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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by James D. Doubet entitled "Attitudes of Educators/Administrators toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Students." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Education.


Roy T. DeSensi, Major Professor

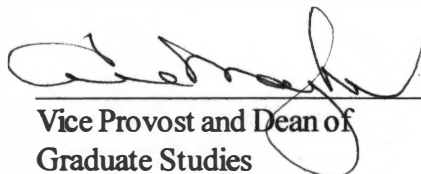
We have read this dissertation and
recommend its acceptance:







Acceptance for the Council:


Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Studies

**ATTITUDES OF EDUCATORS/ADMINISTRATORS
TOWARD LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
AND TRANSGENDERED STUDENTS**

A Dissertation Presented for the Doctor of Education Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

James D. Doubet

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to E. Wayne Ingle for his continued support and belief in my possibilities.

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ABSTRACT

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students are an at-risk population. They attend classes and move through school campuses that can be hostile. The hostility they face can originate with fellow students or teachers/administrators. Positive attitudes from their educators can be beneficial in curbing homophobia and setting the tone of school campuses.

I interviewed nine teachers/administrators who were graduate students in education. They volunteered to share information about experiences with LGBT issues before and after being employed as educators. The group consisted of one black female, one black male, four white females, and three white males. These participants were interviewed twice. The themes that appeared after the interviews were analyzed ranged from intolerance to tolerance. The participants also reported interactions with LGBT students, parents of students, and fellow educators. In the second interview the participants spoke of understanding how past events had helped form their attitudes toward LGBT students. They also mentioned their desires to treat LGBT students with equality. They concluded with concerns that reflected their homophobia.

The implications of this study are that educators can become aware of their knowledge concerning LGBT issues and their own homophobia. To effectively work with LGBT students, educators not only need reliable information regarding the issues, they also need to be aware of how their attitudes can influence -- positively or negatively -- the lives of their students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The great experiment of public education in the United States of America is the desire to educate all people. By educating all equally, the American persona is created. For many years, the metaphor “melting pot” was used to explain the phenomenon of diverse people becoming citizens of the same country. The virtues of many cultures becoming one were expressed eloquently by President Theodore Roosevelt. On September 8, 1902, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the President spoke to the Brotherhood of Locomotive firemen. He explained how our mutual understanding knitted us together and created the American brotherhood (Roosevelt, 1904). That brotherhood, however, was limited to those of European ancestry.

The evolution of American society brought us the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-1950s. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was heard by the Supreme Court. The court ruled that separate but equal, or, in other words, segregated public schools were unconstitutional. A revised catch phrase description of American society was coined. America was called pluralistic. This description seemed to work. It communicated the idea of a generally inclusive society and conveyed the thought that this society contained more than one component. In any case, there has been a shift over the past four decades in the choice of metaphors used to describe how Americans see themselves.

Following the enactment of Civil Rights legislation, public education worked as an agent of social change to break down racial barriers. Teaching materials started to change. This was reflected in additions to textbook structure. In 1965, the Dick and Jane

characters in *The Basic Reader's Curriculum Foundation Series*, published by Scott, Foresman and Company, were introduced to African-American neighbors Mike, Pam, and Penny (Kismaric, 1996). In 1966 the optimistic Coleman Report, funded by the Congress of the United States of America and the work of sociologist James S. Coleman, surveyed 645,000 pupils and 60,000 teachers in 4,000 schools. The data from this study stated that the academic achievement of African-Americans rose as the proportion of white students in a school increased. It was assumed that desegregation of public schools would improve the education of African-American youth (Vander Zanden, 1990). Popular culture vocalized the spirit of understanding, and in 1969 the Youngbloods sang, "Come on people now / Smile on your brother / Everybody get together / Got to love one another right now."

At the beginning of the 21st century, public education once again needs to initial social change, but this time the barrier to be crossed is not as visible as that of race or gender. Sexual orientation does not have a color, and it crosses all racial barriers. By choice, individuals can bury their homosexual orientations and disappear into the heterosexual crowd. Lena H. Sun, a staff writer for the *Washington Post* reported on Monday, July 20, 1998, that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are becoming "more open about their sexual orientation," and, "they are facing more direct harassment" (Sun, 1998, p. A1). The evolution of our society is making the issue of hiding sexuality less and less of an option. Students growing up in this changing scene have information readily available to aid in questioning heterosexist norms. An Internet search conducted on October 28, 1999, with the Dogpile search engines yielded 3,330 references to the descriptors "gay issues." Examples of these references were items such

as “University Gay Studies Programs,” “Gender and Sexuality Newsgroups,” and “The Tennessee Gay and Straight Political Network” which is based at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and deals with gay issues for staff and students. Students have a plethora of information at their fingertips. This information is available not only through the Internet, but through all other media forms as well. This enables the questioning of society’s long held norms, which can be problematic to teachers and administrators.

Issues regarding sexuality in the public school setting are multidimensional. They involve student, parent, teacher, and administrator interactions which bring the feelings, experiences and the views of all into play. The religious, political and other beliefs of these individuals are brought into a forum; the dynamics of which contribute to the school’s culture. “Culture refers to the social heritage of a people – learned patterns for thinking, feeling, and acting that characterize a population or society . . .” (Vander Zanden, 1990, p. 62). Culture is a man-made reality constructed of mutually understood symbols. “This symbolic mode is not only shared by a community, but conserved, elaborated upon and passed on to succeeding generations who by virtue of this transmission, continue to maintain the culture’s identity and way of life” (Bruner, 1996, p. 3). As students, parents, teachers and administrators meet and interactions ensue, will the culture that provides education aid or thwart the individuals’ realizations (Bruner, 1996)? Will a school’s culture possess the wherewithal to provide an inclusive environment whereby LGBT students are guaranteed equal educational opportunities? “Education is a major embodiment of a culture’s way of life, not just a preparation for it” (Bruner, 1996, p. 13). The increasing visibility of LGBT students and awareness of their

existence within the school's culture requires teachers and administrators to be aware of issues concerning these individuals.

When examining issues concerning LGBT students, safety is a priority (Frankfurt, 1999). All children deserve a safe learning environment. Race, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation should not factor into the degree of safety within the school's culture (Goldstein, 1999). Teachers and administrators set the precedent within the school culture, and their actions and non-actions speak louder than words. LGBT students have been an "invisible minority," and heterosexist ideas kept them in that position (Harbeck, 1995). Gay and lesbian students have traditionally denied their personhood and adopted a false persona in response to heterosexist structures.

James T. Sears in his paper "Educators, Homosexuality, and Homosexual Students: Are Personal Feelings Related to Professional Belief?" found that eight out of ten pre-service teachers harbor negative feelings toward gay and lesbian students (Sears, 1992). One-third of pre-service teachers' scores on the *Index of Homophobia* rated them as "high-grade homophobes." Sears called for further study and alluded to the need for intervention in pre-service teacher training and argued "adequate and accurate knowledge about homosexuality lessened prospective teachers' negative attitudes and feelings" (Sears, 1992, p. 54). Strong informed educational leadership could impact the needs of LGBT students. Virginia Uribe in her study "Addressing the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth" came to the conclusion that, because of self-esteem issues, gay and lesbian students were far more likely than heterosexual students to engage in self-destructive behavior. Males especially, are at high risk to involve themselves in irresponsible sexual activity (1992). Massachusetts Department of Education's Kevin

Cranston voices a very real concern: "Adolescent gay and bisexual males face a higher risk of infection with HIV than most other young people because of their behaviors and because HIV prevention programs have failed to address their unique concerns"

(Cranston, 1992, p. 247). Suicide seems to be an avenue that LGBT youth follow to rid themselves of the treatment of hate from the dominant heterosexual culture. The 1989 Department of Health and Human Services Report on Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide states that 30% of the 5,000 annual suicides are based on sexual orientation issues (1989).

The impact of leadership upon teachers and upon students can be seen through programs in effect in the states of California, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Massachusetts. These states are attempting to educate administrators, teachers, and students about the effects of heterosexist attitudes upon LGBT students. For example, within the Los Angeles Public School System of California, "Project 10," a program conceived of and directed by Dr. Virginia Uribe, has succeeded in keeping the issues of concern with LGBT students before school officials. It is encouraging to note that Uribe found through her 1992 study "that negative attitudes and stereotypes toward homosexuals and bisexuals can be altered with educational intervention" (Uribe, 1992, p. 26).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of graduate students of an education program, who are teachers and/or administrators of K-12 students toward LGBT students. Three specific research questions guide this research: a) What issues or events were involved in the creation of the participants' attitudes toward LGBT

individuals up to the time of employment as an educator? b) What issues or events were involved in the creation of the subjects' attitudes toward LGBT students after employment as an educator? c) How do the subjects understand their attitudes toward LGBT students in light of their pre-teaching experiences and experiences while employed as educators?

Definition of Terms

To avoid ambiguity, the following terms are defined. The term "heterosexist" is used to describe an individual's attitude that assumes heterosexual codes and values, since predominant, are "correct," "normal," and the status quo. "Homophobic" is a term also used to describe an individual's attitude that is characterized by an irrational fear of homosexuality. It also involves an individual's fear of either being perceived as homosexual, or actually being homosexual and experiencing attraction to one's own sex. In the early part of the 20th century, the term "melting pot" was used to name the blended culture of the United States that occurred as a result of widespread immigration. "Project 10" is a program developed and operated by Dr. Virginia Uribe in the Los Angeles Public School System. Project 10 provides a safe haven and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical base of this study is a constructivist paradigm. This paradigm has other labels applied to its basic tenant of reality since reality is socially constructed. A few of these include qualitative, symbolically interactive, phenomenological, and

naturalistic (Mertens, 1998). The constructivist paradigm can be traced back to Wilhelm Dilthey and other German philosophers who studied hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989). Hermeneutics is the study of how information is interpreted. Constructivist researchers interpret hermeneutics as a way of understanding the meaning of an event from a particular individual's standpoint (Mertens, 1998).

The constructivist point of view emphasizes that the process of research involves the values of the researcher. Those values must be understood, and procedures like bracketing interviews help the researcher to focus on his or her values and biases. A constructivist researcher knows that his or her worldview has the ability to color his or her understanding of observations. Therefore, the researcher must be keenly aware of this possibility.

To aid in understanding constructivism, the following three questions can be asked: What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be known? How can the knower go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)? Responding to these questions aids in understanding a constructivist's point of view. To focus on the first question (*i.e.* What is the nature of reality?), consider that when a teacher first meets his or her new class of students, individual realities can differ. If the students were to be interviewed after developing their first impressions of their new teacher, there could be a variety of responses to the query, "What is your new teacher like?" A constructivist would interpret this scenario as an example of how each individual builds his or her reality. "The researcher's goal is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (Mertens, p. 11, 1998).

To answer the second question (*i.e.* What is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be known?), the relationship between a researcher and the participants of a study is of primary importance. Each influences the other. Because of this, the constructivist will utilize “a more personal, interactive mode of data collection” (Mertens, p. 13, 1998). The product of the personal interaction between a researcher and his or her participants helps to focus a qualitative study.

Objectivity is replaced by conformability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Constructivists assume that data, interpretations, and outcomes are connected to the realities of the participants (Mertens, 1998). Data can be attached to the participants, and the researcher’s logic in constructing themes can be explained in the narrative. These concepts aid in obtaining knowledge and understanding, which addresses the third question (*i.e.* How can the knower go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understanding?).

Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are most often used in constructivist research (Mertens, 1998). This is done because of the assumption that reality is a construct (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The interactions between a researcher and his or her participants helps to hone the data, and the meanings of the participants’ realities are made clear by dialectical interchange (Mertens, 1998).

A constructivist understands the events that happen to an individual, how that person reacts to those events, and how he or she constructs his or her realities. This presumptive position also views an individual’s “social world as a constructed reality” (Vander Zanden, 1990, p.35). A basic assumption of constructivism is that individuals fashion knowledge by interacting with the world around them (Mertens, 1998). My goal

is to understand the complex world of everyday experience from the viewpoint of the participants involved in this study (Schwandt, 1994). As an educator I have a propensity to examine the influences that have coalesced to form the realities of the students I teach. I want to get inside of their heads and understand those realities (Spradley, 1979). I have applied these concepts to my research, and as a result of this point of view, I chose qualitative methodology as a research tool (Mertens, 1998, p. 161). This theory base leads me to “examine how the demands of a cultural system affect those who must operate within it” (Bruner, 1996, p.11).

My point of view also directed me to consider “how individual human beings construct ‘realities’ and meanings that adapt them to the system, at what personal cost, with what expected outcomes” (Bruner, 1996, p. 12): LGBT students are part of school culture. Their realities include input from that culture. Teachers and administrators can possibly set the tone of that input. Therefore, from a constructivist position I explored their attitudes toward LGBT students.

Rationale and Significance

Education’s role in the United States has been affected from its inception by the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. He felt that a “healthy, sturdy progressive free society can be built only on a foundation of popular intelligence” (Lee, 1961, p. 17).

Education has played a part in equipping citizens with the tools needed to pursue life, liberty, happiness, and membership in a “healthy, sturdy progressive free society” (Lee, 1961, p. 17). The evolution of American culture has moved from the “melting pot” metaphor toward a newer expression, perhaps that of a pluralistic culture, to express the

individual components that comprise our population. Our pluralistic culture includes individuals of different sexual orientations. These individuals also deserve equal educational opportunities.

Influenced by the ideas of people like Thomas Jefferson (Lee, 1961) and education leaders such as Horace Mann, educators have faced the challenge of providing equal educational opportunities and safe environments in which to pursue them. Mann's implication was clear:

I believe in the existence of a great, immutable principle of natural law, or natural ethics, -- a principle antecedent to all human institutions and incapable of being abrogated by any ordinances of man, -- a principle of divine origin, clearly legible in the ways of Providence as those ways are manifested in the order of nature and in the history of the race, -- which proves the *absolute right* of every human being that comes into the world to an education; and which of course proves the correlative duty of every government to see that the means of that education are provided for all (Cremin, 1965, p. 63).

The challenge at the beginning of the 21st century is to examine educational leaders' responsibilities toward LGBT students. The need of education to recognize and attend to this issue has been noted by various organizations. Of note here would be the 23-million member Educational International (E.I.). This international trade union for educators based in Brussels, Belgium, held its second World Congress in Washington, D.C., during July of 1998. E.I. resolved that "discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a violation of human rights" (Smith, 1998, p. 12). The group also suggested that they

“promote education against prejudice, discrimination and harassment, including on the grounds of sexual orientation” (Smith, 1998, p. 12). The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) belong to E.I. The Human Rights Watch, an organization which monitors violations of human rights worldwide, mirrors the E.I. conclusions in their May 2001 study titled *Hatred in the Hallways* (Bochenek & Brown, 2001). This study is naturalistic in that it “attempts to present ‘slice of life’ episodes documented through natural language and representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings are” (Guba, 1978, p. 3).

Graduate students, as future leaders in the field of education, have the potential to influence the lives of LGBT students. Positive influence from a school administrator could be efficacious in curbing homophobia and opening the understanding of school personnel to the effects of heterosexism within the school culture (Unks, 1995). Reports from the federal government such as the 1989 Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Youth Suicide to current workshops offered at the 1999 National Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network’s conference in Atlanta, Georgia, support this idea. The attitudes of these prospective educational leaders, viewed from a constructivist position are critical to the education and realities of LGBT individuals (Jonassen, 1991).

Administrators and teachers can often be found among those from whom LGBT students need to be protected. Because of their preconceived negative notions about homosexuality, educators are often little help to the struggling LGBT student. Some teachers and administrators say nothing, silently condoning the often cruel heterosexual behaviors of other students, while some actually fan the flames of intolerance through

their own hateful or biased actions and remarks. Administrators and teachers are entrusted to provide a safe environment for all students, yet LGBT students are among the last to receive the comfort offered by this basic tenant of the teaching profession.

Leadership is needed. People in the position of educational leadership are influential in the formation of school culture. The need for informed leadership is evident when factors under an administrator's influence are examined. Informed leadership can be active in affecting the attitudes of new teachers as they start their careers. A strong, informed leadership could be sensitive to the at-risk position of LGBT students. California, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Massachusetts are examples of states whose programs are providing education which aids students, teachers, and administrators in increasing their knowledge of LGBT concerns.

Graduate students of an education program who are teachers and/or administrators of K-12 students are potential education leaders. As such, their attitudes toward LGBT students are of concern. These at-risk students need an informed, supportive environment. Some researchers would argue that attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students can be affected by educational intervention. Within a school's culture, leadership is a major contributor to the foundation of that school's environment; therefore, this research project will explore the attitudes of these possible education leaders.

The following chapters will present a review of literature pertaining to LGBT issues, an explanation of the methodology used in the study, a presentation of data gathered, a discussion of the data, and an overview of the study including implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brief Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information gleaned from previously published research that deals with the study's concerns. Following a brief overview of the literature reviewed, I will present a more thorough discussion of the literature.

Inquiring into the attitudes of graduate students requires a methodology well suited to the task. Donna M. Merten's book *Research Methods in Education and Psychology* connects interview methodology with a constructivist point of view. James P. Spradley explores the history of qualitative research in light of its past connections to anthropology in *The Ethnographic Interview*. *Educational Research* by L. R. Gay is an omnibus publication that addresses quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Exploring the understanding that graduate students have of their life experiences and the meaning ascribed to those experiences is accomplished through in-depth interviewing. Irving Seidman explains this interview process in the book *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*.

The views of young gay adults concerning their high school experiences, along with the attitudes toward LGBT students by pre-service teachers is explored through the work of James T. Sears. The "invisibility" of LGBT students is examined through Virginia Uribe's Project 10. The needs of LGBT students are explored through the collaborative work of Virginia Uribe and Karen Harbeck.

Health issues of LGBT students are examined. The research of Kevin Cranston brings to focus the issues of HIV risks and the need of education for LGBT youth regarding those risks. Susan M. Blake and her colleagues researched HIV education in Massachusetts high schools and its impact on lesbian, gay and bisexual students regarding their risky sexual behaviors. Mental health issues are addressed through the research of Robert Garofalo and his look at suicide risks among LGBT students.

Bank Street College is an educational research institution located in New York City. This is the setting for the work of Virginia Casper, Harriet K. Cuffaro, Steven Schultz, Jonathan G. Silen, and Elaine Wickens. They explore LGBT issues within the college.

The concerns of social workers with LGBT issues are investigated through the work of Deana F. Morrow. The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), which shares some of the same concerns as social workers, and positions itself at the forefront of education against homophobia, shares its thoughts through its list of ten concerns.

The development of adolescent sexuality and the needs of LGBT youth are examined in the research of Irving H. Berkovits, M.D. The National Middle School Association's (NMSA) concerns in these areas are observed through the work of Norma J. Bailey and Tracy Phariss. Norma J. Bailey's work for the NMSA's 1996 annual conference is also addressed.

The Minnesota Department of Education's position concerning LGBT issues is examined, as well as the research of Gerald Unks, who reports his findings concerning

the condition of LGBT youth. After the review of Unks' work, a summary section will encapsulate the main points.

Interview Methodology

I view this study from a constructivist point of view. Because of this I am opting for data-collecting methodology that will allow an interactive mode. In Donna M. Mertens' book *Research Methods in Education and Psychology* the implications of research from a constructivist's understanding are explained, and she points to interviewing as methodology to consider (1998).

The interview process is well constructed to explore the tacit and explicit cultures of this study's participants. James P. Spradley explains this in the book *The Ethnographic Interview*. His discussion of ethnography helps me understand the goals of this study in light of the history of cultural anthropology (1979).

The structure of an interview is controlled by the point of view of the researcher and the nature of the sought-after data. In his book *Educational Research* L. R. Gay explains that the process of interviewing more than one participant with the same questions in the same order would be viewed as a standardized, open-ended interview. He states, "Such interviews are used when it is believed that the resulting comparability of responses is worth what insights may be lost as a result of inflexibility (1996, p. 224).

Irving Seidman explains his interviewing process as phenomenologically based, using open-ended questions. The goal is to have the participant reconstruct their experience within the topic under study. This is accomplished through a three-interview process. The first interview is an attempt to have the participant talk about their

experiences with the topic under study up to a point of delineation with the present. The second interview attempts to have the participants talk about their experiences with the topic under study within the present. The third interview asks the participant to reflect on meaning. Meaning involves the intellectual and emotional connections between the participant's work and life. The third interview also asks for the participants to make sense by requiring them to think about how factors from the past and present interacted to bring them to their present understanding concerning the topic under study. Seidman recommends that the interviews should be approximately 90 minutes in length, spaced about 3 days apart. He is flexible in structure and states that interviews two and three may be held consecutively. He speaks to the validity of studies using the three-interview process by affirming the role of the researcher as a positive force and concludes by explaining how validity is further enhanced through the structure of his methodology (1998).

LGBT Young Adults and Pre-service Teachers

James T. Sears, in his paper "Educators, Homosexuality, and Homosexual Students: Are Personal Feelings Related to Professional Beliefs?" interviewed Southern LGBT young adults and pre-service teachers. These interviews were an attempt to understand the views of young gay adults concerning school personnel's understandings of the students' sexual orientation. Data gathered from pre-service teachers concerned attitudes held toward homosexuality.

The thirty-six young adults were interviewed between 1986 and 1988. These were people who had recently graduated from high school. The sample of interviewees

came from different social classes, races, and genders. Eighteen of those interviewed were women. Twenty-six of the interviewees were white, and the remaining 10 were African-American. The interviews were done in 90-minute sessions. "These interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed using standard qualitative methodology" (Sears, 1992, p. 30).

Sears' interviews with gay young adults reflect the pall of silence they impose upon themselves. Why does this happen? They had picked-up an unspoken cultural rule that this area was taboo. The subject was hush-hush; you just didn't talk about it. One interviewee said that people go "bonkers" when the word *gay* is used. They felt that adults could not handle conversations about gay and lesbian concerns.

When asked about teachers, the thirty-six interviewees felt that teachers wanted no involvement. Teachers would offer no input on the subject. Teachers conveyed the "no comment" idea through their reactions. They communicated their bias through homophobic comments. The interviewees recalled teachers stopping racial or religious slur, but they seemed to ignore homophobic language overheard in the hallways or classrooms. Teacher comments that were recalled by the interviewees were negative. These negative comments ranged from conservative ideology being preached by an off-subject teacher to teachers who harassed by holding suspected or known gay students under suspicion and in a position of distrust. One interviewee recounted a principal who took every opportunity to show his dislike of suspected gay students by discipline referrals.

Pre-service teacher perceptions of gays and lesbians were gathered using two tools: *Index of Homophobia* and *Attitudes Toward Homosexuality*. The *Index of*

Homophobia is a summative category partition scale of a person's reactions toward homosexual encounters and feelings toward homosexual persons, and *Attitudes Toward Homosexuality* is a 30-item Likert-type instrument (Sears, 1992). Summative scores were computed for each tool. The scores ranged from 0 (most positive) to 100 (most negative). *Index of Homophobia* N = 252 had a mean score of 65 and a standard deviation of 19. *Attitudes Toward Homosexuality* N = 255 had a mean score of 45 and a standard deviation of 18 (Sears 1992). The results of Sears' study show that eight out of ten pre-service teachers harbor negative feelings toward lesbians and gays. One-third of these were "high-grade homophobes" with scores exceeding 75 on the index. Prospective teachers pursuing elementary education degrees were more likely to harbor homophobic feelings and express homo-negative attitudes than those planning to teach in secondary schools.

Sears' research takes the understanding of schools' cultural environments regarding homosexuality a step forward. Individuals in the young adult interview section conveyed snapshots of their realities within heterosexist school environments. The data concerning pre-service teachers, however, provide real direction for those concerned about pervasive antigay attitudes among teachers.

LGBT Invisibility/Project 10

Virginia Uribe, Ph.D. founded Project 10 at Fairfax High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. In 1994 she authored "The Silent Minority: Rethinking Our Commitment to Gay and Lesbian Youth" and "Project 10: A School-Based Outreach to Gay and Lesbian Youth." In 1992, along with Karen M. Harbeck, Ph.D.,

J.D., Uribe published “Addressing the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth: The Origins of Project 10 and School-Based Intervention.” Her views are controversial, but to the point. In the article, “The Silent Minority: Rethinking Our Commitment to Gay and Lesbian Youth,” Uribe spoke of gay and lesbian youth and their ability to be “invisible.” They have suffered in silence while understanding that they are not part of the dominant heterosexual culture. Those students who are explicit about their sexual orientation have endured years of abuse from homophobia in the school environment. The name “Project 10” came from the 1948 research by Kinsey on the percentage of homosexuals in the general population. Uribe credited the impetus for the project to an African-American gay male student named Chris who became a casualty of the Los Angeles Unified School District. He was mentally abused and physically abused by his peers, and his teachers’ complicity further complicated the matter. Chris was thrown out of his home at age 14 when his parents discovered his sexual orientation. Described by many as “sweet and nice,” he spent a year on the streets of Los Angeles before moving first to a juvenile detention home, and later to a group home for lesbian and gay adolescents. His experiences at several high schools followed the same pattern: Chris would enroll in school, and the student harassment would quickly follow when his fellow students realized how “different” he was. Any retaliation on Chris’s part landed him in an administrator’s office where he discovered that adults were as homophobic as the students, either explicitly, or by turning their heads and refusing to see what was happening to him. The administrative answer was generally the same: Transfer Chris to another school.

Project 10 got its start from an investigation into Chris's situation. Uribe began with interviews from 50 self-identified homosexual students in the Los Angeles area. She spoke with 37 males and 13 females. She also did a questionnaire study of 342 students randomly selected from the general school population. Her conclusions from the study stated that school-based homophobia is damaging. The damage is done to the self-esteem of the gay or lesbian student and "increases the likelihood of self-destructive behavior" (Uribe and Harbeck, 1992, p. 25). Self-destructive behavior, especially for adolescent males, includes unprotected and irresponsible sexual activity. According to the author's research, the average age for sexual involvement for gay males is fourteen.

Uribe's work at Fairfax High School has shown that negative attitudes and stereotypical concepts can be changed with educational intervention. The author also saw that gay and lesbian teachers can have a positive effect on heterosexual as well as homosexual students if the "teachers affirm rather than conceal their sexuality" (Uribe and Harbeck, 1992, p. 26). Her final point was that educators have a professional and ethical obligation to provide school-based assistance and quality education.

LGBT Health Issues

Dr. Uribe, in her previous article about Project 10, raised the health issue of HIV infection among adolescent gay and bisexual males. This population is at-risk because of their position in society. Kevin Cranston also spoke to this issue in his article "HIV Education for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth: Personal Risk, Personal Power, and the Community of Conscience." Cranston stated that "current health education efforts should be augmented by broader self- and group-empowerment training that would develop self-

esteem, social skills support networks, and access to risk reduction materials. An integrated system of care involving school-based programs has the advantage of ready access to and by the greatest number of sexual minority youth” (1992, p.257). For school-based programs to work, the personnel who work within those programs must be qualified and capable to deal with the issues. The individuals in charge must be sensitive to and non-judgmental of the gay and lesbian adolescents in their charge. A problem area is the “tendency of traditional school governance models to be invested in a power-over relationship, such as, administration to faculty and faculty to students” (Cranston, 1992, p. 257). Uribe’s Project 10 has found success with a power-sharing structure. This type of structure works because the adolescents feel that they will be listened to, and not lumped into some stereotypical category.

In the May 1999 *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* published by the American Medical Association, a group of five researchers headed by Robert Garofalo, M.D., examined whether sexual orientation is an independent risk factor for reported suicide attempts. The researchers gathered data from the Massachusetts Center for Disease Control and Prevention of Youth Suicide Risk Behavior 1995 survey. Out of the 4,167 responses, 3,365, or 81 %, of the interviewees responded to the suicide attempt and sexual orientation questions. The researchers concluded that “Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or not sure youth report a significantly increased frequency of suicide attempts. Sexual orientation had an independent association with suicide attempts for males, while for females the association of sexual orientation with suicidality may be mediated by drug abuse and violence/victimization behaviors” (Garofalo, 1999,p.487). The researchers concluded, “In support of prior anecdotal and nonrepresentative data, this population-

based study identifies GLBN sexual orientation as an important independent predictor of suicide attempts among adolescents” (Garofalo, 1999, p. 492).

“In 1993 the Massachusetts State Board of Education adopted 4 recommendations of the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth to improve the school environment for GLB students” (Blake, Ledskey, Lehman, Goodenow, Sawyer and Hack, 2001, p. 940). The authors cited above commenced research in 1995 to examine risky sexual behaviors among gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescents. The authors explored the possibility of affecting the occurrence of risky sexual behavior by providing gay- and lesbian-sensitive HIV instruction in schools. The authors chose a sample of 63 high schools from Massachusetts. 5,370 students and 179 HIV prevention teachers responded by completing surveys on risky sexual behaviors. The teachers answered three questions about meeting the needs of GLB students. The teachers’ scores were weighted to reflect the proportion of students to whom they provided HIV education. Statistical analysis was done to explain the effects of HIV instruction upon risky sexual behavior of GLB youth. GLB youth reported more substance use, high-risk sexual behaviors, suicidal thoughts or attempts and personal safety issues than did heterosexual youths. The sexually active GLB youths reported more lifetime and recent sexual partners than did the heterosexual. More GLB youth reported alcohol use before recent sexual activity and a history of pregnancy. GLB youth in schools with gay-sensitive instruction reported fewer sexual partners, less recent sexual activity, and less substance use before recent sexual activity than did GLB youth without gay-sensitive HIV instruction (2001, p. 940). The authors conclude that GLB youth show increased levels of risky sexual behavior. Those who

receive gay-sensitive HIV instruction demonstrated the potential benefits of reduced risky sexual behaviors.

LGBT Issues and Bank Street College

Education is a process of opening – the opening of understanding, the opening of vision, the opening of empathy. As role models, educators can manifest these concepts. Bank Street College of Education in New York City has been on the forefront of this idea since 1916 when it was called The Bureau of Educational Experiments. This institution was founded by Lucy Sprague Mitchell as a mechanism to affect social change and to lead to a better understanding of children.

The article “Toward a Most Thorough Understanding of the World: Sexual Orientation and Early Childhood Education” was authored by Virginia Casper, Harriet K. Cuffaro, Steven Schultz, Jonathan G. Silin, and Elaine Wickens, all of whom teach at the Bank Street College of Education. Their research was prodded by a former student, herself a teacher, returning for advice. She was looking for information on dealing with a student who came from a lesbian household. Her question started the proverbial ball rolling. The questions that manifested themselves were asked of teachers and administrators and showed a general lack of knowledge concerning gay and lesbian issues. As their research continued, understandings were being affected. For the first time, the lives of gay and lesbian households were being made visible. They were sought-out, and members were asked for help in understanding the unique needs of the children coming from such backgrounds. Once those doors were opened, the issues of the sexual orientations of students and teacher-responsibility came to the forefront. Old

concepts were questioned. "Words such as 'normal' are a reflection of many professionals' traditional reliance on the literature of child development, and their normative language is embedded in many accepted standards of practice. In recent years, however, this reliance has come increasingly into question along with its implicit beliefs in normal development" (Casper, Cuffaro, Schultz, Silin, Wickens, 1996, p. 277).

The Bank Street research also explored teacher preconceptions and explored why teachers possessed the cultural encoding that they did. "Teachers and parents want to protect children from knowledge of the social world that they themselves find discomfoting" (Casper, Cuffaro, Schultz, Silin, Wickens, 1996, p. 290). Heterosexual teachers had to overcome their biases and lack of knowledge.

Bank Street researchers found that they had to confront their own homophobia, and homosexual teachers who wished to come out had to face years of baggage that affected how they viewed themselves, and, consequently, others (Casper, Cuffaro, Schultz, Silin, Wickens, 1996).

Educators are doorkeepers. Their ability to open doors depends upon their understanding of the locking systems employed by cultural mores. Teachers who are unaware of student and caregiver diversity are selectively excluding the benefits of open door thinking and freedom from a minority group. That minority group consists of LGBT students.

In "Breaking the Silences: Lesbian and Gay Parents and the Schools," Virginia Casper, Steven Schultz, and Elaine Wickens of the Bank Street College of Education in New York City speak of their findings and propose a method to help educators in their doorkeeping duties. They are predominantly speaking to the issue of communication

between teachers and gay/lesbian caregivers, but the underlying thinking applies to educator interaction with gay and lesbian students as well. Because of their positions, teachers have to possess an understanding of human diversity.

Homophobia and heterosexism are two primary forces that have to be examined by educators. They are controlling factors that have to be understood if they are to be overcome. "Heterosexism is responsible for the assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless proven otherwise" (Casper, Schultz, and Wickens, 1992, p. 212).

Homophobia stems from people viewing individuals only in terms of their sexuality rather than as total persons. If the individual's sexuality is different from his or her own, then this diversity can become problematic. Once again, the educators, because of their positions, must grapple with these issues. Their reactions and acceptance will allow them to open doors.

Schools, teachers, and administrators represent dominant cultural values. The issues of diversity may not be understood as a concern when it comes to interaction between that dominant heterosexual group and the gay and lesbian minority who are sensitive to rejection. Teachers have to consider how their understanding or rejection affects individuals and families in the case of gay- or lesbian-headed households. There are ramifications in the areas of mental and physical health.

Social Workers and LGBT Issues

Social workers deal with problematic social situations. Deana F. Morrow in "Social Work with Gay and Lesbian Adolescents" addressed the issues of gay and lesbian students. She discussed how this group was at risk trying to mature in a heterosexist and

homophobic society. She also pointed out that fear was the force that controlled professionals who spoke to adolescents on the issues of sexual orientation because they were afraid that helpful input would proselytize young people. She condemned this as an exemplification of societal homophobia.

“There is no evidence that one person can be converted from one sexuality to another” (Morrow, 1993, p. 655). Sexual orientation shows its beginning at an early age. Professional social workers and educators need to be aware of these developmental ideas. According to Erikson, identity formation is the most important developmental task of adolescence. How these young people are socialized during that process is critical. Identity formation can be a painful process, but when you do not belong to the dominant cultural group, the pressures can seem insurmountable.

Morrow’s advice to the education world is one of tolerance and acceptance. Teachers understand peer pressure, but Morrow stresses the different directions this pressure takes when one of the descriptors is sexuality. For too many LGBT adolescents the effects of peer pressure create isolating and stressful school experiences.

Morrow questions the wisdom of identifying gay and lesbian students as a problematic population because of truancy and dropping out of schools. Her point is that it should be understood as a coping method. She challenges school authorities to handle the problems of heterosexism and homophobia so that these students have a safe learning environment.

“Educational institutions in general must move toward de-stigmatizing homosexuality, not only in regard to students, but in regard to teachers and staff as well”

(Morrow, 1993, p. 658). Schools should provide role models for oppressed groups. Schools should provide appropriate information to aid in positive identity formation.

GLSEN and Homophobia

The position of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) concerning homophobia in the schools, is typified in the article “To Help End Homophobia in Your School.” Ten points elucidate their stance:

- Schools should communicate non-discrimination in an effort to guarantee equality.
- Schools should create a safe environment where all members of the institution can feel comfortable.
- Personal acquaintance and interaction with gay people will provide role models and help correct misconceptions.
- By providing support for the students, an atmosphere can be fostered where peer support can be formed.
- Faculty and staff training are crucial. School employees need to know how to be sensitive to gay and lesbian issues.
- The curriculum should include gay and lesbian information in every subject area. Scores of gay and lesbian scholars, artists, scientists, and writers have made positive contributions to our society, and children need to know this.
- Appropriate health care education is crucial as we approach the 21st century. Sex education should reflect an enlightened point of view.

- Just as you would expect a school library to have racially diverse materials, gay and lesbian library and media holdings should be available.
- Extracurricular activities should mirror the diversity of the school community. This could include broadening entertainment programs.
- Heterosexuality should not be assumed. Inclusiveness prevents students and staff from feeling “invisible.” Examples of this insensitivity could range from encouraging students to find opposite-sex dates for school functions to inviting teachers to bring their “spouses” rather than “friends” to faculty gatherings (GLSEN, 1999, p. 2).

These ten thought provoking guidelines from the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network provide an armature on which to build the process of removing homophobia from schools.

Development of Sexuality in Adolescents

In the article “Healthy Development of Sexuality in Adolescents: The School’s Contribution,” Irving H. Berkovitz, M.D., discusses the development of an individual’s sexuality. He lists a series of tasks that an adolescent must accomplish. First is the task of consolidating sexual identity. This explains an acceptance of physical sexuality. The second task is the development of social skills. Here he is concerned with the adolescent being able to approach and interact with other human beings. Third, the adolescent must learn to reduce self-centeredness in order to empathize and respect others.

The contribution of school in the sexual-social development of the adolescent is significant, and the school’s input is different with each stage of development. The gay

and lesbian teenager has special needs. Berkovitz points out that as individuals pass through the school system and move through developmental stages, the needs at each stage are different. The early teenage years are a state of flux because “they may not be fully aware of and committed to a specific sexual inclination” (Berkovitz, 1985, p. 44).

As they start to understand how their homoerotic fantasies and same-sex attraction puts them at odds with the mainstream culture, they have to process guilt, fear, and uncertainty. The pain from this process can lead to feelings of isolation and possible dropping out of school. If the adolescent’s family structure is disrupted by exposure of his or her homosexuality, then the growth of self-understanding can become even more traumatic. “Accepting and non-judgmental school personnel can intervene to ease the problem” (Berkovitz, 1985, p. 44).

NMSA and LGBT Issues

In Norma J. Bailey and Tracy Phariss’s succinct article, “Gay Students in Middle School,” the authors report on the National Middle School Association’s resolution in regard to gay and lesbian students (1996). In 1993 the NMSA resolved to encourage middle schools to look at current information and examine school policies concerning gay and lesbian issues. The first reason they gave for suggesting this was the fact that the maturation of young folk is happening earlier than it did in past generations.

Current research is showing that the difficulty of adolescents as they grow sexually mature is increasingly becoming a middle school issue. Gay male adolescents report becoming aware of feeling “different” between the ages of five and seven; they also report that at that age they did not connect it to sexuality. Thirteen is the median age

that LGBT youth become aware that their feelings of difference are linked to same-sex orientation (Mitchell, 1999).

The reasons why educators are reticent to approach this area is the same as have been found in other studies: personal bias, lack of information, and a fear of promoting homosexuality. Bailey and Phariss conclude by stating “the National Middle School Association is not promoting homosexuality. It is simply stating that if the middle school’s mission is to meet the needs of all young adolescents, then the needs of sexual minority youth must be met” (1996, p. 49). It is not encouraging to see the NMSA make statements about improving the condition of these students and building their middle school survival rate, yet still end with such a disclaimer.

“An Issue We Can’t Ignore: Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues for Middle Level Education” is a compendium of facts compiled by Norma J. Bailey from Central Michigan University that were made available to educators at the 1996 Annual Conference of the National Middle School Association (1996). In the general information section she quotes Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin’s study reporting that ten percent of the population is homosexual. The dates when the APA eliminated homosexuality as a mental disorder and when the American Psychiatric Association eliminated homosexuality as a category of mental disorder are listed. Bailey continues with information concerning LGBT youth. Her source for the following data is *Gay and Lesbian Youth* edited by Gilbert Herd, Ph.D. She explains that LGBT youth are at risk. They are at risk physically and mentally. Her reasoning is that LGBT individuals face bias generated by our heterosexist society. This bias stems from the assumption of the heterosexuality of the individual. LGBT youth as non-heterosexuals face being

stigmatized by what society at that moment thinks a non-heterosexual is, what they act like, and what they suffered to produce their condition. LGBT youth in reaction to this bias manifest behaviors that place them at risk.

In their article "Breaking Through the Wall of Silence" Bailey & Phariss report that feeling the pressure of heterosexual society, LGBT youth may attempt to engage in increased heterosexual involvements to disprove their homosexuality. This leads to the possibility of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, or, in the case of young lesbians, pregnancy. Other physical conditions are related to substance abuse. LGBT youth are three times more likely to be substance abusers. Fifty-eight percent of adolescent gay males studied suffered from substance abuse disorder (1996).

The mental health issues of LGBT youth are generated from difficulties in reconciling with heterosexist understanding. LGBT youth are three times more likely to attempt suicide. This is the leading cause of death among LGBT youth. Self-mutilation, or laceration, is also reported. Problems within families create an environment where LGBT youth are often rendered homeless. It is estimated that 20 percent of homeless youth are LGBT (Bailey & Phariss, 1996). These individuals are socially isolated, not only from their families, but within their schools' cultures. LGBT youth are subject to verbal and physical abuse from fellow students. Teachers, counselors, and administrators often do not involve themselves to aid the situation (Bailey & Phariss, 1996). This is an outcome of their inadequate understanding of LGBT individuals and their issues.

Minnesota Department of Education and LGBT Issues

The state of Minnesota is in the forefront with its legislation designed for protecting the civil rights of all its citizens. Minnesota statute 363.12 states, “It is the public policy of this state to secure for persons in this state, freedom from discrimination: in employment, housing, public accommodations, public services and education . . . because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age” (Minnesota Department of Education, 1994, p. 5).

“Alone No More: Developing a School Support for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth” is a report prepared by the Minnesota Department of Education and recommended as a resource for teachers, school boards, school administrators, and student service personnel. This booklet is an introduction – a cultural primer – that opens the door and guides the understanding of individuals working in a public school setting to the existence of gay and lesbian youth and issues that concern them. What follows is a synopsis of that booklet:

“Alone No More” approaches the needs of LGBT youth by recommending that educators develop awareness of what it means to be non-heterosexual and issues surrounding LGBT individuals in a heterosexist culture. Educators should stay current with research regarding human sexuality. They should also work to understand their own sexuality and how their culture and life experience have interacted to create their current point of view. It is important to note here how vital it is for educators to understand the

far-reaching implications of the effects of homophobia and heterosexism or the ability of educators to equally and fairly interact with students in their charge.

Recognizing this is not an easy issue for individuals, "Alone No More" advises a slow gradual movement of educators toward a more enlightened view of human sexuality. First, educators are urged to find other individuals who are attempting to broaden their understanding of human sexual variation within the school community. It is also advised to understand that if someone is a proponent of open-mindedness in this area, some individual may question the advocate's sexuality. A response should be prepared that would be informative, not defensive. As time is spent enlarging one's knowledge, a natural outcome is the questioning of word usage. This could be a reflection on one's own word usage or the usage of others. "Alone No More" also recommends starting a literature collection that can be shared with other educators and age-appropriate materials for students. The community at large should not be overlooked. There are those individuals within that community who care and will be supportive and sensitive to the needs of LGBT youth.

The state of Minnesota's advice to educators is to become an advocate of equal treatment of the LGBT youth and to become an advocate of equal education for all. Possible suggestions range from wearing a button that promotes awareness of sexual orientation issues and heterosexism to stopping heterosexist or homophobic comments. An aware educator can argue for inclusion within the school culture for LGBT students. They can challenge misinformation concerning sexual orientation and be prepared for questions when they happen. Aware educators can be agents of change within their school and system. The state of Minnesota has made quite a statement with its work in

this area. It is encouraging to see these ideas in print. The synopsis above is a useful guideline in staff development training on gay and lesbian issues. The challenge would be to develop a methodology to adapt Minnesota's ideas to local cultures.

LGBT Youth and School

America's conscience has grown to the point where most people do not use words such as " 'nigger,' 'kike,' 'gook,' or 'wop,' but 'faggot,' 'fairy,' 'homo,' and 'queer' are used without hesitation" (Unks, 1995, p. 3). The civil rights of most minorities are fairly secure, but the state of gay and lesbian rights are not in such a favorable condition.

Homosexuals, unlike other minorities, do have the option of hiding their sexuality and "passing" as heterosexual. But the price that is paid developmentally is costly. This is evident when we look at data concerning LGBT youth. These young people are placed in a more difficult situation than LGBT adults. The social constructs that support LGBT adults are not there for LGBT adolescents. "There are legal, social, financial, and political barriers that prevent any legitimate adolescent participation in them" (Unks, 1995, p. 4).

High schools, according to Unks, are heterosexist institutions that use accepted "social conventions, mores, folkways, and institutional norms" (1995, p. 5) as agents of control. When you examine the culture of the American high school, LGBT youth are non-persons because of the lack of references within that culture.

The gender-defined roles of the heterosexist high school culture are reflected in its academic structure. Auto Shop is for boys, and Home Economics is for girls. High

school structure can be rigid, even in nonacademic areas. There have been changes in this area, but the structure still remains.

Unks states that academics constitute approximately one-half of high school programs. The other half is taken up with the socialization process. Social activities of the high school are formulated around heterosexist principles and are inflexible.

Unks differs from some researchers. He says that most LGBT youth do survive and become average citizens that meld into Middle America. This is refreshing and encouraging to hear when much research data predicts grim statistics regarding suicide and substance abuse.

Summary

Inquiring into the attitudes of cohort members requires methodology attuned to that task. Donna N. Merten explained how interviewing is a methodology suited to qualitative research. James P. Spradley helped to connect interviewing to its history in cultural anthropology. L. R. Gay explained the value of standardized, open-ended interviewing. The process of interviewing, as prescribed by Irving Seidman was explained by examining his three-interview process.

The researchers noted have listed the reasons why we should be concerned about the condition of a minority group found in every school in the United States: LGBT youth. The research of James T. Sears explored the feelings of young LGBT adults and asked them to reflect upon teachers and administrators from their K-12 school experiences. They felt the reactions to non-heterosexuality ranged from “no comment” to hostility. Eight out of ten pre-service teachers studied were “high-grade homophobics.”

Elementary teachers showed a higher degree of homophobia than secondary teachers.

LGBT students attempted to be “invisible” because of abuse in homophobic school environments.

Project 10 was started by Virginia Uribe in the Los Angeles Unified School District because of the homophobic treatment of one student. Health issues of LGBT students raise physical and mental concerns. HIV is a serious physical threat. Living in a homophobic environment takes its toll mentally, and suicide is a risk factor. Susan M. Blake and her colleagues researched HIV education in 62 Massachusetts high schools. Their conclusions showed HIV education can impact students involved in risky sexual behaviors.

Researchers at Bank Street College in New York City explored LGBT issues on their campus. The researchers explained how progress in overcoming homophobia and increasing the inclusiveness of the campus atmosphere was accomplished with students and faculty. GLSEN shared their concerns about LGBT students.

In ten points, GLSEN stressed that schools should provide a safe, supportive, inclusive environment. Morrow’s research explored the interaction of social workers with LGBT students. The fear of appearing to proselytize, if homosexuality was discussed, was examined. The NMSA discussed the changing maturation rates of adolescents and the risks of LGBT students in a heterosexist school environment. The Minnesota Department of Education’s plan, “Alone No More,” which addresses the needs of LGBT youth, was discussed. The “Alone No More” brochure is extensive and can be used as a teacher-training tool. It contains appendices with resource lists. Gerald

Unks states that LGBT youth are in a unique position. He postulates that LGBT youth are in a more precarious situation than are LGBT adults.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of graduate students of an education program who are teachers and/or administrators of K-12 students toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students. The study is qualitative and, therefore, inductive by nature. The work of Donna M. Mertens helped me to make the connection between a constructivist point of view and the choice of interview methodology. According to L. R. Gay, structuring an interview so that more than one participant is asked the same questions in the same order would yield a standardized, open-ended interview (1996). The study also has its roots in “phenomenological-based interviewing” (Seidman, 1998, p. 9). Graduate students in the field of education, as likely leaders in their fields, have the potential to influence the lives of LGBT students. Positive influence from a school administrator could be efficacious in curbing homophobia and opening the understanding of school personnel to the effects of heterosexism within the school culture. Reports from the federal government such as the 1989 Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Youth Suicide to current workshops offered at the 1999 National Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network’s conference in Atlanta, Georgia, support this idea.

Participants

I sought out to interview 8-12 individuals who are enrolled in an education program in the southeastern United States. The nine individuals who agreed to

participate were graduate students as well as teachers and/or administrators of K-12 students. The group consisted of four white females, one black female, three white males, and one black male. As prospective education leaders, these individuals can affect the lives of LGBT students. K-12 teachers and/or administrators work daily with LGBT students and directly influence them.

Scope of the Study

This study included nine graduate students of an education program who are teachers and/or administrators of K-12 in the southeastern United States. It was also limited to those participants who were enrolled in course work from Fall 2000 through Summer 2001. No information could be generalized to all geographic locations. Data gathering, interpretation and presentation were done in a qualitative manner. No quantitative methodologies were employed.

Researcher Biases

To aid the understanding of my bias load, I participated in a bracketing interview. The bracketing interview was audiotaped and reviewed to allow me to explore my own biases. The following is my bias load as exposed by the interview. I verified that I did not wish to interfere with the participants' communications of their attitudes. I understand how my worldview can color my perception. I recognize my bias toward male participants because I am susceptible to male acceptance. My expectation is that younger participants are more tolerant of the research issues than older participants.

Religious differences are also possible bias agents. My religious background affects my understanding of the religious expressions of the participants concerning research issues. This is noted as a sensitive area. I understand that my work experience as a teacher creates bias. The bias load comes from 22 years of attempted interventions on behalf of students who suffer with school related problems because of their LGBT status. My bias load contains acceptance of the concepts of tolerance and those individuals who profess these ideals. It is understood that professional treatment of all participants and the unbiased recording of their attitudes is the goal of this study.

Procedures

After obtaining approval from the Compliances Section of the Office of Research concerning Form B and all other appropriate university clearances, I distributed to potential volunteers a request to participate in this study. The study's introduction and participation request form explained who I am and the purpose of this study. The form requested names, gender, and preferred methods of contact (Appendix A). Nine subjects responded positively. Participants were assured of the following safeguards and protections: The positive responses were provided with an informed consent form to sign. Negative responses were not penalized. Participants were guaranteed full anonymity. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

This study was framed by three research questions (Appendix B): a) What issues or events were involved in the creation of the subjects' attitudes toward LGBT individuals up to the time of employment as an educator? b) What issues or events were involved in the creation of the subjects' attitudes toward LGBT students after

employment as an educator? c) How do the subjects understand their attitudes toward LGBT students in light of their pre-teaching experiences and their experiences while employed as an educator?

The participants who signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) were interviewed following the phenomenological interviewing design (PID) as prescribed by Irving Seidman in his 1998 book *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. PID makes use of open-ended questions in a three-interview process to reconstruct the participants' experiences within the topic under study. PID is in-depth and focused. The focus of these interviews was to investigate the participants' attitudes toward LGBT students.

Seidman's three-interview format is structured in the following ways: Interview One (1 – 1 ½ hours) starts the development of a “focused life history.” For the purpose of the study, “focused life history” is defined as the participants' experiences with issues or events concerning LGBT individuals and the participants' attitudes toward those events. Interview One limited the occurrences to the time before the participants began working as educators.

Interview Two's (1 – 1 ½ hours) focus “is to concentrate on concrete details of the participant's present experience in the topic area of the study” (Seidman, 1998, p. 12). Present experience is defined as the participants' experiences with issues and events concerning LGBT individuals and the participants' attitudes toward those events and issues. Interview Two limited the occurrences to the time the participant worked as an educator. Because of time constraints, interviews Two and Three may be done consecutively (Seidman, 1998).

The purpose of Interview Three (1 – 1 ½ hours) is to ask the participants to reflect on the meanings of their past (before working as an educator) and present (during work as an educator) experiences with issues and events that concern LGBT individuals.

“Making sense, or making meaning, requires that participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation” (Seidman, 1998, p. 12). The idea of meaning “addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participant’s work and life” (Seidman, 1998, p. 12). Did the participants perceive their attitudes as outcome of their life experiences? Did they see their current attitudes toward LGBT students in relation to their past and present experiences with issues or events that have affected their attitudes? As the participants constructed their “focused life history” concerning events pertinent to LGBT students, they first focused on pre-teaching, interpersonal events with friends, relatives, and acquaintances. The results of those interactions can possibly affect the attitudes of the participants. The same was true of the participants’ experiences with pertinent LGBT issues during work as an educator. Events that occurred during the participants’ teaching careers have possibly been influenced by pre-teaching experiences, and the interaction of past and present are possible creators of currently held attitudes. The purpose of Interview Three is to inquire into the participants’ understandings of possible influences on the creation of current mindsets.

Analysis

The interviews were audiotaped. The audiotapes were transcribed. The transcriptions and audiotapes were secured at the UTK Graduate Center located at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The transcriber signed a pledge of

confidentiality (Appendix D). Thematic analysis began at the time the first set of interviews was conducted and followed through until the third interview was completed (Patton, 1990). The transcribed material was approached “inductively not deductively, that is, don’t address material with a set of hypotheses to test, as with a theory developed within another context” (Seidman, 1998, p. 99). I allowed the participants and transcripts to speak, and did not interpret them in a preconceived manner. “What is required in responding to interview text is no different from what is required in responding to other texts – a close reading plus good judgment” (Seidman, 1998, p. 100). The close reading of the transcribed material was first categorized. The categorization process involved marking passages that were interesting in a couple of the transcriptions. These interesting passages were tentatively labeled. Labels were loosely applied and fluid so that they could be changed as needed (Seidman, 1998). The information was annotated in such a way that it could be traced back to its original transcript and audio recording. Categorized materials were filed together with interesting passages of all other transcripts. Each file was reread. I looked for patterns that revealed themselves, and did not try superimposing pre-held concepts.

Interpretation of the data began with marking areas of interest, labeling, and grouping. This was analytic work that started the interpretation process (Seidman, 1998). The bulk of interpretation happened with the “connective threads” (Seidman, 1998, p. 110) that were found among the thematically organized events from the participants’ lives. What did these events, or these “slice of life” views, tell us about the participants’

attitudes toward LGBT students? Interviewing in this manner helped me “understand the details of people’s experiences from their point of view” (Seidman, 1998, p. 112).

Validity is an issue of importance in a qualitative study. It was dealt with in this study by the following means: The participants’ comments were kept in context. This was accomplished by following a scripted or standardized open-ended interview process. The same questions were asked in the same way for each participant (Gay, 1996). Open-ended questions allowed the participants to express their points of view. The issue of consistency was maintained by utilizing a multi-interview process. Interviews spread out over time helped to deal with possible interferences affecting the participants; this aided consistency (Seidman, 1998). The number of individuals in the study also strengthened reliability. This allowed for a check of the themes touching more than one individual (Seidman, 1998). In qualitative research, the researcher is the data-gathering instrument. My personal biases were kept in check, and this is why the bracketing interview was crucial. Qualitative research and its evaluation are labor- and time-intensive. A strategy to enhance validity is triangulation (Seidman, 1998). Within this study, triangulation of data was accomplished through multiple evaluators. I, as well as university personnel trained in qualitative research, examined the data. The participants in the study also evaluated the data. Before the second interview I talked with each participant about his or her transcript from the first interview. At that point each participant made desired changes. After receiving the transcripts from the second interview, participants were urged to contact me regarding any changes.

From a constructivist position, the participants’ attitudes toward the issues raised in the interviews are critical to the education and realities of their LGBT students. Since

“each of us constructs our own reality through interpreting perceptual experiences of the external world” (Jonassen, 1991, p. 10), LGBT students need positive and supportive input from their education environment. Education leadership can set the tone in that environment.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of graduate students of an education program who are teachers and/or administrators of K-12 students toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students. This study was framed by three research questions: a) What issues or events were involved in the creation of the subjects' attitudes toward LGBT individuals up to the time of employment as an educator? b) What issues or events were involved in the creation of the subjects' attitudes toward LGBT students after employment as an educator? c) How do the participants understand their attitudes toward LGBT students in light of their pre-teaching experiences and their experiences while employed as an educator? The design of this study as discussed in Chapter Three is qualitative in nature and involves interviewing nine individuals who volunteered to take part in this study. Seidman's three-interview process is shortened to two interviews. This was done because of participant time constraints. The participants included four white females, one black female, three white males, and one black male. This chapter contains participant profiles, interview questions, themes that emerged, and a summary of data presentation.

Participant Profiles

Information for the following participant profiles came from Questions One and Three in the first interview. John is a white male, 47 years old. He was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. He is married and has two children. John received his elementary through high school education from public schools. Undergraduate through graduate school degrees were completed at state universities. His work background involves social work and serving as a counselor with a university program for the learning disabled. Currently he is employed as a middle school counselor and member of their leadership team. John exuded a relaxed demeanor during the interviews and was comfortable with the questions. He would look around the room while answering, but when concluding his statement, he would focus back on the interviewer.

Paul is a white male, 38 years old. He was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. He is married with two stepchildren. Paul received elementary through high school education from a private Christian school. College through graduate school was completed at state universities. His work background includes working in various professional capacities at a middle school, and he is currently employed as an assistant principal at an elementary school. While responding to interview questions Paul would lean back in his chair, away from

the interviewer, and close his eyes. He explained that he felt more comfortable speaking in that manner.

Jane is a white female, 49 years old. She was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. She is divorced and has twin children. Jane received elementary through high school education from public schools. College through graduate school was completed at state universities. Her work background includes experience teaching kindergarten and first grade. She is currently employed as an assistant principal at an elementary school. Jane spoke directly to the interviewer and was at ease with the interview process.

Angie is a white female, 47 years old. She was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. She is married and has two children. Angie received her elementary through high school education from public schools. Undergraduate and graduate degrees were completed at state universities. Her work background consists of teaching fifth and sixth grades. She is currently teaching fifth grade. Angie was cooperative during the interview process. Her responses were punctuated with short bursts of laughter, and she would react as if she was slightly amazed with the topic.

George is a white male, 33 years old. He was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. He is unmarried and has no children. His education was obtained through public schools, except in grades seven through ten when he attended a private boys' preparatory school. College and graduate school was completed at a state university. His work history includes teaching children in a mental health care facility, teaching in a middle school special education program,

and currently teaching in an elementary school special education program. Physically, George was focused on the interview. He is the youngest of the participants. His mannerisms were youthful, his responses were quick, and he was eager to show that he was “on top” of each question.

Becky is a black female, 51 years old. She was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. She is married and has no children. Her elementary and high school education was obtained through public schools. She attended a private college and fulfilled graduate studies at a state university. Her employment history includes working in a psychiatrist’s office and for a city’s department of mental health. After that, she was employed as a special education teacher and is currently supervisor to special education teachers. Becky was centered on the interview process. Her persona was one of a person who wished to hear, understand, and respond.

Jim is a black male, 49 years old. He was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. He is married and has no children. His education, elementary through high school, was in public schools. Undergraduate and graduate studies were done at state universities. His work history is varied. He worked in a skilled capacity for a factory and as the campaign manager for a friend who ran for state representative. He has operated a restaurant, and he is currently an elementary school teacher. Jim conveyed warmth and a desire to communicate. Though frequently loquacious, his answers revealed a great deal of reflection.

Brenda is a white female, 47 years old. She was born and raised in the southeastern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. She is unmarried

and has one child. Her education, elementary through high school, was in public schools. College and graduate school requirements were fulfilled through state universities. She has worked as a substitute teacher, and she currently teaches fifth grade. Brenda was decidedly focused on her disapproval of intolerance. At first she was cautious with vocalizing reactions, but, when she became comfortable, she forcefully communicated her tolerance of human diversity.

Ann is a white female, 35 years old. She was born and raised in the Midwestern United States. Caregivers were both biological parents. She is married and has two children. Her education, elementary through high school, was accomplished through public schools. She attended a private Christian college in the southeastern United States. Graduate school requirements were fulfilled at a state university. Her work history includes being an elementary teacher, and currently she is working as an assistant elementary school principal. Ann viewed the interview process as educational. She hopes that her fundamentalist Christian beliefs will affect LGBT individuals and convince them to change their ways and accept her point of view.

Interview Questions

All participants were familiar with the interview questions before the formal interviews. They received the following list of questions before signing the Informed Consent Form:

Question One

Please recount biographical information starting with your childhood up to the time you started working as an educator. For example, where did you grow up? Who were your caregivers? Where were you educated?

Question Two

During the time described in Question One, what issues or events were involved in the creation of your attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals? For example, were there media reports, individuals, friends, family acquaintances, and/or religious groups that influenced the formation of your attitudes?

Question Three

Tell me about your career as an educator. How many years of experience do you have? Within how many schools have you worked? What were your job assignments?

Question Four

During the time described in Question Three, what issues or events were involved in the creation of your attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students? For example, were there media reports that affected you? Were there individuals related to your position as a teacher or administrator who affected your thoughts? Did you receive input from a religious organization concerning LGBT students or individuals?

Interview Two was arranged after the participants had time to review printed transcripts of Interview One. This allowed for reflection time. The questions are as follows:

Question One

Interview Two involves reflection. After reviewing your comments from Interview One, how do you understand the connections between your life experiences and your attitudes toward LGBT students?

Question Two

How would your attitudes toward LGBT students affect your personal/professional relationships with those students?

Presentation of Themes

The participants' responses in the first interview concerned pre-teaching issues that pertained to LGBT individuals as well as issues that developed while employed as educators. Three themes emerged out of Question Two: a) no memory of LGBT issues before high school, b) intolerance toward LGBT individuals, and c) tolerance toward LGBT individuals. Jane was the first to mention memories of LGBT issues before high school:

I don't remember anything ever being said.

John had a much longer response:

You know, honestly, again, maybe it's because of my age at the time, but I grew up in a time where you, and I don't know if it was the time or the area or a combination of those, but you didn't even say the word "pregnant" when I was little. She was "going to have a baby." But you didn't say pregnant. Because of that, any issues about lesbian, gay, bisexual . . . if they were out there, I don't recall anybody ever saying, and surely nobody ever admitted, because, this was long before people coming out of the closet, so, really, I don't recall any certain issues specifically.

His comment sums up the attitudes of the other participants who recalled no early memories.

For some of the participants, intolerance was first encountered through religious teachings that were negative. Paul attended a religious school for grades one through twelve. He recalled,

As previously stated, I went to high school at [a religious academy]. I probably have some feelings toward gay and lesbian, bisexual, from a religious standpoint and a biblical standpoint.

Brenda recalled,

. . . there was a very anti-gay attitude in my family. My family was very religious, very conservative . . .

George remembered,

I don't remember anything explicit, but, in talking about things that happened such as Sodom and Gomorrah, you know, there were things implied, you know . . .

Issues of intolerance increased as the participants' memories moved through their school experiences. George, the youngest of the participants, responded:

Well, in 8th grade, what happened was, I went to an all-boys

school and since the school was 7th grade through 12th grade, you know, there was . . . there were all sorts of attitudes, I guess, you know, that . . . especially during the 8th grade year when guys started to date, you know, and there was a lot of pressure to date girls, and then, you know, there was a lot of . . . I'm trying to think . . . I wouldn't really say "pressure," but it was one of those things, you know, you were either dating somebody or you weren't dating somebody, and due to that all-male climate, you know, there were things said like, "Aw, well he's not dating anybody; he must be a fag."

Paul also recalled the influence of his older brother and his friends.

. . . I have two older brothers, and an older friend and, I would say, peer groups, peer relationships, also, helped form opinions in that category, also. But, I've never been one to hang with peer opinions, or anything like that . . . I believe [my brothers] were [instrumental in helping to form an opinion] because I always hung around with them. . . I would say that they . . . you know, they would, you know, always have the, uh, you know the thing . . . the negative comments to say about individuals.

Other participants reported the same type of intolerant attitudes being expressed during their high school experiences.

Knowing individuals who were LGBT generated tolerance among the participants. Two of the participants, Becky and Jim, had positive information to report.

Becky recollected,

I would probably have to reflect back and say the majority of the, I guess, attitudes or experiences or whatever I had were probably closer in terms of individuals that I knew. There was a person in my neighborhood who I didn't know, but I saw frequently. There were a couple of students that I remember in high school. There were, I had a teacher, and I had a cousin, at least one that I know of, maybe two, and a couple of individuals in my community that I knew who were probably bisexual. I remember a dentist and a male nurse, so I would say

neighborhood.

Jim recalled,

The most, I think what stands out in my own life has been my attitudes were shaped by the people that I knew and that I had [encountered] . . . the strange thing about it is that during that era you didn't talk about it. You knew as kids, you know, as we got older, you talk about who's gay . . . actually we didn't use that term then, you know, it was "sissy" . . . but, even with that terminology, there were so many other prejudices, I think that it was nothing we as children focused on, because there were always gay people in the community that you knew of as a child, and who were respected as adults and so there was never . . . and you were expected, as a child in the community I was raised in, to respect that adult regardless of their lifestyle choice.

Becky and Jim spoke about individuals they knew, as did Paul:

. . . I have a very dear friend who I don't see any more who was a lesbian. We played a lot of tennis together and played a lot of mixed doubles and she was a, is a excellent person and a good person and I consider her one of my dearest and closest friends. So, I don't, I really don't have an opinion one way or the other, but, you know, I think it's important that everybody is treated in a fair and humane manner. That, you know, everybody should be treated equally.

George also reported how meeting people influenced him:

Well, I think college was a good . . . as far as my attitude toward folk, I felt like it was a positive experience for me because, prior to then, I hadn't been around anybody who was "out," saying they were homosexual. I had been around people who were homosexual, but I'd never, you

know, really sat down and talked with them, you know . . . I met some folks . . . actually I was dating a girl and . . . she was in the Honors Program here, and there were a couple of guys in the Honors Program who were gay, and, you know, I got to know them, and it wasn't an issue . . . it was a positive experience, you know, that was just their "thing," so to speak . . . I mean, they were just people.

Brenda spoke of her college experiences with LGBT individuals in the following way:

When I was in college . . . when I first started to college years ago, I worked at a place where there were several gay men, and we were all just kind of buddies. They had a special little bar they all went to and we would all go down there with 'em and, and that's the first time I really have a true memory . . .

In Question Four, Interview One the participants were asked about their experiences with LGBT issues while employed as an educator. Question Four revealed two themes. The first was the participants' reactions to information from media reports. The second dealt with the participants' interactions with individuals in the workplace: students, parents of students, and colleagues.

The primary media report was that of Matthew Shepherd's killing. This event stands as a benchmark for LGBT intolerance. John said it this way:

I'm not real good at remembering names, but I remember there was a news release where some college student . . . oh and I may have my facts wrong . . . but I believe it was college-age student . . . some . . . I can't remember the name . . . some guy who was gay, and a couple of guys pulled him out, and it seems that they tortured him . . . And I just remembered that . . . ugh . . . that really just bothered me because, again, it doesn't matter whether me or anyone else believes that it is "correct" or "appropriate" to be lesbian or gay or bisexual or whatever. It doesn't matter. I mean, nah . . . I don't know . . . I just can't imagine anybody being that intolerant. To even say a derogatory thing, much less go out and kill somebody.

So, I guess, more than where before I would have probably just ignored it . . . ignored the issues until they came up, actually . . . and I guess . . . I guess, in a way, it is a good thing that I did start thinking about that in dealing with my own feelings rather than wait for somebody to just walk in my office door one day, but I have . . . I have trouble not understanding intolerance . . . I mean . . . yeah, whatever . . . tolerance.

George took the opportunity to use a teachable moment when he and his class watched a news report on Channel 1 News:

. . . we had the Channel 1 system in our school, and we would watch Channel 1News and when Matthew Shepherd, you know, when that incident happened out in Wyoming and . . . let's see . . . an episode happened down in Texas, I forget the individual's name, but, you know, when they dragged him behind the car and essentially . . . There were a lot of things talked about on hate crimes on Channel 1, and I remember talking with some students, you know, just pretty directly, which was kind of unusual in a public school setting, but, you know, we talked directly about some of the terminology and it kind of centered around that whole notion of "you can't judge a book by its cover," you know, I mean, if somebody acts a certain way, that doesn't mean, you know, they are a certain way, you know, as far as perceptions go . . . it wasn't anything too out there on the edge because it was in a public school. There wasn't anything real extreme being talked about, I mean, the word "gay" might have been used , might even have used the word "fag," you know, just like, what does that mean? You know, and trying to open up a dialogue and get kids to think about, you know, you gotta watch these things you say, I mean, you know, they can do a lot of damage. You don't know if it's true and, if it is true, what does it matter?

Brenda remembered how angry she became over a report of a teacher being fired:

I remember media reports about teachers being fired after teaching for 20 years, and then all of a sudden somebody finds out that they're gay, and they're fired, and I would have a real negative reaction to that because my first question is, "What does that have to do with them being an educator?" and, obviously, for 20 years they did a wonderful job, so what's the issue all of a sudden. That's what I learned in the media reports.

The second theme of Question Four involved the participants' interactions with individuals related to their positions as teachers or administrators. Students, parents, and fellow teachers/administrators were all included in discussions. Paul reported his dealings with a mother and son:

[A] mother came to see me concerning kids picking on [her son] because he tended to be more feminine than masculine and a lot of the kids wouldn't talk to him and stuff like that. What sticks with me is . . . it was very hurtful to him . . . the child . . . and it . . . and I believe he was in . . . he was seeing a counselor at the time about it, and so he was trying . . . he was developing all of these negative feelings and really didn't have a lot of self-esteem, apparently, and his mother wanted us to be aware of the problem, and . . . and, uh, you know, try to head off anything that might have become a problem such as violence, or anything like that, towards him.

Jane mentioned a situation where a male elementary student wished to be referred to as female:

There was one little boy who, towards the end of the school year, who started carrying his bookbag – instead of over both shoulders – on his one arm, and he wouldn't let us call it a bookbag, he made us call it his purse. My parapro and I kind of chuckled about it because it was such an odd thing for him to want to do, but, um . . . and his dad was real macho, and we kind of joked about it, "Wouldn't his dad just die if he knew he was doing this at school?" But I thought, it's not going to hurt anything. I didn't see that hurt anything. And he did want us to call him by some female name, but I never would do that. And the bus driver was not a . . . you know, some people just panic . . . she was in the panic mode when he asked her to call him by this female name. She comes into school just all out of wack, and, you know, we just said that, "Just leave him alone. He's fine. He'll stop." And I don't know what ever happened because I kind of lost touch . . . 'cause I moved . . . he'd probably be 12th grade now. We should check on him.

Becky recalled a situation at one of the schools she visits:

The only thing that stands out, and I probably have mentioned it to you when we were talking, about the student that seemed to have been open at _____ High School, and I never really understood, and I guess because by me traveling I was not in the school every day, but I was in the school several times a week, and there was a group of students at one point who started . . . the girls started dressing to look like guys and they started forming romantic relationships with the same sex, and I never really got the gist about whether it was a statement of who they were or just a statement to try to throw a little shock into it. And I don't know, see this past year I didn't work there, so I don't know whether or not it was something that just, you know, died down after a year, because I've got a feeling that it did. Or maybe, you know, maybe they made the statement that they wanted to make and then figured, well, there's no need in being so flamboyant with it . . . there was this one girl that I knew quite well, and most of my associations with my students from the standpoint of my job would be a one-on-one situation, and I may interact with that student two or three times. A lot . . . most of . . . the nature of my interaction . . . a lot of times they would tell me more than they would tell someone else in a whole year and then the next time I saw her I didn't . . . she spoke as if she knew me, and I was already past her before I realized that it was her.

Jim reported a situation with a male student and how he handled a situation of intolerance:

I had a little boy, his mother placed him in my room . . . well, didn't place, because you can't do that . . . but she was so happy he was placed in my room because he has effeminate ways, and he's always been this way, and, ever since I've observed him, and, you know, just from watching him in school, from the time that he was in second grade, and his mother, you know, was constantly, you know . . . and even some teachers were, in subtle ways, in subtle ways make differences in the way . . . in this child, in some of the things that he would do. You see, you see this, and you say to yourself, how do you handle this as a teacher? How do you . . . because you don't know all the answers, you don't know what's going on psychologically and cognitively in this child's head, or biologically, which, I think, is even more important. Basically, one of the things that I did was try to show that there were distinct gender differences and that you

did not have to accept anybody mistreating you, and you are not . . . and I think it was more important, not what I did for him, but how, what I did . . . what I tried to show the other children that to mistreat a person because of the way they speak, their preference for choosing to hang with the girls and talk or whether they want to hang with the boys and talk, that is their preference. And to mistreat and to call a person names, because even small children can be mean, and we know this, and they . . . and when . . . you have to cut it in the classroom, you have to nip it in the bud and they see that you will not tolerate it, then you see a change in the behavior of your students . . .

The participants spoke of students' parents. Angie recounted her interaction with the "two moms" of a student:

. . . as a teacher or as a student support team member, we have dealt with two different sets of lesbian parents of children who had been brought to the student support team for various problems. One was behavior, and it was a real interesting case. The child didn't belong to either one of the parents. They were . . . it was . . . one of the ladies was an aunt, and the girl's mother had died, and she was living with the aunt . . . it gave me something to think about, I mean, how did this child react to things differently, or what effect would it have on this child in school on her dealings with other children? And then – that was one pair – another pair I had in student support team, in SST, and we had talked about this particular child, and then this past year this child was in my class. So I had, you know, closer dealings with the parents. And, I have to tell you, those sets of parents were the best, most supportive ladies I . . . as just about I've ever dealt with, and that's the truth. They . . . one of the things, you know, for their child that . . . you know, anything they could do, they were willing to do, that sort of thing. They were just very willing and open to help.

Ann spoke of a colleague who came to her with a LGBT issue:

Now, when I went this year to my new job assignment, we did have a third grade teacher came to me and said that she had gotten a new student in that had two mothers. She didn't know, really, how to handle that . . . I guess my thought was, you know, how is the little girl socially? You know, is she relating to the other children in the classroom, and are they relating to her.

You know, it is my experience with the age of children in elementary school, they don't always understand sexuality, you know, in that regard . . . Her moms were going to get married, and she shared that [with another student] . . . And, you know, I personally have a fourth grader – what will be a fourth grader and a fifth grader. When a child says that, they don't register that that should be different. You know, as long as, you know, the teacher she just said, "Well, you'll have a good time. You'll wear a pretty dress." She just handled it with, "What will you do at the wedding? Is there any cake?" and didn't make it a different situation for the children in the class to make it easier for her. You know, there will be those who will pick up on it socially before long. In the elementary years you're just blessed by their innocence in a lot of ways.

Finally, the participants spoke of their LGBT colleagues. The participants responded to colleague issues in the following ways. George recalled from his experiences working in a mental health facility:

. . . since you asked about faculty in the middle school, in going back to my first job in the mental health facility, you know, we've had a person on staff there who was a very active member in the gay community here in town. I enjoyed working with her, you know, I didn't have any problem with her sexual identity, or anything like that . . . Yeah, I had a pretty good working relationship, I mean, she certainly wasn't the first gay person I'd ever met, because, you know, I'd met folks going to college, you know.

Becky had fond memories of an ex-colleague:

I did work on a faculty when I was in the classroom, and we had a music teacher who was gay. He ended up being fired; I'm not exactly sure why. I liked him. He worked really well with my students. I had a special ed class, and he took a special interest in them. He did a lot of special things and extra things with them and worked really well with my class, but he was dismissed from the school system. It originated with the school that I worked in, and I'm not sure exactly what the nature of the complaints were. I believe that it was probably, you know, the fact that he was gay, but from the standpoint of how he worked with my class, he probably worked

better with them than any other music teacher that I can think of.

Jim recalled an incident concerning a teaching assistant. This event involved his classroom:

... one of my teaching assistants ... you always hear things from the children about what's going on in the community ... whatever ... and one of my assistants ... one of my teaching assistants ... there was a ... the children mentioned something, that this, you know ... they began to talk among themselves that outside of her work that she was lesbian ... I didn't overhear it. An incident happened where, because one of my students was related to her, so an altercation came up because of one of the students saying something where ... "Your aunt is a ... is a ... is a" ... well ... did they say "fag," or whatever ... whatever it was, it had something to do with a derogatory name referring to ... and what I had ... and what I had to do ... one of the things I did was I took the two young ladies outside and explained to them whatever adults choose to do is their business, and for you to say to the girl ... whatever she had said, she had said something derogatory ... for you to say something derogatory about her aunt disappointed me. I let her know that I was disappointed in her disrespecting her aunt that way and disrespecting her peer student ... her peer that way, that it was not any of her business what anybody chose to do outside in their own personal life, and that you as a child were too young to be making any decisions ... any judgments about anybody.

Remembering her work relationships, Ann commented on a staff member:

We did have one member of the staff that was a homosexual, and we knew that, but he was fabulous to work with, and he was fabulous to work with the children, you know, that was a non-issue with me, personally.

Interview Two was accomplished after the participants had reflection time to consider their responses for Interview One. Question One asked them to speak about

their understandings of the connections between their life experiences and their attitudes toward LGBT students. The theme here is how the participants understand the development of their attitudes toward LGBT students. John explained this way:

I grew up in a musical family, so I played the piano all my life, and I guess I have been judged because of that, just because I played the piano back when I was little, the gay and lesbian, that – you didn't hear words like that – but "sissy" pretty much meant the same thing. But, it didn't matter that I played sports, as soon as they heard I played the piano, then I was, obviously was one of those. So I guess I had felt the prejudice myself, so even though the gay and lesbian lifestyle may be different from how I personally feel, to me that's not important. As far as my attitude toward any of the LGBT students, that's no different than if they're male or female or black or white or whatever race, whatever religion. So I think the experience with my friends and in the personal experience . . . I don't know that it's changed my attitude toward lesbian and gay itself, but it has definitely changed my tolerance toward that particular population or any population who believes different than I am. I don't think that my ways are necessarily any better; they're just different.

Paul felt his tolerance and acceptance for LGBT individuals came about as a reaction to the intolerance modeled to him as a child. The homophobic actions of his older brother and his friends along with the teachings of his religion when compared to his experiences with LGBT individuals have helped him come to that conclusion. Jane's response was similar. She, too, felt that her desire to be tolerant of LGBT individuals came about as a reaction to hypocritical and intolerant teachings of her family and their religion. Angie explained that once LGBT issues were made personal through a friendship they became integrated into her thinking:

Well . . . I have a good friend who is dealing with those issues personally . . . You know, it is a struggle, and it is an unknown – to me, unknown, as far as, how can they view

these things this way? You know, for me, but then, they're my friend, so I see their struggle, and since they're my friend, I'm going, "But they're my friend," so why would I treat them differently? And, also, and as I thought more about this, when the AIDS epidemic first started to be well know and they had us go through "watch these movies" and "this how you have to handle body fluids and things like that if you have an accident on the playground" or any of that sort of thing, and, you know, it was scary. But it was scary for everybody, and when it developed into "this person can't have this job because they might have AIDS, they might be homosexual, they might . . ." you know, I'm going, "To me, well how are they supposed to live? How can they be denied a job or whatever just for that, because they've got to live."

George explained his thinking while reflecting on the first interview and continued to explain how his working relationship with his colleague at the mental health center helped to create his current frame of mind:

I guess the biggest thing I think about, you know, in reflecting upon, you know, our interview, and after reading the interview, I guess one of the biggest things, you know, I see kind of bothers me in that, in thinking about my life experiences, you know, I harbor no ill will nor malice towards individuals of alternative lifestyles, if you will, but, in reflecting about things, you know, making comments like I have in the past, you know, to use as a control mechanism, and that bothers me because what that does, that, in my opinion, it conveys a message of homophobia where that's not something I espouse, so . . . I guess the individual with whom I worked in the mental health center was good . . . a good role model for me in that, yeah, she was a lesbian, and, you know, still, despite her sexual orientation, she worked very well with students, you know, she was there for the purpose of helping students be successful and turn their lives around which was the antithesis of all the stereotypes society or . . . I guess, society, tends to paint, you know, LGBT individuals. So I think her more than anybody was instrumental in my perception of gay/lesbian individuals.

Becky found herself a bit surprised at the impact that LGBT people have made on her life. Her relationships with these individuals have been positive. Her special education background has been helpful as well. She feels that special education teachers are more in tune with the individuality of students. The mix of these two experiences has created her current tolerant mindset. Jim credits his upbringing and experiences with LBGT individuals as having created his tolerant position. Brenda came to the same conclusions. The difference between these two would be that Jim credits the acceptance and value placed on LGBT individuals to his religious upbringing whereas Brenda credits her reactions to intolerant religious practices as forcing her to look beyond. Ann took a conservative Christian position and stated that

. . . I hope that my faith in the things that I believe in are such that they would treat people with love and it would bring them back, even though I may not agree with the lifestyle they choose, even though I may not agree with things that they do in their lives, I mean, the things, they are totally wrong, I still think that we treat each other with respect and with love because if I'm ever going to hope to have any kind of influence on anyone in any situation, it's not going to be through name calling and condemning and, you know, and judging people. I can respect someone even though they may not believe the same things that I do, and so I'm hoping that my life experiences, the things I believe in, do make a difference in how I deal with people.

In Question Two, Interview Two, the participants reflected on how their attitudes toward LGBT students affected their relationships with such students. The theme that emerged here was a desire to treat LGBT students equitably, but the participants voiced concerns. John explained that if he felt he could not keep a professional perspective as a

counselor he would refer students to another counselor. Jane noted that she wanted to treat all students with respect. She was concerned, though, that LGBT students' behaviors would be inappropriate. George wished to treat others as he wanted to be treated. He also felt that LGBT issues might be out of place on a school campus. Jim made a point to say that tolerance must be modeled. Ann expressed she wished to treat all equally, and her motivation is to influence individuals with her religious point of view.

Summary of Data Presentation

The analysis of the transcriptions yielded several themes. Question Two of the first interview asked about issues and/or events that helped to form the attitudes of the participants toward LGBT individuals before being employed as an educator. Within that question three themes became apparent. The first was the lack of information on LGBT issues or events in the years leading up to high school. The second theme was that of intolerance. One of the pathways that intolerant behavior followed was religious teaching. In the case of one participant, intolerance was part of his private religious school experience. Intolerance toward LGBT individuals also appeared within the participants' memories of family attitudes as well. Peer groups were also reported. Peer pressure to follow heterosexual dating was recounted. The third theme was tolerance. Participants told of events that impressed their young minds with the importance of being open to human diversity. The acceptance of LGBT individuals within a community was reported. The participants spoke of individuals who helped to break down stereotypes. In a couple of cases, participants referred to individuals who were involved in their young

lives, but by the time the participants reached college, the reports of the importance of knowing LGBT individuals became a common occurrence for all but Ann.

The last question of Interview One asked about events that happened while the participants worked as educators. First was the theme of media influences such as news reports. Participants reported their reactions to Matthew Shepherd's killing and to anger felt over teachers being fired because they were LGBT. The second theme was that of interactions with people such as students, students' parents, and colleagues. Paul reported a meeting he had with a mother who wished to sensitize him to the fact that her son was undergoing counseling to help him deal with being bullied over LGBT issues. Jane spoke of dealing with a male elementary student who wished to be referred to as a female. Participants reported interactions with parents. Angie recounted parent conferences with the two mothers of a student. Her response was "those parents were the best, most supportive ladies." Reports of coworkers came from a number of those interviewed. George recalled a working relationship in a mental health facility with a lesbian colleague and how she had a positive effect on his understanding of LGBT people. Other participants spoke of the positive relationships they had with LGBT coworkers and how they helped to break down stereotypes.

Interview Two occurred after the participants had time to reflect upon transcripts from their first interview. They scheduled the second interviews when they felt they were ready. In the second interview they were asked to explain how they understood the connections between their life experiences and their attitudes toward LGBT students. The theme that developed from the responses showed that all participants understood the influences of life events upon their concepts of LGBT students. The range of expressions

started with John who felt that he experienced bias as a young person because he played the piano. This made him the victim of homophobic comments. That experience, coupled with the racist reactions he endured because of his support of a black area basketball team helped him develop his tolerance of all minority groups. Brenda's experiences of the inconsistency between the words and actions of her family helped her question the bias of religious teaching. Ann saw her life experiences teaching her to show love and concern toward LGBT individuals so she could remain a good example of her religion's point of view.

When the participants answered the last interview question the overwhelming theme was equity. They would not treat LGBT students differently than heterosexual students. They did express concerns, however. John felt that if he couldn't keep a tolerant point of view when counseling a LGBT student, he would refer the student to another counselor. Jane was concerned that the behavior of LGBT students would be inappropriate at school. George felt that LGBT issues might be out of place on a school campus. Jim wanted to point out that teachers needed to model, not just talk about, tolerance toward LGBT individuals. Ann was concerned about her loving treatment of LGBT students because "it would bring them back, even though I may not agree with the lifestyle they choose." As they concluded their interviews all participants declared their desires to treat LGBT students with equality, but the range of rationales behind those desires are as varied as the participants involved.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Five is to discuss the themes of Chapter Four in light of previous research. Endeavors to determine the causes of homosexuality go back as far as humans have kept records (Hogan & Hudson, 1998), but this study will examine research from the late 1800s to the present. Research became centered in scientific concepts as the 20th century unfolded. The writers of popular press reacted to scientific findings, and the discussion of hitherto taboo subjects found its way into American homes. Other authors exploring the human condition wrote about homosexuality in novels. Some of these were banned and others were published posthumously. As the 20th century progressed, information that dealt with gay and lesbian themes increased. Research based on the principles of psychology and sociology extended the boundaries of knowledge.

Discussion of Themes

The participants, in recounting their histories, recalled little information concerning LGBT issues before high school. This, then, is the first theme. Invisibility is a component of the status LGBT individuals have accepted as a survival technique to exist within the dominant heterosexual society (Uribe, 1994). The history of LGBT people is rife with the capricious gift of acceptance from the dominant heterosexual culture. Minority groups have borne the brunt of the dominant groups' desires to make

minorities scapegoats for the majority's problems. "... men, women, Jews, Muslims and Christians, blacks and whites – have been united in one eternal hatred: detestation of a particular group whose presence is universal. This group is, of course, those we call homosexuals" (Fone, 2000, p. 1).

Research in Germany at the end of the 19th century explored the condition of homosexuals. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Institute of Sexual Research and worked to repeal German laws condemning male sodomy. Most of his work was lost in 1933 when Adolf Hitler came to power. In 1913, Englishman E. M. Forster wrote the novel *Maurice* which explores a growing love relationship between two men of different social classes. It was published posthumously in 1971. While on a speaking tour across the United States in 1915, Emma Goldman spoke out in support of gay and lesbian people. She was concerned about their unhappy living conditions. Radclyffe Hall, an English writer, published *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928. Her pro-lesbian book was initially banned in England and the United States, but was cleared in the U.S. in April 1929 and was published without reaction in England during 1949. In 1931 American author Blair Niles published her novel *Strange Brother*, which dealt with a white gay man finding refuge in Harlem. In January 1948 Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was published, and America started moving toward a more scientific look at homosexuality.

The oldest participant in this study was born in 1950; the youngest was born in 1968. All nine were born into the post-World War II world where LGBT individuals had started to organize and make their presence felt. The Mattachine Society was formed November 11, 1950. This was the first longstanding organization in the United States to

advocate gay and lesbian rights. The first lesbian organization, The Daughters of Bilitis, was formed in 1955 on September 21 by four couples. In 1964, *Life* magazine, June 26 edition, printed their expose of "Homosexuality in America." The report, told through the biased understanding of reporter Paul Welch, describes "the 'gay world' which is actually a sad and sordid world" (Welch, 1964, p. 66). On November 16, 1964, Randy Wicker was the first openly gay man to appear on national television on *The Les Crane Show* (Hogan & Hudson, 1998). By 1972 *That Certain Summer*, a movie starring Hal Holbrook and Martin Sheen as a gay couple, aired on national television. The availability of information about LGBT individuals has continued to grow up to the current day. The participants could remember nothing from their early history, even though information was available. The control that restricted their exposure to reports and to personally knowing LGBT individuals who were comfortable being "out" with their sexuality was the homophobia of their cultures of origin. The same homophobic forces controlled the participants' high school years.

The second theme of intolerance was fueled by two primary sources: fundamentalist Christianity and politics. In the United States, one of the most notable cases of the Bible being used to justify the violation of human rights was slavery (Hill & Cheadle, 1996). Those who argue from their views of Christianity that LGBT individuals deserve to be treated with intolerance also used the Bible (Hill & Cheadle, 1996). The participants' religious backgrounds did include this type of rhetoric. Views of intolerance are not restricted to religious points of view. Popular press reported information related to homosexuality. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* by Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey was released in January 1948. This caused a ripple in public consciousness

(Fone, 2000). The report discussed levels of male same-sex activity. The June 4, 1948, edition of *Time* magazine responded to the Kinsey report with the opinions of Dr. Lawrence Kubie, a psychiatrist who said that Kinsey's "implication that because homosexuality is prevalent we must accept it as 'normal' or as happy and a healthy way of life, is wholly unwarranted" (1948, p. 76). By October 1948, *Parents' Magazine* was explaining how to watch your kids for signs of same-sex attraction. *Newsweek*, on October 10, 1949, reported on the danger to society by homosexuals. In February of 1950, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy started his witch-hunt of homosexuals employed by the United States government. By December of 1950, the United States government made public its report on the "employment of homosexuals and other sex perverts in government." The conclusion was that homosexuality was a security risk and inevitably perverts moral fiber (Hogan & Hudson, 1998). The popular social climate influenced by politics was saturated by homophobia. The participants spent their formative years within this environment.

Two of the participants, Becky and Jim, reported the third theme of tolerance. Born and raised in two different Southeastern cities, these two Black participants reported tolerant attitudes toward LGBT individuals. Jim explained that because of the experience of having to deal with prejudice based on racial issues, LGBT concerns did not receive an overt amount of attention. "There were so many other prejudices, I think that it was nothing we as children focused on because there were always gay people in the community that you knew of as a child and who were respected as adults." Becky recalled a number of LGBT individuals that she knew from her neighborhood and from high school. When asked whether they gave her a positive or negative feeling, she

responded, “They were friends of mine.” Eric Garber, a founding member of the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project speaks about Black attitudes toward LGBT issues in *A Spectacle in Color: The Lesbian and Gay Subculture of Jazz Age Harlem*. He reports that Black culture exhibited a “relatively tolerant attitude toward homosexuality” (Duberman, Vicinus & Chauncey, 1989, p. 320). James T. Sears quotes the research of Cheryl Clarke. Her 1983 study of homophobia in the black community explored the differences of socioeconomic levels. She determined that working class black families have “. . . often tolerated an individual’s life-style prerogatives . . .” (1991, p. 135). The other participants did not start speaking of tolerant reactions to LGBT individuals until they reviewed college experiences. These participants recalled LGBT individuals who affected their understandings. Being personally acquainted with LGBT individuals touched the participants. They spoke of how LGBT folk were just people and how knowing them helped to break down stereotypes. The process of attending classes, working and socializing provided them object lessons in human diversity. These same concepts were discussed in research from Bank Street College of Education in New York City. The researchers reported on how the opening up of LGBT issues aided the faculty in approaching their own homophobia. This process led the school in creating a more inclusive campus (Casper, Cuffaro, Schultz, Silin, & Wickens, 1996).

Earlier in this chapter negative reports of the media were recounted. Negative information based upon stereotypes is still out there in the media. Margaret Mulhern and Gregory Martinez report that they “hadn’t realized the amount of negative information and stereotypes they [the children] had absorbed at young ages, primarily from the media” (Letts & Sears, 1999, p. 250). That negativity is now balanced by reporting that

shows LGBT issues in a less judgmental light. The severe homophobia of fundamentalist Christianity is still here, but it is balanced by journalistic efforts of people like David Lipsky in the August 6, 1998, *Rolling Stone* magazine report "To Be Young and Gay." In that article, the importance of the media is illustrated as the teenagers being interviewed explained the affect of MTV: "I'd never seen two guys holding hands in my entire life until I finally saw *The Real World*. It was just like, if MTV can put this on, then it's gotta be okay, hopefully" (1998, p. 80). The Internet has had its affect with web sights such as (www.younggayamerica.com). *Prime Time* with Diane Sawyer on ABC network has had its impact with interviews such as that with Ellen DeGeneres. Major bookstore chains with their gay and lesbian book sections have helped encourage and sustain teens in the heartland of America. The participants of this study explained how news reports of Matthew Shepard's killing and of the homophobic treatment of teachers had impressed them.

The participants also spoke of their interactions with students, parents and other teachers/administrators concerning LGBT issues. Those issues are explored and discussed by the publications of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). In a joint publication with Planned Parenthood of Connecticut edited by Leif Mitchell, an extensive resource was developed to help educators who are dealing with issues of homophobia with students, parents and teachers. The Minnesota Department of Education's booklet *Alone No More* also does a good job of examining LGBT issues. The booklet is described as a cultural primer that opens the door and guides the understanding of individuals working in a public school setting and working with LGBT concerns.

Interview Two, which followed after the participants had an opportunity to reflect upon the reading of the transcripts from Interview One, asked them to speak about their life experiences and their attitudes toward LGBT students. They saw this connection and, therefore, the theme of life experiences affecting attitudes toward LGBT students is established. This concept is important to the professional role of the educator. Maria Teresa Tatto, in her article "The Influence of Teacher Education on Teachers' Beliefs About Purposes of Education, Roles, and Practice" speaks to this issue. "Reflecting and attempting to understand how their [teachers'] beliefs influence their teaching are critical to teachers' development and change in role conceptions and teaching practices" (1998, p. 66). This is equally valid when one looks at issues of teacher interaction with LGBT individuals. We have the research of people like Gerald Unks who reports of the levels of homophobia on American high school campuses and the degree of teacher involvement in the creation of that environment. One of the participants, John, summed up his understanding of the connection between his attitude and treatment of students this way: "I think the experience with my friends . . . has definitely changed my tolerance toward that particular population or any population who believes different [sic] than I . . ."

The second question of Interview Two asked the participants to consider how their attitudes would affect their relationships with LGBT students. All the subjects responded that they would treat LGBT students no differently than heterosexual students, but they had reservations. Those reservations reflect the degree to which they have dealt with their own homophobia. In the booklet *Alone No More* by the Minnesota Department of Education, recommendations are made to educators who are making movement toward

a more enlightened view of human sexuality. Information is the key and its provision should be the first activity a school system implements in the process of leading its faculty to growth (1994). Sensitivity to the fact that faculty members may also be dealing with their own sexuality in a way not envisioned by them before, coupled with the fear of someone questioning their sexuality if they speak up for tolerance of LGBT concerns, are issues that need to be discussed by education leaders. These issues are not such that memos can be issued to make people more sensitive and left at that. As in all good educational endeavors, modeling of tolerance by education leaders will go a long way in aiding the transition to a more inclusive faculty.

CHAPTER 6

OVERVIEW, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study has been to explore the attitudes of graduate students enrolled in an education program within the southeastern United States toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students. The attitudes of teachers and administrators are of concern because these individuals set the precedent within a school's environment (Sears, 1992). The increasing visibility of LGBT students elevates an awareness of their existence within the school culture. This requires teachers and administrators to be cognizant of issues concerning LGBT students. These issues include suicide, physical abuse, and psychological abuse, and they place LGBT students at risk (Uribe, 1994).

Nine individuals volunteered to be interviewed for this study. The group consisted of one black female, one black male, four white females, and three white males. They were each interviewed two times. During the first interview, biographical information was gathered, and I probed into issues of LGBT concerns before the participants were employed as teachers and/or administrators. They were also asked about LGBT issues after being employed as educators. The second interview involved reading and reflecting upon transcripts from Interview One and answering two questions. First they were asked about the connections between life experiences and attitudes toward

LGBT students. Secondly, they were questioned about their attitudes and how they related personally and professionally to LGBT students.

Interview One yielded biographical information and three themes. The first theme was no memory of LGBT issues. The oldest participant in the study was born in 1950. Prior to his birth, the work of people like Emma Goldman and Magnus Hirschfeld attempted to enlighten public understanding of LGBT issues. Works of literature such as Radclyffe Hall's 1929 novel *The Well of Loneliness* with its pro-lesbian theme and Blair Nile's 1931 novel *Strange Brother* explored the lives of lesbian and gay individuals in light of a heterosexist society. In 1948 *Kinsey's Report on American Male Sexuality* was released. The resulting popular press discussions spoke of the negative effect of homosexuals on American society. Advice was given through articles in magazines like *Parents* in October 1948. The magazine reported how to raise your children not to be homosexual. Information about LGBT concerns was available, but perhaps not noticed. The controlling factor with the participants could be considered to be the homophobia within their cultures of origin. It is no wonder, then, that the second theme of intolerance also surfaced. Cultural influences from religious teachings, popular press, government investigations, and family beliefs created a spirit that contributed to homophobia. The black participants each raised in a different southeastern city had different information to report. They spoke of being taught to respect LGBT individuals who lived in their communities. The participants reported the third theme of tolerance as they spoke of college experiences. Knowing LGBT individuals helped to break down stereotypes. The last question of Interview One revealed two themes. The first was the influence of the media upon the participants. The killing of Matthew Shepherd and reports of teachers

being fired because of being LGBT were recounted. The second theme was that of interactions between the participants and LGBT issues while employed as educators. Those experiences involved students, parents, and colleagues.

The second interview exposed two themes. The first involved the participants speaking of the connection between their attitudes toward LGBT students and past events in their lives. They all understood the connection and discussed the relationship between the two. The second theme was the desire of the participants to treat LGBT students with equality, but reservations were expressed.

Implications and Recommendations for Educators

The interview process the participants were exposed to has implications for teachers and administrators. There is an emphatic need for educators to explore their knowledge of LGBT issues and examine their attitudes toward LGBT individuals. If educators are exposed to these two concepts as well as data concerning the at-risk status of LGBT students, research suggests attitudes can be positively affected (Dang, 1997). When the participants volunteered to enter into the interview process, it facilitated the recall of interactions with LGBT concerns. These concerns were categorized into two time periods: before and after being employed as an educator. The cognitive processes of the participants lead them through mental territory heretofore unexplored. The result was a learning process for which the participants expressed appreciation. They reached the realization that they had added a different dimension to their thinking. They also became aware of their level of LGBT knowledge and homophobia.

The evolution of American society has increased the availability of information about LGBT concerns; consequently the increasing openness of young LGBT people becomes a fact for educators. The openness of these young people has implications for educators. Teachers and administrators need reliable information to effectively work with these developing LGBT individuals (Bailey, 1996). The interactions between educators and LGBT students are not static events that just involve the communication of academics. It is a dynamic force that forges the mettle of a developing individual.

The degree to which educators default to heteronormative expectations when dealing with LGBT students is a reflection of their level of homophobia and a vehicle for expressions of attitudes. The destructiveness of this default thinking is obfuscated by its ubiquitous nature. Its common presence establishes the status quo, and LGBT youth often react with destructive behaviors such as suicide (Bailey, 1996). The implications here are that "this information alone should prompt educators to examine existing attitudes toward homosexuality, the effect of these attitudes on both gay and non-gay population and how such attitudes are contrary to the public school mission of teaching all children respect for individual diversity" (Uribe 1994, p. 169).

During my class I overheard a group of sixth grade students talking as they sat working on background sets for a puppet theater. A group of four 12-year-old girls started quizzing a group of four 12-year-old boys as to whether or not they had girlfriends. This led to the exaggerated, "Yes! Of course I do!" answer from all the boys but one. He didn't answer. He looked uncomfortable, grew red in the face, and looked at the floor. He was goaded into yelling out, "No! I don't!" This was the point where I intervened. The children were acting out the social blueprint of enforced heterosexuality.

What ensued was a discussion about what it means to be an individual and how to show respect to humanity.

How many of these scenarios occur in schools every day? How many educators would recognize the ramifications of this student interaction? The training of undergraduate education majors should include coursework that deals with the unique needs of LGBT students. This training should also address homophobia awareness levels and the effects of heteronormative thinking. Teachers and administrators would benefit from a self-discovery process whereby they can explore their knowledge of LGBT issues and their levels of homophobia. Doing these things would begin the process of developing a more equitable environment for all students.

Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in the knowledge of pre-service educators concerning LGBT student issues and delivery methodology to supplement that knowledge would benefit teacher-training programs. Research into the level of preexistent training that veteran educators have received concerning LGBT issues would aid school climate concerns. Research into the effects on school climate from homophobia and institutionalized heterosexuality would aid understanding the stress often experienced by LGBT students within that culture.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Request for Participants

My name is James Doubet, and I am a doctoral student of the University of Tennessee. I am a middle school teacher with 21 years of experience, and I have an interest in the formation of school cultures. For my dissertation I am exploring the attitudes of K – 12 teachers and administrators toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students. My interest in this area stems from watching the torment of LGBT students as they attempt to navigate the unpredictable waters of public schools and their heterosexist cultures. The event that helped determine my dissertation focus was the brutal murder of Wyoming student Matthew Shepherd in 1998. A news report of Shepherd's killing was broadcast on Channel 1 News. If you are not familiar with this news program, it was created for school broadcast and is delivered via a satellite cable feed system. The company also provides a television for each classroom in the schools that subscribes to their free services. My students reacted to the Shepherd story with straightforward questions such as, "Why was he killed?" A colleague told me that her students stated that it was okay that Shepherd was killed because he was gay. In telling me this story, she was visibly moved by her students' reactions, and explained to me how she used their comments as a "teachable moment" to explain the concept of tolerance. After school that day, I informally polled the other teachers and administrators on my campus about the broadcast. The common response was that they thought the killing was "horrible," but they didn't know how to respond to students' questions about the gay context.

If teachers and administrators are going to respond in a tolerant manner when questions and issues regarding LGBT individuals are raised by their students, they need to be conscious of their *own* attitudes toward these groups. The focus of my research is the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward LGBT students. If you would agree to be interviewed regarding your attitudes toward LGBT individuals, please complete the attached information form, and I will be in touch with you. Your help would be greatly appreciated, and your confidentiality is guaranteed.

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Check all that apply

_____ TEACHER _____ ADMINISTRATOR

_____ KINDERGARTEN _____ ELEMENTARY

_____ MIDDLE SCHOOL _____ HIGH SCHOOL

Researcher

Mr. James D. Doubet
1276 Phils Drive
Chattanooga, TN 37421
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Email: JWSOUTH@aol.com

Advisor

Dr. Joy T. DeSensi
Professor and Department Head
Educational Administration and Cultural Studies
1914 Andy Holt Avenue
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700
Phone: (865) 974-1282 Email: desensi@utk.edu

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

Title: The attitudes of teachers and/or administrators of K-12 students toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered.

This research is designed to explore the attitudes of teachers and/or administrators of grades K-12 toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students. Participants are doctoral students enrolled at a major university in the southeastern part of the United States.

As a participant in this study, you are a volunteer. You may terminate your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. This study will involve two interviews. Interviews will last approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours at a mutually agreed-upon place. You will receive a copy of all interview questions one week beforehand for contemplation.

This study is framed by six research questions:

Interview One

Question One

Please recount biographical information starting with your childhood up to the time you started working as an educator. For example, where did you grow up? Who were your caregivers? Where were you educated?

Question Two

During the time described in Question One, what issues or events were involved in the creation of your attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals? For example, were there media reports, individuals, friends, family acquaintances, and/or religious groups that influenced the formation of your attitudes?

Question Three

Tell me about your career as an educator. How many years of experience do you have? Within how many schools have you worked? What were your job assignments?

Question Four

During the time described in Question Three, what issues or events were involved in the creation of your attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students? For example, were there media reports that affected you? Were there individuals related to your position as a teacher or administrator who affected your thoughts? Did you receive input from a religious organization concerning LGBT students or individuals?

Interview Two

Question One

Interview Two involves reflection. After reviewing your comments from Interview One, how do you understand the connections between your life experiences and your attitudes toward LGBT students?

Question Two

How would your attitudes toward LGBT students affect your personal/professional relationships with those students?

You will have the opportunity at the end of each interview to ask questions or add any additional comments. You will receive a transcript of each interview to verify for accuracy and approval before it is used in my research. Your participation in this study entails no unusual risks or discomforts. Your possible personal benefits from this investigation include a better understanding of your attitudes toward LGBT students and personal growth concerning issues of human diversity. The knowledge gained from this research will be presented to others through publication. A doctoral dissertation will be prepared as partial fulfillment of degree requirements and will be a resource for future scholarly work expanding this topic.

Your confidentiality will be maintained since pseudonyms will replace both your name and the names of any affiliated institutions. The interview process requires audiotaping. The audiotapes will be retained in a secure location in Room 120 of Race Hall at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The tapes will be erased after the dissertation is successfully defended. It is your prerogative to review your audiotapes upon request, at a mutually agreed upon time and place. The transcripts will be prepared by a professional transcriber who will sign a statement of confidentiality. Every precaution will be made to insure confidentiality of records and identifying information. This information consent statement and the transcripts will be retained in a locked file cabinet for three years in Room 120 of Race Hall at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

I have read the above statement and agree to participate in the research. In addition, I am aware that:

- 1. My name, affiliations, transcripts, and audiotapes will remain confidential. The tapes will be erased after the dissertation has been successfully defended.**
- 2. I am entitled to make further inquiries regarding the procedures.**
- 3. Participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time and for any reason.**

Signature _____
Print Name _____
Date _____

Researcher

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1276 Phils Drive
Chattanooga, TN 37421
Phone: (423) 894-9828
Email: JWSOUTH@aol.com

Advisor

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APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

Interview OneQuestion One

Please recount biographical information starting with your childhood up to the time you started working as an educator. For example, where did you grow up? Who were your caregivers? Where were you educated?

Question Two

During the time described in Question One, what issues or events were involved in the creation of your attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals? For example, were there media reports, individuals, friends, family acquaintances, and/or religious groups who had input into the formation of your attitude?

Question Three

Tell me about your career as an educator? How many years of experience do you have? Within how many schools have you worked? What were your job assignments?

Question Four

During the time described in Question Three, what issues or events were involved in the creation of your attitude toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students? For example, were there media reports that affected you? Were there individuals related to your position as a teacher or administrator who affected your thoughts? Did you receive input from a religious organization concerning LGBT students or individuals?

Question Five

We are now finished with the interview. Is there anything you would like to say about this session?

Interview Two

Question One

Interview Two involves reflection. After reviewing your comments from Interview One, how do you understand the connections between your life experiences and your attitude toward LGBT students?

Question Two

How would your attitudes toward LGBT students affect your personal/professional relationship with those students?

Question Three

We are now finished with the interview. Is there anything you would like to say about this session?

APPENDIX D

Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

As the transcribing typist of this research project, I understand that I will be hearing tapes of confidential interviews. The information on these tapes has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these tapes with anyone except the primary researcher of this project.

Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Transcribing typist E. Wayne Ingle
Printed Name E. WAYNE INGUE
Date 12/10/01

APPENDIX E

Organizational Resources

Campaign to End Homophobia
PO Box 819
Cambridge, MA 02139

Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling (AGLBIC)
PO Box 216
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Association for Lesbian and Gay Psychologists
2336 Market St., Number 8
San Francisco, CA 94114

Bisexual People of Color Caucus/BiPol
584 Castro St., No 422
San Francisco, CA 94114
(415) 775-1990

Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum
3924 W. Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
(P-FLAG)
PO Box 27605
Washington, DC 20038-7605

Gay Teachers Association
Box 435, Van Brunt Station
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
121 W. 27th St., Suite 804
New York, NY 10001
tel: (212) 757-0135
fax: (212) 727-0254
glSEN@glSEN.org
<http://www.glSEN.org/>

Human Rights Watch
350 5th Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
<http://www.hrw.org>

National Bisexual Network
584 Castro St., No 422
San Francisco, CA 94114
(415) 755-1990

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
1517 U Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 332-6483

National Gay Youth Network
PO Box 846
San Francisco, CA 94101

You Are Not Alone. National Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Organization Directory,
published by:
The Hetrick-Martin Institute
401 West Street
New York, NY 10014-2587

VITA

James D. Doubet was born and raised in central Illinois. He attended Covenant College, a private Presbyterian college on Lookout College near Chattanooga, Tennessee, and received a B. A. in Elementary Education. Graduate studies began at Berry College located at Mt. Berry, Georgia. He received an M. A. in Middle Grades Education. The degree of Doctor of Education will be conferred at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Spring 2002.

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