eminence of the situation. One possibility is the relationship

between internal and external strengths, and how they impact and interact with each other.

All the participants had suggestions for improvement and changes in their school settings. It is interesting to wonder what requirements are necessary for them to act on these ideas rather than just think about them. Still, questions remain. How can one develop the ability and skills to be activists and strive for change and empowerment rather than just think about it? How do the oppressive or dominant voices silence and stifle the voices of others and create a facade of concealment and shame that is seen as a better option for the moment than openness and pride? What makes an individual "buy-in" to those constructs which oppress and dominant rather than challenge them?

Summary From Participants

Participants were sent a copy of my analysis for reflection and any last comments they wanted to add. They were contacted by phone in doing this one last member check. One participant said she had "never quite thought of it in those terms with power and all that." Another participant reflected that she, "was amazed at how hard it really is to hide....I just never thought about it [being out vs. not being out] and the energy it takes....all that oppression stuff." One comment that seemed to summarize the essence of all the participants' remarks in relationship to the analysis was: "It's kind of sad to think about all of it and how hard we have to work. I'm pretty out but still it just isn't easy or over for us."

Overall, the participants found the final analysis to be consistent with their perceptions and felt the analysis ensured their anonymity. They commented that it was interesting to read about other women's experiences and appreciated being a part of the study. There was a sense that they had made a contribution toward something that was very important to them.

Related Thematic Similarities and Differences in the Literature

This section includes a brief comparison of my findings with previous related studies about lesbians which were reviewed in Chapter Two. My data supports the belief that sexual identity impacts work experiences and behaviors, and discrimination in the work environment limits the opportunities for lesbians (Driscoll, Kelley, Fassinger, 1996; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Scharchar & Gilbert, 1983). The participants in the study did believe their sexual identity provided facilitative aspects and were less conforming to gender roles, but contrary to Fassinger (1996) their sexual orientation did not seem to be a factor in choosing their career. The participants in this study did not experience a second, adolescent-like period in terms of identity development and making career decisions as Boatwright reported (1996). Similar to Scheider (1986) the results of my study did indicate that high impact factors one considers in coming "out" were related to working with children, human service work, position of power, and large settings.

Participants in this study were also concerned with job loss, fear of discrimination, and experienced little satisfaction in passing (Griffin, 1992a; Jennings, 1995; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Olson 1987; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Similar to other

studies, the results of this study reflected that coping or identity management strategies were situational (Franke & Leary, 1991; Anderson & Randlet, 1994). Hall (1986) found over ten years ago that lesbians' sexual orientation gave them a greater sense of confidence and was a source of strength; I found similar data. Yet, coping mechanisms did seem to affect self-esteem in a negative manner as Schachar and Gilbert found in 1983. Driscoll (1996) reported that 24% of the participants in her study were totally "out" and 44% were "out" to their immediate supervisor which is similar to my findings. In addition, Driscoll (1996) reported that relationships were seen as valuable in dealing with stress and contributed to self-confidence which was also reported by the participants.

Olson (1987) reported that education is a discriminatory profession which is similar to this study's findings. The participants in this study reported that lesbianism contributed to them being more sensitive to differences, more tolerant, and having more self worth which is also similar to Olson. In Olson's (1987) study only 15.6% of the participants or teachers were out to administrators where as in this study more participants were out to administrators than to teachers. Similar to Woods and Harbeck (1992) there was also indication in my study of female physical educators being stereotyped and use of particular management strategies in dealing with sexual identity.

Overall, my findings support Griffin's (1992b) summary of themes and patterns from related studies which includes job loss, personal/professional separation, fear of being found out, isolation among others. For example, three of my participants believed if their sexual identity was revealed they would lose their jobs. They separated their personal lives from their professional lives. Two of the participants lived with fear of

being found out. Three of my subjects isolated themselves from others to avoid detection. All of my participants at one time or another resented having to conceal and lie about their sexual identity and experienced discomfort in addressing anti-gay attitudes. They also did not think that sexual identity and their professional role were related which reflects the defensive/protective stance reported by Griffin (1992a). Similar to Griffin (1992a) my participants also relied heavily on their professional reputation as a safeguard if their sexual identity ever became an issue.

The biggest difference in my data from previous studies in the literature was regarding the role of counselor demanding a more intense relationship with students. In addition, in this study there was more involvement and interaction by being in a position of expert with administrators and other teachers. The overall similarities included: fear of job loss, discomfort with lying, use of concealing techniques, positive personal attributes related to sexual identity, and a better understanding of marginalization and discrimination.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Emerging Theory and Final Thoughts

The following section contains four sections. The first is the foundational

constructs of my emerging theory on power and identity development. The second

section presents the emerging theory on power and identity development. The third

section contains future research considerations. And, the final section are the final

thoughts on the study by the researcher.

Foundational Constructs of an Emergent Theory

My theory on power and identity development is influenced by and embedded in

four major schools of thought: constructivism, social advocacy stance, critical theory,

and post-modernism. The following is a brief summary of my research process and

interpretation of how these four schools of thought intertwine. Further, I present how I

envision them weaving and blending together allowing my developing theory on power

and identity development to emerge.

Constructivism and the Beginnings of the Study

As I originally started this study, my paradigm was one of understanding through

exploring and analyzing the experiences of others. A "grounded study" or "naturalistic

design" seemed to be the most appropriate research design at the time. My intention was

to add to existing constructions or theories with the belief that knowledge is created in a dialectical manner. As researcher, I saw my role as a gatherer of information and a facilitator of other perspectives or constructions.

My research criteria in doing the study was to establish a sense of credibility and authenticity in my findings. I recognized the importance of admitting and attempting to identify my own filters and biases that I brought into the study. Part of my intent in admitting bias was to limit these same bias, or in a sense attempt to create a type of qualitative objectivity in analyzing the data. My belief was that by examining these constructions or realities that new constructs could be developed or modification could be possible. I also the believed that ultimately individuals can create their own realities and identities.

After extensive research on identity development and the recently identified phenomena that the "coming out" process starts in adolescence rather than young adulthood (Herdt & Boxer, 1996), it seemed existing theories on sexual identity development lacked understanding and consideration of this new phenomena. Specifically, sexual identity development theories omitted an understanding of the "coming out" process and how this process was part of the total picture of identity development. After spending an enormous amount of time and energy on sexual identity development and identity development overall, my conclusion, from the literature, was that the primary issue around "coming out" and developing a lesbian identity was connected to having or not having a safe environment.

The literature also supports that the school environment provides a host of struggles for sexual minority youth (Herdt & Boxer, 1996; Sears, 1992). It was evident to

me that the school environment was a microcosm of our cultural/social values and beliefs. One aspect in particular that I began focusing on was being a gay or lesbian school counselor. It was then I went to the literature and found nothing specifically on being a gay or lesbian school counselor. In a sense this was the beginning of this particular study.

<center>Counselor as Social Activist</center>

During my initial inquiry and as I continued my own professional self-growth, a major transformation or cognitive shift in my thinking occurred. It was not something that happened in one swift motion but was more of a gradual increase/decrease that occurred as I added new information, had new experiences, began to let go of constructs no longer useful, and discovered new constructs.

In regard to critical theory and a social advocacy stance, Lather (1991) recounts the shift in understanding scientific inquiry and the impact of a postpositivist paradigm which creates a "constructive turmoil that allows a search for different possibilities of making sense of human life, for other ways of knowing which do justice to the... human experience" (p. 52). She asserted that this shift opened the doors for "advocacy-based research" to be recognized. She believed this way of conceptualizing encourages the search for "emancipatory knowledge" which is intended to heighten attention to "contradictions distorted or hidden by everyday understandings, and in doing so it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes" (Lather, 1991, p.52). I agree with Lather's (1991)

emphasis on the need for research that is advocacy based in search of knowledge for empowerment.

Lather (1991) continues to assert that to operationalize reflexivity in critical inquiry five criteria are necessary to consider:

1. It needs to consider the realities and needs of oppressed individuals
2. It motivates and directs the oppressed in the course of cultural transformation
3. It focuses attention on the fundamental paradoxes which aid the oppressed in understanding
4. It also provides an atmosphere that invites the oppressed to engage in "ideology critique and transformative social action" (p. 64)
5. It stimulates analysis and informed action for the researcher and participants.

I see these criteria as essential in developing a social advocacy paradigm and in conducting research.

An additional construct complementing this stance is experiencing a Ph.D. program that is based in the belief that counselors are agents of change and need to address social injustices which inhibit growth and wellness. An advocacy component which has been embedded in my training and professional experiences through the philosophy of my academic program and my school's mission statement has led me to re-evaluate the way I view the world (Osborne, Collison, House, Gray, Firth, & Mary Lou, 1998). I have been immersed into this intense learning environment for an extended amount of time with numerous new thoughts, ideas, questions, beliefs, and values. It has altered how I view lesbianism and school counseling. Interestingly, this construct has germinated and is the new frontier of a paradigm shift in the Counselor Education field.

It is important to note as we embark on this new frontier of social advocacy that when utilizing a social advocacy approach to explore and develop research epistemologies we also need to be aware of some of the dangers. The social advocacy approach tends to move the researcher into: (1) an authoritative or expert position and (2) create an oppositional milieu when dealing with injustices. Overall, there needs to be more thought and understanding in terms of creating research paradigms which consider and attempt to address these two issues.

<p style="text-align:center">Influences of Critical Theory</p>

As I began my period of intense analysis recording themes/patterns which emerged, I had several sheets of paper upon which I compiled examples for each theme/pattern. Then I attempted to organize some of the themes/patterns which were connected in some sense into a larger abstraction or pattern. This was one of my most difficult tasks because although I had organized the themes/patterns into collections or piles, I could not figure out the overall pattern.

Thus, I began reading more on qualitative research paradigms. Although, I still hold onto the naturalistic or constructivist paradigm, I also began to realize that as I sifted through the data my paradigm felt incomplete. I realized it was because I needed to examine the data and the themes from a social activist perspective, interfaced by the dynamics of critical theory. With new and more information on the research process and critical theory, the connection or pattern of the themes appeared to me.

When I sat down to analyze once again, it was within minutes, that I figured out the connection I had been searching for throughout the later part of analysis. It was then that I began to shift more to a "critical theory" perspective as a world view of qualitative research. I finally found myself merging the concepts of "constructivism/naturalistic theory" and "critical theory."

Some of the pieces of "critical theory" that I am drawn to include the concept that that the purpose of research is to examine the topic in a critical and transformational fashion with advocacy as a premiere purpose. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that "the inquirer is cast in the role of instigator and facilitator, implying that the inquirer understands a priori what transformations are needed" (p. 113). Critical theory holds that transformations of knowledge occurs "when ignorance and misapprehensions gives way to more informed insights by means of a dialectical interaction" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113).

In terms of criteria appropriate to judge rigor or quality of research, in a "critical theory" paradigm, Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated:

> The appropriate criteria are historical situatedness of the inquiry (i.e., that
>
> it takes account of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethic, and
>
> gender antecedents of the studied situation), the extent to which the
>
> inquiry acts to erode ignorance and misapprehensions, and the extent to
>
> which it provides a stimulus to action, that is, to the transformation of the
>
> existing structure (p. 114).

These three criteria can be seen as complementing the criteria of "trustworthiness," which is viewed as a component of "constructivism." It shifts more responsibility and accountability to the researcher in recognizing the potential power of knowledge.

In terms of roles, the critical theory researcher is viewed more in an authoritative mode rather than as a facilitator (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This is because the voice of the researcher is "change" oriented. The researcher directs participants to "develop greater insight into the existing state of affairs (the nature and extent of their exploitation) and are stimulated to act on it" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115).

<div align="center">Post-Modernism Influences</div>

Defining post-modernism is a complex task, in that it is a movement that is in process and open to interpretation. I am currently utilizing Lather (1991) who can be described as a post-modernist feminist to help describe what I borrow from the essence of post-modernism. She asserted that post-modernism focuses on various structures in place, especially in terms of constructing language and our histories. And through examining or through the deconstruction of structures, an individual can begin to comprehend the dynamics that the structure imposes.

The goal of post-modernism is to constantly challenge the impositions that structures place in our lives. Lather (1991) described post-modernism as being "evocative as opposed to didactic," (p. 10) and that "post-modernism demands radical reflection on our interpretive frames" (p. 13).

Lather (1991) postulated that: "While the critical theories of the various feminisms, neo-Marixisms and minority discourses have long asked questions about the way power shapes the generation and legitimization of knowledge, postmodernism foregrounds an awareness of our own structuring impulses and their relation to the social order" (p. 89). In relation to post-modernism, my beliefs and emerging theory attempt to consider how the previous "structuring impulses" function in developing the cultural/social norms. I believe this post-modernist school of thought is imperative to counselors, like myself, who view and define themselves as social advocates in that they are attempting to identify and challenge injustices.

<div style="text-align:center">Summary of Foundational Constructs</div>

Subsequently, I find myself creating a unique-in-process research paradigm adopted from the essence of the "constructive/naturalistic" paradigm, "critical theory" paradigm, and limited influences of the "post-modernist" paradigm. I have attempted to take and explain the segments which I adhere to and merge them into a personal paradigm of how I view and investigate reality. My emerging theory on power and identity development contains the quintessence of this personal paradigm.

<u>Emerging Theory on Power and Identity Development</u>

My emerging theory on power and identity development is based on four of my six categories which emerged from the data in my study. These categories are:

- Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of Homosexuality
- Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View

- Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self
- Redefining the Dominant View: The Redefining of Self.

The two categories of data that are not used directly in my emerging theory on power and identity develop are the categories of "Demographics/Vocational Influences" and "Being a School Counselor and a Lesbian." These two categories contain logistical information about the participants and initially, were "imposed" on the participants by me and do not reflect unique, emerging themes as do the other four categories.

As I struggled four categories were developed with the data. I was uncertain what these four groupings represented or how they were related. What stood out was the issue of power and how these individuals defined themselves through it. It was then the idea of a "Dominant Voice" emerged, and I began to make sense of what the themes were telling me. At this point, I named the four categories with the labels: Development of a Dominant View: The Construction of Homosexuality; Participants' Perceptions of Homosexuality by the Dominant View; Participants' Experiences in Living the Dominant View: Defining of Self; and, Redefining the Dominant View: The Redefining of Self.

Based on my data it appears these categories/themes begin to explain how an oppressive construct develops; how the construct is defined and maintained by a dominant group; how the construct is perceived and maintained by the submissive group; how the submissive group (participants in my study) deal and function under the oppressive construct; how an oppressive construct effects identity development and, explores how the oppressive construct can be shifted or redefined.

Constructivism and Power in my Emerging Theory

My emerging theory on power and identity development theory is based on two

assumptions. First, individuals create or construct their world; they bring meaning to

reality through the process of constructivism. Second, there is a synergistic relationship

between the self/individual and the culture/system.

In terms of constructivism, my theory is related to Trickett, Watts, and Birman's

(1994) position that "individuals construct their world through social exchange

processes" (p. 19) whereby "individuals are active creators and definers of their realities,

not passive respondents or victims of environmental circumstance (p. 20). It is a reality

embedded with binary systems or dualities creating an atmosphere of paradox, tension,

and power dynamics. This perspective implies that constructions such as

homosexuality/heterosexuality can be created to serve the interests of others, and these

constructions can be imposed or forced on one interest group over another. This

construction of homosexuality/heterosexuality is related to the concepts and realities of

another binary pair. These two binaries, oppression and empowerment, compose the

construct of power.

Essentially, power contains both the elements of oppression and empowerment.

Oppression is viewed as a condition of "asymmetric power relations" involving

"domination, subordination, and resistance, where the dominating people exercise their

power by restricting access to material resources and by implanting in the subordinated

people self-deprecating views about themselves" (Prilleltensku & Gonick, 1994, p. 153).

In this study, participants had to constantly negotiate the cultural construct in that they

were in a submissive role, and they were not entitled to the same privileges everyday. They struggled to move out of a position of inferiority with "varying degrees of risk" creating "varying degrees of advocacy" for themselves and gay/lesbian issues overall.

Respectively, the essence of empowerment is characterized as the analysis of the reasons for the powerlessness, identifying the systemic and cultural institutions which perpetuate the powerlessness, and acting individually and collectively to create change (Lather, 1991). Another term used by Jones (1990) is "affirmative diversity" which is the "affirmation of the fundamental value of human diversity in society, with the belief that enhancing diversity increases rather than diminishes quality" (p. 18). Thus, we need to ask why are we so fearful of diversity, and why do we believe it will take away from who we are?

Relationship between the Individual and the Culture

The second assumption in developing my emerging theory is the belief that a synergistic relationship between the self/individual and the culture/system exists. The individual obtains meaning and gives meaning to the system or cultural setting. In developing and continually negotiating identity, it appears that the participants reflect the constructs of the "Dominant View," and the "Dominant View" reflects the constructs of the participant. This phenomena is in a constant, synergistic motion. In maintaining this assumption, it is possible for individuals to challenge, influence, or change constructs.

To challenge or change the cultural/social norms, individuals have to challenge their own perceptions or interpretations. Thus, the individual view must be altered before the dominant view is changed. Basically, what we give to reality – is the reality

we receive. Empowerment is an internal and external process which supports and requires one another. Thus, it seems possible to redefine a construct from within and without.

In examining the construct homosexuality it is possible to apply the previous statements. The "Dominant View" and the "Individual," influence and impact how the construct homosexuality is created (see Figure 5.1). Individuals are in a position of challenging not only the meaning created by the Dominant View but also challenging their internal beliefs and constructs. Thus, identity is developed in relation to the perception of society's norms. Conversely, identity develops and influences the constructs which compose the Dominant View.

The Construction of Homosexuality
by the Dominant View

Perceptions of Homosexuality ⟵⟶ Participants' Experiences
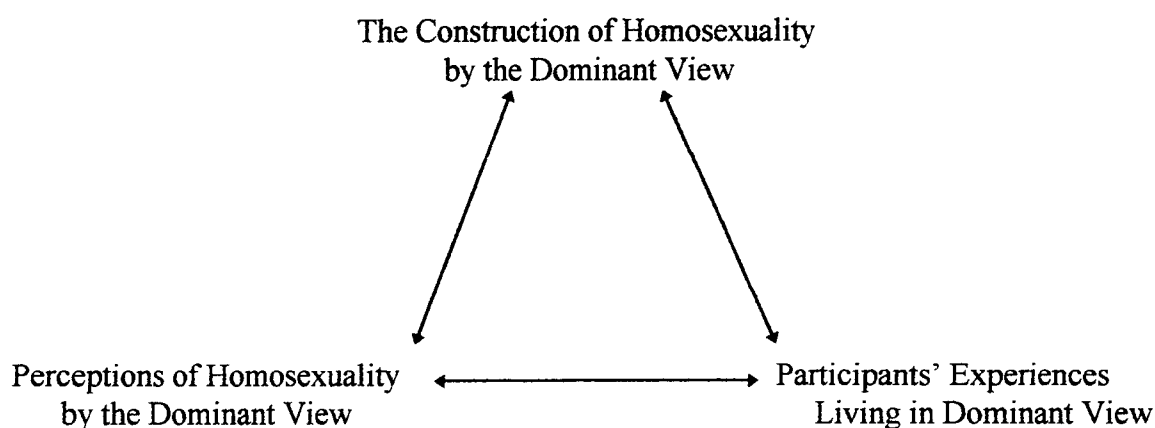by the Dominant View   Living in Dominant View

Figure 5.1. The Development of Homosexuality in terms of the Dominant View.

Future Research Considerations

In doing this study I have become aware of two critical factors to consider in future research endeavors. The first is the importance of examining the way we view and interpret our current research paradigms and their various components. Secondly, we

need to develop an epistemology of homosexuality. Until we transform our thinking, we will be unable to ask questions which have meaning for change. In doing this we need to borrow from and recognize existing paradigms of research which deal with power; then, we can construct the process of conceptualization in developing more theory and detail on the topic of being a school counselor and a lesbian.

In terms of current research paradigms and their various components researchers need to re-evaluate and interpret three key components. One, we need to redefine bias and rethink what we do with it in our studies. Two, we need to reevaluate our perspective on the role of the participant in relation to the researcher. Does collaboration or planned action between researcher and participant need to be utilized in our designs? Three, reporting our results should reflect a manner that allows the reader to bring their own meaning and interpretation to the results or lack of results. It is not the researcher's task to explain or understand everything he or she finds. There is no need for proof of something; rather, there is a desire for the presentation of issues that need to be studied in more detail. With the goal being that the results would encourage future studies to fill in more of the gaps and holes as we understand our created meanings.

Epistemology of Homosexuality

I propose that we do need to develop an epistemology of homosexuality. In doing this, we may borrow and blend from other epistemologies such as critical theory, feminism, post-modernism, and other paradigms which are wrestling with how to view and research similar issues.

For example, I believe Britzman (1997) from a post-modernist perspective asks if positionality and representation are potential concepts to move us beyond the binary and duality constructs that are so entrenched in our thoughts. "How does sexuality come to be thought of as a window into identity, as a problem of development, as a thing to fear, and as in need of the anchors of orientation, positionality, and representation?" (Britzman, 1997, p. 36). This question points out how stuck we are in our view of identity development. It seems to suggest we must deconstruct the whole paradigm of sexual identity development.

Britzman (1997) also suggests that there is paradox or irony in the way we have been examining and researching the construct of homosexuality. She says "The study of why gay rights are so difficult to achieve requires not a look into the lives of gays and lesbians but into the questions and conditions of why sexuality must be regulated, outlawed, and fought for" (p.36).

In response to Britzman (1997) I agree, as researchers, we need to develop different ways of asking questions and begin examining homosexuality in a new context. The questions that need to be posed are not regarding how one deals or copes with alternate sexual orientations. Rather we need to shift our thinking and begin exploring how power is related to the construct of sexuality, and what impact this has on developing sexual identity. In order to do this, we have to challenge our current research paradigms in creating an epistemology of homosexuality.

In creating and utilizing an epistemology of homosexuality for research, researchers need to ask the questions differently and ask different questions. Why do we create and maintain the dynamics of oppression and empowerment? What does this

binary provide us? Why does it have power? And, how do you change the meaning of the binary that has acquired a power dynamic?

The sense of "otherness" is created by the perpetuation of myths and falsehoods. Privileges and protections are selectively maintained and withheld from a group of individuals. Eventually, a definition is created with justification as to why the "other" is not worthy, and a construct of accepted negativity is entrenched. Why this happens seems to have a relationship with our need of binaries or a quest for "otherness" and "sameness." Basically, have we created a power dynamic around sexuality? As we continue to research maybe we need to ask why we are so afraid of the construct of sexuality.

Heterosexuality and homosexuality is the binary in my study; heterosexuality is the valued and sacred. Heterosexuality is the accepted sexual orientation which is guarded and justified at all costs. And, those who challenge this construct have been labeled with ugly, demeaning terms ranging from "evil" to "criminal" to "demented and sick."

This leads into another factor to consider in understanding why this power dynamic exists. One area that future researchers to explore is oppressed individuals' behavior and what influence this behavior has on identity development/negotiation of the oppressed individual. Why does the individual "buy-in" to the power construct and de-value herself in the process?

From this study, it was evident that the submissive group perceives its definition and meaning from the dominant view. "I do not accept Otherness," and I cannot be a part of "Sameness." Basically, the message is "I am not worthy because I feel different

than the rest." An internalization occurs by the submissive group who begins to "buy-in" to the construct of "Sameness." "I cannot let anyone know I am Other." Otherness becomes hidden and kept secret. "I am sinful, evil, criminal, sick, pitiful, and imposing....I cannot let others know." This internalization sustains the Dominant View which suppresses and attempts to devour Otherness. Unfortunately, the tendency of the oppressed individual is to devour herself in the process of hiding and perpetuating "Otherness."

Thus, questions for future researchers seem to be: What happens for an individual to shift out of the Dominant View and defy the oppressive construct? What makes it easier in one context to challenge the myths, stereotypes, disbeliefs than in another context? What occurs that enables an individual to "speak out" to "come out" and debunk the constructs of oppression? How can one incorporate "Sameness" into "Otherness" and vice versa? How can one transfer the energy spent in concealment into the energy of celebration?

Further, the researchers must now explore changing constructs that have a binary and power dynamic embedded in them. How do we create an environment where individuals are receptive to oppositional knowledge? How do we live in a reality without duality and synergism? What do we create instead? How can we maintain security and balance without knowing the outcomes? Why have we created the binary of heterosexuality/homosexuality and associated it with the binaries of power and fear? These are critical questions to pose and ponder as move into the next millennium.

Concluding Statement

Britzman (1997) commented in terms of post-modernist thought that, "We are still grappling with what difference difference makes and with what makes a difference....Postmodernism asks that we think a thought that is not yet" (p. 32). This is the quest we need to begin in developing applicable research paradigms in order to question that which is unforeseen at the moment. Two thoughts not yet thought that I identified from this study is first the relationship of power and sexual identity development, and to create a new epistemology of homosexuality. It appears that sexuality and sexual orientation are embedded with a power dynamic which includes oppression and empowerment. In addition to the previous thought, there is also a necessity to develop a new epistemology of homosexuality. As researchers, we need to start searching for better ways of understanding and creating knowledge. These dimensions challenge us to move beyond the known, to build upon what I found, in formulating questions and research epistemologies which will create and make meaningful change for lesbians.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Framing/Structuring Questions for Initial Interview

Introduction: The initial part of the interview contains remarks which review the purpose of the study, issues related to confidentiality and anonymity, and an opportunity for the participant to ask or clarify any information. After that, the general format is as follows:

As you know, I am interested in knowing what it is like for you to be a school counselor who is a lesbian. In this interview, I ask you questions which explore how being a lesbian influences your role and practice as a school counselor. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. How did you choose to become a school counselor? What background and experiences do you bring to your role as a school counselor?

2. Talk about when you first began to realize you were a lesbian. Was sexual orientation a consideration for you when you chose to become a school counselor?

3. Tell me about being a lesbian school counselor. Do you believe that being a lesbian influences or impacts your role as a school counselor? If yes, how?

4. How do you deal with your sexual identity in terms of disclosure at school?

5. What behaviors do you identify as being high risk in revealing or disclosing your sexual orientation? Do you react/interact differently with students, faculty, and administrators because of your sexual orientation? If yes, how does that happen?

6. In what ways does being a lesbian enhance your effectiveness as a school counselor? In what ways, if any, does being a lesbian distract from your ability to be effective as a school counselor?

7. What suggestions would you have for changes in the school or educational system that would allow you to feel more effective as a lesbian school counselor?

8. Describe your sense of security in performing your job as a school counselor.

9. What is the best part for you about being a lesbian school counselor? What is the worst part for you?

10. What would you like heterosexual school counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, community to know about you?

11. How could professional organizations representing counselors assist you as a lesbian school counselor? What comments would you like to make regarding the professional organizations representing counselors in relation to being a school counselor who is a lesbian?

12. What concerns or issues should about sexual orientation be included in counselor education programs?

13. What other comments would you like to make or add ?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

A. Title of the Research Project.

Examination of the Experiences of Lesbian School Counselors

B. Investigators.

Jennie L. Miller, M.A., N.C.C.	Dr. Lizbeth A. Gray
Ph.D. Candidate, Counselor Education	Counselor Education
Education Hall 308E	Education Hall 315 E
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Corvallis, OR 97331	Corvallis, OR 97331
541 737-5969	541 737-5972
miljenni@ucs.orst.edu	grayli@ccmail.orst.edu

C. Purpose of the Research Project.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of school

counselors who are lesbians. The study investigates how being a lesbian woman

influences the role and practices of a school counselor. Common themes and

patterns will be identified which will enhance the understanding of individuals

and their experiences of being lesbian school counselors.

D. Procedures. I have received an oral and a written explanation of this

study and I understand that as a participant in this study the following

things will happen:

1. What participants will do during the study.

I will be asked to schedule a time and place for an audiotaped interview to

be conducted by Jennie Miller. This interview will be approximately one and half

hours in length. The interview will consist of broad questions which will focus

on my experience as a school counselor and what influence being a lesbian has on

this role and practice. All follow-up interviews will be scheduled at my convenience. Jennie Miller will ask questions which confirm or add to information already obtained in previous interviews. I will be invited to review the information for accuracy and assurance of anonymity.

2. Foreseeable risks or discomforts.

The potential risks or discomforts could be the recollection of events or descriptions of situations which (were/are) emotionally painful (at the time/currently) of the experience and may lead uncomfortable or painful emotions in the present moment. Another possible risk includes being identified as a lesbian and consequentially experiencing various forms of discrimination. In accordance with the ethical codes of the American Counseling Association, the researcher as a professional counselor, will make appropriate referrals if I am in need of counseling services due to participation in this study. Strict procedures will be followed to enhance anonymity of participants and confidentiality of materials. My name will not be attached to the data.

3. Benefits to be expected from the research.

Although there is no assurance of this benefit, participating in this study may include a sense of contributing to an overall understanding of human experiences. More specifically, in articulating and sharing stories, I may come to a deeper understanding of my own experiences and gain an increased sense of empowerment and self-esteem, along with a greater appreciation for living a bicultured existence. I may also gain a sense of taking action and pride in

changing attitudes toward oppressive behaviors in regard to sexual orientation issues in our culture.

E. Confidentiality.

All information obtained from me will be kept confidential. My name will not appear with any transcripts or data, instead a numerical code will be attached. I will be able to review data and analysis to ensure my anonymity in this study. The only persons who will have access to the information in this study will be the investigators. All materials will be kept under lock during this study.

F. Compensation for injury.

If participation in this study does bring up painful emotions or creates a situation which necessitates the participant to seek counseling services, Jennie Miller will provide referrals to professionals in the area or appropriate referrals. To obtain these services, I may contact Jennie at the university (541 737-5969) or at her residence (541 752-7947). All efforts will be made to aid me in dealing with any severe emotional reactions which may occur due to participation in this study. I further understand that Oregon State University is not responsible for any compensation or medical treatment due to my participation in this study.

G. Voluntary Participation Statement

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may either refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

H. If You Have Questions

I understand that any questions I have about the research study and/or specific procedures should be directed to Jennie L. Miller, Education Hall 308E, Oregon State

University, Corvallis, OR 97331/ phone: 541 737-5969 or 541 752-7947/email:

miljenni@ucs.orst.edu; or,

Dr. Lizbeth Gray, Education Hall 315E, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR

97331/phone: 541 737-5972/email: grayli@ccmail.orst.edu. Any other questions that I

have should be directed to Mary Nunn, Sponsored Programs Officer, OSU Research

Office, (541) 737-0670.

I. **Understanding and Compliance. My signature below indicates that I have read and that I understand the procedures described above and give my informed and voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.**

_____   _____
Signature of participant (or participant's   Name of Participant
legally authorized representative)

_____
Date Signed

_____   _____
Participant's Present Address   Participant's Phone Number

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator (optional)   Date Signed