Experiences Explored Through the Prism: Out Gay and Lesbian Pathways to University Presidency

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EXPERIENCES EXPLORED THROUGH THE PRISM:
OUT GAY AND LESBIAN PATHWAYS TO UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY

by

Patrick Englert

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

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Experiences Explored Through the Prism:

Out Gay and Lesbian Pathways to University Presidency

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Abstract

The profile of university presidents has changed very little in the past twenty-five years, with the majority being white males (Kim & Cook, 2013). The presence of the ‘lavender ceiling’ (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995) in higher education is evidenced in there being less than one percent of university presidents who openly identify as lesbian and gay (L&G) (Rivard, 2014). Colleges and universities continue to be largely heteronormative and struggle to create safe, supportive, and just campuses; mirroring instead the bias and microaggressions that occur outside the insulated walls of academia (Bazarsky, Morrow, & Javier, 2015; Vaccaro, 2012).

This multi-case qualitative study explored the lived experiences of nine out L&G presidents in higher education via two research questions: 1) What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education? 2) How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency? Using queer theory as a lens, the study builds upon queer research with one central theme; committing to being out in higher education. Committing to being out in Higher Education acted as a catalyst and resulted in four themes related to research question one: 1) supporting frameworks for being out, 2) experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept, 3) navigating expectations of what it means to be a queer leader, and 4) engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities. Two themes that emerged from the second research question were: 1) cracking the lavender ceiling, and 2) overcoming fear and taking risks. A conditional theme, better to be gay than from student affairs, is also presented.

(Keywords: College and University Presidents, Pathways, Lavender Ceiling, Queer Theory, LGBTQ+, Bias, Leadership)
Acknowledgements

In January of 2015, I set out on icy and snowy roads to begin interviewing nine out lesbian and gay college and university presidents. What I encountered were gracious leaders who shared their incredible narratives authentically. I appreciate their time and willingness to be vulnerable in reflecting and sharing their experiences as leaders.

I am not sure I ever envisioned having such a dynamic dissertation committee. Dr. Elizabeth Dinkins you are a phenomenal educator, professional, and mentor. I cannot begin to thank you enough for cultivating my passion for qualitative research, which has changed the way I view and interact with the world. You brought my doctoral experience to life via collaborating on research and writing, exposing me to critical perspectives, and investing and believing in my ideas. Dr. Dinkins, you have challenged and supported me throughout this experience—knowing how to nudge or prompt me when I was unsure or stuck. The amount of reading and feedback you have provided to this dissertation is inordinate—I know that your feedback and steadfast role as my Chair has ensured that I delivered a solid piece of writing and also developed my confidence in conducting qualitative research. I hope we will continue to collaborate and write and as you say and I believe, “there is still much work to be done” to dismantle inequities and cultivate just spaces.

When I began my Masters at the University of Louisville in August of 2005 the first class I took was Introduction to College Student Personnel, taught by Dr. Fred Rhodes. He shared amazing stories of a small private Catholic liberal arts university—Bellarlmine University where he was the Vice President of Student Affairs. Dr. Rhodes I am thankful that I was able to work under your leadership for seven years. I am keenly aware and thankful for the investment you have made in me and your willingness to be my champion, mentor, and support. I hope that as I continue in the field I may be as student centered as you have always been.

One of the first people I met at Bellarmine University when I began my position as Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Student Engagement was Dr. Carole Pfeffer. Her office at the time was across the hallway from mine. Over the course of the next year she always stopped in to say hello, share a story, whistle, and commiserate with laughter. I have appreciated your openness to share your narrative. You edited and provided feedback on my first publication about parent and family programs and it only seems fitting that you have provided detailed and meticulous feedback on my dissertation. Thank you for being a part of my committee.

Before I began my travels to conduct interviews in the Northeast and Midwest I was anxious about the process and wanted to ensure I captured the data accurately and comprehensively. This anxiety was deconstructed by Dr. Kristin Cook who helped me prepare and shared expert advice on interviewing participants. Thanks for your time, advice, and feedback throughout this process.

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I have been blessed to have spent almost ten years at Bellarmine University. I work in the Student Affairs division and I am beyond thankful for my dedicated and gifted colleagues who I consider family. In fall 2015, I transitioned to a new role and with this change I have had the privilege and joy of working with a team of incredible individuals who innovate, develop, and create in unique and vibrant ways. I am so proud and appreciative of each of you and the work you do to develop students.

I have been supervised by and work under the leadership of the most dynamic woman and Vice President for Student Affairs over the past three years. Dr. Helen Grace Ryan I am most in awe of your intentionality and intuition. Thanks for taking a chance and inviting me to serve as Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. I learn from you each day and you challenge me to be the best I can be, which is empowering and thrilling. Thanks for your support throughout this dissertation journey—I value so much the trust and relationship we have developed. I look forward to watching your pathway continue to advance as I know it will be bright and most importantly student centered.

As a component of my doctoral experience I participated in a course that required a two to three week cultural immersion experience domestically or internationally. In life, it is rare to have the opportunity to spend weeks focused on one particular culture or set of ideas. My time at Wingsprings, located on the Pine Ridge Reservation just outside of Martin, South Dakota connected me to Dr. Craig Howe’s hospitality and knowledge which created a space where my peers and I were changed in ways none of us expected. I reflect on this experience often and it is a contributing factor to my dissertation being critically focused.

I would be remiss not to thank a few people for their love, encouragement, and the special place they hold in my life. Dani Reid Filak our adventures together give us so many opportunities to chat, learn, and grow; you bring much fun and joy into life and have more stick-to-it than anyone I know. Elizabeth Cassady I appreciate our daily conversations, texts, and ponderings of life—your strength is only surpassed by your heart. Heather Orman I will always value your firm, yet caring nudges and our lifelong memories of South Dakota. Angela Rone here’s to surviving snowstorms and to solving life’s quandaries together over margaritas—you are uniquely authentic and a wonderful friend. Lindsey Gilmore we are never short on laughs and I’m pretty sure can conquer anything. Dr. Anne Bucalos, my work neighbor and friend, I appreciate your sage advice, positivity, and your wonderful energy you share. Kris Bearson thanks for being a great friend—you are a kind and caring soul. I’m glad our paths crossed.

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I consider myself a lucky guy to be the younger brother to my sister Jennifer Englert. I have always looked up to her and she is my best friend. I am so proud of all that you have accomplished and in awe of your ability to balance being a wonderful mother, committed professional, and selfless person. I’m done, now it is your turn to finish your dissertation!
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to those whose work is making the dream of a just world a reality; where the uniqueness of one’s sexuality and gender is celebrated instead of denigrated. Through these brave acts of coming out, the world hears different experiences so as to create a new reality.

If you dream of a world in which you can put your partner’s picture on your desk, then put his picture on your desk…and you will live in such a world. And if you dream of a world in which you can walk down the street holding your partner’s hand, then hold her hand…and you will live in such a world. If you dream of a world in which there are more openly gay elected officials, then run for office…and you will live in such a world. And if you dream of a world in which you can take your partner to the office party, even if your office is the US House of Representatives, then take her to the party. I do, and now I live in such a world. Remember, there are two things that keep us oppressed—them and us. We are half of the equation. There will not be a magic day when we wake up and it’s now OK to express ourselves publicly. We make that day by doing things publicly…first in small numbers, then in greater numbers, until it’s simply the way things are and no one thinks twice (Baldwin, 2000, March on Washington Speech).

And so the work continues.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“There is a strong moralistic strain in the civil rights movement that would remind us that power corrupts, forgetting that the absence of power also corrupts” (Rustin, 1965, p. 534).

Overview & Statement of Problem

American higher education was founded around the mission to serve society and promote democracy (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Osteen, 2012; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Thelin, 2004). Despite being founded upon this mission, higher education has had a tumultuous journey realizing this cornerstone of belief—higher education in the United States began as an institution that excluded based on social class, gender, and race (Ahmed, 2012; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Labaree, 2017; Stich & Freie, 2017; Thelin, 2004). Perhaps the first clear examples of justice issues impacting the community within the context of higher education occurred during the 1960’s civil rights movements—colleges and universities could no longer operate in ivory towers. The social and political unrest of the time challenged universities to explore diversity and outreach to the greater community (Chambers, 2005). Barnard Rustin (1965), a civil rights and gay activist, discusses at length the ways in which power corrupts or empowers people and organizations. In this same respect he suggests that corruption also occurs without the presence of power and leadership among people and organizations to recognize and mediate injustice. Higher education institutions represent powerful structures that both empower and disenfranchise students, faculty, administrators, and communities—ultimately influencing the possibilities of progress and inclusion for underrepresented groups (Birnbaum, 1988; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

Significant historical events have occurred over the past 50 years that have affected lesbian and gay (L&G) identities and rights within higher education (deLeon & Brunner, 2013).
Examining these events emphasizes the progress that has been made since the civil rights movement began. Progress within American higher education has mirrored the political landscape of the times, with campuses serving as physical spaces for protests, laboratories for new ideas, and models for progressive change (Eaklor, 2008; Marine, 2011; Tierney, 1993). Despite this progressive spirit, however, colleges and universities remain largely heteronormative and struggle to create safe, supportive, and just campuses for L&G students, faculty, staff, and administrators mirroring instead the bias and microaggressions that occur outside the insulated walls of higher education (Bazarsky, Morrow, & Javier, 2015; Vaccaro, 2012).

**False Paradigms of Progress**

Societal progress cannot be mistaken for the elimination of discrimination and creation of a new normal. The past fifteen years are often cited as being particularly progressive, with more L&G leaders holding political offices; Fortune 500 companies having instituted antidiscrimination policies; and Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell having been repealed; all suggesting positive momentum towards progress (Walters, 2014). Many college campuses house offices devoted to diversity with missions centered on supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Plus (LGBTQ+) students (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002). As these offices have become more prominent, majors in queer studies and minors in LGBTQ+ topics have also grown, with nearly 20 programs offered in the year 2000 (Eaklor, 2008). Before June 26, 2015, 37 states had enacted the freedom to marry for same sex couple (Freedom to Marry, 2015). The Supreme Court ruling endorsing a nationwide right to same-sex marriage led to an explosion of awareness and debates (Liptak, 2015). Despite these trends, many of these debates have centered on the role of religious freedom and its presence in marriage. Further evidence of
ongoing bias can be seen in bills passed in 21 states discriminating against LGBTQ+ people through refusal of service based on religious freedom (Fantz, 2016; Walters, 2014). In 2016 alone, nearly 200 bills were proposed in states across the United States which could lead to discrimination for LGBTQ people (Fantz, 2016). Indiana passed a religious freedom restoration act, which has led to strong statements of opposition by Apple, Google, and the NCAA (Montanaro, 2015). Walters (2014) discusses the progress of queer freedom in current times: “The Progress Narrative, then, depends on a very gaudy pair of rose-colored glasses, through which continuing discrimination and inequity are either ignored or seen as remnants of a past we are about to put behind us” (p. B7). Clearly, despite progress in some areas, abundant examples of ongoing discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community exist in various societal arenas.

These historical and cultural perspectives inform the current context of higher education in relation to sexual identity. In spite of some positive momentum of historical events, higher education is largely a modernist system, which operates through a heteronormative and paternalistic lens to regulate sexual identity (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Marine, 2011; Tierney, 1993). Ernest Boyer (1990) developed six Principles of Community for higher education, which included a call for campuses to be educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebratory. Boyer’s call for community on campuses challenges that if momentum is not being made towards building upon the six principles, then campuses may be declining and failing to live their missions. Still, higher education has made some progress through implementation of policies and practices intended to protect LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and administration (Bazarsky et al., 2015, Marine, 2011). These protections emerge via academic freedom, presence of statements that
acknowledge sexual orientation within mission statements and faculty and staff policies, and expectations to offer care and concern for the dignity of individuals (Dilley, 2002; Renn, 2010). Yet despite these practices, colleges and universities as a whole perpetuate perspectives that provide defined space for LGBTQ+ individuals and entertain the scholarship of queer theory without queering or creating campus spaces and culture which take sexuality and gender into consideration (Brown & Gortmaker 2009; Renn 2010; Vaccaro, 2012). Faculty, staff, and administrators must still navigate carefully coming out, consider to what extent being LGBTQ+ may affect hiring and promotion, and operate in an inherently heterosexual environment (deLeon & Brunner, 2013). Renn’s (2010) review of research spanning the last 80 years in higher education asserts that sexual identity is still viewed as a status of difference, which eliminates the critical examination of culture and viewing sexual identity on a continuum, the latter of which provides space for reflection and development of understanding by campus constituents. Tierney (1993) suggests that colleges and universities operate in “collegial models” (p. 24) which reflect and mirror established norms and fail to question normative contexts. Some colleges and universities provide safe and supportive environments for faculty, staff, and administrators, but that is only one element in the larger context of difference. The heteronormative environment of colleges and universities perpetuates discrimination and limits the pathways to advancement for LGBTQ+ faculty and administrators. The queering of higher education has yet to occur (Renn, 2010), which challenges what a structure, environment, and culture of difference looks like and who is entrusted with power, especially at the highest administrative level.
Homogenous Presidents

Discrimination within the workplace is prevalent for LGBTQ+ individuals across careers (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001, Vaccaro, 2012). Day and Schoenrade (1997) suggest heterosexism continues to grow within society and that LGBTQ+ employees fear pervasive discrimination. Higher education is no exception, and Rankin (2005) notes that the majority of faculty, students, administrators, and staff in her study described their campuses as homophobic. Kulick, Wernick, Woodford, and Renn (2016) discuss the heterosexist environments that exist on campuses as well as the microaggressions experienced on a regular basis in their research. The lavender ceiling (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995) is a concept that defines “systematic barriers which prevent recruitment, retention, and promotion of openly gay and lesbian people” (Swan, 1995, p. 52). Barriers such as institutional policies, heteronormative and heterosexist practices, lack of awareness of bias, and homogenous searches for upper administration positions prevent LGBTQ+ practitioners from progressing towards career trajectories and positions power away from LGBTQ+ individuals. The lavender ceiling continues to be impenetrable (Unger, 2011).

While research related to sexuality and workplace is relatively extensive (Carr et al., 2003; Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998; Grossman, 2012, Johnson & McIntye, 1998; Lehtonen, 2016; Wright & Smith, 2015), few studies have examined these issues within the setting of higher education (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009), suggesting a gap in research. Research has examined LGBTQ+ topics such as campus climate (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009), LGBTQ+ faculty members’ experiences across universities and departments (McNaron, 1997) within one university (Noack, 2004), difficulties and discrimination in the classroom (Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002), and challenges of queer scholarship for tenure (LaSala, et al., 2008). However, minimal research exists examining the experiences of LGBTQ+ university administrators,
presidents in particular. This existing gap needs further research to better understand how higher education institutions embrace or marginalize sexuality as well as how LGBTQ+ leaders are impacting higher education.

The profile of college and university presidents has changed very little in the past twenty-five years, with the majority being white males (Kim & Cook, 2013). The number of presidents of color nationally is approximately 17%, with only five percent of presidents being women of color (American Council on Education, 2016). Approximately, four percent of university presidents identify as Hispanic and approximately 26% of university presidents identify as women (American Council on Education, 2016).

The American Council on Education’s *The American College President Study* suggests that female presidents are less likely to be married or have children than their male counterparts (American Council on Education, 2016). In the 2016 study, 58% of presidents were over the age of 60, which is one of the only significant changes since 1986, when only 13% were over the age of 60 (American Council on Education, 2016). This study suggests that white men 60 and above lead the majority of institutions within higher education. Inherent in the white male perspective is privilege (McIntosh, 1989), which results in leaders attaining high profile positions such as presidents who may be ignorant of, and complicit with (even unintentionally) the marginalization of underrepresented populations on college campuses.

At the time of this study there were 48 out gay and lesbian presidents who belonged to the LGBTQ Higher Education Presidential organization (LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education Organization). This number has increased substantially from the eight openly gay presidents, self-identified in 2007 (Rivard, 2014). The presence of the lavender ceiling in higher education is evidenced in there being less than one percent of college and university
presidents who openly identify as L&G. Two qualitative dissertations have explored the experiences of lesbian and gay presidents within higher education (Bullard, 2013) and the lived experiences of the university presidential job search for gay males (Leipold, 2014). No research has examined to date how the pathway to university presidency for lesbian and gay practitioners might inform campus climates and career pathways for other LGBTQ+ faculty and administrators. The absence of diverse presidents on college and university campuses raises concerns with regard to how the needs of underrepresented populations are being recognized and addressed. While 48 out L&G presidents in higher education have created cracks in the lavender ceiling, the barriers in place are far from being shattered, suggesting that L&G administrators are not openly being empowered to assume senior leadership roles within institutions of higher education (Henking, Gandre, Shelton, Hoyle, Whitney, & Ragsdale, 2014). Further research is needed to explore the experiences of out L&G presidents and how their experiences intersect with institutional climates and inclusion.

**Purpose of the Study**

By examining the lived experiences of nine out L&G presidents in higher education, this study seeks to develop an understanding of how being an out president may impact career path and policy within higher education. This study will add to the emerging literature on workplace environment and sexuality, in particular examining the concept of the lavender ceiling. It will also build upon queer research by examining the experiences of out L&G university presidents within traditionally heteronormative contexts. Through understanding of how sexuality influences the pathway toward senior leadership, future L&G faculty and administrators may navigate this pathway in more strategic and intentional ways. The presence of more openly L&G senior level administrators and presidents may begin to shatter the lavender ceiling and
bring more critical perspectives into higher education, paving the way for marginalized or underrepresented groups. This study is a direct response to the call for research Renn (2010) makes at the end of her review of the research conducted in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) and Queer research within higher education. Brazelton, Renn, and Stewart (2015) call for an increase in the use of queer theory as a framework to examine and generate LGBTQ topics to research in higher education. Renn also acknowledges that faculty, administrators, and staff within higher education have been minimally studied and that further attention is needed to address “persistent questions and problems in higher education” (Renn, 2010, p. 139).

Research Questions

If higher education was founded on the purpose of serving the greater community and promoting democracy (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Osteen, 2012; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Thelin, 2004), then it is critical that the voices and experiences of L&G presidents be heard and studied in guiding the future of higher education. The presence of more openly L&G senior level administrators and presidents bring more critical perspectives into higher education; paving the way for marginalized or underrepresented groups.

Current heteronormative structures within higher education and the lavender ceiling prevent LGBTQ+ professionals from being represented more significantly within senior-level leadership roles (Henking et al., 2014). To better understand the experiences of L&G college presidents, this study used a qualitative multi-case study to address two guiding questions:

1. What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education?

2. How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?
Definition of Terms

Language matters within LGBTQ+ identity (Jourian, 2015). Vicars (2012) discusses the use of language and camp (a social, cultural, or aesthetic style often associated with gay males; how one performs) as a “way of acting visible” (p.469) and a means of forming identity, defining self, and seeking affiliation. Terminology related to sexuality and gender identity continues to emerge and evolve (Jourian, 2015); therefore, it is necessary to establish how these terms were used within this research. Specific terms, provided below, were identified as pertinent to this study and definitions, and they are supported and grounded in relevant literature. Sedgwick (1991) discusses the multiple ideologies, assumptions, and discursive practices that are embedded within meanings of definitions and terms; she asks: “what if the richest junctures weren’t the ones where everything means the same thing” (p. 6-7)? The definitions below serve as a guide for the reader to understand how I operationalized terminology to create understanding and discourse. Following Sedgwick’s logic, the definitions outlined below do not represent the only meanings for the terms; however, they do provide a context for the terms as they relate to this study.

Gender identity. Within the scope of this study the term gender identity refers to an individual’s sense of self, which may include identities between, outside of male or female, or male or female (Wilchins, 2002). Transgender refers to individuals whose gender identity is not aligned with their biological sex or societal norms of male and female (Elkins & King, 1996). At the time of the study there were no self-identifying Trans¹ college or university presidents in the United States. Gender identity is a central topic explored in the context of gender roles and

¹ Trans* may be used to represent the numerous identities not under the umbrella of cisgendered woman or man. Trans* does not stand alone, but should be used to describe a Trans* man, individual, person, or identity. Transgender incorporates a range of identities, none of which conform to traditional gender expectations and presentations (Singer, 2015).
norms. This study focuses on sexuality; however, gender performance is a theme that emerged as a central phenomenon, strongly connected to sexuality.

**Heteronormativity.** Queer theory has “enabled the exposure of the white, masculinist, middle-class, and western bias historically encoded in gay studies” (Spurlin, 2002, p. 9-10). Cohen (2013) cites heteronormativity as a power dynamic of “localized practices and those centralized institutions which legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and ‘natural’ within society” (Cohen, 2013, p. 203). Heteronormativity juxtaposes sexuality in relation to gender, race, and class. Colleges and universities have “evolved to tolerate the generation of queer theory from within but have stalwartly resisted the queering of higher education itself” (Renn, 2010, P. 132), leaving institutions predominately heteronormative. Sexuality within higher education is viewed as a dichotomy in which heterosexuality is considered the “normal, natural, and inevitable” (p. 501) and homosexuality is viewed as “abnormal and perverse” (Fox, 2007, p. 501). The participants within this study recognize the existing heteronormative structures in which they live, work, and operate each day. The experiences they share acknowledge and, in many cases, intersect with heteronormative constructs.

**Lesbian and gay.** Lesbian and Gay (L&G) are used instead of the term homosexual throughout this study. The word homosexual is a scientific term with connotations of the study of “degenerates in need of imprisonment or a cure” (Tierney, 1997, p.27); L&G are instead terms used in research focused on needs, “rights and understanding” (p. 27). Throughout this study L&G is used as an abbreviation representing two participant-identified sexual identities being studied. This initialism is an adaptation of the often cited initialism for LGBTQ+—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, and plus which fails to contextualize the subtle
and often substantial nuances that exist within each of the individual identities (Renn, 2010). LGBTQ+ combines sexual and gender identities, failing to acknowledge the unique differences between these identities. L&G in this study signals that the main focus of this study centers on only two sexualities; bisexuality, questioning, asexuality, and pansexuality are not explored due to the identities of the participants. Gender identity is discussed and referenced as it connects to sexuality.

**LGBTQ+**. Throughout this dissertation the initialism “LGBTQ+” is used to refer to those who identify as lesbian (L), gay (G), bisexual (B), transgender (T), queer (Q), and questioning, fluid, or nonconforming to defined identities (+). This term is not meant to erase the distinction between individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or other identities, but rather to be as inclusive as possible (Britzman, 1995; Honeychurch, 1996; Seidman, 2010). LGBTQ+ is also used in reference to social practices, behaviors, and beliefs associated with underrepresented genders and sexualities. To recognize the diversity within this initialism, this dissertation uses individual initials when referring to specific identities included in the literature, research, and studies referenced throughout.

**Other**. Other is a term used throughout the study to challenge and acknowledge difference that exists within identity. L&G presidents represent the other in this study. Groups that are traditionally marginalized or oppressed in society and are “other than the norm” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 26) represent the other. Giroux (1992) suggests there is no need for “a patronizing notion of understanding the other, but how the self is implicated in the construction of otherness” (p. 31). Throughout the study the use of the word other requires the reader to consider how the experiences of participants may differ from the ways in which some readers
experience the world, a world that too often reinforces societal norms that perpetuate a category of otherness.

**Out.** Out is a significant term in this study as it counters the concept of “closetedness… a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence” (Sedgwick, 1990, p.3). The participants in this study have rejected being closeted, hiding, remaining silent and maintaining dual existences between work and home life. Coming out is an ongoing process for L&G individuals. Coming out at work is not a one-time process; as workplace personnel change, the need to disclose one’s sexual identity may arise repeatedly. All participants in this study are out, having disclosed their sexual orientation in the organizational structure of the college or university workplace environment (Hill, 2006).

**Queer/Queering.** The word queer is an adjective meaning not heterosexual (Dilley, 1999). It is also used more commonly as a noun to designate inclusion in a sexual- or gender-marginalized group (Rhoades, 1997). Queer is not a deficit but rather a “presence of something: a desire for same-sex experience, a position outside the normal trope of daily life that affords perspectives apart from the norm” (Dilley, 1999, p. 457). Within this study the term queer describes L&G individuals and theoretical concepts. Queer may also be used as a verb; for instance, queering curriculum refers to implementing a postmodern approach to curriculum that assumes identity and binaries as social constructs. Additionally, queering curriculum could also mean incorporating LGBTQ+ texts, concepts, and history into disciplines that have been void of these topics (Dilley, 1999). Queering of higher education has not occurred. Renn (2010) discusses that while higher education has entertained the concepts of queer theory, revising and changing higher education structures and cultures with sexuality and gender in mind has yet to occur.
**Sexuality.** Within this study, sexuality is defined in two ways. For the participants in the study, sexuality refers to the identity development of an individual in which sexuality is a process, or set of processes, “whereby identities are, in an ongoing and never complete way, constructed and reconstructed” (Knopp, 1999, p. 116). Sexuality also refers, however, to the organizational and community context of higher education. Corber and Valocchi (2003) define sexuality as a “regime of knowledge and power that structures the economic, political, and social life of modern societies” (p. 4). Sexuality is performed in a myriad of ways within higher education. These manifestations occur in direct and indirect ways and are mediated accordingly.

**Summary of Methodology**

This qualitative study is grounded in a descriptive multi-case study method, outlined by Stake (2006) and Yin (2014). Multi-case study method allows for robust and compelling research (Herriott & Firestone, 1983) that focuses on single cases as well as across cases. Data collection for this study included a critical incident survey, semi-structured interviews, and document and artifact analysis, all of which were conducted with nine participants using two research questions to frame the study. The nine cases were chosen for context in regard to institutional size, location, gender, and age. Each case involves an out president who identifies as lesbian or gay. For the purpose of this study, each case is centered upon understanding the pathway to presidency for out L&G presidents in a broader context as a leader, but also through experiences of bias and support.
Limitations

There are two limitations that impact this study: access and time. These limitations are acknowledged as a means of increasing awareness of the limits present within the study as well as providing areas which may need to be explored in future research.

**Access.** The study only examined individuals identifying as out L&G practitioners. Participants’ acknowledgement of being an out university president presented a specific lens through which their experiences took place and were interpreted. Additionally, participants were recruited from the LGBTQ Presidents Higher Education organization; thus the participants are familiar with one another and reflect similar perspectives and shared experiences. This sample also neglects to collect data on university presidents identifying with a different sexual or gender identity. At the time of data collection there were no presidents identifying as bisexual or as a trans* person that were a part of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization.

Closed presidents were not included as part of this study due to access and protection of their choice and privacy. However, it is clear that their perspective is a critical one in the ongoing discussion of this topic.

**Time.** Due to the numerous responsibilities of university presidents, acquiring access to one of their most valuable possessions—time; proved to be challenging. Therefore, care and intentionality were used in developing data collection methods that provided breadth and depth while being sensitive to the participants’ time. Consequently, the first interview was conducted in person with each president; follow up interviews were conducted via telephone.
Significance of Study

This study addresses an existing gap in queer research (Brazelton et al., 2015; Renn, 2010). While the study builds on the body of research examining institutional practices towards LGBTQ+ educators (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; deLeon & Brunner, 2013), its particular focus is on L&G university presidents, a population that has been minimally studied (Bullard, 2013; Leipold, 2014). This research provides insight and perspectives for L&G practitioners with regard to career path and trajectory. The two participant groups (lesbians and gay men) brought nuanced perspectives that challenge current standards and theory related to how university presidents experience their positions. Additionally, the concepts of bias and support are explored through the continuum of experiences along the pathway to presidency. This study is grounded in the multi-case study method (Stake, 2006), constructing meaning through the shared experiences of out L&G university presidents.

The most substantial outcomes of this research are 1) the way in which it informs practice within higher education; 2) reconsiders the structural and organizational ways in which higher education impacts L&G practitioners and 3) presents findings that presidents, administrators, faculty, and staff may use to understand or improve practices regarding bias and support to LGBTQ+ populations.

Dissertation Overview

Through engagement in intentional inquiry with L&G university presidents, an understanding of how sexuality affects career path, leadership, and policy emerged. Ultimately, this study provides direction and understanding regarding how L&G professionals navigate career paths and campus climate at varying points of their career.
This chapter provides an overview and introduction to the dissertation, as well as background and context as to the need for this study. Chapter two presents the literature review and offers a broad overview of the various contexts of the study, providing background and depth underscoring the relevance of this study. Chapter three provides the methodology used in this study, including the theoretical framework, research design, role of the researcher, site and participation selection, and analysis methods. Chapter four explores the singular and across case themes developed through a constructivist framework and descriptive multi-case study research design. Lastly, Chapter five offers a robust discussion of the findings and suggestions for future research and implications for developing best practices and refining programs and practices for LGBTQ+ faculty and administrators in higher education through queering.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

“The universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose” (Haldane, 1927, p. 286).

Overview of the Literature Review

The word queer is used in varying ways and to represent a myriad of possibilities or impossibilities in our world (Cohen, 2013; Dilley, 1999). Within this study, queered positions are presented in two ways: via participants identities’ being non-normative or counter to heterosexual identities and as the theoretical framework for this study. Queer theory supposes that sexuality is a social construct embedded among power differentials and ever changing meanings and contents for each individual (Britzman, 1995, 1997; Honeychurch, 1996; Seidman, 2010). As the theoretical framework for this study, queer theory enables the knowledge and points of view collected to be assembled into a new body of knowledge to inform and re-consider higher education.

According to Yin (2014) a rigorous methodological path is one that begins with a thorough literature review and intentional research questions to guide the study. The first two chapters of this dissertation offer a solid foundation, without which the research would lack clarity and the ability to inform and expand existing research on the topic. The literature review provides an overview and context through which the dissertation should be explored. Thorough review of the literature informed the two research questions, with research question one focused on the broader understanding of out L&G college and university president’s experiences within higher education, while research question two focused specifically on the pathway to presidency as an out L&G president. Leadership experiences (Bullard, 2013) and presidential search
processes (Leipold, 2014) have been explored in prior scholarly research, but pathways to presidency and its impact on future practitioners had not been studied until now.

The purpose of this study is to examine the pathways to university presidency for out L&G practitioners and how this informs campus climates, leadership, and career paths for other LGBTQ+ practitioners. This research contributes to further understanding the implications and insights out L&G presidents share and how these may inform shifting campus culture, the shattering of the lavender ceiling, and providing a more direct pathway for L&G practitioners to navigate towards senior leadership in higher education. It is important to frame this study in a discussion of queer theory, which is presented first. Queer theory highlights the theoretical construct which this study is situated and the lens through which the current literature should be reviewed. Second, an overview of significant historic events relevant to the LGBTQ+ community and the participants within the study also is presented. These historical events and markers provide milieu for the reader and underscore the impact of larger cultural systems and historical events on each out L&G university president as well as how their leadership and experiences impacted those same systems along the pathway to presidency. Third, a broad context about university presidents is provided to examine and understand the literature, or lack thereof, regarding the experiences of out L&G university presidents. The fourth and final section of the literature review focuses on the lavender ceiling. The emergence and performance of sexuality and gender presents challenges for out L&G presidents of colleges and universities, such as navigating coming out indefinitely in different settings to penetrating the lavender ceiling. The review of literature ultimately acknowledges the nuanced elements of being L&G in the work place and within the broader environment of higher education, exploring bias as a context of the environment.
Queer Theory

At the heart of queer theory is the position that the outside margins of what has been deemed as normal are challenged to create new ways to examine, critique, and present queer data (Britzman, 1995). Dilley (1999) describes queer theory as “elusive to nail down as mercury” (p. 457). In this comparison, Dilley discusses queer theory as a gauge or thermometer through which queer topics may be explored. The beginnings of queer theory are presented to provide background as to the relevance and emergence of the theoretical framework. A broader overview of how queer theory is used in various contexts follows, along with how higher education is being queered using the framework. Finally the use of queer theory as a framework and lens is discussed.

Beginnings of queer theory. Queer theory, that is, theory addressing the non-heterosexual, emerged from the post-structural theorist work of Michael Foucault (1978). Foucault (1978) explored sex and sexuality from rigid Victorian perspectives. His work highlighted the limitations of establishing universal truths and societal rules relating to sex and sexuality. A heteronormative society, which stems from the Victorian ideals of repression, applies value judgments to relationships and interactions, thereby positioning contexts outside of the norm as negative and abnormal. Foucault’s work engenders the resistance to the dominant power and asserts that sex and sexuality are social constructs (Seidman, 2010). Terms such as homosexual and heterosexual are concepts created in the late 19th century, supporting the ideals of a single sexuality, which offered no acknowledgment of the queer self (Foucault, 1978).

How queer theory is utilized in various contexts. Queer theory often provides more inquiry versus clear outcomes and therefore the process becomes just as important as the
product (Dilley, 1999). Britzman (1995) suggests three methods for qualitative research using queer theory: “studying limits, studying incongruence, and studying reading practices” (p. 155). Limits within sexuality are studied through the examination of lives, experiences, and perspectives of non-normative identities. Incongruence of existing binaries within sexuality are studied through comparisons between heteronormative and non-heteronormative lives, experiences, and perspectives. Reading practices include analytical reading outside of one’s area of expertise to challenge and better understand queer concepts (Dilley, 1999). Green (2002) discusses queer theory as sometimes inaccessible and lapsing into “a discursive, burdened, textual idealism” (p. 522). Queering literature is an academic process, whereas queering organizational structures and environments is much more complex. These complexities lead to a dissonance in moving queer theory to practice in real world contexts. Queer theory challenges a static identity, such as gay or straight, and instead embraces the performativity and fluidity present within sexuality and identity. Fluidity of gender performance and sexuality is counter to the binaries present within social structures in and out of higher education.

Abes and Kasch (2007) discuss queer theory as “critically analyzing the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identity, and resisting oppressive social constructs of sexual orientation and gender” (p. 620). This idea of intersectionality, or the overlapping of various identities such as race and sexuality and how these identities empower or oppress, emerges from the work of Crenshaw (1991), who explored identity development and contexts of life. Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) suggest that the exploration of the “whole-self” contextualizes the individual (p. 585). This exploration of self is posited through the heteronormative contexts and environments that restrict and impose discursive norms upon the identities of others. Queer theory opposes the hegemony enmeshed in static binaries of

Queer theory in higher education. Renn (2010) provides an in-depth overview of the status of queer research in higher education, arguing that few studies involving higher education faculty, staff, and students use queer theory as a framework through which data are collected and analyzed. Scholars such as Abes (2009), Bilodeau (2009), and Talburt (2000) offer queer scholarship within higher education that can be built upon. Abes (2009, 2008, 2007) has provided ways in which queer theory can be used to transform structures within higher education and impact LGBTQ+ college student experiences. Abes uses an intersectional approach, which seeks to challenge higher education to queer spaces through recognizing multiple identities. Bilodeau (2009) uses queer theory in his research focused on transgender college students to provide a space for exploration of inequitable structures marginalizing students based on the “underlying assumption that there are two, and only two, genders” (p. 54). The use of queer theory as a framework through which structures and norms are examined has the intent of moving from theory to practice. Talburt (2000) studies the identity of three lesbian faculty members and explores the participants’ identities through the queered approach of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing versus fixed social norms that typically define identity. No published research articles use this framework to explore governance and administrative leadership within higher education. Of particular relevance is not only the lack of research in this area but the lack of acknowledgement of studies relating to L&G university presidents.
Queer theory in this study. Within this study queer theory is used to explain and give voice to the ways in which the participants narrate their experiences and identity in the context of higher education as well as personal life. The findings provide themes that contextualize the heteronormative and hegemonic environments pervasive within higher education (Tierney, 1997). Foucault (1980a) suggests that “Power is always there. One is never outside it; there are no margins for those who break with system” (p. 141). Therefore, within this study queer theory serves as a lens through which to examine power structures, keeping these structures in the forefront when examining the collected data. Additionally, the study seeks to understand ways in which out presidents can queer higher education through their leadership and introduction of policies and practices as a result of their identity.

Historical Context of L&G

Understanding the historical context of gay and lesbian sexuality is significant, framing how these historical incidences have shaped sexuality and the community of L&G individuals. Varying historical events over the past 60 years have intersected and impacted the experiences of LGBTQ+ people. LGBTQ+ history has been omitted from education curricula (Mayo, 2013), leaving generations of people with no historical narrative to provide context to sexuality and gender identity. In this section, relevant LGBTQ+ history is presented to provide perspective and to contextualize the ways in which gender and sexuality have been culturally understood and positioned.

Lesbian and gay educator stigmas. In the early 1920’s and 1930’s individuals defined as gay were viewed as deviants and forced into the closet, and this was particularly true for educators during this period of time (Karslake, 2007). Around this same period of time, sex research began solidifying societal norms that placed L&G identities as incongruent (deLeon &
Brunner, 2013). Within education, L&G educators were viewed as deviants with a contagious disease (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Lesbian and gay educators were closeted and lived in fear of retribution, such as arrest, termination, or violence if their sexuality was discovered (deLeon & Brunner, 2013). Gay male teachers were forced out of the classroom for fear of sexual encounters with students, while lesbian educators were forced to live as spinsters if they were to keep teaching (Blount, 2003). There was no place in higher education for out L&G educators or administrators.

**Galvanizing events leading to change.** LGBTQ History has repeated a pattern of progress, promptly interjected with resistance. Strides forward have been a result of significant aggressions and loss for the LGBTQ+ community (Eaklor, 2008). Alexander and Gibson (2004) discuss the late 1960’s as being a time when coming out involved taking a stand against injustices of heterosexism and heteronormative environments. The 1969 Stonewall riots, led by LGBT community members of Greenwich Village, New York, were volatile protests in response to the ongoing harassment and raids taking place by New York police against patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar (D’ Emeilo, 1992). Stonewall and the 70’s sparked a sexual revolution that undergirded research studies examining L&G identities and experiences (Renn, 2010). Campus and community activism became commonplace, and colleges and universities began to consider how sexuality and gender coincided with higher education (Dilley, 2002). This revolution occurred shortly after the Stonewall riots and ruling in the case of *Morrison v. State Board of Education* (1969), where Marc Morrison was accused of engaging in sexual acts with a man, which led to being deemed unfit to teach and being terminated from his job. Ultimately, the case went to the Supreme Court, and Morrison was reinstated as an educator.

The past 50 years have shaped and changed the landscape for the L&G community (Fox, 2007). Academic organizations such as the American Library Association, Modern Language Association, and American Psychological Association each formed task forces focused on gay liberation (Eaklor, 2008). During a 1973 meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) a vote of the trustees deemed homosexuality not to be a mental disorder, with the change becoming effective in the 7th printing of the DSM-II (Bohan, 1996). This change in designation began to reduce stigma and bias related to sexual identity.

If the 70’s opened the proverbial closet for queer identities and acknowledged existing homophobia and discrimination, the 80’s brought stigmatized visibility via the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic (Shilts, 2007). The 80’s therefore were significant in building resilience and support within the gay community. By the end of 1981, 159 cases of AIDS were documented, raising awareness and fear across the world (AmfAR, 2015; Shilts, 2007). At the end of the decade, 89,343 deaths as a result of AIDS and 117,508 documented cases solidified the stigma and discrimination associated with being gay and having AIDS (AmfAR, 2015). The deaths of Rock Hudson, Liberace, and Michael Bennett brought national attention to the growing epidemic. AIDS was viewed as a disease only impacting gay men for a large part of the 80’s. The negative treatment of Ryan White, a 13 year-old hemophiliac with AIDS who was not allowed to attend school in Indiana, began to slowly shift negative and inaccurate perceptions about the disease. The gay community came together in
solidarity to support dying family\textsuperscript{2} and to challenge injustices such as no medical care, minimally funded and slowly progressing research, and educating the community about AIDS (Shilts, 2007).

The 90’s challenged heteronormativity through the development of queer theory and pedagogy within higher education and the continued emergence of LGBT studies programs across the U.S. (Alexander & Gibson, 2004). The presence of LGBT studies programs on college campuses challenged administration to consider where these programs fit and how to balance controversy that resulted from alumni and donors’ disapproval of the programs on campuses. Queer Theory offered new ways of thinking and reframing the world, yet the world continued to operate in binaries and norms dictated through straight lenses. The AIDS crisis continued, and in 1990 the Ryan White Care Act federally funded a program for individuals living with AIDS (Eaklor, 2008, Kaiser, 2007). While this program raised attention and support for AIDS patients, it failed to acknowledge or represent the LGBTQ+ community who fought for ten years and lost nearly a hundred thousand people. America was not ready to help LGBTQ+ individuals living with AIDS; however, a teenager who accidently received AIDS was worthy of compassion, as it did not involve human sexuality. Higher education grappled with ways to educate students about safe sexual practices and, similar to the world, struggled with how to support and care for students, faculty, and staff who were diagnosed with HIV or AIDS and in many cases forced to keep their diagnosis a secret (Donovan et al., 1998). LGBTQ+ studies programs and Queer theory brought opportunities to explore and study

\textsuperscript{2}Family is used to describe the idea of kinship. Kinship is “not a list of biological relatives” instead “…a system of categories and statuses that often contradict actual genetic relationships” (Rubin, 1975, P. 169). In queer culture the idea of family refers to LGBTQ identifying individuals as brothers and sisters. During the AIDS epidemic gay men who had contracted HIV and AIDS were abandoned by biological family members due to shame and fear and therefore LGBTQ people stepped into the roles of care and support (Shilts, 2007).
sexuality in open and progressive ways previously unavailable, yet this was in stark comparison with the 20,000 individuals dying of AIDS and over 40,000 new diagnoses occurring at the end of the 90’s (Center for Disease Control, 2018). Higher Education was trapped between exploring history and theoretical concepts in the classroom and putting theory into practice, which did not occur during a time when the LGBTQ+ community continued to be vilified and ignored amidst a health crisis (Eaklor, 2008).

Policy changes that occurred in the 1990’s included The Department of Defense instituted Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy in 1993, which eliminated applicants for military service from being asked or having to tell their sexual orientation; however, engaging in gay acts or disclosing sexual identity other than heterosexuality was not permitted (Eaklor, 2008; Kaiser, 2007). The policy offered an opportunity for gay men to enter the military but it was offered on the premise of gay men re-entering the closet and conducting themselves in alignment with what the government deemed as “normalized” straight men. In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the Defense Against Marriage Act into law, which defines marriage as legal union between one man and one woman, with the provision that no state was required to accept same-sex marriages from a different state (Eaklor, 2008; Eisenbach, 2007). The signing of this Act into law created an almost twenty-year battle focused on marriage equality. As the end of the decade approached on October 7, 1998, Matthew Shepard was brutally murdered due to his sexual orientation. This hate crime drew national media attention and reminded the nation of the discrimination and victimization that occurs to LGBTQ+ people (Eaklor, 2008). It would take over ten years for the Matthew Shepard Act to be instated in October 2009, which provides protections based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. Matthew Shepard’s age and the brutal nature of his murder resonated with college students across the
nation, who questioned campus administration with how LGBTQ+ college students would be protected and supported. Prior to the death of Matthew Shepard many colleges did not consider sexuality as a part of a hate crime. Campus faculty, staff, and administrators were once again reminded of the limits of education and awareness and began to change policies and practices on campus related to hate and bias based crimes (Dubois, 2006). Queer theory is being taught in the classroom and emerging in scholarship, yet colleges and universities have been unable to deconstruct heteronormativity and re-envision the ivory tower as an inclusive and supportive space for LGBTQ+ people.

**Historical context connection to the study.** In the 2000’s more L&G people hold political offices, Fortune 500 companies have instituted antidiscrimination policies, and Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell has been repealed (Walters, 2014). Attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people have become more positive within the past decade (Westgate at al., 2015). In June of 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage in Obergefell v. Hodges (Supremecourt.gov). Unfortunately, in 31 states LGBTQ individuals may be fired based on discriminatory practices (HRC, 2015). However, there is still much work to be done because injustice and heteronormative practices are resoundingly accepted throughout the United States. Research on perceptions of LGBTQ+ leaders in the workplace has been minimal (Fassinger et al., 2010; Morton, 2017). Barrantes and Eaton (2018) use implicit leadership theory in their study to understand the perceptions of gay men in leadership roles. Implicit leadership theory posits that society’s norms about leaders guide the overall expectations of ideal leaders in the workplace (Schyns & Meindl, 2005). Within the United States this means leaders are viewed as white, cis-gender, straight men. Morton (2017) suggests through his study that there was no difference in leadership effectiveness between LGBTQ+ and straight leaders.
Fassinger et al. (2010) proposed a comprehensive model for LGBTQ+ leadership in the workplace that takes into consideration sexuality, gender, and interaction with leaders and followers. This study explores how L&G identities challenge binaries and the ways in which non-fluid identities are able to exist in an environment that may consider the theoretical frameworks of queering space, but which is unable to move theory into practice. The heteronormative environment of higher education has similarly considered the theoretical concepts of queering, yet has been slow to deconstruct heteronormative practices and create a re-imagined environment that recognizes and provides equitable space for LGBTQ+ leaders across the academy (Renn, 2010).

University Presidents

The demographics of college and university presidents have changed very little over the past 25 years, with minimal diversity in regard to race, gender, and sexual orientation (Cook, 2012). Senior level leaders serving as presidents at multiple institutions over the course of their tenure; the age of current presidents has increased to individuals in their 60’s (Song & Hartley, 2012). Out L&G college and university presidents ranging from ages 50 to 70 experienced historical events, including Stonewall, AIDS, and Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; providing a unique frame through which they have experienced sexuality in and out of higher education.

ACE and CIC studies. The American Council on Education (ACE) has conducted The American College President Study every five years since 1986 (American Council on Education, 2016). The ACE presidential study spans 25 years with eight iterations of the survey. Demographic information such as race, gender, and age is collected. The collected data provide an in-depth view of what issues presidents in higher education experience, who they are as leaders, as well as pathways to presidency. ACE has also used this data to predict and
envision how the role of president may change in the future and identify existing gaps such as gender and race (Cook, 2012). The profile of college and university presidents has changed very little in the past twenty-five years, with the majority being white males (Kim & Cook, 2013). Only 9% of presidents belong to racial or ethnic groups defined as other, and 26% are women (American Council on Education, 2016). Approximately, 45% of college and university presidents held a position within academic affairs/faculty one year prior to their current presidency, compared to only 16% of presidents holding a senior executive position outside of academic affairs one year prior to presidency (American Council on Education, 2016). The study suggested that female presidents are less likely to be married or have children as opposed to males (American Council on Education, 2016). In the 2016 study, 58% of presidents were over the age of 60, which is one of the only significant changes since 1986, when only 13% were over the age of 60 (American Council on Education, 2016). A study similar in scope was conducted by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) in a 2011 survey of college and university presidents (Song & Hartley, 2012). The findings from the study suggest that the typical president of an independent college or university is a white male in his 60’s with seven years tenure in the position (Song & Hartley, 2012). Existing surveys of college and university presidents (American Council on Education, 2016; Council for Independent Colleges and Universities, 2012) have traditionally omitted questions related to sexual identity. This omission limits the understanding of how many L&G college and university presidents are serving in institutions of higher education and ignores an important identity within the university presidential experience. In the 2016 administration of the American Council on Education presidential survey questions measured presidential perceptions of climate, but the survey still did not include a question pertaining to the sexuality of the presidents.
**Omission of sexuality and gender identity.** Sexuality and gender identity represent data missing from the American Council on Education and Council of Independent Colleges studies, despite both organizations’ acknowledgement that higher education is becoming more diverse and that there is a significant need for more diversity among presidents and senior administration (American Council on Education, 2016; Song & Hartley, 2012). The findings of both studies adhere to heteronormative constructs, which define family circumstances as the marriage between a man and a woman. These findings do not report on partners or non-hetero relationships and therefore may represent skewed data. In an article written by current out L&G presidents, it is estimated that less than 1% of all presidents are out and identify as L&G (Henking et al., 2014). With 48 out L&G presidents belonging to the LGBTQ presidents group, there have been few attempts to capture the experiences of this population (Rivard, 2014).

**L&G university presidents.** A study conducted by Henking et al. (2014) explores the impact of being gay upon leadership and the influence on employees at colleges and universities. This qualitative study suggests the importance of being out and the possibilities inherent in honoring others and the significant impact on institutional mission and vision. Henking et al’s. study underscores the need for further research, examining the impact of workplaces that lack inclusivity and promote hostile environments. An article authored by Fain (2007) brought to the forefront the challenges of serving as a president of an institution of higher education as an openly gay leader, who faces conservative boards and governance structures, scrutiny of one’s personal life, fear of discrimination, and limitations of institutional type. There were three L&G presidents cited in the 2014 article; three years later the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization was founded in 2010 with 25 members (LGBTQ
Presidents in Higher Education, 2014). At the time of this study there were 48 LGBTQ presidents who were members of the organization (Rivard, 2014).

Current trends for search processes for presidents include the use of search consultants, with 80% of schools employing outside firms (American Council on Education, 2016). Rivard (2014) suggests that search firms provide opportunities for L&G candidates to disclose their sexuality early on in the process. Despite the use of outside, “objective” search firms, there are still risks of discrimination, and experiences of bias enmeshed in the process. Institutions of higher education may not be described as hostile; however, research suggests most institutions are led by a homogeneous cadre of white men. It is important to understand the experiences of out L&G individuals in president positions as it is unclear at this time as to whether or not their presence may impact other marginalized groups.

**Role of understanding presidents in this study.** The findings from this study will provide themes that explore the pathways of L&G presidents towards presidency, which include both supports and barriers. Exploring the pathways of L&G leaders in positions of university or college presidents offers the opportunity to understand the power structures in place within higher education that impede or limit momentum based on sexuality and gender identity. The themes also will explore the common experiences of L&G presidents within higher education, which will provide depth to an area that has remained largely unexplored—sexual identity and senior leadership within higher education.

**Coming out and epistemology of the closet.** The act of coming out as well as the process of remaining closeted are performative in nature (Sedgwick, 1991). The performance and/or multiple acts of remaining silent or sharing one’s sexuality reflect and produce “effects of identity, enforcement, seduction, challenge” (p. 10). In this performance positioning also
occurs, which influences how we collectively understand language and action. Sedgwick (1990) termed the wearing of masks and varying roles of silence, in which sexual identity is or is not expressed, as the “epistemology of the closet.” Within higher education this paradigm is seen through the identity roles LGBTQ+ faculty, students, staff, and administrators must balance and articulate to populations within the institution (Tierney, 1993). Tierney suggests the need for lighting of closets and the removing of masks to redefine the constructs of heteronormativity that have built closets and to further undo the categorical binaries that shape how we categorize sexuality through a critical perspective. The long-standing narrative regarding the empowerment of coming out within the educational context (Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992; Sears & Williams, 1997) has existed based on coming out as a “prime method for reducing negative attitudes and acts of prejudice…” (Bridgewater, 1997, p. 65). Once again, this emphasizes that through being out, educators can deconstruct the heteronormative structures that exist in higher education as well as reducing discrimination.

Henking et al. (2014) suggests that through redefining the concepts of closets the ability to be a solid leader emerges, despite needing to deconstruct the expectations of sexuality and identity that are present each day. One college president from Henking et al’s (2014) qualitative inquiry of gay leadership styles impact on employees purports:

The implication that one can pass is important here; the closet presumes collaboration in an “open secret” in which one remains hidden until and unless one is…not. Here, identity and authenticity are construed through the lenses of choice and visibility. Thus the closet is (and is not) relevant to one’s leadership as a college president or at a Fortune 1000 corporation. In both contexts, one is a symbol of one’s institution and, all too often, a symbol of one’s “category” as well (Henking et al., 2014, p. 61).
Coming out is not a singular or one-dimensional process. The implications of coming out within the workplace coincide with the complications of the invisible, yet oppressive lavender ceiling. The lavender ceiling is present, but does not manifest itself until stepping out of the closet occurs. Through the ongoing action of coming out, the lavender ceiling becomes visible to the L&G individual as well as being enacted by heteronormative structures and hegemonic actions.

**Coming out in the workplace.** The role of being *out* in the workplace is complicated and varying. A national quantitative study by Hewlett and Sumbles (2011) emphasizes the complex negotiation of identity that occurs within the workplace environment. Forty eight percent of L&G employees are not out at work. This statistic is underscored by the authors’ finding that 52% of men and 37% of women prefer that L&G employees do not discuss or engage aspects of their personal lives at work (Hewlett & Sumberg, 2011). Ruggs et al. (2015) conducted a study which suggests that individuals who remain closeted do so out of fear that coworkers will be unsupportive and that disclosure will have a negative impact on one’s career.

Perceived workplace climate and support have been suggested to lead to greater levels of comfort for out LGBTQ+ employees (Huffman et al., 2008; Kollen, 2013; Reed & Leuty, 2016). Research suggests that LGBTQ+ people who perceive support within the workplace as well as positive co-worker reactions to disclosure, report decreased fear and higher levels of disclosure (Ragins et al., 2007; Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Lyons, Brenner, and Fassinger (2005) suggest a correlation between job satisfaction and being out in the workplace, yet closeted employees expressed higher levels of satisfaction with salary, highlighting possible discrepancies in wages among out and closeted employees. Research studies exploring the positive benefits of coming out have been a mix of results; Wax, Coletti, and Ogaz (2018), who
conducted a meta-analysis examining the benefits of coming out at work, described the act of disclosing one’s sexuality as “a highly complex, fluid, ongoing process (p. 6)”. The meta-analysis found that due to the variability of findings across studies that examined coming out and job satisfaction generalizability was not possible.

The concepts of tolerance have allowed inequality to perpetuate within higher education and kept many educational leaders closeted (Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003). Tolerance does not equate to support or stability in the workforce for L&G individuals; therefore there is still risk in coming out in the workplace. In a study examining senior level student affairs professionals’ negotiations with regard to coming out, Renn (2003) states there are several factors shaping the decision to come out, such as policies, colleague support, personal life, and whether or not an individual is partnered. Evans and Broido (1999) first explored the interaction of private versus public identity in regards to educators and the ongoing narrative of coming out as well as the renegotiation it requires. Gedro (2009) asserts that the process of coming out is ongoing and continues once a position is accepted through making decisions such as wearing a wedding ring or placing pictures of a partner or family in one’s office. L&G presidents of colleges and universities may not have the opportunity to remain closeted based on whether or not they are partnered because often partners become a part of the institutional fabric of a college or university (Bullard, 2013).

**Bias and support.** Bias and assumptions emerge within the workplace through heterosexist discrimination and actions (Gedro, 2009; Hill, 2006); higher education is no exception to this. The lavender ceiling (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995) describes an existing power structure that limits the persistence and success of L&G individuals, similar to the concept of the glass ceiling for women. Unger (2011) describes this barrier as being
impenetrable. In a study by the Human Rights Campaign (2011), 567 of 4391 colleges and universities offered protection against discriminatory acts based on sexual orientation, underscoring the importance of sexuality being a protected identity. However, only 309 institutions provided health-care or partner benefits, which indicates a lack of support for LGBTQ+ employees. Policies and practices on campus underscore the existing barrier of the lavender ceiling.

Discrimination occurs on campus in numerous ways, and deLeon and Brunner (2013) suggest the “Euro-heteropatriachal attitudes of society intensify the fear of difference, allowing bias and inequalities to prevail even at the structural level” (p. 162) of society. Structural microaggressions occur at all levels within higher education, perhaps even more so for out L&G presidents as they are viewed as different or the other. Studies in the United States have found upwards of 60% of LGBTQ+ people have been discriminated against in the workplace (Badgett et al., 2007; Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012). McFadden (2015) suggests there are two types of discrimination: formal and informal. Formal discrimination is in regard to job applications, job searches, wages, and job termination. Informal discrimination examples include jokes, harassment, exclusion, and microaggressions. Stereotyping, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment are cited as the three significant ways in which LGBTQ+ people are discriminated against (Guiffre et al., 2008). Research related to sexuality and the workplace is relatively extensive (Carr et al., 2003, Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998; Grossman, 2012; Johnson & McIntye, 1998; Lehtonen, 2016; Wright & Smith, 2015); however, few studies have examined the interactions between sexuality and colleges and universities as workplaces (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009).
L&G employees may experience professional and personal stress as a result of navigating identities and barriers related to sexuality and gender identity (Gedro, 2009). Taylor and Raeburn (1995) conducted a study examining discrimination experienced by out faculty advocates on campus, including bias in the tenure and promotion process, exclusion from colleague and peer networks, minimization of research if focused on queer or LGBTQ+ topics, and difficulty in acquiring positions. Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) studied faculty in arts and sciences and found that activism is a way to mitigate negative impacts of the work environment and to counteract experiences of bias.

Chung (2001) identifies coping strategies for dealing with discrimination in the workplace, including quitting, silence, social support, and confrontation, all of which emphasize the risk and sacrifice that come with each decision. Antidiscrimination policies, inclusive environments, and practices that promote multiple identities have a positive long-term effect on employees. Ragins and Cornwell (2001) suggest that the strongest predictors of inclusive work environments are opportunities for employees to bring partners to work events and gatherings.

**Lavender ceiling and relevance to the study.** The lavender ceiling represents an impenetrable barrier to the pathway to presidency within this study. The concepts of power differentials, coming out as an ongoing narrative, and the negative influences of bias are significant areas being explored within this study as a means of better understanding the barriers in L&G leaders’ paths to presidency. Themes relevant to the concepts above that emerged through this study may offer ways in which cracks may be made in the lavender ceiling.

**Literature Review Summary**

The literature presented in chapter two grounded this study in queer theory and provides relevant literature that seeks to queer heteronormative concepts. An overview of significant
historic events relevant to the LGBTQ+ community and the participants within the study are presented to provide context to the reader who may not be familiar with LGBTQ+ history and to ground the lived experiences of the participants within a historical and social context. Relevant literature about college and university presidents is presented to illustrate the lack of diversity in these senior level positions as well as highlighting the limited existence of research on L&G presidents. Finally, literature about the lavender ceiling is provided to connect the concepts of power, coming out, and bias.

The literature cited in this study provides an overview of relevant queer concepts to understand the experiences of L&G university presidents in the context of higher education. It is important to note that literature on queer issues is evolving quickly (Brazelton et al., 2015). Political and social attitudes are having a significant impact upon the landscape of queer culture (Bazarsky et al., 2015). Despite articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Education, and The Washington Post discussing L&G presidents (Fain, 2007; Juschik, 2010; Stripling, 2014; Wilson, 2011), studies have largely omitted administrators within colleges and universities from current research. Additionally, the pathways of presidents have not been studied as a means for exploring career trajectory as well as bias and support. The possibilities of exploring these pathways have the potential to shape and grow future leaders within higher education.
Chapter 3: Methodology

“The past is not simply the past, but a prism through which the subject filters his own changing self-image” (Kearns, 1979, p. 101).

Overview of Chapter 3

The prism becomes a metaphor for considering how the past impacts life experiences, as noted by Doris Kearns Goodwin’s (1979) observation cited above. Kearns Goodwin suggests that the prism represents the past and serves as a filter through which an individual may understand the experiences of life. In this metaphor, experiences become the light that shines to refract and reflect an individual’s path towards the present. Through exploration of these projected fractals of past experiences, the individual is empowered to understand one’s self and his or her journey towards the future. Similarly, qualitative research allows a researcher to understand the ever-changing journey and experiences of the participants being examined through various pertinent lenses which provide explanations, understanding, and meaning.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) assert that qualitative data represent a:

…source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of human processes.

With qualitative data, one can preserve chronological flow, see which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations…Finally, the findings from well-analyzed qualitative studies have a quality of “undeniability.” Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, and meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader—another researcher, a policymaker, or a practitioner—than pages of summarized numbers (p. 4).

Qualitative research examines the experiences of participants operating in real-life situations and scenarios (Stake, 2006). For this study a qualitative descriptive multi-case study (Yin,
was selected as a means to present an in-depth understanding (Maxwell, 2013) through the use of multiple methods of data collection focused on depth versus breadth. The study is guided by two research questions: 1) What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education? 2) How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency? The first research question is framed broadly to better understand the experiences of out L&G presidents, while the second research question narrows to understand the impact of being an out L&G president upon the pathway specifically. Single case analysis and across case analysis were used to yield thematic findings, supported by thick description.

This chapter provides an overview and rationale for the qualitative research design of this study and contains six sections. The chapter begins by first providing the conceptual framework for the study, followed by a rationale for qualitative methodology and descriptive multi-case study design (Yin, 2014; Stake, 2006). The third section explores the writer’s reflexivity and provides a researcher as an instrument statement. The fourth section presents overviews and detailed accounts of participant selection. A description of how data were collected and analyzed is included in the fifth section, and the sixth and concluding section offers a discussion of validity and limitations.

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework provides the researcher with an evolving map through which the research is conducted; as the researcher further develops knowledge, the framework evolves and becomes more clearly articulated (Miles et al., 2014). Maxwell (2013) describes conceptual frameworks as “the system concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports or informs your research” (p.39). For this study the conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2013) is grounded in critical postmodernism (Foucault, 1976, Baudrillard,
1987), queer theory (Butler, 2004; Berlant & Warner, 1998; Foucault, 1976) and the metaphor of prism projections (Kearns, 1979). This study presumes that the constructs of society are largely heteronormative and hegemonic (Berlant & Warner, 1998; Rich, 1980; Warner 1991). Enmeshed in the larger societal structure are colleges and universities, the environments of which are also predominately heteronormative and hegemonic (Renn, 2010). Critical postmodernism and queer theory are two lenses through which data collection and coding of data occurred. The lens of Critical postmodernism allows for capturing and identifying the impacts of heteronormative structures, while the lens of queer theory provides a framework to consider the intersection between how participants are marginalized and what is possible through reframing within a queered perspective. The prism metaphor acknowledges the influence of each participant’s sexual identity as it filters through past experience and ultimately projects elements of the participant’s pathways. Transferable data allow current out L&G presidents of colleges and universities and L&G administrators to better understand upward movement in higher education positions. Figure 3.1 provides an illustration of the conceptual framework for this study.
**Critical postmodern.** Critical postmodern thought seeks to combine the empowerment of voice for others that is inherent in critical theory and the deconstruction of norms within postmodernism (Tierney, 1997). Critical postmodernism is described by Peter McLaren (1995) as examining “both the macro-political level of structural organization and the micro-political level of different and contradictory manifestations of oppression as a means of analyzing global relations of oppression” (p. 209). McLaren (1995) grounds critical postmodernism in the process of examining the larger political structures of an organization or entity, while simultaneously investigating the smaller political challenges and oppressions as they occur at varying levels throughout the organization. Within this study, universities represent the
organization through which micro and macro political structures are examined as a means of understanding the impact upon out L&G college and university presidents pathways.

A critical postmodern framework is integral to the process of full exploration of the complicated organizational structure of a university as well as the diverse personalities that exist within the organization. A critical postmodernist framework brings into focus the individual and organization to examine the experiences of out L&G university presidents within the complex context of higher education. People are viewed as object and subject; “neither passive objects incapable of resistance, nor are they unconstrained individuals able to determine their own histories” (Tierney, 1993, p. 28). Within this study, I engage objective and subjective lenses to discern emerging themes in each case and across cases. By using critical postmodernism as a lens through data collection and coding of data I am able to recognize and mediate the negative impacts of societal and organizational norms and othering.

Colleges and universities then are viewed as communities. Community allows for the consideration of what is and what could be (Weeks, 1995). Through questioning the possibilities that exist and challenging assumptions within the community, action becomes possible (Tierney, 1997). Power dynamics exist at all levels within higher education. Established norms are enmeshed with power, which creates a unique paradigm for L&G university presidents. Foucault (1980) discusses power as being always present, and inescapable; “there are no margins for those who break with the system” (p. 141). Grounded in these concepts, this study seeks to understand at a micro level how L&G university presidents influence and connect to the communities of colleges and universities and how the queer identity is recognized or denied within the larger macro levels of higher education.
**Queer theory.** Queer theory asserts that sexual orientation is a fluid aspect of identity that rejects containment and consistencies and is complex and changeable (Giffney, 2009). By rejecting categorization, Queer theory also disrupts the social and cultural pressures for individuals to behave in particular ways. Because society is structured as a series of hierarchies where power dynamics can be associated with a person’s status and role, the same individual may be afforded different levels of power in different settings according to relative position (Kumashiro, 2000). Levels of power are constructed through socio-political actions over time.

Although western societies are shifting to more egalitarian or equal rights perspectives (Lorber, 2013), sexual orientation still plays a role in defining power dynamics. As a theoretical perspective, Queer theory rejects binary understandings of sexuality as a means of disrupting hegemonic power structures. Queer theory’s goal, to reject labels and identities that have traditionally been used to exclude or limit the power of individuals who do not conform to sexual norms, creates an empowered space for individuals to embrace new identities (Beasley, 2005; Butler, 1993b). This perspective accepts that sexuality can be embodied in multiple ways and can change over time, allowing individuals to embody this fluidity as it fits their personal and political identities. A queered position acknowledges multiple theoretical perspectives. Essentialists view sexuality as constant and unchanged; people have always had same-sex relations so being gay is deemed biologically normal (Dilley, 1999). Queer theory also acknowledges constructionist attributes, which focuses on the individual subject and the process that is continually evolving and changing, with sexuality defined and viewed a constructed concept (Penn, 1995). The essentialist and constructionist perspectives are entwined positions that comprise queer theory. Table 3.1 displays theoretical perspectives of sexuality, which depicts the range of perspectives from essentialism to queer theory.
In this study queer theory is used to challenge the hegemony or “academic mindset that assumes the centrality of white, middle-class, male, heterosexual values and desire” (Gibson, Marinara, & Meem, 2000, p. 93).

No published studies about administrative leaders and governance use queer theory as a theoretical framework (Renn, 2010). The absence of queer theory to frame research presents an existing gap and challenge, and Britzman (1995) suggests that queer theory examines marginalized populations or at least approaches the edges of the norm, which provides new ways to view, analyze, and engage. Whereas critical postmodernism served as a lens to acknowledge and deconstruct a range of norms existing within higher education such as race and ability—the historic role of white able-bodied men serving as presidents of colleges and universities, queer theory is a lens through which gender and sexuality is deconstructed. This study uses queer theory as a lens to reframe the heteronormative and hegemonic structures of society, higher education, and the experiences of out L&G presidents. Queer theory is also used
as a lens through which the collected data were analyzed to identify opportunities and examples of ways in which organizations may be queered.

**The prism metaphor.** According to Newton (2012) white light is composed of all of the colors visible to the human eye within the electromagnetic spectrum. When light passes through a prism, it is bent by the angles on the surface of the prism causing each wavelength of light to be refracted by varying amounts. Each color is refracted differently, bending at different angles, transforming white light into the colors of the spectrum, displaying a rainbow (Newton, 2012). The use of the rainbow within the prism metaphor is culturally significant as the rainbow has been synonymous with LGBTQ+ pride and culture for over 36 years (Grossman, 2012). The metaphor of the prism is realized in the work of artist Gilbert Baker, who transformed the colors of the rainbow to embody queer culture and pride (Grossman, 2012). In 1978, the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade commissioned him to design a symbol that could be used to represent diversity and acceptance (Grossman, 2012). Baker connects the mythical and scientific aspects of the rainbow, a production of refracted light, to the complex understanding of sexuality. Baker’s initial rendering of the flag contained eight colors, each color acknowledging a specific aspect of queer identity: “pink for sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, blue for art, indigo for harmony, and violet for the human spirit” (Grossman, 2012, para. 4). Pink was dropped from the flag due to the limited availability of pink fabric, as was indigo, to allow for an even six stripes. Baker describes the symbolism and enmeshment with the colors of the pride flag for LGBTQ+ people:

> The rainbow is a part of nature and you have to be in the right place to see it. It’s beautiful, all of the colors, even the colors you can’t see. That really fit us as a people
because we are all of the colors. Our sexuality is all of the colors. We are all the genders, races and ages (Grzanich, 2012, para. 4).

The rainbow represents Baker’s belief that sexuality intersects with multiple elements of identity; such as race and gender, within each individual. The study uses the rainbow metaphor as reflected in Baker’s work capturing the enmeshment of LGBTQ+ identity in the rainbow projection that emerges from the prism.

Maxwell (2013) discusses how epistemological constructivism posits that the world is ultimately society’s construction and that, consequently, all theories and models are attempts to simplify and explain the complex reality in which we exist. With this in mind, the final component of the conceptual framework of this study is based upon prisms and refracting light. The prism acts as a conduit through which the past may be examined and inform understanding of self. In this study, the prism is comprised of past personal history, which includes past experiences and defining moments focused around sexual identity. Examples of past personal history includes coming out and the context through which this occurred, historical landmarks such as Stonewall, and defining life moments such as the death of a partner or getting married.

Three identities comprise the participants’ LGBTQ identity: professional identity, personal identity, and cultural identity. Each of these identities is comprised of how the presidents mediate and engage with their sexuality within the work environment, in their daily lives outside of work, and within their varying identities. LGBTQ identity is filtered through the prism and intersects with past personal history, recognizing that identity and past experiences are interconnected in varying ways based on each president’s experiences. Considering the connections between LGBTQ+ identity and past personal history provided a deductive lens through which pathways and experiences were explored through data collection and analysis.
The resulting projections are pathways and experiences which are comprised of bias and support, leadership experiences, and forms of identity mediation. The refracted light comprised colorful and unique pathways for each participant and offered the opportunity to explore differences and commonalities. The prism metaphor also allowed me to embrace the complexity of identity and history and how it impacts pathways and experiences, as well as providing a structure through which I could better articulate the components throughout design and analysis. Additionally, the prism metaphor serves as a lens through which the experiences and pathways of presidents are viewed in regards to research question one and two. Figure 3.2 displays the process in which LGBTQ+ identity filters through past personal history to project pathways and experiences.

**Figure 3.2** The Prism as a Metaphorical Process to Examine Out L&G Presidents
Rationale for Qualitative Design

Designing research is “as much art as science” and “an exercise of the dramatic imagination” (Cronbach, 1982, p. 239). Yin (2014) concedes that “The design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (p.28). This study was developed with intentionality and careful design, utilizing both an inductive and deductive approach throughout to inform the design and analysis.

This dissertation is a descriptive multi-case, qualitative study. Cases were analyzed individually and each of the nine cases was also analyzed across and within cases to identify common experiences and themes. Multi-case study is a method that offers rigorous processes and approaches (Stake, 2006; Yin 2014). This study examined how out lesbian and gay university presidents experience bias and support and the impact of identity upon professional life while navigating the pathway to presidency.

Qualitative design emphasizes the lived experience and is “well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the social world” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 11). The research questions for this study required an inductive and deductive approach to develop and analyze themes. A qualitative design provided a framework through which the social worlds of L&G presidents could be explored in a complex and layered approach through analysis of single cases and across cases. This study is exploratory in nature, with the purpose of collecting necessary data to begin constructing theoretical frameworks grounded in queer theory and constructivist perspectives to understand the impacts of sexuality and gender upon the lavender ceiling.
Multi-Case Study Design

Case study is one of the most challenging methods of social science research and focuses on investigating a “contemporary phenomenon” (case) in depth and within its context (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Within this study the pathways of out L&G presidents serve as the contemporary phenomenon. As a phenomenon, L&G presidents are of particular interest for several reasons: they make up less than one percent of college and university presidents (Rivard, 2014), minimal exploration of the experiences and pathways of out L&G presidents has occurred (Bullard, 2013; Henking et al., 2014; Leipold, 2014), and sexuality and gender identity are at the forefront of current political and justice issues (Fantz, 2016; Walters, 2014).

A case investigation becomes of interest when the boundaries between the context and case become blurred. Within this study the presidents are bounded by the context of the college environment and how the presidents experience, interact, and impact the colleges and universities they lead. This multi-case study acknowledges the shared and different experiences between out L&G presidents and looks for themes across cases. A case is dynamic and always evolving, “operating in real time” (Stake, 2006, p. 3). The design of this study recognizes the strength of a single case and presents the single case findings as a way to ground the across case findings. Stake (2006) suggests that a single case is meaningful particularly because of its context and interaction with other cases.

Multi-case studies examine cases that are bound by a common concept or idea. Stake (2006) asserts that cases should be no less than four nor more than 10 phenomena, objects, or conditions. These numbered parameters underscore the relevance of selecting meaningful and solid cases. There are three main criteria for selecting multiple cases: 1) pertinence to the phenomenon 2) diversity across cases; 3) and “opportunities to learn about complexity and
contexts” (p.23). Within this study there were 9 cases comprised of out L&G presidents of colleges or universities. Stake’s first criterion for selecting multiple cases is addressed through each case being bound by the common criteria of being an out L&G college or university president. The second criterion is met through the selection of 9 cases selected to ensure a diverse context with regard to institutional type, size, location, gender, and age. The third criterion is met through the selection of cases that provide a range of institutional types and the inclusion of L&G participants, ensuring that the cases provide varying contexts. Complexity of the cases was addressed through examining cases individually as well as across cases, ensuring themes were identified singularly and across cases.

This study was grounded in a descriptive case design (Yin, 2014), with the purpose of describing a phenomenon in its real world context. The goal of the study is to understand the pathway to presidency for out L&G presidents in a broader context as a leader, but also through experiences of bias and support.

Reflexivity and Statement as a Researcher

Patton (2002) states that, “the quality of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher” (p. 5). Reflexivity or how we position ourselves in the study is an integral piece of qualitative research, building credibility and increasing transparency (Wolcott, 2010). Transparency within the research process decreases threats to validity and reactivity that may occur due to the interaction between the participants and the researcher. I provide my statement as a researcher, addressing my experiences, background, bias and position as the investigator of this study.

Background. My knowledge of college and university presidents comes through experiences beginning as early as my undergraduate experience when, as a student leader, I had
the opportunity to engage in conversations with the president of the university I attended, attend social functions at his house, and form opinions about how a president should lead and grow a campus. These experiences were structured through a heteronormative lens that presented the president as a straight, white, cisgender, married male. At social functions his wife was often in attendance and a visible and involved part of his tenure at the university. My undergraduate experience served as a key time for understanding and developing my sexual identity. Since this time I have worked at three higher education institutions. In this 15-year time span, each of these presidents has been a straight, white, cisgender married man, leading me to operate with an assumption that the space for an out LGBTQ+ president was limited, if even possible.

Working within the area of Student Affairs, I have been fortunate to experience a culture that is open, understanding, and inclusive to sexuality and gender identity. Many of us are trained as practitioners to be holistic and developmental in approach, which certainly has some transferability to one’s personal life as well. Despite this acceptance that is present within student affairs and sometimes in higher education, there is also an existing expectation as to what level sexual or gender identity and expression will be accepted or enable an individual to progress professionally. As a gay man who was in a nine-year relationship until spring 2017, I often consider the implications of being out in varying contexts, such as, at work or in graduate school, among different groups of friends or family, and other realms of life. My partner and I would reflect upon the ways in which our sexuality emerges or is performed differently based on the context. We work within higher education and as such have experienced colleges and universities as heteronormative entities, which simultaneously empower and marginalize sexuality and gender identity. I am an administrator in a student affairs division within higher
Within higher education I have been aware, perhaps even hyper-aware, as to how my sexuality intersects with my professional identity.

**Experiences and position.** I began my doctoral studies focusing on community engagement as a research topic of interest. Community engagement was relevant to the work I was doing in my career and is positively received by colleagues and faculty. Two conversations with colleagues on different occasions organically cultivated bigger questions sexuality and moved me away from safe and familiar ideologies of community engagement and repositioned me in the critical reality of sexuality and higher education.

The first conversation occurred with a senior level academic administrator who is an experienced leader and colleague. We met for breakfast one morning in the fall semester of 2013 at a local diner. Over the course of the breakfast meeting we discussed work related topics as well as narratives from our lives. Midway through the conversation my colleague shared, “I am guessing you probably know I am gay, right?” In reality, I did not know, and had not given it much thought. I also took the opportunity to come out and we discussed at length the challenges of coming out numerous times in a lifetime. The significance of this interaction was that through the mutual sharing of our sexuality I began an internal dialogue as to the importance of being out in higher education and to what extent one’s level of being out mattered. I was struck with curiosity as to how her sexual identity had impacted her career pathway and in what ways my sexuality has intersected with career trajectory. I was also intrigued to discuss ways in which the expression of her sexuality had been challenged or supported.

Several months later I discovered an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which discussed the increasing presence of out L&G presidents of colleges and universities as
well as a national organization for LGBTQ college and university presidents (Wilson, 2011). The article left me wondering about the impacts of serving in a senior leadership role in higher education and how one’s sexual identity may serve as a catalyst for impacting larger environmental and cultural change. In the spring of 2014, I began writing with a faculty member and mentor in my doctoral program. I was enmeshed in literature focusing on heteronormativity in education (Blackburn, 2005; Kumashiro, 2000), the fluidity of sexuality and gender (Butler, 2004; Diamond, 2007; Foucault, 1978), and how positioning of self and other’s gender and sexuality (Davies & Harre, 1990) creates possibility or impossibility. All of these topics fostered my awareness towards an emerging research question.

In April 2014, while co-coding data for a research study with my dissertation chair, I shared my growing intrigue with the topic of LGBTQ college and university presidents’ pathways. In this conversation, I expressed my concerns about switching dissertation topics and what the implications and outcomes of focusing my research on sexuality might warrant. The conversation was pivotal in grounding this study. My Chair shared, “Committing to this topic will certainly impact your future. It may certainly eliminate some possibilities; however, focus on why this research matters and who it will impact.” I realized that despite being out, other LGBTQ+ colleagues and I must consider the implications of a research agenda focused on LGBTQ+ topics and that perhaps a false paradigm of progress exists within higher education. Some institutions celebrate and move the progress narratives forward through inclusive policies and practices while other institutions delimit possibilities for queer people.

These pivotal conversations intersected with the political and cultural climate of the past four years, which has focused on the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people. Title IX guidelines shifted in April 2014 to include gender identity—for the first time offering civil rights
protections for students against discrimination, sexual harassment, violence, and misconduct on campuses across the United States (US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Gay marriage became legal on June 26th, 2015 in all 50 states based on the ruling by the Supreme Court. Celebrations occurred across the United States, including the White House being lit in rainbow colors (Chappell, 2015). Despite this progress, discrimination and prejudice remain, as underscored by actions from Kim Davis, a Rowan County Clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses after the ruling based on God’s authority (Blinder & Perez-Pena, 2015). The presidential election of 2016 and inauguration of Donald Trump in 2017 marked a shift in politics and raised pause and concern for the rights of LGBTQ+ people. The climate signaled a need for critical research that uses queer theory to challenge heteronormative structures.

The findings of this research are relevant and important given the current political and cultural climate. I am seeking to challenge the heteronormative structures that exist in higher education as well as trace the pathways via which L&G college and university presidents navigate to make substantial impacts. I reflected upon and maintained awareness as to my positionality within the study. As someone who identifies as gay, I share an identity with all nine of the participants within my study. Additionally, I work within higher education and have had similar and different experiences as the participants of the study. Prior to beginning the study, my positionality was focused largely on the shared commonality of sexual orientation. As I collected data my position shifted and I more clearly saw commonality and overlap of shared experiences within higher education administration. My position shifted again in the final interview with some of the presidents. Four of the presidents’ final interviews via phone took on a more familiar and friendly tone, emphasizing developing rapport and shared
experience. I was particularly aware of this shift in rapport and intentionally guided questions to stay focused as well as ensuring that the presidents continued to provide depth, explanation, and context that can be decreased based on familiar rapport. Lastly, I considered my positionality as I was coding data. I found that I resonated with some of the president’s experience more than others and spent time developing an understanding as to why this was. Ultimately, I examined the presidents on a continuum of their enmeshment in their sexuality, or the relevance and interaction with their sexuality in work, life, and identity.

**Reflexivity.** I entered into this research with bias and assumptions related to the experiences I have had as an out gay administrator in higher education. I began this study with the assumption that most of the participants were limited on time, which may have impeded access to data collection. I was also aware of the politics that exist in service as a leader of a university. The participants in this study represented their institution and therefore may have been hesitant to discuss sensitive topics that may have presented their institutions in a negative perspective. A reflexive approach was necessary to determine if a topic needed to be probed or further elucidated. Throughout the collection of interview data, I listened for depth of experience and examples that supported the answers to each question. When examples were provided with no description, I would elicit more explanation or analysis. Similarly, if an answer to an interview question was provided without examples or context from the participant’s experience, further probing occurred. The reflexive approach ensured that saturation of data (Walker, 2012) occurred. The semi-structured questions developed for the interviews were revised and edited throughout the data collection process. Miles et al. (2014) discuss revision as an ongoing process and encourage follow-up. A second interview reviewing themes and asking additional questions allowed me to address discrepancies.
**Bias.** Bias is present in all research (Yin, 2014, Maxwell, 2013). Acknowledgement and transparency of biases allowed me to present representative findings that were not guided by reactivity. As a gay male working within higher education, I reflected upon my experiences of bias and support as well as my pathway using reflexive journaling and ongoing discussions with other L&G colleagues to develop understanding as to how these experiences intersect with data collected for this study. I identified two biases that I regulated for throughout the study. The first bias was in relation to how instances of discrimination were experienced. My assumption was that these instances would be experienced in subversive ways and that the instances would have minimal impact on the presidents. This assumption was based upon my experiences of discrimination and microaggressions and how I interface with these interactions now versus earlier in my career. The second bias I mediated was assuming a level of professionalism for each president. Based on my experiences with university presidents I had developed a set of traits I assumed to be present, such as, being friendly, yet reserved, careful in the types of information shared, mindful of personal space, and limited in time. The process of mediating bias is discussed further in the trustworthiness section of this chapter. My sexual identity and experience could not be assumed as similar to those of the participants in this study.

**Participants**

**Criterion for selecting cases.** Sampling within qualitative research is largely purposive, as compared to random sampling, which is often used in quantitative (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Maxwell (2013) suggests four goals when using a purposeful sample: 1) selecting a representative sample in regard to size, individual, and case being studied; 2) capturing the “heterogeneity of the environment” (p. 89) or making sure the findings address the range of possibilities across cases; 3) selecting cases that are critical of the theory that the study
is built upon; 4) and developing comparisons that may explain differences within the study. The goals Maxwell (2013) suggests to guide purposeful samples were used in the process of selecting cases for this study. These goals provided a framework through which the selection of cases could be checked to ensure trustworthiness. Goal one was met through the criterion used in sampling, which ensured diversity across cases, which is discussed in more detail below. Goal two was met through selecting participants from a range of institutional types and sizes: traditional four year, community college, not-for-profit, for profit, less than 100 students attending to upwards of 20,000 students attending. Goal three and four were considered via the age range, gender, and race of the participants, which is counter to the existing literature on college and university presidents. At each stage of case selection the cases were examined to ensure that they were representative of out L&G presidents, diverse in experiences and perspectives, critical of queer theory, and comparable across cases.

Yin (2014) cautions using the term sample as it may create confusion with the term case in a multi-case study; the two terms are not necessarily interchangeable. Within this study each participant represents an individual case, and each case was examined individually and across cases as a multi-case study. These parameters informed the design of the study as well as sampling strategies. Criterion sampling strategies ensure quality and require that all participants meet specific parameters in order to participate in the study (Maxwell, 2013). The sampling strategy for this study was developed based on the following three criteria: (1) identifying as lesbian or gay, (2) currently serving as an out president at a college or university, (3) and the location of the individual’s institution located in the Midwest or Northeast regions of the United States.
Prior to the start of this research, four phone conversations were conducted with founding members of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization to seek information about the organization and the requirements for membership. A requirement of membership in the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization is to openly identify as an out LGBTQ senior level leader of an institution of higher education. This is a requirement, as the name and university of each member is displayed on the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organizations website. At the time of the study, all members identify as L&G; there are no presidents who openly identify as bisexual or transgender.

Upon closer inspection of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education membership list on the organization’s website, only 48 members are current presidents, while others were retired or resided in other positions within higher education. From the 48 members, 26 out L&G college or university presidents were invited to participate in this study based on geography. The geographic locations of the Northeast and Midwest were used as they had the highest concentration of out gay college and university presidents other than the west coast, in particular California. The southern United States was noticeably absent of L&G presidents. From the 26 invited participants, 14 identified as gay males and 12 identified as lesbian females.

Each potential participant was emailed a letter of purpose explaining the study parameters and expectations (Appendix A & B). Within the email a SurveyMonkey link was included which contained an electronic consent form. Upon completion of the consent form, each participant was assigned an alias to protect his or her identity throughout the data collection process. This process ensured that the data collected were not attributable to a specific participant. Of the 26 out L&G college and university presidents invited, nine
participants (approximately 35% of the cases) completed consent forms agreeing to participate in the study.

**Participant Demographics**

The participants of this study include three females and six males ranging in age from 50-75. Of the nine presidents, five are in their 50’s, three are in their 60’s, and one is in his 70’s. Eight participants serve at four-year institutions, while one participant serves as the president of a 2-year community college. One participant is a president of a for-profit college, while the remaining participants lead not-for-profit institutions of higher education. Six of the participants identify as gay men and 3 of the participants identify as lesbian women. Table 3.2 provides demographics for each of the 9 cases in this study.
### Table 3.2

**Demographics of Cases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym*</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Institutional Type**</th>
<th>Institutional Size**</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Carl Morgan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>4-year, private, not-for-profit</td>
<td>&lt;6000 Students</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Angela Hersh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>4-year, public</td>
<td>&gt;5000 Students</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Kim Williams</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>4-year, public</td>
<td>&gt;6000 Students</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Sandra Hayes</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>4-year, private, not-for-profit</td>
<td>&gt;100 Students</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Jason Gann</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>4-year, private, not-for-profit</td>
<td>&gt;1000 Students</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Rick Carver</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>4-year, private, not-for-profit</td>
<td>&lt;1000 Students</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Glenn Stevens</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>4-year, private, for-profit</td>
<td>&gt;2000 Students</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Jack Sloan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>2-year, public community college</td>
<td>&lt;20,000 Students</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President John Buckman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>4-year, public</td>
<td>&gt;1500 Students</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Each president was assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity. **Institutional type and size data (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018)

Chapter four begins with presentations of case profiles for each of the nine cases providing a thick description regarding each cases artifact selection, pathway to presidency, individual understanding of sexual identity, and coming out.
Data Collection

The relationships developed with participants are an integral piece of the design process for qualitative research, as participants have the opportunity to move research forward or interfere with the direction of and findings of a study (Maxwell, 2013). Lofland (1971) states the integral role participants contribute to qualitative research, through collaborative processes with the researcher: “To capture participants ‘in their own terms’ one must learn their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality” (p. 7). The researcher must carefully report the reality of what each participant shares as well as navigate the role of interpreting data accurately and appropriately. As each participant comprises one of nine cases in this study, the importance of capturing the experiences of out L&G college and university presidents singularly and across cases through rigorous methods ensures the attainment of data saturation.

The data collection for this multi-case study was conducted in three phases, which began in November of 2014 and continued through July 2015; nine participants participated in each of the three phases. The first phase of the study was participation in completing a critical incident questionnaire (Flanagan, 1954) and document collection. The second phase was an artifact elicitation (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Berger, 2009), in-person semi-structured interviews lasting between one to two hours, informal observations of the participants office and campus, and document collection. Informal observations were conducted through my role as participant as observer and were documented through field notes. The third phase included document review and a final phone interview lasting approximately one hour. Table 3.3 provides an overview of each phase of research and the time and type of data collection that occurred.
Table 3.3

*Data Collection with Phase and Time*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Type</th>
<th>Phase 1- Time</th>
<th>Phase 2- Time</th>
<th>Phase 3-Time</th>
<th>Total Time in the Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident Questionnaire</td>
<td>1 questionnaire with 7 open ended questions x 9 cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact Elicitation</td>
<td>15- 20 minutes x 9 cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interview</td>
<td>1-2 hours x 9 cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview via phone</td>
<td>1 hour x 9 cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Review</td>
<td>Ongoing 10 hours (Vitae’s, community correspondence, and policies related to diversity topics)</td>
<td>Ongoing 18 hours (School newspapers, social media presence, organizational charts, and other documents available on campus)</td>
<td>Ongoing 9 hours (Documents received from three participants and follow-up of documents referenced in the interviews)</td>
<td>37 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three phases occurred over the course of eight months. The time period between each phase of collection varied, based on the participants’ schedules. The first phase occurred in late November 2014 and was completed by the end of December 2014. The second phase began in
February and was completed by March, and the third phase began in June 2015 and was completed by the end of July 2015.

**Critical incident questionnaire.** A critical incident questionnaire (Flanagan, 1954) was emailed to each participant; this is a qualitative method that provides authentic focus and prompts recall, assisting the researcher in understanding particular phenomena. Flanagan (1954) explained that “the critical incident technique, rather than collecting opinions, hunches and estimates, obtains record of specific behaviors from those in the best position to make the necessary observations and evaluations” (p. 355). The critical incident questionnaire (Appendix C) was administered via SurveyMonkey; all identities were protected via each participant using his or her alias, selected at the time of completing the consent form. For this study, the critical incident questionnaire was used to ask about sexuality, the coming out process, L&G leadership, and bias and support. The questionnaire was also used as a means to ensure the experiences and perspectives of each participant were accurately captured. The critical incident survey included six questions that prompted specific recall through narrative responses. The questions were developed to generate reflection and recall for both research questions. A question asked, which focused on research question one was: Share an example of a time when sexuality played a significant role in your position as president. Why was it significant and how did it inform or shape the situation? A prompt that was given for research question two was: Think about a defining moment in your pathway to presidency where you experienced bias or discrimination based on your sexuality, please describe this incident below. The specific recall that each question promoted provided entry points when conducting the in-person interviews. The survey responses were used to frame questions for follow-up and to prompt deeper
reflection and recall of relevant details. Additionally, the questionnaire allowed for recall and reflection that may not emerge in the interview process.

Artifact. Artifact elicitation (Miles et al., 2014) was used for this study to stimulate recall, generate conversation, and develop an understanding of each participant’s perspectives of his or her sexuality. Within this study sexuality was viewed on a continuum, which informed how leadership occurs and bias and support is experienced. Each participant received an email prior to the first interview, requesting him/her to bring an artifact to the interview. The artifact could be any item or document that participants felt represented their sexuality. At the beginning of each interview the participant was asked to discuss the artifact and its significance in representing his or her sexuality. An unexpected result of the artifact elicitation was a means of introduction and developing a rapport with each participant. In each case the artifact provided a tangible representation of the participant’s sexuality, with a nuanced narrative as to why he or she identified in a particular regard.

Document review. Document Review (Miles et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2013) occurred through each of the three phases of data collection. Document review includes the collection of artifacts and documents relevant to the case and cases. In phase one, the websites of each university were reviewed for content relevant to the participants. During this review, vitae, community correspondence, and policies related to diversity were collected. These documents all supported and provided depth of understanding to the first research question; what are the experiences of out L&G university presidents with in higher education? The vita of each participant provided an overview of the individual’s career path. The vitae, in tandem with data collected from the critical incident survey and interviews, provided additional data points to address the second research question; how does being an out practitioner impact pathways to
presidency? During phase two, school newspapers, organizational charts, and other documents available on campus were collected and reviewed. These documents were collected to better understand the experiences of the participants in their role as an out L&G president from multiple views answering research question number one. In phase three participants were asked if there were any documents they felt were relevant to share or direct me towards in answering the research questions. Three of the participants provided me with additional documentation. These items included an inauguration program, articles each president had written or been quoted in, and documents related to their professional involvement in the community. In this final phase, I also followed up on collecting documents referenced in the interviews. One example of these documents was the memoir *The Best Little Boy in the World* (Reid, 1973), which was referenced at length as having a large impact upon one of the participants’ sexual identity and leadership.

**Interviews.** Yin (2014) cites the interview as the most important “source of case study evidence” (p. 110). Interviews in case-study research should be fluid in nature and not follow a prescriptive or rigid structure (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Following completion of the critical incident questionnaire, phase two invited each participant to participate in one in-person semi-structured interview that took approximately one to two hours to complete. Semi-structured interview questions were used for consistency across cases, but also to allow for flexibility within each case to navigate and address topics completely and fully. The semi-structured interview questions were reviewed by three faculty members with expertise and experience in developing interview questions. An additional review was conducted by three queer identifying administrators in higher education. Study participants responses varied in the length; therefore it was necessary to probe or ask additional questions of some of the participants to develop a
clear understanding. Each participant chose to host the interview in his or her campus office at a convenient time. All interviews were recorded via a digital recorder. In the semi-structured interview each participant was asked approximately 16 questions exploring the experiences and perspectives of being a L&G president (Appendix D). These questions focused on bias and support, pathway to presidency, and historical inquiry about personal and professional life. During each interview I took field notes to write down thoughts, important statements, and follow-up questions. Reflexive journaling occurred immediately following each interview. These journals allowed for the identification of emerging themes and also helped regulate my bias. I transcribed all digitally recorded interviews.

Prior to phase three and the second interview, each participant received a transcript of his or her interview and a one-page list of emerging themes for member checking (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). The participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript to check for consistency and to determine whether they believed emerging themes had been interpreted accurately. The second interview was conducted via telephone and consisted of an additional eight semi-structured questions (Appendix E) asked to seek further perspectives or experiences in regard to the initial interview and to further explore themes that emerged. Field notes were taken during each phone interview and, immediately following the interview, transcripts, field notes, and reflexive journals from the previous in-person interview were reviewed. I transcribed each of the digitally recorded phone interviews. The review of the data was incorporated into the reflexive journaling I engaged in immediately following each phone interview.

**Informal observations.** Observation is a “meaningful data-gathering method” (Stake, 2006, p. 4). For this study informal observations were conducted in phase two during the in-
person on-campus interviews. I observed the participants’ offices and the campus culture.
During these observations I took detailed field notes. Observations allowed me to view the ways in which the participants were comfortable in expressing their sexuality within their offices through objects. For example, I noted when a participant had a rainbow flag or displayed photos of his or her partner in the office. Around campus I was able to assess how sexual identity was accepted or expressed in the campus culture. One participant’s campus had a specific campaign focused on diversity and social justice issues, with large banners of faculty, staff, and student photos displayed with a quotation about how they live their identity on campus. These banners demonstrated the relationship between the participant’s values and the institutional mission. Through this observation I was able to ask specific questions of the participant as to how the banners were related to his experience as a president at the institution.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process occurred in two stages with two distinct cycles of coding and was informed by the methods of Miles, et al., (2014) and Maxwell (2013). The first stage occurred while data was being collected and included reflexive memoing and initial coding. The second stage occurred post-data collection and used first and second cycle coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). The coding process used an inductive and deductive approach to elucidate depth from the data. The inductive approach allowed for the emergence of themes and concepts in an organic manner drawing upon the language and voice of each participant, while the deductive approach used the conceptual frameworks of critical postmodernism and queer theory as existing codes through which the data was reviewed. Figure 3.3 depicts the two stages and two cycle coding process. A more detailed description is explicated below.
**Figure 3.3 Stages of Coding Process**

**Stage one: during data collection.** Data collection and analysis occurred in tandem and throughout the study as Maxwell (2013) suggests. Following each interview I engaged in reflexive memos (Maxwell, 2013) to detail thoughts, emerging themes, and perspectives that were unique or relevant to the research questions. These memos also provided a space to reflect on the triangulation across data sources—informal observations, artifacts, and document review with the interview data.

During data collection I engaged in a routine of re-reading transcripts of previously collected participant interviews prior to conducting an interview. Agar (1980) suggests the importance of reading transcripts in entirety so as to immerse oneself in the details of the case.
and gathering a sense of knowing the case as a whole before examining specific parts. Through re-reading the transcripts and sometimes listening to the recordings of the previously conducted interviews, I was able to consider emerging themes and identify similarities and differences among the participants’ pathways and experiences within higher education. This process was particularly relevant to keeping me immersed in the data and connected with each case and across the cases. I kept the two research questions at the forefront of the reflective process; ensuring I was considering the broad emergent themes for research question one and more specific themes relevant to research question two. The reflexive memos were also used in constructing semi-structured second interview questions. The emerging themes captured in the reflexive memos identified areas and topics I needed to explore further with participants. After the first round of semi-structured interview transcripts were transcribed I initially coded each transcript via pencil and paper to generate a list of 53 individual codes. Emerging ideas were developed from the initial coding, and these ideas were used to generate further questions for the second semi-structured interviews. As my data collection came to a close I used the reflexive journals to develop analytic memos (Miles, et al., 2014). The analytic memos at this stage began to pull together the multiple data sources as well as emerging themes across participants. I produced two comprehensive analytic memos—each addressing a research question within this study.

**Stage two: post-data collection.** Once all transcripts were member-checked they were entered into NVivo, a computer based software for coding, along with the responses from the critical incident questionnaire, documents, and observation notes. Coding took part in two cycles following the methods of Miles, et al., (2014) in three phases. Phase one used first cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013) which looks at chunks of data and assigns specific codes for each
section. I used descriptive coding, which assigns a word or short phrase to each passage of data. This process was largely inductive in nature, which allowed words and phrases to emerge from each case’s data set. Five codes: queer perspectives, queering spaces, critical understanding, creating queer possibilities, and intersectionality of identity, were deductive in nature as they directly related to the conceptual framework. The use of these codes ensured that in the coding process queer theory and critical postmodernism were lenses through which the data were reviewed. The first cycle of coding yielded 78 descriptive codes (five deductive and 73 inductive). Phase two began after the first cycle coding was complete. These codes were compared to the initial coding process that occurred during stage one when data were being collected. Discrepancies were explored and reduction occurred through combining codes. An example of this reduction was the reduction of the gender performance and gender expectations into gender expectations and performance. Reduction of codes only occurred in instances where the descriptive word or short phrase in first cycle coding was too similar or redundant. The result was 81 codes.

Once the first cycle of coding was complete I created a list of codes and began to examine the codes for emerging patterns and themes within these codes. Miles, et al. (2014) discuss pattern codes as typically looking like categories or themes, causes or explanations, relationships among people, and theoretical constructs. With these in mind I began my second cycle coding (Miles, Huberman, Saldaña, 2014). Codes were divided between the two research questions: 1) What are the experiences of out L&G university presidents within higher education? 2) How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency? Codes were analyzed between experience and presidential pathway. There were 74 codes aligned with research question one and 23 codes aligned with research question two. Research question
codes overlapped between the two research questions; however, intentionality was used to
identify codes that specifically aligned with presidential pathways. The last process in phase
two was developing clusters of codes for each research question. Additionally, NVivo provided
descriptive data about the number of times a code was used within and across cases. The
descriptive data informed whether a code was clustered with other data. Single case findings
were eliminated, and only across case findings were clustered together. Research question one
had five clusters of codes: coming out (12 codes), support (14 codes), heteronormativity and
bias (12), queer leadership (17 codes), and queering (11 codes). Eight codes were reduced for
research question one. Research question two had three clusters of codes: lavender ceiling (16
codes), overcoming fear (6 codes), and student affairs (1). No codes were reduced for research
question two.

In phase three the eight clusters were then combined and reduced to eight pattern codes
or emergent, stackable themes from within and across cases. The data analysis resulted in five
themes related to research question one and three themes associated with research question two.
Appendix F provides a list of codes at each stage of development and reduction.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is often questioned with regard to validity and
reliability (Miles et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Guba (1981) developed a set of
constructs to be employed by the qualitative researchers. The four constructs are credibility,
transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981), each of which was considered in
the planning and execution of this study to ensure it is trustworthy. Credibility has been argued
as one of the most important factors to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and
means there is congruence between the study’s findings and reality. Transferability recognizes
the criteria and the boundaries of cases presented within the study, acknowledging the overlap with participants outside of the cases (Stake, 2006). Dependability focuses on the ability to replicate the findings of a study with similar cases and has been designated as important and closely related to credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability uses reflective practice to reduce bias and ensure the findings are comprised on the experiences and content from the participants (Shenton, 2004). Table 3.4 provides the method or consideration and how it addressed each of Guba’s (1981) four components of trustworthiness. Following the table is a detailed account of the actions and decisions made in each area of trustworthiness.

**Table 3.4**

*Methods and Analysis Consideration for Trustworthiness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods and Analysis Considerations</th>
<th>Credibility</th>
<th>Transferability</th>
<th>Dependability</th>
<th>Confirmability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member checking with participants</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative case comparisons</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation of cases and rich data</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick description is used to present cases and findings</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed demographic of each participant and individual narratives for single cases</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective memoing throughout the data collection and analysis process to capture my process and thoughts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing review of limitations of the study was conducted throughout the data collection process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Credibility. Within case study research, validity supports the accuracy of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) and Miles et al. (2014) use the term validity to address qualities that make a study credible. Within this study I have incorporated multiple methods, such as member checking, comparing to a negative case, rich data, and triangulation (Maxwell, 2013, Miles et al., 2014), all of which were used to create credibility within the study.

Member checking is a process of providing participants the opportunity to review interview transcripts for accuracy of description and interpretation (Miles et al., 2014). Member checking occurred at two points: immediately following the first interview and at the end of the study when excerpts from thematic findings were sent to elicit further understanding. No participant requested changes to findings.

Rich data (Maxwell, 2013) were collected via digital recordings of all interviews with participants. Field notes were kept throughout the data collection process and referred to in developing analytic memos. The layered approach of data collection provided the opportunity to collect thick and detailed data from each participant. The critical incident questionnaire allowed participants to be reflexive. Having completed the questionnaire prior to the in-person interview generated greater depth of response and more specific recall of examples. The transcribed narratives from all interviews were analyzed and triangulated so as to provide a rich and detailed picture of the themes emerging within and across the multi-cases. Because the
participants are diverse in nature based on institution type, sexual identity, and location, it was necessary to present these data appropriately and with detail in the dissertation.

All data were reviewed for disconfirming data (Maxwell, 2013; Wolcott, 1990). If conflicting themes arose in a particular case, the themes were examined through triangulated data and existing literature to provide additional lenses through which the case could be viewed. Conversation and feedback were solicited from fellow researchers to make sense of how the evidence connected to the evidence being supported by the other cases. Within the findings section the enmeshment of the cases is clear, and disconfirming evidence has driven the themes to be more detailed and with thicker and richer description.

Fielding and Fielding (1986) discuss at length triangulation as a method for collecting data from diverse sources and settings to reduce bias and chance associations. Within this study several forms of data collection were used, including the use of a critical incident questionnaire, interviews, and artifact and document analysis. The diversity of data collected examined and coded reflexively allowed for recognition of emerging themes, bias reduction, and threats to trustworthiness.

**Transferability.** Transferability offers the opportunity for a reader to draw connections and understanding from the findings presented to their circumstance, organization, or self (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Detailed and thick descriptions are presented for each of the participants or cases within this study. Tables 3.2 and 4.1 provide demographic information of each case. The information contained in these tables informs the reader of the diverse types of institutions at which the out L&G University Presidents were employed, as well as their ages, races, selected artifacts, pathways, and coming out experiences. These demographics are explicated in chapter four through detailed case narratives that seek to provide enough detail to
offer further relatability and connection for the reader. The discussion in chapter five provides specific examples of how the findings may be transferred and in what capacity.

**Dependability.** Thick description (Stake, 2006) was used throughout the dissertation to present detailed and clear overviews of the research design and implementation. One example of this thoroughness includes the narratives in chapter four to present each of the single cases, opting for an in-depth presentation of cases versus a brief overview. Through sharing the “minutiae” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72) of fieldwork, I have provided the needed information for replication of the study. The appendices include study invitation, example consent form, critical incident survey, interview protocols for in-person and phone interviews, coding process, and process map for the study. These documents provide transparency and clarity for study replication. The dependability of this study is further supported by the attention I focused on the credibility of the study; Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a credible study further ensures a dependable study.

**Confirmability.** The use of a process map provides the reader with a visual map to be able to trace the process through which I navigated to arrive at my findings. The process map for this study is represented in Appendix G, which can be used in conjunction with the description of the study design provided in chapter three. Triangulation of multiple data collection methods was also used to reduce investigator bias. Through the coding process I looked for emerging themes within and across cases using transcribed interviews, document review, and the critical incident questionnaire.

**Threats to trustworthiness.** Three threats to trustworthiness exist within this study. These threats include: saturation, sampling strategy, and researcher bias. Access to participants was a substantial threat and limitation of this study. Saturation (Walker, 2012) was reached
through ensuring that data collection was focused on depth within and across cases. Multiple stages of data collection and analysis occurred to ensure saturation was met. College and university presidents are extremely busy with numerous priorities and obligations. Due to the distance of the president’s location and availability, acquiring long periods of time for interviews and observations was impossible, which limited the ability to achieve saturation in data collection. Because of this limitation additional methods of data collection were included, such as artifacts and document analysis, as well as a second interview via telephone to further elicit feedback on developed themes from the first interview.

The use of a purposeful, criterion sample for this study limits the participants for this study. Identifying a sample of L&G presidents presented a challenge because only the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization lists current college and university presidents who identify based on their sexual orientation. One of the terms of membership with this organization is that all members must be out on their campus in their role as president. Through use of this organization to gather a diverse sample I was unable to explore the experiences of closeted practitioners. The study of closeted L&G presidents is needed and would also provide depth of understanding to a population that has been virtually unexplored. The criteria for the study included (1) identifying as L&G, (2) and currently serving as an out president at a college or university (3) with the location of institution being in the Midwest or Northeast United States. These criteria limit the exploration of other sexual identities such as bisexual, transgender, asexual, and pansexual. At this time, no member of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization identifies outside of the L&G identities. Geographic location also served as a threat for this study’s trustworthiness. Participants were sampled from the Midwest and Northeast United States. These regions were chosen as having the largest
concentrations of out lesbian and gay presidents, except the state of California. It is possible that through limiting participants in other geographical locations, experiences and themes related to pathways to presidency may not be represented or explored. I was able to address the sampling strategy of a purposive sample through embedding a random sample within. The nine cases are comprised of diverse individuals in regard to age, gender, institution type and size. This enabled me to increase transferability and credibility.

Of course researcher bias was an ever present threat to trustworthiness. As a gay male, I often found myself relating and identifying with the data being collected in interviews. During first rounds of coding, marriage equality was in the forefront of social media and television. I was also in the midst of a promotion in my career, which directly coincided with the topics being explored in my research. Two clear biases and assumptions emerged that I accounted for throughout the data collection and coding process. I entered the study with an assumption that was based on my experiences regarding discrimination. I posited that, based on the level of leadership, Presidents would experience minimal overt bias and not be impacted by it as much due to the level of their success. During data collection I asked broad questions to explore discrimination and bias and probed deeper with additional questions to ensure I was capturing each president’s experience. Similarly, during coding I used member checking as a means to ensure that the emerging themes from the data were reflective of the participant’s perspectives. I also relied heavily upon triangulating the data to confirm or deny themes. I wanted to be sensitive to the participants’ time to review documents and therefore selectively reached out twice. Incorporating more opportunities for member checking would strengthen this study and further reduce bias. The second bias that I mediated for was my assumptions around the characteristics of professionalism that comprise a college or university president on which I was
initially basing my experience with three previous presidents at institutions where I attended or worked. As part of my reflexive journaling I created a profile for each president participating in the study. This process allowed me to identify unique characteristics for each president as well as explore common leadership characteristics. During the process of stage one coding I recognized the importance of providing single case presentations for each president with thick description to convey the unique and nuanced characteristics each president possesses via their L&G identity, leadership, and professional identity.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the methods used in this descriptive multi-case qualitative study examining the pathways of out L&G college and university presidents. The conceptual framework was discussed first, connecting critical postmodernism, queer theory, and the prism metaphor. Next a rationale was provided for using qualitative methods as well as an in-depth overview of the research design. Data collection and analysis were discussed next and the section concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness as it relates to the processes within the study. Chapter four provides in depth singular case findings and across case findings.
“To give the subject a reality in the form of a sentence that is like a piece of rock crystal or a prism” (Thurman, 2007, para. 2 as cited in Nicholas, 2007).

Chapter 4: Case Overviews and Findings

Overview of Chapter 4

Revisiting the idea that higher education was founded on the purpose of serving the greater community and promoting democracy (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Osteen, 2012; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Thelin, 2004), it is integral that the voices and experiences of L&G presidents be heard and studied in guiding the future of higher education. The presence of more openly L&G senior level administrators and presidents may begin to shatter the lavender ceiling and bring more critical perspectives into higher education, paving the way for marginalized or underrepresented groups and ultimately queering the heteronormative environments of higher education.

Just as Judith Thurman, a literary critic and biographer, discusses the nuanced intentionality that must occur to reflect the person within a structure of words (Thurman, 2007 as cited in Nicholas, 2007) this chapter seeks to create salient and clear projections of the findings of this research study.

The two research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education?
2. How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?

Yin (2014) discusses the importance of reporting case study research in a manner that speaks to multiple audiences and reports the data in an accurate and engaging manner. This chapter begins with case overviews to provide thick description regarding each case’s pathway to
presidency, individual understanding of sexual identity, and coming out. Cases are presented on a continuum of each participant’s own comfort and centrality of sexual identity within their lives and roles as presidents. The case overviews are presented with intentionality—the first case overview presented is a seasoned president who is at the end of his career and who was acknowledged as a mentor and support by the other cases, without prompting in each interview. In the first case’s sexual identity is a core aspect to his personhood, and he is comfortable with his sexuality emerging in authentic and vulnerable ways. At the opposite end of the continuum are cases who view their sexual identity as being only a small portion of their personhood and a minimal role within their leadership as presidents. Following the case overviews I present the across case findings of this study framed through the research questions that guided the study. Research question one is framed by five themes and research question two is framed with three themes.

**Case Overviews**

Demographics of participants and pseudonyms used were presented in chapter three via table 3.2. An abbreviated overview of each case profile is presented below in table 4.1. These two tables serve as a quick reference to assist in navigating between the nine cases throughout the findings chapter. Below case overviews are provided with attention to detail and thick description so as to capture the “constant, influential, and determining factors shaping the cases” as they relate to the research questions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 332). For each case, background first is provided in regard to the number of years served at the institution and an overview of the college or university’s mission statement and purpose. Second, each case’s pathway toward presidency is elucidated as well as how the person’s sexuality and leadership are connected. Third, an overview of each participant’s coming out process is
presented and, lastly, context of the artifact that each case brought to represent his or her sexuality is shared. These finding are presented as they are shared experiences by all cases that provide depth and understanding of each cases pathway. Table 4.1 provides an abbreviated overview of the artifact selected, pathway to presidency, and coming out for each of the cases.

**Table 4.1**

*Abbreviated Overviews of Cases*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Pathway</th>
<th>Coming Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| President Morgan | Photo of he and his partner holding hands with the sun setting behind them | Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs  
Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences  
Professor of History | Always knew he was different, but grew up in a southern unaccepting household.  
Married a woman and had children. Came out later in life after divorcing his wife and meeting his life partner who was a fellow faculty member. |
| President Hersh      | The song *Somewhere over the rainbow*                                     | Provost &Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Executive Provost for the Office of Academic Affairs  
Associate Provost  
Executive Dean of the Graduate School  
Interim Dean  
Professor of Biology | Ever present awareness of being a lesbian. Describes the experience of coming out as benign and that her family just knew. She was accepted by parents and family and reflects back that had she made coming out more of a process that perhaps it would have had a deeper meaning. |
| President Williams    | A CD of music by Chris Williamson entitled *Changer and the changed*       | Vice Chancellor for Student Life & Dean of Students  
Associate Vice President for Student Life  
Assistant Vice President for Student Life  
Director of Residence Life  
Mid & Entry Level Student Affairs Positions | Grew up in Houston, Texas in a conservative environment and describes her coming out as unremarkable. Freely admitted if asked that she was a lesbian, but as she has matured developed a confidence to assert her queerness and be upfront about her sexuality. |
President Gann

An evergreen tree

- Provost and Executive Vice President
- Interim Provost
- Interim Dean of the College of Education
- Dean of Performing Arts
- Dean of Admissions & Alumni
- Director of Admissions
- Director of Career Planning & Placement
- Secretary

Came out in his Junior year of college and viewed being in the closet as stifling and being gay as a gift. He views being out as an opportunity to enlighten straight people and to show other gay people that there is nothing to be ashamed of in regard to sexuality.

President Hayes

The house she shares with her partner

- Acting Provost
- Interim Dean of Faculty
- Chair
- Social Sciences, Philosophy, & Religion Professor

The feminist movement informed her sense of self and her understanding of sexuality. She came out in North Carolina in 1976 at college. She references the turmoil that existed between gay men and women and the impact this had on her trajectory to understand sexuality in a deeper way.

President Carver

A stained glass window of concentric circles, which was used to develop the logo of the college

- Graduate Psychology Professor
- Psychologist and Family Therapist

Recalls always having been out and that his sexuality is core to who he is as a person. Grew up during the HIV and AIDS crisis and was impacted by friends dying around him.

President Stevens

Two photos on his desk—one depicting his current partner and an older photo that depicts his deceased partner

- Provost & Chief Academic Officer
- Executive Associate Director of Middle States Commission on Higher Education & Regional Vetting Agency
- Assistant Dean for the College of Science & Math
- Assistant Dean of Students
- Entry & Mid-level Student Affairs Positions

He came out in the height of the disco era after graduating high school. He is not out to his parents, suspecting that his parents must know about him and his sister’s sexuality (his sister identifies as a lesbian), but choose not to acknowledge it. His sexuality is deeply rooted in the intersection of his ethnicity as a Hispanic man.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President Sloan</th>
<th>Wedding band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chancellor for Workforce Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director of Economic and Workforce Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director/Dean of Business and Professional Institute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Trainer</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School Instructor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

First came out to a Jesuit priest and later began coming out by disclosing to other seminarians he was having sex with while in the seminary. Remained largely closeted until 2008 due to the places he worked being conservative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President Buckman</th>
<th>A family photo depicting his partner and two dogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for Enrollment Management &amp; Student Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Assistant to the President &amp; Chair, Department of Student Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for Student Affairs/Chair, Department of Student Personnel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean for Community Development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Advisor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Dean for Residential Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Student Activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Director of Orientation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator of Greek Life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resident Director</td>
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Described himself as a late bloomer and came out of the closet at the age of 26 or 27 after being floored that a student whom he had presumed to be straight came out as gay while attending a diversity speaker. He grew up in a conservative home and dated women all through high school, college, and while teaching high school. He reflected he knew he felt different, but knowing and admitting are two different things.

**Case one: President Carl Morgan.** Dr. Carl Morgan has served for the past fifteen years as the fifth president of Kennedy University which is a private, not-for-profit, institution with two campuses—one urban and the other suburban. Kennedy University offers over 100 undergraduate and graduate degrees. The mission of the institution values diversity, challenges constituents to ask tough questions, and value differences in personal experiences, inclusion, social awareness, and engaging with social justice issues. President Morgan has served in the roles of Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Provost and Vice President of Academic
Affairs, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and history faculty member at four institutions before becoming president of Kennedy University. He is at the end of his career and retired from his presidency in spring of 2015. President Morgan discussed his passion and ongoing involvement within higher education:

Ever since I was six years old, in August and September of every year I knew what I was going to be doing. I was going to be in school. Sometimes I was a student, sometimes I was a professor, sometimes I was an administrator. But for 64 to 65 years, I’ve been going to school. In the fall of 2015, I’m not going to school it will be a new experience (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Morgan was reflective of his years of experience and how his sexuality has often been central to his leadership roles in academia. He describes his coming out as a journey and one that took decades:

When I was younger, I grew up in the South, in the deep south, and my family is very Southern. Homosexuality was something that was very, very bad. I grew up in Florida in the 50s. I was there in junior high school when Anita Bryant was doing all that stuff and it was in the newspapers and my parents loved Anita Bryant. My father thought she was exactly right—ranting, and railing about faggots. There I am, way before I was sexually awakened but I knew I was different somehow…. It’s just, it taught me to be cautious, keep my head down and say nothing. Gradually I began to realize that it [sexuality] was not this little focus on your life with sexual relationships. It was actually more important, it was encompassing, it’s a way, and this where I am essentially, and it’s a way that you can define the essence of who you are as a person (interview, February 6, 2015).
President Morgan got a divorce from his wife in the late 70’s and began to come out to close friends. He described that once he came out it was not coincidental that his career also took off as he was comfortable with who he was. President Morgan discussed his life as before and after coming out, signaling the freedom he encountered when he came to terms with his own sexuality. He stressed the importance of his sexuality comprising the essence of who he is.

President Morgan met his life partner of 31 years when they were both faculty at a university. He selected a photo of him and his partner to represent his sexual identity:

A picture of my partner and I hand in hand, standing, looking at the Pacific Ocean and enjoying the sunset, so you could see the sunset behind us. It was taken at the beginning of our relationship, 30 years or a little bit more, and we still have it hanging on the wall and it reminds us periodically that we’re each other’s sunset men. We’re going to go off into the sunset together and live our lives as whole as possible and as engaged as possible in the meantime (interview, February 6, 2015)

The selection of this photo also underscored where President Morgan and his partner are in the next phase of their lives. As he contemplates life after serving in Higher Education for nearly 50 years he shared the importance of relationships and being passionate about what one invests in life.

**Case two: President Angela Hersh.** Dr. Angela Hersh has served for four years as the 10th president of Schneider State College, which is a four year, public college. The Schneider State College mission is to prepare students to think critically and creatively as active citizens to seek out meaningful work grounded in the tradition of the liberal arts. President Hersh began her career as a faculty member in Biology and has since served as an Interim Dean, Executive Dean of the Graduate School, Associate Provost, Executive Provost for the Office of Academic
Affairs, and Provost and Vice President. President Hersh describes Schneider State College as being friendly and supportive of L&G people:

It turns out that Schneider State College has had a long history of being welcoming to gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgender, students, faculty and staff. I didn’t know that when I interviewed. There was the provost at the time and she is a lesbian. My chief of staff is lesbian, it happens that our chief diversity officer is a lesbian which I also didn’t know. There are gay men everywhere here on our faculty. I am comfortable here (interview, February 25, 2015).

She equated being comfortable to having other LGBTQ+ people around her. This is evidenced in the key roles she cites as being staffed by L&G people. President Hersh is confident and authentic in her leadership. She shared that “in some ways I think I lead with the gay because it’s one of my commitments to myself in this role here” (interview, February 25, 2015). She discussed the responsibility of being out and ensuring other LGBTQ+ people view her as proud of her sexuality.

President Hersh selected the song *Somewhere over the Rainbow* as her artifact. She chose this song because it was played during her wedding to her partner and for the progress that has occurred over the last couple of years:

It is like the rainbow is happening we’ve waited a long, long time for some of the basic rights that other people have always had and suddenly and of course I know it’s not suddenly. I know it’s been decades of very, very hard work but to an uneducated populist, I’m sure it feels like the gays are taking over. Because of what’s happened in the last four years in terms of marriage equality, several tax laws, and healthcare laws. I
just very much feel like our journey and our work isn’t done but man have we made progress (interview, February 25, 2015).

As a biologist she is practical and rationale, yet her reflection upon progress notes a sentimentality and hope in regards to the progress narrative. President Hersh described her experience of coming out as benign:

You know I was agnostic about it which I’m sure sounds silly but it never occurred to me that it would have to be something that needed to be discussed. It just was and everybody knew it. I think as I look back on that, had I been, it wasn’t that I wasn’t open, but had I been more open about being out, if that makes sense? I think some … it would have been a different experience and probably, maybe a richer one, I don’t know. I never have been someone who wasn’t loved by my parents, and when I hear some of the stories that students tell here, it just breaks my heart. It never occurred to me that my mother and father wouldn’t love me, it never occurred to me that siblings wouldn’t love me, it never occurred to me that my extended family wouldn’t love me (interview, February 25, 2015).

President Hersh described her sexuality as a lesbian always having been present. As she discusses her sexuality there is an obvious comfort and awareness that is present. She lives in a house on campus with her partner. They often host students, faculty, and staff for gatherings and socials. In June 2017, President Hersh stepped down as president, taking a year of leave before returning to teach full-time in fall 2018.

**Case three: President Kim Williams.** Dr. Kim Williams has served for the past seven years as the sixteenth president of Croix University, which is a public institution with two campuses and offering online classes as a third delivery method. Croix University offers over
100 undergraduate and graduate degrees. The mission of the institution values life-long learning, inclusivity, and a student centered focus. Prior to serving as the second female president at Croix University, President Williams served for nearly 11 years as the Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Dean of Students at a metropolitan university. She also has served as Associate Vice President for Student Life, Assistant Vice President for Student Life, Director of Residence Life, and other mid and entry level positions within Student Affairs.

President Williams described her approach to serving as president of Croix University:

> Coming in here I had a rather thoughtful point of view about how to be a good president and my job has been to articulate that to showcase it, to unbundle it, to explain kind of how that may have been you know what it looks like and to hold on to that. Even to the point where I might be fired for it and a piece of that is being that lesbian with a partner and a dog and a family (interview, February 9, 2015).

She subsumed the risks of serving in a leadership role as a woman, coming from a Student Affairs background, and being a lesbian. While she has a vision and is strategic in her approach to leading the university, she is also open to discussing that any leader at the presidential level is open to vast criticism and removal from the position.

When asked about presenting an artifact that represented her sexual identity President Williams was reflective and thoughtful about her selection of music by Chris Williamson (1975)—titled *Changer and the Changed*. The music directly related to her identity and coming out:

> Well it is easy to sing to, soulful rhythms kind of a combination of love and lost and redemption and survival depending on the age of the people you are talking to. Growing up gay in the 70’s in Houston Texas, you know was no great gig. I mean there is nothing
remarkable about my coming out story. I was always the kind of person that if you ask me I would say, yes I am, as I developed individual relationships in the early 80’s and into the 90’s I would be forthcoming with my sexuality but that’s different than being upfront. There was that continuum of confidence and assertion that I went through. I identify as lesbian when I’m with folks and we are talking at a workshop or a session or we are talking about sexuality or gender identity, in order to be thoughtful and respectful of the whole continuum I use the word queer (interview, February 9, 2015).

President Williams acknowledged the continuum of assertion and confidence that she had experienced over the years in various settings. As a president she presents a quiet confidence that is approachable, and she is comfortable discussing her sexual identity. She leverages her identity to engage and connect with queer people. President Williams’s educational background has a focus on finance and economics, which she leverages in her role as President. Her partner is a faculty member at Croix and actively serves as first lady. In fall 2017, President Williams was named the Interim Chancellor of the State System of Higher Education.

**Case four: President Jason Gann.** Dr. Jason Gann has served for nearly five years as the ninth president of The Lexington Conservatory, which is a small, private, not-for-profit institution offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in music. The Lexington Conservatory’s mission is centered on development of the individual, artist, and intellectual learner through music. President Gann began as a secretary of The Lexington Conservatory and continued to work his way upward in administration by serving as Director of Career Planning and Placement, Director of Admissions, and Dean of Admissions and Alumni. He left The Lexington Conservatory to become Dean of Performing Arts at a private, nonprofit institution, situated in an urban setting. He served in interim roles as Dean of the College of Education and
Interim Provost, before being named as Provost and Executive Vice President. President Gann’s return to The Lexington Conservatory was prompted by his passion for a small school setting:

First of all I love small schools, I have always been in small schools. I love being the mayor of a small town. I love the interaction with students and I actually get to know them and them knowing me, and living on campus in their home. I like it and then seeing both the faculty and the students seeing me with my husband regularly is a big deal. I, as the president, can make a much bigger impact than I ever could in any other job that I would have taken, because I normalize it [being a gay man] and in particular because we are an interracial couple (interview, February 11, 2015).

He and his husband live on campus on the top floor of a residence hall. He is stopped by students as he walks the halls of the administrative building and throughout his interview discusses specific students by citing their names. While he recognizes the major responsibilities of keeping a private school running, such as enrollment, fundraising, and other leadership challenges, he has remained laser focused on the impact of building community and in particular his responsibility in developing relationships and modeling citizenship.

President Gann noted that “Being gay was an extraordinary gift that nature pardoned to give me and not that it’s a problem, but I can’t imagine being anybody else. It also gave me the gift to view the world differently” (interview, February 11, 2015). He further elaborated that through being gay he has been able to be more aware of his privilege and therefore better understand the experiences of other underrepresented groups:

I decided early on that I would never be in the closet, the closet was a horrible place for me and I didn’t live there that long. I came out as junior in college, but the closet was a
crippling place I thought, but just as important as is for you yourself, what’s really important is with people around you. When you’re not out, straight people can’t get enlightened and grow and certainly gay people can’t because when gay people know you are gay and you’re not out that’s even worse, because then they realize that it’s something to be ashamed of (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Gann discussed challenges along his pathway towards presidency, but largely held a positive and hopeful outlook in regards to sexuality. He discussed the strength of an evergreen:

I’m an amateur gardener and I guess I would say that evergreens are my favorite plants, and they are my favorite plants because they stay green all year round and they’re sturdy. The evergreen tree is sturdy against the elements, yet showing their color all the time. They are never flashy. I’m not saying that I’m not flashy; 20 years ago I would have given you a different answer. But now at 55 I feel like the evergreen is colorful, proud, and sturdy because you’ve got to be there against all odds.

President Gann is reflective in nature and discusses his interest in being vulnerable and authentic. His selection of an evergreen mirrors his values and his own development as a gay man.

**Case five: President Sandra Hayes.** Dr. Sandra Hayes has served for five years as the 14th president of Burton College, which is a four year, private, not-for-profit college located in an urban area. President Hayes is the first woman president of Burton College. The Burton College mission is focused around Socratic process and critical thinking, and open-minded thought to guide learning. The community is called upon to be responsible citizens and to strive for the examined life. President Hayes spent nearly 20 years as a faculty member teaching the
social sciences, philosophy, and religion. She has served as Chair, Interim Dean of the Faculty, Acting Provost, and Adviser.

President Hayes and her partner live apart as, due to the small size of Burton College, there was not a faculty position for her partner. She values the time she is able to spend with her partner and discusses this through the artifact she selected:

I am going to pick the home that my partner and I have in the Northeast. It is a solidly built structure and I resonate with the graphic image of our home. Well, one thing is that it [the home] allows me to not live in the usual urban setting I am typically surrounded by day to day. It is situated in a small town and though it’s public and visible—it’s also very defining, I feel like I see myself there. It just has the combination of family, personal identity, crisis, multiple meanings, but also political community. All of those are mixed together right there in the surface of the structure (interview, June 16, 2015).

Articulating her sexuality via an artifact emerged as a difficult process for President Hayes. She described the numerous ways in which her house served as a metaphor for the layers of identity that comprise her sexual identity. She was vulnerable in her answers and comfortable sharing the difficulties of living away from her partner at times and the crisis between wanting the role and leadership that is present within the presidency and acknowledging the personal sacrifice of relationships, time, and family that result from assuming the role of president.

President Hayes came out in 1976 in North Carolina:

I came out at college. There was this squabble going on within the gay movement, and the relationship between gay men and women was pretty complicated and loaded in a whole range of different ways. Especially given the complicated relationship between
what eventually becomes the lesbian movement and the feminist movement (interview, June 16, 2015).

The context of the feminist movement has informed President Hayes’ sense of self and her understanding of sexuality. She discussed that this time in her life informed her leadership and drive as a lesbian leader. She and her partner created one of the first lesbian and gay studies programs in the nation. President Hayes approaches conversations with others in a manner that mirrors Burton College’s mission. She strikes a balance between listening intently and sharing her perspectives—ultimately incorporating a critical analysis and co-constructing meaning. President Hayes ended her tenure as President of Burton College in the spring of 2017; she supported the college through transitioning to become a part of another institution in fall 2017.

**Case six: President Rick Carver.** Dr. Rick Carver has served for the nearly 15 years as the fifth president of Stein University, which is a small private, not-for-profit institution offering undergraduate and graduate degrees. Stein University’s mission is focused on impacting and engaging students in social justice within the broader community. President Carver described his institution:

> We are a professional school. We’ve been gradually diversifying. When I first came here the place had this working legacy going back to the fifties, but was really a sleepy and actually a bit of a troubled place. There was less than 200, almost all part-time students, and so the last 12 years have included diversifying and figuring out what does it mean to continue to offer solid academics, making social justice practitioners, and getting to where we are right now, which is currently 1,200 fulltime students on two campuses, soon to be three campuses (interview, February 6, 2015).
The growth and development Stein University has experienced over the past 15 years is significant. President Carver has invested in Stein University, serving two consecutive terms as president. He shared openly the challenges of moving an institution forward from dwindling enrollments and dated practices to juxtapose the changes and development he was also undertaking at the time serving as a president of a university for the first time. Prior to his presidency he served as a licensed social services practitioner and leader in his field, President Carver taught graduate level courses as a faculty member and administrator before beginning his presidency at the age of 38.

President Carver discussed an artifact that was representative of his sexual identity; he selected a stained glass art piece that is also the logo of the institution. The stained glass depicts overlapping colorful circles and shapes, similar to concentric circles. He described the art pieces’ evolution:

I picked the logo just because it’s the symbol of the institution and it’s also sort of tied up into my sexuality too. My ex, who until recently I was with, is a stain glass artist and when we were first picking a sort of logo or imprint of the place, we were working with a communications firm who developed idea after idea. The firm looked at the piece of stain glass that isn’t here anymore, as it was in my old office, with sort of overlapping circles, and we kind of riffed on that to come up with this logo. It sort of symbolizes for me how personal gets wrapped up into your professional and that’s a good thing. The logo represents a lot of things to a lot of people here now (interview, February 6, 2015). President Carver went on to explain that the stained glass was representative of his own sexual identity and sexuality, as the overlapping circles represented the intersections of his personal
and professional life as well as the colorful manifestations of the glass when light refracts through the art piece. He described his sexual identity:

I lead as a gay man and I think that there are some differences in opinion about this between different gay presidents, but being gay is a part of who I am. You can’t separate that or marginalize that or think that it’s like sort of a minimum influence on leadership. It means I look at things in a particular way, it means I’m interested in, for example, social justice issues. My experience growing up as a gay kid means I lead in a particular way so people have heard a lot about how different marginalized groups lead from the margins. They get outside of the box, do all of those different things that someone marginalized may be limited from doing (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Carver did not recall a particular experience in regard to coming out, suggesting “I’ve kind of always have been out” (interview, February 6, 2015). As a leader in higher education, President Carver has used his past experiences as a means to ground his leadership style and approach. He acknowledged his sexual identity as an important component of his role as a leader. Leadership and being an out gay man are enmeshed concepts he describes as being not easily dissected or understood. The experiences President Carver has had around his sexuality while growing up and coming out are embedded within his leadership style and the way he interacts with constituents on his campus. His role as president allows him to lead differently than if he were in the margins.

President Carver’s approach to leading as a gay man provides him the opportunity to focus the work he does as president to ensure equity and justice are at the forefront:

I grew up coming out in New York City at a time of everybody dying and the emergence of Act Up, and that did a couple of things. It put a chip on my shoulder and it also gave
me a community of friends who have supported me through defying expectations in some ways (interview, February 6, 2015).

The historic context and relevance of growing up in New York during the AIDS epidemic is important, as it situates President Carver in evolving frameworks and mindsets with regard to how his sexuality could limit or stigmatize his aspirations. President Carver lives in an urban area and was single at the time of data collection, having broken up at the time with his long-term partner. In the spring of 2017, President Carver made national headlines as being one of the first college and university presidents to disclose his HIV status.

**Case seven: President Glenn Stevens.** Dr. Glenn Stevens has served for nearly ten years as the fourth president of Fallport College, which is a small, 4-year, for-profit institution offering primarily associate degrees and certificates. The Fallport College mission is centered on career development for diverse populations to be prepared personally and professionally for a global economy. President Stevens served as Provost and Chief Academic Officer for three years before being promoted to President of the college. Prior to coming to Fallport College, he worked for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and Regional Vetting Agency, served as the Assistant Dean for the College of Science and Math at a large university, and Assistant Dean of Students at a private university in the Northeast.

President Stevens grew up in Southern New Jersey and he recounts the conservative nature of growing up in a rural area. He discussed the lack of opportunity to come out in high school:

I went to high school 74’ to 78’, no one came out; it isn’t what it is now. Where they have these straight gay alliances in high schools and so there wasn’t an opportunity to do that and I knew from a very early age that I was gay. It wasn’t until the summer after I
graduated someone took me to a gay bar in Atlantic City on New York Avenue, or what I call the gay strip. I came out in the height of the disco era and I went to a club, a disco tech, I suppose is what they called them then, they’re equipped with the glittery ball and whatever on the ceiling. Men being everywhere… rooms full of gay men and I was just in total awe of it, and that was my coming out. When the closet doors opened the hinges just went—BAM! I look back and I laugh at myself at some of the things that I did and how I dressed but that was all my awakening. I think right after high school when I went to that one gay bar and experienced liberty, if you will, that really changed my life profoundly (interview, February 11, 2015).

His recall of the moment when he came out was a mix of his resentment for the lack of opportunity to explore his identity or consider coming out while in high school with a mix of sentimentality at recalling the liberation of understanding there was a space of acceptance and similarity within which he could exist. President Stevens also acknowledged the intersectionality that exists through being a Hispanic gay man throughout his interview.

President Stevens pointed to a photo of his current partner and a visibly older photo of him and a man, noting that “This is my partner who passed away 18 years ago, and that is my partner now in Greece” (interview, February 11, 2015). He explained that through each of these relationships he had grown personally and also professionally. The relationships have impacted him differently and challenged his identity development.

President Stevens described his sexual identity as being present from the beginning, but existing on a continuum:

Being gay to me, I don’t believe it was a choice. I think it’s who I was from when I was born and I tried the other side and frankly I didn’t care for it and just felt more
comfortable with a man. Now it’s just who I am, it’s I guess my lifestyle. There are a lot of people that have issues with who they are—being gay. I don’t have any of those issues but at the same time, I don’t go up to people and say my name is Glenn and I’m gay. I have friends who live to be gay and that’s just not me it never has been (interview, February 11, 2015).

He is comfortable with his sexuality and clearly articulated that he will never deny his sexuality, but there are other aspects of his identity, such as being Hispanic, that hold space in tandem with being a gay man. President Stevens lives with his partner who is a medical doctor.

President Stevens resigned from his position of president at Fallport College in 2017.

**Case eight: President Jack Sloan.** Dr. Jack Sloan has served for almost seven years in his third presidency as the president of Mountaintop Community College, which is a two-year, public, community college. The Mountaintop Community College mission is centered on creating opportunities and shaping lives to change the future—together. President Sloan began his career as a high school instructor, transitioning to the world of technology and serving as a Corporate Trainer. He then served as the Director/Dean of Business and Professional Institute, Executive Director of Economic and Workforce Development, and then Vice Chancellor for Workforce Education before entering into his first Presidency at a community college.

President Sloan’s coming out has been a journey. His earliest recollection of coming out began when he was in the seminary:

I started coming out to guys who I was having sex with in the seminary, so other seminarians. We sure knew we were attracted to men and we acted out even though we were celibate people, there were so many people who honored celibacy. But anyway, I would say in high school I came out to a Jesuit priest who was there and was trying to
get in my shorts, but I wasn’t going to have any of that because I wasn’t attracted to him and he was also my teacher. I was closeted until 2008, because the places I worked were pretty republican and so they weren’t really open. My partner and I were closeted and we protected ourselves when people came to the house in the 90’s and 2000’s. He wasn’t around when I brought people over or when he brought people over I wasn’t around (interview, February 16, 2015).

While he was able to identify specific people or times when he came out, he acknowledged that being fully out has only occurred since 2008. He describes it as a process through which he and his long-term partner had to become comfortable and feel safe being out. President Sloan chose his wedding ring to represent his sexual identity:

   My wedding ring would probably be the artifact that I would choose right now to say…well we got together 31 years ago we would have never thought that we would be able to get married and when we moved three years ago we never thought that this state would allow marriage (interview, February 16, 2015).

President Sloan values his 31 year relationship with his partner and was purposeful to acknowledge him during his inauguration speech to ensure his partner would be a part of the Mountaintop community. He discusses his sexuality as a core piece of his self: “I am my sexuality and everyone knows who I am and they interact with me knowing that I am a man who is gay and in a committed relationship; I mean there are days I don’t even think about it” (interview, February 16, 2015). President Sloan is a gregarious extrovert who uses humor within his personal and professional life. His comments about his identity suggest that he leads as a gay man and that whether he is aware of it or not, his identity is a core piece that emerges often within the work he is doing.
Case nine: President John Buckman. Dr. John Buckman has served for four years as the fourth president of Clinton State College, which is a small, 4-year, public institution offering two-year, four-year, and graduate Education programs. The Clinton State College mission is centered on personal and professional development through an experience-based liberal arts education. President Buckman began his career in Student Affairs serving in a myriad of positions, including: Vice President for Enrolment Management and Student Affairs, Executive Assistant to the President and Chair Department of Student Personnel, Vice President for Student Affairs/Chair Department of Student Personnel, Dean for Community Development, Academic Advisor, Associate Dean for Residential Life, Director of Student Activities, Assistant Director of Orientation, Coordinator of Greek Life, and Resident Director. In 2016, President Buckman accepted a Presidency at a middle-sized state university in the Northeast. He and his partner live apart because they work at separate institutions, which requires them to travel to see one another.

President Buckman points to a photo on his desk when asked to select an artifact that represents his sexual identity: “Well it’s my family picture right there.” The photo depicts him and his husband and their two dogs, which he noted have grown to include three. “Yeah I don’t know if it defines … for me it doesn’t say anything for sure about my sexuality. For me what it says is it’s a symbol of my life. Period” (interview, February 12, 2015). His acknowledgement that the photo represents a symbol of his life offers a glimpse of President Buckman’s view that being gay is merely piece of his larger identity and that perhaps that piece is only “10% of who I am” (interview, February 12, 2015). In his current stage of life, he has developed coping mechanisms and constructed barriers when interference arises related to his sexuality:
The course of my day, in my job and quite frankly in my life, because at this stage I’m 51 years old, at this stage in my life, I’ve been with my partner for 22 years. If you’ll excuse my French, but I don’t give a fuck … if that even comes up as an issue I’m rather not fazed by it. I ignore it where appropriate, I educate where appropriate, or I would say my husband and I have made a conscious decision to live and work at places that will only be supportive and that will not think twice about who we are. Otherwise we’re not going to go there (interview, February 12, 2015).

President Buckman is a confident individual who while friendly, is also direct. He presents indifference about others’ thoughts in regards to his sexuality, finding a balance between ignoring and educating, but only when appropriate. He described himself as a “late bloomer” when discussing his coming out around the age of 26 or 27.

I am a college student of the 80’s, Christian conservative home, as far as I was concerned I was straight and didn’t even know what the word gay was. I knew I felt differently but knowing and admitting are entirely two different things. I considered myself straight and dated women through college, through my career as a high school teacher, through graduate school and during my first year as a hall director. I think we invited a woman by the name of Kathy Obear to present about diversity. I remember sitting there and one of the RA’s talking about what it was like to be a gay student on campus and I turned to someone, did he just say he was gay? I was like really? Again I think I knew how I felt, I just didn’t fully understand it, I didn’t know how to characterize it. I had some catching up to do and if folks couldn’t accept me for who I was, I just don’t have the time for it.
My life from that point on I think moved very quickly … I’m not … I was never the, wave the rainbow flag and be in the parade and go to the clubs kind of guy—it’s not who I am. My husband would call me conservative if that tells you anything. My partner is like let’s go to the parade and I’m like, why? We’re very different in that (interview, February 12, 2015).

President Buckman’s sentiments of catching up and feeling as if he were a late bloomer underscore his impatience with others not understanding his identity in the way he does. He shared his comfort in being a gay man; he also identifies components of gay identity that he is uninterested in or uncomfortable engaging in.

Conclusion

The single case profiles of each of the presidents began with the number of years served as well as the mission statement of the institution they are currently leading. These findings demonstrate the range of institutional types and number of years of experience each of the presidents brings to their positions. Similarly, each president’s pathway to presidency is shared as well as how their sexuality and leadership are connected. These findings are presented with thick descriptions to provide context as to the range of experiences and entry points into the presidency as well as the fluid nature of the president’s sexuality. The presidents’ sexuality and how it is enacted within their roles as leaders were presented on a continuum of each president’s comfort and centrality of sexual identity within their lives and roles as presidents. The presidents’ coming out process is presented to ground the historical context of the period through which they came out and to centralize the impact and commitment coming out had on each participant’s trajectory. Lastly, the artifacts that participants chose to represent their sexuality were presented to offer depth as to how the presidents understand their sexuality at the
current point in their careers and lives. The single case presentations allow for a depth of understanding of each participant before understanding the shared experiences of the nine participants.

**Across Case Findings**

All data were examined across the nine cases. The across case findings are structured based on the two research questions for this study. Five themes are presented for research question one and three themes are presented for research question two, captured in figure 4.1. Figure 4.1 depicts six of the themes as being centered around committing to being out in higher education. Each of the six themes is experienced and predicated upon the presidents making a definable commitment to being out. Better to be gay than from student affairs emerged as a conditional theme and is situated outside of the circular diagram.
For each theme, two to three pieces of collected evidence from the critical incident surveys, interviews, and documents are presented, along with narrative to further articulate the finding. Following the narrative, a table is presented that provides thick description excerpted from critical incident responses and interviews, collected from each participant to provide additional voices, further context, and support of the theme.

**Overview of findings research question one.** Research question one is: What are the experiences of out L&G college and university presidents within higher education? Five themes emerged across the cases. The themes begin with committing to being out in higher education as to how the continued coming out process for participants impacted and guided their experiences and also influenced and shaped the context of the institutions they work at and
lead. The second theme involves supporting frameworks for being out, comprised of three findings: mentorship support of faculty and staff, partner support, and L&G President support. The third theme experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept emerged as an important theme across the data collection as it became clear that the environment and experiences within higher education are rooted in a heteronormative and patriarchal context. This theme had three findings: bias and microaggressions, false paradigms of progress, and bias leads to support. The fourth theme is navigating the expectations of what it means to be a queer leader, which is discussed to display more broadly the spaces and contexts within higher education L&G presidents are expected to lead and navigate and how this intersects with their sexuality and gender. Two findings are presented: leading with the gay and gender performance. Lastly the fifth theme of engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities displays how L&G presidents are using their identities and queer leadership to create queer possibilities on their campuses and within their communities.

**Committing to being out in higher education.** All nine of the presidents identified the importance of committing to being out in the role of presidency and within higher education. Of the nine, seven presidents came out early in their lives and careers. This process of coming out was consistently connected to incorporating the presidents sexuality into their careers and lives with the understanding that coming out may impede or present opportunities. President Williams shares:

I was going to have people meet me on my terms versus attempting to be invisible or inconsequential, and so early in my career I decided to be out with a very clear understanding that it could cause great things or horrible things to happen but that was going to be my own way of controlling my life” (interview, February 9, 2015).
The visibility of the presidents’ sexuality emerges relatively early in each of the seven presidents’ careers through their vita’s and other documents collected and analyzed, which capture their involvements in professional organizations’ subcommittee’s focused on sexuality and gender, publications of articles and book chapters focused on LGBTQ topics, and creation of and teaching in queer studies programs. Table 4.2 provides an in depth look at the ways in which the seven presidents have developed scholarship, served their institutions and community, taught, and developed a social media presence focused on queer topics.

**Table 4.2 President’s Queer Presence in Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Scholarship</th>
<th>Service to the Institution and Community</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Social Media Presence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| President Hersh | 35 articles, papers, and scholarly presentations with LGBTQ topical focus | • Co-Director of the LGBT Studies program  
• Four committees focused on LGBTQ+ topics | Three LGBTQ+ courses taught | LinkedIn  
Wikipedia page  
YouTube videos  
Webpage content |
| President Williams | One article with LGBTQ focus | • Six committees, programs, focused on LGBTQ+ topics. | | LinkedIn  
YouTube videos  
Webpage content |
| President Gann | One article with LGBTQ focus | • Four professional affiliations with LGBTQ+ organizations | | Facebook  
LinkedIn  
YouTube videos  
Webpage content |
| President Hayes | | • Two professional affiliations with LGBTQ+ | | Facebook  
LinkedIn  
YouTube videos  
Webpage content |
President Carver

- Three professional organizations with LGBTQ+ focus

Facebook
Twitter
LinkedIn
YouTube videos
Webpage content

President Stevens

- Five professional affiliations and involvement with and LGBTQ+ focus

Facebook
LinkedIn
YouTube videos
Webpage content

President Buckman

Eight articles on LGBTQ topics, discrimination, and creating inclusive spaces.

- Two Awards related to LGBTQ+ accolades
- Two committees
- One partnership with a speaking agency

Facebook
Twitter
LinkedIn
Instagram
YouTube videos

Publishing on LGBTQ+ topics was present on four of the seven presidents’ vitas, demonstrating their investment in adding to scholarship on queer topics. Each of the seven presidents was engaged in committee work, local, regional, and national LGBTQ+ organizations, and community LGBTQ+ community work. Only one of the seven presidents taught LGBTQ+ specific topical courses throughout their tenure. All seven presidents maintained involved social media and online presence through a range of platforms.

Coming out and being out for two of the presidents was a longer process. For President Morgan and President Sloan, coming out occurred later in life. The decisions to come out were starkly different for the two presidents. President Morgan navigated ending a marriage and the impacts on his children, as well as the impediments being out may have upon his career. His
coming out was occurring in tandem with opportunities to progress his career. He had to make decisions about how his sexuality would affect his career aspirations. President Morgan recalls, “I learned this the hard way,” referring to not coming out based on fear of losing opportunities (interview, February 2, 2015). He chose to come out and shared that being out in higher education requires practitioners to be “honest about who you are” and “understanding what you are willing to compromise about yourself to have a job” (interview, February 2, 2015). President Morgan emphasized the importance of being authentic and finding ways to enmesh identity, passion, and career.

President Sloan did not come out until 2008, because the places he worked “were pretty Republican and so they weren’t really open” (interview, February 16, 2015). He remained closeted due to his fear of the impact being out would have upon his career and how the community where he and his partner worked would respond. Despite the length of time it took the two presidents to come out, they both acknowledged the significance of being out. Similar to the other seven presidents, being out for Presidents Morgan and Sloan allows them to serve as an advocate for underrepresented groups, live in an authentic manner, and create pathways for LGBTQ people within higher education.

Each of the nine presidents disclosed that being out in higher education acted as a means of not reinforcing what President Hersh deemed the “you better be careful mentality” to other queer people (interview, February 23, 2015). The presidents felt that by hiding their sexuality they would send the message to other LGBTQ people that the risk of coming out is greater than being authentic. Being out to students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and the greater community allows the presidents to challenge stereotypes and bias based on sexual orientation.
The presidents collectively shared the role their leadership has on establishing possible pathways for LGBTQ+ people in regards to career and leadership. In a 2014 video, published by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, President Carver discussed that “we wanted to see what we could do to advocate for LGBTQ people being better considered as leaders and advance them to presidency and other levels of leadership” in reference to the formation of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization and coming out in a more collective way (Document, February 3, 2014). The presence of L&G people in prominent senior level leadership positions creates possibilities for LGBTQ+ people to aspire and attain similar positions. Based on document collection and analysis, each of the nine presidents had an online presence related to the individual’s sexuality, which ranged from online biographies and Wikipedia pages to blogs and YouTube videos which are detailed in Table 4.2. This presence underscored the presidents’ commitment to being out.

The nine presidents all disclosed their sexuality when applying to their positions during the time of the study. This disclosure acted as a means of testing the campus climate as well as ensuring that each campus was prepared and able to accept an out president. President Gann disclosed his sexuality so that “if there might be a problem that is known, we can all move along,” (critical incident survey, January 1, 2015); President Stevens ensures all constituents at the college know: “people know, my cabinet knows, management knows, everybody I guess” (interview, February 11, 2015). Through being out in the search process and continuing to come out, the presidents are able to ensure that their sexuality aligns with the values and mission of the institution and that larger issues will not arise with the board of trustees or donors at a later point.
Table 4.3 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of presidents committing to being out in higher education.

**Table 4.3**

*Committing to Being Out in Higher Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Hersh</td>
<td>If I don’t make it clear that being a lesbian is an important piece of who I am and I don’t let people know, then I’m reinforcing for them the “I think you better be careful” kind of mentality that I grew up with as a kid and I don’t want that to be true for anyone (interview, February 23, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hayes</td>
<td>I write on LGBTQ issues and am openly partnered and so there was never an issue to be raised about being out (critical incident survey, December 4, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Carver</td>
<td>Professionally, when I was interviewing for my first faculty job after graduate school I wanted to make sure that it was ok to be out. At that point my CV didn’t look as gay as it looks now. When I interviewed for this job I interviewed to a board that was almost completely white, straight, octogenarian men, and I made sure to double check that they knew, but I wanted to make sure we’re not going to have a problem here. I have kind of always been out (interview, February 6, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Buckman</td>
<td>You know I knew once I was out, that I would be out regardless of the position that I held. I’ve always felt strongly about that. I remember thinking what if I met presidents who were out. I think I knew this could become a reality when I met other out presidents (interview, February 12, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table demonstrates how participants emphasized creating a culture of knowledge around being out, removing barriers to coming out, and creating pathways for LGBTQ people through leadership. President Hayes created a culture of knowledge around being out by using queer scholarship and the presence of her partner to provide signals to the campus community regarding her sexuality. Similarly, President Carver ensured that the search committee and
campus stakeholders would not have concerns with him being an out gay man and chose to disclose his sexuality to remove any future barriers. Creating pathways for LGBTQ+ people within the field became a priority and possibility for President Buckman when he realized there was a space for him to be gay and a university president. Each instance demonstrates the gravity and impact of committing to being out in higher education as a college or university president.

**Supporting frameworks for being out.** All nine presidents discussed the importance of support networks throughout their careers as well as being central to their role as a president of a college or university. The presidents classified supports as “personal and professional” and as being comprised of LGBTQ and straight mentors (interview with Rick Carver, February 6, 2015). President Williams shared the organic nature of these supports: “I haven’t had a queer godfather or godmother to look out for me” (interview, February 9, 2015). This statement demonstrates that support for the presidents did not occur in a mysterious or magical manner that moved them forward towards presidency; instead support manifested in three clear ways: mentorship via faculty and staff, partners, and L&G presidents.

*Mentorship via faculty and staff as support.* Mentorship was conceptualized through the lens of challenge and support for all nine presidents. Mentors, regardless of their sexuality, supported each president through difficult situations, personal and professional, as well as challenging the presidents in developing their leadership skills and abilities. President Morgan shared the advice he received from the Director of Counseling, who witnessed him demonstrating authoritarian behavior when he was a dean,: “As you probably already know, you catch more flies with honey. Use your own authority so you don’t have to bully other people; they will listen to you and they will follow you” (interview, August 8, 2015). This
feedback shaped President Morgan as a leader and came as a result of a colleague who was willing to provide feedback other direct reports and colleagues were unwilling to give. All nine presidents were able to provide numerous examples of specific colleagues who delivered difficult feedback out of a place of care and concern as a means of professional development. President Buckman shared the anger he felt towards his mentor who encouraged him to quit his teaching job and apply for positions in Student Affairs. His mentor created a “stupid folder” and told him to save the rejection letters and place them in the folder “because these are the people stupid enough not to hire you” (interview, February 12, 2015). Challenge and support served as a balanced process that allowed the presidents to grow and learn as they navigated their pathways through higher education.

Mentorship and support was not limited with regard to sexuality; President Gann states: “the people who helped me were straight” (interview, February, 11, 2015). He discusses, similar to the other eight presidents, that there have been allies along the way who understood sexuality is not an indicator of people’s ability to lead nor of their abilities. President Hersh’s mentor was a straight man who leveraged not only her abilities, but her intentionality:

Women in science are rare when I was in school, women in administration and higher education is still relatively rare. Women presidents are rare, I think it is still less than 30% and most of us are in community colleges. He was sort of the one that always said that you have to be purposeful about your path and really think about what you want your impact to be (interview, February 23, 2015).

All nine presidents cited a mentor who recognized significance in their skills and abilities and “took special interest” in guiding their pathways through offering development, encouragement, opportunities, and mentorship (interview with President Sloan, January 16, 2015).
Eight of the Presidents identified LGBTQ+ faculty and staff as supportive colleagues. President Hayes states, “there are several lesbians on [the Board of Trustees] and there have been the presence of LGBTQ people for a long time” (interview, June 6, 2015). President Carver shared, “now you can’t shake em’ with a stick without a bunch of gays being around” (interview, February 6, 2015). The presence of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff along the pathway to presidency has provided collegiality and support through difficult situations within the presidents’ personal and professional lives. LGBTQ+ faculty and staff provided opportunities for growth and promotion and provided developmental advice and feedback. President Buckman did not have examples of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff support. He shared that in some cases he found the LGBTQ+ faculty and staff to be frustrated by him because he does not always agree with their causes, referencing that “blood drives are a good example where I am not going to stop allowing drives on campus just because they don’t allow gay people to donate. They just don’t always see the big picture” (interview, February 12, 2015). He viewed sexuality as an irrelevant aspect of mentorship.

Table 4.4 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of mentorship via faculty and staff as support.

**Table 4.4**

*Mentorship via Faculty and Staff as Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Hersh</td>
<td>I’ve had incredible mentorship. I encountered my mentor when I was in graduate school. He turned out to be incredible if not the most important mentor of my life and we really walked the journey together (interview, February 23, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>I grew up coming out in New York city at a time of everybody dying and that...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Carver did a couple of things. It put a chip on my shoulder and it also gave me a community of friends who have supported me through defying expectations. I have also made sure that the professional settings that I’ve been in leadership and faculty-wise have been places that I believe support existed or could be created. I’ve got mentors I have always worked with a coach (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Stevens I was able to network and find the support there not only from students, but faculty and staff. My boss was really, really cool. He was very open minded and taught me a lot about being political and how to navigate politics in any position. Then we went to a conference and I took him to his first gay bar in New Orleans. He also wanted to learn from me (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Sloan Along the way people did take special interest in me and I had a lot of good mentors-- straight people many who till this day still support me, but many people I haven’t communicated with in years never knew about my sexuality; it never came up. I was just this single guy who was in the seminary and people thought I was a good catholic boy and I just chose life with celibacy (interview, January 16, 2015).

This table presents the experiences of presidents being challenged and supported by faculty and staff, self-selected mentorship by LGBTQ+ faculty and staff, presidents experiencing sexuality not always being a component of mentorship, and the role of straight allies. President Hersh described her mentorship as a side by side journey that included challenge and support.

Mentorship is viewed as a proactive and individualized process that President Carver has been intentional to guide via selecting coaches and faculty and staff that are reflective of his personhood. President Stevens experienced mentorship through a straight supervisor who engaged in co-construction of development. Sexuality as shared identity was not necessary for President Stevens or President Sloan. The presence of straight allies and advocates as mentors was important in career trajectory. The support provided by faculty and staff mentorship impacted the presidents’ pathways and development as leaders.
Partner support. The role presidential partners contribute to support is integral to each leader’s success. Eight of the nine presidents identified the significant role their partner has on their presidency and success. Due to the long hours, extreme stress, and blend of work and life responsibility, the first lady or man assumes numerous ambiguous responsibilities with no compensation. Informal responsibilities may include living on campus, attending interviews, engaging donors and alumni during dinners, and being a visible member of the campus community, all while maintaining their own careers. President Gann shared the role his husband takes on: “we live here on campus…at the top of a residence hall. We’re always on campus” (interview, February 11, 2015). Eight of the presidents described their partners as being integral to the campus community. President Hayes shared about her partner, “She’s very welcomed into the community. People love her. She’s been very supportive both financially and otherwise worried about the status of the college” (interview, June 16, 2015). Partners bring their personality and lived experience to the presidency, which complemented and acted as a perceived asset for the presidents.

All of the presidents acknowledged and included their partner in the interview process for presidency. Most often this means that the partner participated in some portion of the interview process. President Williams shared the support her partner offered while she was interviewing for the position: “Her poise and optimism allowed everyone to quickly feel at ease and comfortable. It gave me the quiet confidence to step up and be a leader of a university” (critical incident survey, December 2, 2014). Partners help campus administration, board of trustees, donors, and students understand what a same gender relationship looks like and normalizes a concept that some campus stakeholders do not understand. When a partner is able to put constituents at ease, concerns about sexuality are reduced.
All eight presidents acknowledged their dependence on their partner for support in the context of dealing with stress and difficult situations. Partners become sounding boards and sometimes take a backseat to the institution in regards to time and availability. President Stevens shared the difficulty of being available for his partner during busy weeks and the give and take of the job, which sometimes includes his partner and other times, does not; “There are times when I’m working 70 hours and he’ll bitch about it. All I can say is dude it brings home the bacon, back off” (interview, February 11, 2015). Each president indicated a level of sacrifice that has occurred within their relationship as a result of holding the presidency. This sacrifice manifests differently for each president, ranging from long-distance relationships to limited time.

President Carver was separated from his partner and discussed the challenges of being a single gay president. He does not have the support of a partner and identifies dating as being “difficult if not impossible” as online apps such as Grindr and venues such as clubs and bars are not options for him to engage in due to the presidency being high profile (interview, February 6, 2015). President Carver shares that support comes from a level of trust that is present in a partnership and that only exists after a period of time together.

Table 4.5 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of partner support.
Table 4.5

Partner Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Morgan</td>
<td>When I took this presidency he came here. He’s a professor and he’s very distinguished and so he came here and has been a support to me along the way as he also created his own path until he retired a year and a half ago (interview, February 6, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hersh</td>
<td>She [her partner] is a wonderful warm charming woman and anybody that spends five minutes with her will instantly be in love with her, and she probably adds a lot more to the dynamics in any situation than I do. She plays an important role in my position as president (interview, January 23, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hayes</td>
<td>So, commuting has impacted her and me on that front, but I think it also is difficult to work out the consequences of one’s ambition for a woman. But I think the main difficulty what it means after 20 some years of a relationship you become commuters. It's excruciating to both of us (interview, June 16, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Sloan</td>
<td>When I gave a speech in front of a thousand people and I thanked him for being my partner for 27 years and he got a standing ovation. So I would say October 2011 is when I came out completely and acknowledged his role in my life (interview, February 16, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Buckman</td>
<td>Recently my partner and I attended the LGBT leaders on higher education meeting in Chicago and marched with other LGBT leaders in the Gay Pride parade in Chicago, which was the first for me, I might add. It was a testament of our support for one another (interview, July 27, 2015).</td>
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</table>

This table establishes the informal responsibilities a partner of the president take on, which include supporting the campus community, serving as a sounding board for the president, and normalizing heteronormative environments, all while maintaining their career trajectories and life priorities. President Morgan and President Hersh discuss the support their partners provide to the campus community through their presence. Partners of the presidents also have their careers to balance and maintain. President Haye’s partner, while a valuable member of the
campus community and a support, has had to commute, which has placed pressure on their relationship and careers. President Sloan and President Buckman discuss their partners’ presences as disrupting heteronormative environments. Partner support is central to the presidents committing to being out and serving as a president of a college or university.

*L&G president support.* A select number of individuals across the United States understand what it is like to hold the position of president at a college or university. This unique perspective carries with it power and privilege, as well as vulnerability and high stakes. Navigating the experiences of being an out gay president presents additional challenges, which a drastically smaller number of presidents understand and experience. President Gann shared:

> Being a president is part of a club with 4000 or so of us. I love to go to conferences to just watch as presidents stride along like peacocks…displaying their egos. When I am around other gay presidents I feel safer because you know they are your people. I wouldn’t want to be around gay people all the time, but hanging out together as an organization we talk about issues we would probably not with our straight peers (interview, February 11, 2015).

All nine of the presidents described the camaraderie and support they have felt from the L&G Presidents organization. The organization provides a network of peers through which L&G presidents can be vulnerable and authentic. President Morgan, one of the founders of the organization shared, “There is no posturing. We are completely comfortable with each other and we are very candid in a caring way” (interview, February 6, 2015). This comfort is achieved through “storytelling and talking in discussion” (interview with President Williams, February 9, 2015).
Each of the nine presidents referenced support as coming through relying on each other to solicit feedback, process decisions, and relate to one another in a personal way. President Hayes relayed this when he shared, “There’s more willingness to talk. By that I don’t mean it’s necessarily issues with sexuality, things like what it actually feels like to fire people. It’s all those things and more” (interview, June 16, 2015). The presidents’ sexuality brought them together to better understand and support one another through the process of being an L&G president; however, the support has far exceeded the boundaries of sexuality, instead creating a space for leaders to be authentic and share lived experiences.

Table 4.6 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of L&G president support.

**Table 4.6**

*L&G President Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Morgan</td>
<td>We just had our annual meeting, which we do on somebody’s campus each year. There were about 20 of us there, I think, and one of the greatest things about meeting with these amazing women and men whom I just really adore and love and admire so much is that it’s different from other presidential meetings that I go to (interview, February 6, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Williams</td>
<td>As a group we are men and women dedicated to higher education, highly educated, and of a certain age, I would say 45-65 and certain educational and economical level. These factors comprise our common experiences of privilege, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. We always convene in an intentional way. Language is powerful, if someone says something about my partner for 25 years, we got married last year, the group has a good sense of what that means (interview, February 9, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Carver</td>
<td>Now we are firing on this as an organization and it’s a multi-strategy. One is to support LGBTQ people to think about themselves as leaders, and our conference that’s upcoming is a mechanism to do that, it’s a mentorship professional development conference (interview, February 6, 2016).</td>
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</table>
President Stevens
If I go to organizations with all presidents, I hate it. First of all they’re not good looking, secondly they’re a total bore and most of them are just really conservative assholes. The LGBTQ Association of Presidents provides me a network of support as a gay president. If I have a problem with x, y, or z then I can talk to one or two, or three people that I know (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Buckman
Put a bunch of gay folks in a room and what happens? If you just look at cross-cultural identity development when one is in a group of similar folks there are connections spoken and unspoken that play out. The LGBTQ presidents are connected in a different way and we have different life experiences and we have shared experiences (interview, February 12, 2015).

This table illustrates the experience of being and connecting with other L&G presidents for support. This support is experienced in an authentic and comfortable manner, which allows L&G presidents to be vulnerable and to tell their stories. The table displays that the presidents seek each other out for support around being an L&G president, but also for decision-making and problem-solving, which recognizes the shared and different experiences of LGBTQ+ people. President Morgan shares his love and affinity for the other L&G presidents he meets with via the LGBTQ Presidents Organization. There is also a shared understanding that occurs amongst the L&G presidents; President Williams experienced this through shared life experiences such as marriage. President Carver views fellow L&G presidents as being able to support through demonstrating leadership; he has particularly seen this through the LGBTQ Presidents Organization, which held a summer professional development conference for current and up and coming L&G leaders in higher education. L&G presidents provide a space for President Stevens to feel supported and safe to turn to for decision-making and sound boarding. President Buckman discussed the other L&G presidents as being an affinity group comprised of similar and different experiences. L&G presidents provide support for one another and also create a space of acceptance and understanding.
Experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept. All nine presidents discussed the ways in which heteronormativity exists and is central to their colleges and universities. As President Carver described, “We still have sexism, we still have racism, and we still have heterosexism. It manifests in small and sometimes big ways from microaggressions to straight up I can’t believe that’s what went on in the classroom situation” (interview, July 31, 2015). Heteronormativity as an entrenched concept is explored through three subthemes: bias and microaggressions, false paradigms of progress, and bias leads to support. Through these three findings heteronormative contexts are understood as driving instances of bias and microaggressions, limiting progress, and providing opportunity for support to emerge.

President Morgan discussed the phenomenon of empathy emerging from acts of discrimination: “When there is overt bias…it tends to generate something within people who were observing it, sympathy and empathy, and therefore they offer support and help” (interview, August 7, 2015). Understood as a process, the presidents reflected upon instances of bias and microaggressions within the heteronormative context of college campuses and considered the reciprocal action of bias and support.

Bias and microaggressions. Each of the nine presidents experienced a range of bias and microaggressions professionally based on their sexuality. Bias occurs in overt ways in which individuals leverage decisions to make negative statements in regards to their disagreement with the president’s sexuality. President Morgan shares, “Bad things happen. A father withdrew his son’s application because he didn’t want his son to attend a university with no morals” (interview, January 6, 2015). This action was described as hurtful and difficult by President Morgan. He did not focus on the personal affront as much as he was concerned for the impact of the student who was withdrawn.
Bias also emerges in subversive ways that are much less easy to identify due to the nuanced ways in which they occur. President Stevens shared, “Pinpointing bias is hard, but I have interviewed for some positions and you look around the room and think, I am never going to get past the first round. Being Hispanic and gay acts as a double curse sometimes” (interview, January 11, 2015). President Stevens’ perspective emerged among all of the presidents as the unspoken bias that is within the job search process. Being an openly gay candidate would never be the reason an institution would give for not hiring, yet for at least seven of the presidents information shared by the search firm or search committee members after the search indicates that based on being openly gay the individual was not hired.

Each of the nine presidents discussed the ways in which bias was used in a retaliatory manner. President Sloan shared, “A donor…told me she would never give to the college and that she was afraid I was going to attract too many gays and lesbians and turn the college into a gay mecca” (critical incident survey, December 1, 2014). Based on the president’s sexuality and the university’s acceptance of it via hiring, constituents retaliate by way of threatening to withhold donations or support. This places the presidents as well as the institution in precarious positions, but also requires the president to demonstrate grit and resiliency in the face of the retaliation.

The nine presidents reflected on their current positions and the power it affords them to respond in ways in which they may not have 20 years prior. President Stevens shared, “Now if I see something, I say something” (interview, January 11, 2015). President Hayes provided an example of her ability to confront bias: “I was meeting one of the trustees’ husband, he shared with me that he didn’t approve of my lifestyle and I was so shocked. I said, I don’t approve of
yours either” (interview, June 16, 2015). All of the presidents addressed the importance of confronting and dismantling bias.

Microaggressions were more difficult for the presidents to identify at their current level. President Morgan’s perspective was that at a particular level of leadership people do not openly offer up microaggressions. All nine presidents referenced experiencing microaggressions, despite not necessarily recognizing these examples as being microaggressions. President Carver shared an embedded microaggression that occurred from comments by his leadership team:

When we moved to this campus, it’s a very professional environment that is completely different from the dump that we came from, and people were saying when we first moved in here ‘This is so Rick’ and I didn’t get what the content of that really was, but I knew it was having an impact on me, because I got it when we were having a retreat with my senior management team and I started crying. That was pent up hurt that I had done all the work to get us here and it was summed up like the queen wanted to redecorate (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Carver recognized the emotional impact microaggressions can have as well as the minimizing effect of such comments. While he recognized he did not think the intention of his colleagues was to hurt him or undermine his hard work, they did just that. The microaggressions referenced by the presidents were undermining, humiliating, and often led to them second guessing their own skills and abilities. In each instance these comments were addressed in varying ways with the constituents that used them intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. For the presidents, addressing microaggressions was about managing the impact with less emphasis on the intent.
Table 4.7 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance in regards to bias and microaggressions.

**Table 4.7**

*Bias and Microaggressions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>President Hersh</td>
<td>I’ve got a partner and we are going to live an “out” life and there was just this dead silence on the phone. He [the head of the search firm] told me I would never make it into the job. I withdrew from the search and I don’t know what kind of story he made up about why this one person they were all excited about wasn’t in the search anymore. That was the first time in my life that I really felt hate and it was devastating and I thought to myself, wow. I realized that your talents are not what will get you your next job (interview, February 23, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Williams</td>
<td>I remember early in my career I was an assistant vice president and there was a director who was clearly homophobic without a doubt and I was fairly out. I remember a meeting on campus and she made some kind of homophobic comment and I just looked at her, paused and said that is completely unacceptable. You cannot act that way or talk that way and she just lost it and I let her know her personal beliefs were interfering with her work and her colleagues. I remember no one else stepped forward or said anything. Now afterward, people said things like, “I am so glad you took her on” and I was left wondering “where were you in the room?” (interview, July 31, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Gann</td>
<td>I have had three situations where I experienced discrimination in presidential interviews. In two of the cases I was approached by people on the search committee who told me there had been overt bias in the process. At an interview with the Trustees, a board member asked me, “Do you and your husband dance a mean fox trot?” Now, I am quite sure he did not ask the straight male candidate that question (critical incident survey, January, 18, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Buckman</td>
<td>The most painful experience I ever had related to my sexuality had to do with my fraternity and my being on a national board and being poised to become the next president of the fraternity. This was during my professional career. They couldn’t or wouldn’t elect a gay man to be the president of the fraternity. It was so painful to me to know that I was…that this wasn’t about my ability or my work (interview, February 12, 2015).</td>
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</table>
This table depicts the experiences of bias and microaggressions by the presidents. Bias is often experienced in a more subversive manner in the job search process. Presidents demonstrate grit and resilience through dismantling bias which demonstrates discrimination is not accepted on their campuses. Bias is experienced overtly and may be used in a retaliatory manner. Microaggressions were more difficult for the presidents to identify and examples of microaggressions are mediated for impact versus intent. LGBTQ identity superseded ability and hard work. President Hersh experienced discrimination within the job search process in an overt manner, where the search firm told her the school would not consider her based on her sexuality. Taking a stand against instances of bias demonstrated that discrimination is not tolerated; President Williams shared the isolation and liberation of taking a stand against a colleague who was making heterosexist remarks. President Gann experienced discrimination in a covert way through a question posed by a board of trustee’s member that minimized President Gann’s relationship with his husband. Being gay superseded the hard work and ability President Buckman exhibited, resulting in him not being elected as the national president of his fraternity. The experiences of bias and microaggressions impacted the professional and personal lives of presidents as well as the trajectory and pathway for the presidents.

*False paradigms of progress.* All nine presidents grappled with an existing false paradigm of progress, particularly within higher education. The existing structures within higher education are still harmful and a cause for concern. President Hayes experienced a shift in higher education over the course of the past 30 years in regard to the space being ideal for LGBTQ+ people:
I think that once upon a time, we all believed that [higher education was] one of the better places to be at, to work if you were LGBT. I think it’s uneven. I think it’s very uneven. I do think that when I first entered it as a workplace from being a college student or a graduate student, it was at the time a better place to work than much of the other industry, but by the time the late ‘90s came or perhaps even before that, I started teaching in the mid ‘80s, it just flipped (interview, June 16, 2015).

President Hayes identifies the direct contrast between inside and outside of higher education. When she was in college she experienced higher education to be a more accepting and open space compared to the world outside of academe, but as parts of the world have progressed, higher education has struggled to keep up. Each participant shared excitement in regard to the June 2015 legalization of gay marriage; however the recurring narrative was that higher education was already a step behind. President Stevens identifies the progress narrative as even being problematic for L&G leaders:

There are potential issues when it comes to human resources, to benefit packages, etc. that institutions didn’t think about before. I think there’s also a training piece too. I think that as leaders of higher education, we need to think about how we are being progressive or archaic. When you hear this is my wife and it’s coming from another woman—even for me as a gay man, I squirm and not that I haven’t accepted it, it’s that I still haven’t heard it so often (Interview, July 31, 2015).

Again underscoring higher education’s struggle to move beyond a heteronormative context, President Stevens acknowledges his entrenchment in heteronormative structures even as a gay man. He begins to challenge and envision areas of growth needed within higher education to dismantle or counter heteronormative structures through a call for new practices to support
employees whose husbands, wives, and partners now qualify for benefits as well as training for leaders to be better prepared to support LGBTQ employees.

President Hersh experienced this false paradigm in regards to the bias and microaggressions students’ experience:

I think we [higher education] are slow and I also think on the surface all might be well in the sand box but when you scratch that surface the bias that people in particular, groups and in this case, GLBTQ people continue to feel is still there. Certainly we see it in our students when you do campus climate survey and you really dive into their experiences while you might not see homophobic hate speech chalked onto the side walk their personal daily experience are still a concern. And so I think in higher education we tend to sort of stay where we are stating it’s [bias and discrimination] not a problem anymore and if it weren’t for people who have experiences of bias I’m not sure we would delve much deeper (Interview, June 16, 2015).

Change is slow within higher education, and as a result of this slow change and unwillingness to change heteronormative environments and practices, students continue to experience bias and discrimination. President Hersh underscores that higher education is often looking for overt bias and discrimination versus microaggressions that may occur covertly and are harder to quantify. She identifies a lack of exploring bias and discrimination deeply as an impediment to supporting students from the heteronormative structures that continue to be perpetuated.

Six out of the nine presidents were optimistic about the progress narrative in regards to higher education becoming a more open and inclusive space. President Gann acknowledged the presence of the false paradigm, but anchored the future in hope at dismantling the heteronormative environment of higher education:
Well I think first of all there were always these concerns. I mean right now I have no illusions that we are in “happy land”. I think we’ve got a long way to go and I may not see it happen during my time on earth. I think that we are going to be taking larger incremental steps in the next few years (Interview, July 24, 2015).

Table 4.8 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regard to false paradigms of progress.

### Table 4.8

*False Paradigms of Progress*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>President Morgan</td>
<td>You’re going to see more and more visibility and you’re going to see that in all of 50 states. It’s going to be driven by future generations, first and foremost by general changes to societal attitudes. More significantly I can hope that sexuality is a secondary consideration as people move forward in searching for positions. They [future generations] don’t seem to care about sexuality as much, but for now there is work to be done (interview, August 7, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Carver</td>
<td>Marriage equality is an important step. There are many things underway in higher education around change. We are still missing housing and employment rights in most states. The preponderance of homeless are LGBTQ and most bullying in k-12 is around gender and sexuality. It is a big step, but I don’t know that it is a transformational step for higher education. We still have sexism, we still have racism, and we still have heterosexism. It manifests in small and sometimes big ways from microaggressions to straight up like I can’t believe that’s what went on in the classroom situations (interview, July, 31, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Sloan</td>
<td>But you know I said to the board, here’s the thing you can fire me tomorrow. You know you just gave me a four year contract but you really could say adieus and I have no protection (interview, August 5, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Buckman</td>
<td>Right now if you look closely at the types of colleges that LGBTQ leader are leading, they tend to be, well, you will rarely see any of them leading a large research university. I think that will take time and when that happens, that would be pretty cool, that would show progress (interview, July 27, 2015).</td>
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</tbody>
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This table demonstrates maintaining hope for progress and equity, continued work that still needs to be done within higher education to dismantle the heteronormative context and environment, workplace discrimination and firing, and presence of the lavender ceiling. President Morgan was mindful of the progress that has occurred via marriage and employers seeming to be less concerned with sexuality, but he also acknowledged that there is work to be done to further equity. The presence of sexism, racism, heterosexism, and heteronormativity are indicators to President Carver that higher education is a space where work is needed to transform the culture. President Sloan shared a conversation he had with the board of trustees at his institution about the lack of workplace protections as an indicator that there is still a lot of work to be done to reach progress. The majority of L&G presidents are not leading top research institutions, which suggested the presence of the lavender ceiling, limiting the level to which L&G presidents can rise. The presidents acknowledged progress and largely maintained a positive perspective, but also recognized substantial work ahead.

*Bias leads to support.* Bias is largely viewed as a negative concept. All nine of the presidents discussed the connection between balance and support. President Hersh shared that without overt bias “support for those same people would not typically emerge. June 26th [marriage equality was legalized] was so significant, because people can say ‘I have a friend who is gay and they are now okay to our government’” (interview, July 28, 2015). The concept of bias incidents serving as motivation and encouragement to others to take a stand and offer support was referenced by all nine presidents. President Stevens shared, “people are really mobilizing if you will, around instances of bias, something we haven’t seen before” (interview, July 31, 2015). He references that in the past, instances of bias were addressed on campus, but now there is education, training, and a focus on inclusion that has not been present before.
President Williams shared an experience with bias that resulted in support:

In August 2013, my partner and I of almost 20 years got married. We are both private people and we got married at the county courthouse. About a month later, I was quite surprised to receive a call from the editor of a local paper in the community. The editor said someone told him I had gotten married last month and had ulterior motives. I was stunned and furious. Within an hour my spouse and I were meeting with the editor. He looked embarrassed and apologized for asking the question about our wedding. The story ran the next week. The funny thing is we started receiving wedding gifts and cards from folks we knew and didn’t know. Yes there are bigots in the community where I live and work, but by far there are way more caring and loving people in this community (critical incident survey, December 2, 2014).

The presidents’ collectively referenced keeping perspective and focusing on building communities of care and support on their campuses. This perspective is kept by keeping an open mind and awareness to see instances of support when they emerge. President Morgan shared, “you choose how you get through it” (interview, August 7, 2015). This choice includes looking for individuals and practices that support and challenge instances of bias.

President Carver suggests that bias experiences empower people to “lead from the margins,” which “make them look for out of the box solutions” (interview, July 31, 2015). His practice is also shared by President Gann, who posits that leaders who come from underrepresented groups that have been marginalized have the opportunity to reposition power and support for others who are underrepresented. He shared that being allowed on the bus, but always made to sit in the back because you are gay, has the potential to be reframed “when the bus driver is gay you feel different” (interview, February 16, 2015). Similarly, L&G presidents
are reframing the possibility for LGBTQ+ practitioners who may now consider the bias they have experienced as opportunities to support and create programs, practices, and policies for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff.

Table 4.9 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regards to bias leads to support.

**Table 4.9**

*Bias Leads to Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Gann</td>
<td>A group of people can feel safe in a place, but it’s another thing to feel that you can actually lead a place (interview, February 16, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Stevens</td>
<td>I think what is happening now in our society is that people are becoming more engaged when they hear about bias. So back in the day whenever that was, whether be ten years ago, twenty years ago, when there was an act of bias, you know, we dealt with that situation but we didn’t do anything beyond that situation to teach people about the greater good (interview, July 31, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Sloan</td>
<td>Well about a year and half later she calls me up and she gave me a check for 1 million. She said she had come to realize that you aren’t one of those flag waving gays, and that you’re not trying to turn the college into a gay mecca, and that you are not promoting yourself. You really do want to change the lives of students. So I have been watching and I can really appreciate that and I am very sorry that you know I made the judgement about you before I even knew you (interview, August 5, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Buckman</td>
<td>I was committed to return as a speaker to the national conference for my fraternity and talk about what it means to be a college president and it was a pretty powerful moment to come back after all that time and after I had not been able to be president of the organization because I was gay (interview, July 27, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table focuses on the ways in which support created safe spaces, but also created possibility, education and expectation transformed bias, lived experiences and interactions have the ability
to change perspectives, and the impact of demonstrated resiliency in the face of adversity. President Gann shared that combatting bias can lead to safer environments, but that more importantly eliminating bias should provide possibility to LGBTQ people to become leaders in spaces where they have not been welcomed previously. Education and expectation in regards to bias have shifted in ways in which President Stevens said have never been present before and is leading to more awareness. President Sloan shared that a donor changed her mind about him as a gay leader based on observing his leadership and lived experience. Presenting to at the national fraternity meeting despite previously experiencing bias from the organization, President Buckman demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity via overcoming the bias of the group to educate and model his leadership as a gay man. The presidents experienced bias and support as an enmeshed concept.

**Navigating expectations of what it means to be a queer leader.** Serving as president of a college or university requires dynamic leadership skills. For all nine presidents, their sexuality is a piece of who they are as a president and as a leader. In most spaces and daily job duties being gay is not a salient identity that emerges or is mediated, but is often present. President Hayes shared that her sexuality is “occasionally significant” (critical incident survey, December 4, 2014). This is not to say that one’s sexuality is not continually present. All nine presidents have come to understand what it means to be a queer leader and how to enact this leadership in varying contexts. President Carver contextualized his understanding of self by sharing:

> I’m a person with a good deal of privilege because I’m white, because I’m a leader, because I’m a man and I just feel it’s important to use that privilege to continue to push back on heterosexism. One way to do that is the fact of my existence. My gain is an
analogue for other beleaguered and marginalized groups. When I make sure that my identity as a gay person is within my narrative—I hope it offers hope to the women here, the people of color here, to people with physical challenges, etc.” (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Carver enacted his identities to leverage power in leading. All nine presidents have developed the skill set to leverage their sexuality as a means of empowering faculty, staff, students, and community members. All of the presidents shared that they view their role as a queer leader as not only a duty, but also an expectation from LGBTQ+ constituents on their campuses and within their communities. Two findings emerged: leading with the gay and gender performance, which are directly related to the concept of leveraging and navigating expectations of being a queer leader.

Leading with the gay. Each of the nine presidents enacted their sexuality as a means of leveraging various campus constituents and stakeholders. The ways and reasons in which they lead with their sexuality vary. Six of the presidents, Morgan, Hersh, Hayes, Sloan, Stevens, and Buckman, lead with their sexuality in a more subtle and soft manner. President Morgan shared, “By being an out person in every context, I can say very quietly what I need to say” (interview, February 6, 2015). Subtle and softly should not be misinterpreted at ineffective or lacking presence. All of the six presidents ensure their campuses know they are out and advocate for a range of justice issues. President Buckman’s campus, located in Vermont, had the most prominent focus on diversity and social justice issues—visible through large banners, advertisements, and documents that showcased the lived mission of the institution.

Three of the presidents, Williams, Gann, and Carver, lead with their sexuality in a bolder and more audacious manner. President Gann shared, “my sexuality plays some role in my
presidency every day. I have had the privileged experience of speaking to our coming out students who are moved and strengthened in their identity by knowing me and knowing I’m there” (critical incident survey, January 18, 2015). This approach positions them particularly well to connect with LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff on their campuses.

For all nine presidents coming out repeatedly on campus becomes a mission. President Carver shared, “When I do classroom visits I make sure I’m modeling authenticity by thinking in some subtle way how to come out” (interview, February 6, 2015). The presidents discussed making classroom presentations, attending LGBTQ+ student organization meetings, ensuring their partners attend events, and making sure their sexuality is a part of their media presence. These are just some of the ways the presidents lead with the gay. Embedded within the mission to lead with the gay is the intrinsic call and commitment to be their authentic selves, which is interconnected with other identities (gender, race, and ethnicity) and justice issues for all presidents. Each of the nine presidents shared that there is “no clear delineation,” as President Hayes shared, between sexuality and the identity of being a president (interview, June 16, 2015).

Table 4.10 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regards to leading with the gay.

Table 4.10

Leading with the Gay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Hersh</td>
<td>I lead with the gay because it’s one of my commitments. To make sure I model incredibly good aspects for our students. We have a lot of LGBTQ students. It’s not the first thing that pops in to my mind when I have a big decision to make (interview, February 23, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>I have a really thick skin and that has been really helpful as a president. I’m like you know somebody can say something offensive to me or something stupid and I’m really good about forgetting it and blowing if off and putting it in the box it’s supposed to be in. That comes from, you know, being a big old dyke. I think to survive and not to get yourself hurt with all that I think you have to get on with it all and be yourself. I always enter into a room being me (interview, February 9, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gann</td>
<td>Students, faculty, and staff all layer on each president their own perceptions, about that person based on all of their individual experiences. My sexuality is just another aspect of who I am that people react to. Some don’t care all that much. Others likely feel uncomfortable. Some, especially the LGBTQ faculty, students, and staff are elated I’m here and have told me so (critical incident survey, January 18, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>Being gay is an enormous part of who I am and I lead as a gay man. You can’t separate that or marginalize that or think that it’s like sort of a minimum influence on leadership. It means I’m interested in for example social justice issues by virtue. It is a fact of my personhood and it’s in a lot of rooms that I’m in, whether Chicago or national higher education rooms, it is something that marks me as different (interview, February 6, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloan</td>
<td>I am just me. Often people say after four years of knowing me, Sloan I never knew you were gay and you don’t act like a gay person (interview, February 16, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>I’m not one of these traditional college presidents that sit in his or her ivory tower. My door is always open. I give my business card that has my direct telephone number and my email to every single student here and to the parents believe it or not. My identity leads me to be open and that openness is hopefully allowing others to be themselves (interview, February 11, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckman</td>
<td>There are like 50 gay college presidents in the United States, that’s like one percent. The one time I am happy to be in the one percent. I am like this should be a point of pride and you think in your mind you are going to be a hero to the gay kids. The truth is that that does not happen at all because I am the president, period (interview, February 12, 2015).</td>
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This table establishes the ways in which presidents enact and leverage their sexuality, intrinsic responsibility to be out and lead with their sexuality, inseparable aspect of personhood, redefining what gay means, sense of openness, and the unclear delineation between sexuality and presidency. President Hersh, President Williams, and President Gann shared the
importance of being out and leading with their sexuality because of their commitment to their students and to other LGBTQ+ constituents; being oneself is of the utmost importance. Separating being gay from his personhood is impossible for President Carver, who shared that his sexuality is a core part of who he is when he enters a room, whether on campus or at a national conference. President Sloan shared the opportunity to shift people’s thinking about what it means to be a gay leader via his role as president. Committing to sharing his sexuality has allowed President Stevens to be more open in his leadership and approach on campus, which he articulated as maintaining an open office door to inviting students to call him personally or stop by to discuss their challenges and concerns. President Buckman is committed to being out and is a gay leader; however, his leadership as president supersedes him being gay. The presidents incorporate their sexuality into being a leader in varying ways, but all are committed to being out.

*Gender performance.* Each of the nine presidents acknowledged gender as a performative and enacted process that may be approached in a fluid manner. The male presidents discussed enacting gender in a more masculine manner to be taken seriously; “A male who might be slightly effeminate to them [Board of Trustees] is seen as an embarrassment to the institution” (interview with President Stevens, July 31, 2015). The male presidents viewed themselves as presenting masculine and in moments presenting as more “campy” when appropriate or in particular settings. Two of the female presidents, Hersh and Williams, referenced the ways in which the male presidents navigate gender performance in various settings and contexts: “There is more pressure from society and from others to enter the room in a particular way” (interview with President Williams, July 31, 2015). This pressure, whether
generational or a result of heteronormative contexts, results in minimal space for gender fluidity for university male presidents.

Three of the female presidents report “showing up as themselves” or giving minimal thought as to how they perform gender in their role as president (interview with President Williams, July 31, 2015). President Williams acknowledged showing up as her “short lesbian self” and that “she doesn’t try to be more or less butch with various people.” The three female presidents identified a more fluid and free approach to gender, which focused less on societal demands and more on being one’s authentic self. Six of the male participants described a “strong kind of alpha” or “butch” woman as having an advantage in the role of president (interview with President Sloan, August 5, 2015). All nine presidents suggested that a female can enter into a space with a more masculine gender performance and it may actually increase her credibility and ability to leverage within the space.

Table 4.11 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regard to gender performance.

Table 4.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hersh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hayes</td>
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<tr>
<td>President Gann</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
masculine it almost takes them further. I am more of a hankie kind of guy, I
am generally more sentimental and certainly compared to straight guys I
would not be considered super masculine, on the other hand for gay people I
might be a little more masculine (interview, July 24, 2015).

President Carver

Most of the folks in my group don’t do that. I don’t see people doing that at
all. I don’t see them worrying about being too gay or too masculine. I mean
most of the gay men in our group are kind of dudeish anyway. I don’t think
we have somebody who, in our group I would consider really pushing gender
frames (interview, July 31, 2015).

President Stevens

If I came across effeminate or you know flailing my hand around in
conversation or came across with any more habits that I can sometimes
display—kind of in a campy way, you know, that turns off a lot of people and
when you’re in part of a search committee, it’s an area of bias (interview,
July 31, 2015).

President Sloan

Being feminine wouldn’t work. I met with a young man who is African
American and gay as the day is long. All that swishing and giggling and all
that kind of stuff can be annoying. I am trying to think of the women lesbian
presidents I know and I know many and they are all not lipstick lesbians
(interview, August 5, 2015).

President Buckman

Having now spent time with other LGBTQ presidents, it’s interesting that I
do find myself cognitively aware of their behaviors or how they prevent
themselves from letting their ‘hair down’. I am not inclined to do that
[engage in camp] so there is probably something inside my brain that is
saying “stop that” (interview, July 27, 2015).

This table’s context focuses on the ways in which male and female presidents perceive and
enact gender performance as well as what is perceived as accepted and unaccepted. The
presidents share about mediating gender performance, gender norms, false sense of gender
performance, bias drives gender performance, and covert expression of gender and camp.

President Hersh and President Hayes shared gender performance as being a non-issue in that
they do not shift or change who they are in settings based on their gender. President Hersh
reflected that awareness is important, but that does not necessarily mean changing one’s self.

This similar sense of awareness is practiced by President Gann, who recognized the role gender
performance has in varying contexts based on one’s gender. President Carver was dismissive of
gender performance being mediated by L&G presidents, yet shared that most of the male gay presidents enacted a masculine demeanor. The connection between bias and gender performance is shared by President Stevens and President Sloan; both shared that an effeminate gender presentation by a male would draw judgment and bias. President Buckman shared that he has observed other L&G presidents refrain from engaging in camp or limiting their gender performance and that he himself also does not engage in camp, which he assumes could be his subconscious regulating his behavior. The presidents reflected upon societal pressures and norms related to gender performance and accepted and rejected these norms based on their lived experiences of bias.

Engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities. The presidents created queer possibilities in three ways: changing the climate on their campus, impacting social justice issues, and developing practices that support LGBTQ+ students. These possibilities resulted through each of the nine presidents leveraging their sexuality and leadership role in a strategic way that makes the programs, practices, and policies a priority.

All of the nine presidents shared intentions to impact and change the climates on their campuses. President Morgan shared, “our presence changes, humanizes, and through us offers potential for what is possible” (interview, February 6, 2015). Similarly, President Williams shared how a first-year student came up to her to tell her he decided to come to the college because “I thought if you are an out president, maybe I can be safe here” (interview, February 9, 2015). The presence of an L&G president leading an institution has ripple effects on the institution and constituents. The presidents recognize that by their mere presence and leadership change begins.
Being present is one level of support, while being engaged and involved with students is another. President Hersh shares:

We have students to our house for various functions; it is located on the main walkway of the campus. They stop and pet the dogs, they talk and I think for students who don’t identify as LGBTQ they sort of see two normal human beings living the life that people do. Our students had their first pride march here last year and I went down to visit with them. My partner and I went down and the students cried and thanked us profusely for coming and I just looked at them and said ‘well where else would we be’” (interview, February 23, 2015)?

President Hersh has committed to being involved and connecting with LGBTQ+ and all students so they can visualize themselves in the roles she and her partner demonstrate on campus. She discusses demystifying what should be normal if it were not for a heteronormative context. The impacts the nine presidents are making go beyond their campuses. President Sloan shared his story and “has spoken at several national conferences about being a president who is gay” (critical incident survey, December 1, 2014). All of the nine presidents have presented on a range of LGBTQ+ topics over their course of their tenure in higher education. Review of curriculum vitae for each of the presidents demonstrates the scope of presentations presented locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, covering a range of LGBTQ+ topics within their academic disciplines and within the context of being an L&G president. The work they are presenting is developing a narrative that deconstructs heteronormative structures and positions L&G people in a place of power.

The nine presidents have created queer possibilities via a range of changes to policies and practices. Some of these practices are simple, yet impactful. President Carver shared, “we
were one of the first campuses that asked people on their admissions application if they identified as LGBTQ. It makes sure people don’t feel invisible” (interview, February 6, 2015). This small change on the admissions application has enabled the university to also track and increase support for LGBTQ+ populations as growth occurs. President Buckman challenged his campus to engage in deeper learning around social justice topics. Through his leadership he declared the ‘year of social justice’ on campus. He shared:

I mean the fact is we are a predominately white campus, look where we are. The snow is white, the people are white and that was a huge adjustment for me because I came from a very diverse environment. Social justice and multicultural competencies wind up being front and center for me in the work that we do simply because our students and our community lacks experience (interview, February 12, 2015).

The ‘year of social justice’ moves beyond a static identity and challenges the campus community to understand social justice from an intersectional approach in an active practice. This is the work that creates queer possibilities—moving from fixing broken pieces of higher education to recreating higher education with equity in mind for all.

Table 4.12 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regards to engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities.

Table 4.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Morgan</td>
<td>Sexual orientation has explicitly been in our handbook for employees for decades. Give a message that this is a welcoming place and we would like to recruit talented LGBT people just like we would like to recruit talented and black and brown and Asian people (interview, February 6, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
President Hayes I have worked with organizations to move LGBTQ people towards presidencies. Specific attention to same sex partners of presidents might make certain efforts easier and ensuring all presidents themselves have diversity training (critical incident survey, December 4, 2014).

President Gann Over the years I have tried to make an impact with LGBTQ issues in higher education. For me, it was I’m not going to do that to any student who I have interaction with. I will not allow myself to be so selfish and I’ll sacrifice my own career for two things: self-dignity and that that kid might have a better time than I did (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Stevens You know, I think certainly with all that happened with conversations about marriage equality, now this whole thing with Caitlyn Jenner, you know, there’s a lot of dialogue and I think it’s really opened the door. I think that people will continue to talk about it, people will continue to stand, to develop and further transform their thoughts and ideas around these issues. There will be more opportunity for gay and lesbian individuals to become leaders of institutions. But I don’t expect in the next five years that we’re going to see a major increase in gay and lesbian presidents. I think we’ll see a slight uplift which is good, but you know, that revolution will take much longer (interview, July 31, 2017).

This table’s context focuses on the ways in which presidents leverage their sexuality and leadership to change the climate of their college and universities, impact social justice issues, and develop practices that support LGBTQ+ students. President Morgan shared the importance of a welcoming message being transparent and forward facing, such as in the university handbook, which increases the likelihood of recruiting LGBTQ+ people as well as other underrepresented identities. Providing pathways for other LGBTQ+ leaders is one way that President Hayes queers higher education; she also identifies the need for more diversity training at all levels. President Gann committed to creating better outcomes for students than what he experienced in college. President Stevens identified dialogue as a means to queer higher education because it contributes to increased knowledge and awareness as well increased...
leadership positions for LGBTQ+ people. The presidents actively seek ways in which they can transform and dismantle heteronormativity in higher education.

**Overview of findings research question two.** Research question two is: How does being and out practitioner impact pathways to presidency? Three themes emerged across the cases: the lavender ceiling, overcoming fear and taking risks, and better to be gay than from student affairs. The findings begin with cracking the lavender ceiling, which explores the concept of limits placed upon L&G individuals’ career paths. The second finding is overcoming fear and taking risks, which explores the role of taking risks in career advancement. The third and last theme is better to be gay than from student affairs, which emerged as an important theme for student affairs practitioners along their pathway to presidency. This is a conditional theme as it is not central to committing to being out as the other eight themes do.

**Cracking the lavender ceiling.** The lavender ceiling is a barrier or set of barriers that seven out of nine presidents referenced directly as existing along the pathway to presidency—or in all job attainment. The lavender ceiling is referenced as “pink ceiling” and “plexiglass ceiling” (interviews with President Morgan and President Carver, February 6, 2015). While only seven of the nine presidents directly referenced the lavender ceiling, all of the presidents discussed the presence of barriers—from their experiences of discrimination and experienced bias in the job search process. President Morgan shared:

I was Dean of Arts and Sciences. It was when I tried to move up to the post of chancellorship at the campus as a whole I was one of the two finalists; one external, one internal. I was told that the board had a practice so you had to be unanimous when you’re hired as a chancellor. There were nine board members and two voted not to hire me. A peer told me the two voted not to hire me because I was gay. Back in those days
that was perfectly legal. I remember I went home and said well I guess now we have the limits of what I can accomplish here (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Morgan’s experience of discrimination based on his sexuality presents the challenge of job searches—candidates may receive feedback, but often are left to wonder what role their sexuality may have played in receiving or being passed over for a job.

President Gann shared that as positions become more advanced they move away from skills and focus more on “feeling and fit” (interview, February 11, 2015). Across the nine presidents, mediation of the lavender ceiling varied from President Hersh’s “don’t underestimate the challenges of the pathway” to President Buckman’s advice he received from a female president of color that if you work hard enough you will achieve what you want (interview, February 23, 2015). Understanding the existence of the lavender ceiling allows for practitioners to mediate the existing bias and attempt to crack the illusive glass.

Table 4.13 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regards to cracking the lavender ceiling.

Table 4.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Williams</td>
<td>A sort of pipeline exists for underrepresented individuals. Women have led it as well as professionals of color and now you are seeing it for LGBTQ people. For every underrepresented identity there are a set of barriers that exist. Take for example that women only hold about 23% of president positions across the board (interview, February 9, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Gann</td>
<td>None of this is serendipity circumstance. I’m not the normal president for this institution, and I think the reason why I was chosen was because of the moment and time we’re in. I think that’s how most presidents are chosen, the moment in time that the search is in. I think the lower you go in levels</td>
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it’s about, ‘do you have the skill to do the gig’? When you get to presidency, no one’s got the complete set of skills (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Carver

That has not changed very significantly. There is what I call a pink glass ceiling where you can get up to the provost level but the boards are more conservative places and they hire presidents. That’s the last place that we have been slow to get into (interview, February 6, 2015).

President Stevens

Getting to upper level positions is the bigger challenge. It’s less of the challenge to navigate the waters as a gay president once you are here. I think that it’s getting there, that’s probably the larger challenge because there is obvious bias along the way (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Buckman

I became an ACE fellow… I was visiting with a president who had been named one of the top 10 presidents. She asked me, “why do you want to be a college president?” and I said, “I didn’t know if I wanted to be one and that was why I was going through the fellows program.” I also shared that I was up against numerous glass ceilings as a student affairs professional and as an openly gay man and her response to that was, “then don’t waste my time and go back home.”

I was like, “excuse me?” She said, “I came to this country in an arranged marriage and she points to her husband. When I followed him to Indiana where he was finishing his doctorate, I then learned how to speak English, got my doctorate, and followed my husband again and he was a full professor of engineering and I was just an adjunct. By the time we left there I was the provost and he was the professor” (interview, February 12, 2015).

This table explicates the ways in which the presidents experience cracking the lavender ceiling along the career pathway through examples of experienced bias and mediating the ceiling. The presidents shared that now is the time for LGBTQ+ people to crack the ceiling, a lack of serendipity in the search process, slowness in cracking the ceiling, attaining a presidency is difficult, and shattering the ceiling without letting anything get in the way. President Williams shared that women and people of color have paved the way in presidencies for underrepresented identities and that it is now time for LGBTQ+ people to also lead the way. There is a moment in time to be in the right search for a presidency where the institution is open to having a gay president, shared President Gann, who believes there is no serendipity in the process. President
Carver experienced cracking the lavender ceiling as a slow and difficult process when individuals get to the provost level. Similarly, President Stevens described getting to the presidency as tough based on identity and experience. President Buckman acknowledged sharing his concerns about being gay and from student affairs with a mentor through the ACE fellowship program and her passionately sharing that he should shatter the ceiling and not let anything stand in his, mirroring her experience. The presidents recognize the difficulty of cracking the lavender ceiling, while also demonstrating the ways in which they have done so.

**Overcoming fear and taking risks.** All of the nine presidents have taken risks over the course of their tenure in higher education, and these risks have often involved overcoming the fear of the unknown as well as the outcomes that could have resulted from taking the risks. The development of grit and resiliency is an outcome that all of the presidents remarked was a result of taking risks. As President Carver explained, “You have to have nerve and charisma to overcome your fears and do it. It is also about knowing how to navigate things that are different for gay people” (interview, February 6, 2015). He acknowledged that while difference exists for L&G presidents, there is a need to acknowledge and own this difference, while still moving forward in a bold manner to pursue career goals.

President Morgan found that “overcoming fears and taking some risks” led to experiencing “rewards” and a “more enriched life” (interview, February 6, 2015). He considered the advances in his career and his relationship with his partner to be the rewards and enrichment he received from the risks. For President Stevens some calculated risks and life happenstance propelled his career forward:

After six years there, I got tired, I got bored. It became very routine there and I wanted to experience another institution. The provost position at this institution became
available and so I applied and interviewed and got the job. This was a risk I made and about a year later the president who hired me resigned suddenly. His son passed away. He decided to step down; the institution was going through a lot and so I just happened to be at the right place at the right time and I decided to throw my hat in the ring and became the fourth president of this institution. Again another risk I took, but in the end it paid off (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Stevens’ initial risk positioned him to have developed a skill set he needed when happenstance opened a position. President Buckman shared that “you can’t be a higher education leader in any senior position without taking risk” (interview, February 12, 2015). He is referencing that no decision is a sure bet and that as an individual progresses within the field’ decision-making on behalf of others increases.

Table 4.14 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the shared significance of the presidents in regard to overcoming fear and taking risks.

**Table 4.14**

*Overcoming Fear and Taking Risks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Williams</td>
<td>Resilience is a good word, like I tell people it’s very good that I grew up in a dysfunctional family and I grew up gay. That gives me the grit to overcome fears as they surface and to take some risk. As a president there are a lot of people who try to manipulate me (interview, February 9, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hayes</td>
<td>Unlike most academics we made it at an institution standing for 25 years. Then I took a job somewhere else. So with the presidency came the community, because this institution was too tiny to have offered her a job. That has been very difficult at the end of my 3rd year. The 1st year we commuted and she had various health problems. The 2nd and 3rd year she had a fellowship in Chicago and next year we're going back to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
commuting. I will be honest, if there's something that causes me to leave this job it will be in large measures that I don’t want to commute. I sometimes wonder if the risk was worth it when it comes to my personal life (interview, June 16, 2015).

President Gann  
No person even sitting persons who are applying for the presidency come with all the skills which are necessary for being a president of any institution. You have to manage the fear and rely upon the skill set you have developed over the years. Presidency is such a unique position that you can never fully prepare for it, I don’t care what you have done before (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Sloan  
So when I was applying, during my time with the board, I said, ‘I want you to know that I have a partner of 26 years and if that causes any of you a heartburn I want you to know that I am actually really fine for you to say fine we don’t want you because, I don’t want you being embarrassed in the press. So you have authority, I am not going to sue you, you don’t have to worry about any of that, but I want you to be very comfortable.’ I was scared, but also felt a sense of calm in being completely me (interview, February 16, 2015).

This table demonstrates the ways in which taking risks leads to positive outcomes and advancement in career through being resilient, balancing risk with work and personal life, recognizing that one is never fully prepared, and being authentic when taking a risk. President Willams discussed how resilience helps her overcome the fear she has at times when considering risks. Work and personal life are enmeshed as a president; however, President Hayes has had to evaluate the worthiness of the risks she has taken to be president and how they have impacted her personal life, which does not allow for her partner to live in the same city.

President Gann shared that he takes risks because he has learned that one is never fully prepared in any position no matter how hard they try. Informing his institution that he was a gay man demonstrated President Sloan’s need to be authentic, which resulted in him having to overcome fear and take the risk of coming out to the search committee. The presidents navigate overcoming fear and taking risks with the experience and knowledge they have accrued.
**Better to be gay than from student affairs.** Traditionally presidents of colleges and universities have come from academic affairs and served in the roles of deans, provosts, and faculty. Five of the presidents followed this path. Four of the presidents, Williams, Gann, Stevens, and Buckman, began their careers in student affairs. These four presidents shared the sentiment that “positional status within student affairs may trump sexual identity” (interview with Kim Williams, February 9, 2015). President Stevens shared, “I am not sure what is worse: being gay or being from student affairs” (interview with, February 11, 2015). The presidents encountered feedback from search firms and institutions as to the stigma attached to the student affairs portfolio.

President Gann provided perspective as to why so many of the gay presidents are at smaller and lesser known institutions. He shared that mainstream schools are still looking for traditional presidential candidates and may not be open to considering an L&G president or a student affairs practitioner:

It’s the smaller schools that consider different leadership paths. If you look at finalists they are either very homogenous or there is one of these or one of those. There is a student service vice president, there is a provost, and there is a development person—it’s like clearly in that case the board of trustees is open to having a variety of things. But what they are probably dealing with is who will raise the most money (interview, February 11, 2015).

President Gann alluded to the changing scope of higher education as well as the developing interests and needed assets for presidential positions. Presidents are expected to be able to navigate a diverse portfolio of responsibility. President Buckman shared, “The president is rarely involved in academic work; he’s no longer the academic leader of the institution. I am
the PR guy, fundraiser, and I think community. I deal with crisis, conflict, and celebrating” (interview, February 11, 2015). The development of skill sets for the four presidents’ experiences within student affairs has prepared them for their roles, yet all concluded the challenges they will face when looking at larger institutions when they pursue their next positions.

Table 4.15 provides additional thick description and depth to demonstrate the strength of the theme across participants. Examples provided in the table speak to the significance of the presidents identifying that it was better to be gay than from student affairs.

Table 4.15
Better to be Gay than from Student Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Thick Description Providing Strength of Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Gann</td>
<td>There are still norms in higher education—norms like someone from the faculty, the dean, or the provost becomes the president and that’s still the majority of the largest group although it’s diminishing probably now. It’s only about 50% of the presidents who come up that way now. In the mainstream schools that’s still the way, you know no one ever comes to Harvard from Microsoft, it just doesn’t (interview, February 11, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Stevens</td>
<td>I think it’s much easier to be gay and be in student affairs and really truly to be yourself, and in fact I loved being in student affairs. If you are going on a track that is more academic, my advice is find someone to coach what you say and how you say it and how you behave. I think you can be true to yourself but also be cautious. If you’re going on the academic track and you’re a flamer the chances that you’ll continue moving forward are probably going to be limited and that’s just the way it is. I also think that if you coach everything you do and say and the way that you carry yourself and find a way to be respectful and be respected. If you’re in students’ affairs and searching for a presidency it is sort of like throwing caution to the wind (interview, February 11, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Buckman</td>
<td>There is this notion that student affairs folks, they don’t fit the traditional mold and they don’t have the academic experience or credential. The truth is the college presidency is changing anyway. My sexual orientation for this job for the most part was irrelevant but not being a traditional academic, that was a different ball game (interview, February 12, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table identifies the challenges participants from student affairs backgrounds faced as they progressed towards a presidential position; the norms of higher education, navigating self, and assumptions of academia. President Gann shared the norms of higher education being that presidents come from academic affairs despite a growing populations of presidents coming from outside of faculty. Student affairs provided a supportive environment for President Stevens, more so than academic affairs, where he had to be more aware of his sexuality. He shared that entering into a presidency from student affairs is much more of a gamble based on the established norms. President Buckman acknowledged that the skills looked for within presidencies are changing, but the assumption is that the person should be from academic affairs with the appropriate credentials and experiences. Presidents with pathways from student affairs found that being gay may be less problematic than coming from student affairs.

Conclusion

Chapter four began with presenting single case findings for each of the nine cases. For each case, thick description was provided for the number of years each president had served at his or her current institution, institutional type, mission, and positions along the pathway to presidency. Thick description was provided for connections between leadership and sexuality, coming out, and an overview of the artifacts that were selected by each case to represent his or her sexuality. These findings were presented to highlight the themes that emerged singularly and how this background intersected with the across case themes. The singular cases each addressed broadly the two research questions of the study.

Research question one was answered through five themes that emerged across the cases: the significance of being out in higher education, support frameworks for being out, experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept, navigating expectations of what it
means to be a queer leader, and engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities. The themes suggested that being out within the role of president is important on a personal and professional level for all nine of the presidents. Being out sends a message to faculty, staff, and students as well as charting a clear trajectory for underrepresented populations and social justice issues. Undertaking the role of president is an arduous job that blends personal and professional life; each of the nine presidents rely upon faculty and staff mentors, partners, and fellow L&G presidents as support in varying ways. Heteronormativity was experienced as an entrenched concept by all nine presidents, who admitted experiencing bias and microaggressions based on their sexuality throughout their presidency—beginning with the job search process and continuing with comments made by donors. Despite the progress narratives, each of the nine presidents acknowledged more work is needed as bias and discrimination continue to persist. The nine presidents all connected the concept of bias leads to support, insinuating that support is often a function of bias.

Serving as a queer leader required all of the nine presidents to navigate expectations related to their sexuality. All nine presidents shared how their sexuality and leadership intersect. For the male presidents, gender performance was a mediated practice, whereas for the women presidents they were able to their authentic selves. Lastly, all of the nine presidents shared their role in creating queer possibilities through changing and enacting policies to taking zero tolerance approaches to instances of bias.

Research question two was answered with three themes that emerged across the cases: cracking the lavender ceiling, overcoming fear and taking risks, and better to be gay than from student affairs. The themes suggested that all of the nine L&G presidents were faced with unique barriers along the pathway to presidency due to their sexuality and that these barriers
require grit and resiliency to press against the restrictive and ever present glass ceiling. As the nine presidents journeyed along the pathway to presidency, they each took risks that some described as “serendipitous” and other described as “calculated” to move forward (interview with President Gann, February 11, 2015). Many of these risks required overcoming the fear of failure, retribution, and vulnerability. Lastly, four of the nine presidents experienced stigma within higher education based on the functional area they worked in along the pathway to presidency. This stigma emphasized that perhaps, being gay is less stigmatized than working in a functional area within student affairs.

**Limitations**

There are three clear limitations to these findings. The first and most obvious is the geographic location of all cases—coming from the Midwest and Northeast United States. The study does not capture the experiences of the large population of presidents who lead colleges and universities on the West Coast or the few presidents who hold positions in the Southern United States. The culture and influence of these geographic regions could offer different experiences for the presidents and may provide a deeper understanding of how discrimination and bias create or negate opportunities to break the lavender ceiling.

The second limitation is that the data were collected over the course of nine months 2014-2015. Four of the cases within this study are no longer serving as presidents of institutions, and one case is now serving as the president of a different institution. In less than three years, the trajectory for presidents’ pathways can change greatly and therefore a longitudinal study may offer more depth and reveal important findings regarding the pathways for L&G president’s long-term success in these roles.

The third and last limitation is in regard to the representation of the cases.
Identity is intersectional and the cases within the study had various identities, which offered power as well as oppression. The study would benefit from additional presidents of color as there was only one person of color in this study. The number of presidents of color nationally is approximately 17%, with only 5 percent of presidents being women of color (American Council on Education, 2016). This suggests an even smaller number of L&G presidents of color. Additionally, only out L&G presidents were included in this study. The experiences of presidents who are not out or who identify as a different sexual or gender identity would bring experiences that elucidate further the challenges of heteronormative campus culture and capture the experiences of such identities.
“What is it about the bending action of a glass prism or, under the right conditions, a drop of rain that splits white light into its separate colors?” (Dawkins, 1998, p. 44).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of Chapter Five

This study is in direct response to Brazelton, Renn, and Stewart’s (2015) call for using queer theory as a framework through which research is conducted. By examining the lived experiences of nine out L&G presidents in higher education, this descriptive multi-case study sought to develop an understanding of how being an out president may impact career path, leadership, and policy within higher education. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education?

2. How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?

This study was grounded in the existing literature, which suggests that, in spite of some positive momentum demonstrated by historical events, higher education is largely a modernist system, which operates through a heteronormative and paternalistic lens to regulate sexual identity (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Kulick, Wernick, Woodford, & Renn, 2016; Marine, 2011; Tierney, 1993; Woodford Kulick, Sinco, & Hong, 2014). Faculty, staff, and administrators must still navigate carefully coming out, consider to what extent being LGBTQ+ may affect promotion, and operate in an inherently heterosexual environment where bias, microaggressions, and discrimination flourish (deLeon & Brunner, 2013; Kulick, et al., 2016; Vaccaro, 2012; Woodford, et al., 2014). The lavender ceiling continues to be impenetrable and positions power away from L&G practitioners and prevents them from progressing towards career trajectories (Swan, 1995; Unger, 2011). Few studies have examined
sexuality and higher education as a work place (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009), in particular higher level administrators and presidents.

The lack of research on L&G university presidents’ experiences and pathways, as well as the impacts of heteronormative contexts and the lavender ceiling provide a rationale of the need for this study. Lastly, the queering of higher education has yet to occur (Renn, 2010), which challenges what a structure, environment, and culture of difference looks like and who is entrusted with power, especially at the highest administrative level.

The data analysis yielded a central theme, committing to being out in higher education, which acted as a catalyst and mediated four themes related to research question one: supporting frameworks for being out, experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept, navigating expectations of what it means to be a queer leader, engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities. Two themes emerged across cases for research question two: the lavender ceiling and overcoming fear and taking risks, which were also a result of committing to being out in higher education. A conditional theme, better to be gay than from student affairs, emerged and, while not central to the theme of committing to being out in higher education, is presented based on its relevance to research question two and the larger statement it makes on how functional areas within higher education are marginalized and reduced.

The prism metaphor acknowledged the influence of each participant’s sexual identity (professional, personal, and cultural) as it filters through past experiences (coming out, gender performance, historical context, defining life moments, etc.) and ultimately projects elements of the participant’s pathways (leadership experiences, bias and support, and identity mediation). The prism metaphor connects experiences that may otherwise be viewed as singular in nature
and creates a collective narrative to better understand how sexual identity and past experience impact pathways.

Chapter five situates the discussion of the findings in how they may be used in queering higher education, recognizing that the findings provide direction and possibility for re-envisioning and re-building colleges and universities free of heteronormative and hegemonic environments. First, a discussion will be presented of the eight themes that emerged across all nine of the cases and how these findings are situated within existing literature. Second, implications will be addressed in the contexts of policies and practices in higher education, additional implications for L&G practitioners, and future research. Third, a conclusion to the chapter and dissertation will be offered.

Queering Higher Education

Each finding offers a unique possibility for queering higher education. Foucault (1980a) centralizes power as a mediating circumstance within systems: “Power is always there. One is never outside it; there are no margins for those who break with system” (p. 141). This understanding of power is of particular relevance when studying presidents who lead and leverage power in varying ways within structures that also possess power—colleges and universities. The findings of this study suggest ways in which out presidents can queer higher education through their leadership and introduction of policies and practices as a result of their identity. Additionally, the findings provide a lens through which to examine the heteronormative and hegemonic environments pervasive within higher education; and consider power structures (Brazelton, Renn, & Stewart, 2015; Tierney, 1997). For each theme a discussion is provided that connects existing research and literature to the theme from the study.
and details whether or not the study supports the literature. Findings in qualitative research are transferable, but not generalizable.

**Committing to being out in higher education.** Seven of the presidents came out relatively early in their careers, feeling the need to be authentic and transparent in regard to their sexuality among colleagues and students. While the coming out process is ongoing, the presidents exhibited much more confidence and ease in sharing their sexuality with constituents as they became higher level leaders. The importance of being oneself within a job outweighed the impacts of being closeted in a position. The findings of the study support the literature, which cites that perceived support from co-workers and positive workplace environment lead to higher likelihood of coming out. Research suggests that LGBTQ+ people who perceive support within the workplace as well as positive co-worker reactions’ to disclosure lead to decreased fear and higher levels of disclosure (Ragins et al., 2007; Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

Evans and Broido (1999) first explored the interaction of private versus public identity in regards to educators and the ongoing narrative of coming out, as well as the renegotiation it requires. Research studies exploring the positive benefits of coming out have been mixed. Wax, Coletti, and Ogaz (2018), who conducted a meta-analysis examining the benefits of coming out at work, described the act of disclosing one’s sexuality as “a highly complex, fluid, ongoing process” (p. 6). The meta-analysis found that due to the variability of findings across studies that examined coming out and job satisfaction, generalizability was not possible.

Two of the presidents waited until later in their careers to come out and much of that had to do with perceived losses that may occur based on revealing their sexuality. This confirms the findings of Ruggs et al. (2015), which suggest that individuals who remain closeted do so out of fear that coworkers will be unsupportive and that disclosure will have a negative impact on
one’s career. For all nine of the presidents, while there was perceived risk in being out through the presidential search process, being an out president at the institutions they are leading has served as a point of pride as well as allowed them each the ability to feel as if they can be their authentic selves.

The longstanding narrative regarding the empowerment of coming out within the educational context (Griffin, 1992; Harbeck, 1992; Sears & Williams, 1997) has existed based on coming out as a “prime method for reducing negative attitudes and acts of prejudice…” (Bridgewater, 1997, p. 65). Similarly, perceived workplace climate and support has been shown to lead to greater levels of comfort for out LGBTQ+ employees (Huffman et al., 2008; Kollen, 2013; Reed & Leuty, 2016). This study supports this research in that all of the nine presidents identified the importance of being out in a senior level position to impact the climate of the college or university where they worked, as well as providing support for LGBTQ+ constituents. An additional reason cited by the presidents to be out was the responsibility to mentor and provide a pathway towards similar roles for other LGBTQ+ individuals. This practice is missing from the literature, but is important to study further to better understand the implications and effects the act of coming out has upon moving other LGBTQ+ people along the career pathway.

**Supporting frameworks for being out.** The study suggests that the nine cases found support via LGBTQ+ faculty and staff as well as through fellow L&G Presidents. Early in seven of the presidents’ careers this support aided them in finding the strength and courage to come out. For all nine of the presidents, having’ L&G colleagues to turn to for support and understanding resulted in aiding the president’s abilities to lead, cope, and succeed. These findings confirm the literature, which suggests the positive impact co-workers can have on
LGBTQ+ practitioners. There are three studies that directly support the positive role co-worker relationships can have for out LGBTQ+ practitioners within the workplace; these supports range from providing a support network through which the individual can be comfortable to be out to shaping the scope of the work climate (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Law et al., 2011; Ragins, 2007).

All nine presidents suggested that having a partner as an L&G president is imperative to the position as it reiterates the heteronormative concept of a traditional couple. The study supports this assertion, with eight of the nine presidents relying on their partners in 2015. Bullard (2013) suggests that partners of L&G presidents provide support in numerous ways, such as serving in unofficial roles for the university as well as supporting their presidential partners through challenging work situations. A queered perspective challenges this norm and considers a single president whose practice of dating in a high profile position is supported.

**Experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept.** The study found the experiences of the nine presidents to mirror formal and informal discrimination and to manifest via stereotypes and gender discrimination. The presidents experienced stereotypes most commonly within the context of formal and informal discrimination. Due to the cases being in positions of power in their roles they were able to challenge instances of bias and microaggression, sending a broader message that discrimination is not tolerated within their institutions. The act of discrimination was much more complicated when it occurred throughout the job search process because then the power is situated with the institution and not with the employee. Each of the nine presidents encountered formal and informal discrimination within the job search. These instances were handled carefully, but also suggested queering occurring through countering heteronormative narratives held by trustees or questioning the norms presented by institutions—even at the high stakes of forfeiting a position. The findings from this
study support the body of research that examines discrimination resulting from a heteronormative environment.

Cohen (2013) cites heteronormativity as a power dynamic of “localized practices and those centralized institutions which legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and ‘natural’ within society” (p. 203). Sexuality within higher education is viewed as a dichotomy in which heterosexuality is considered the “normal, natural, and inevitable” (p. 501) and homosexuality is viewed as “abnormal and perverse” (Fox, 2007, p. 501). This heteronormative approach leads to instances of discrimination and bias. Studies in the United States have found that upwards of 60% of LGBTQ+ people have been discriminated against in the workplace (Badgett et al., 2007; Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012). McFadden (2015) suggests there are two types of discrimination: formal and informal. Formal discrimination is in regard to job applications, job searches, wages, and job termination. Informal discrimination examples include jokes, harassment, exclusion, and microaggressions. Stereotyping, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment are cited as the three significant ways in which LGBTQ+ people are discriminated against (Guiffre et al., 2008).

All nine of the presidents within the study discussed false paradigms of progress. The passing of marriage equality was an event celebrated by all cases; however, it also caused pause for the fear that people may assume the work is over. The nine presidents acknowledged that while there continues to be progress, ultimately there is still an existing heteronormative environment that limits the impact of progressive change. The findings from the study support the research, which acknowledged the presence of queer theory in the classroom, but lack of engagement with and enacting of queering spaces. Renn (2010) suggests that colleges and
universities have “evolved to tolerate the generation of queer theory from within but have stalwartly resisted the queering of higher education itself” (p. 132).

**Navigating expectations of what it means to be a queer leader.** The six male presidents enacted gender performance in a way that supported norms of masculinity, whereas the female presidents countered norms of what it means to be female by performing gender in a mix of masculine and feminine. The findings from this study confirm the body of research, which explores gender performance and roles as mediating factors in leadership roles.

Attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people have become more positive within the past decade (Westgate at al., 2015). Research on perceptions of LGBTQ+ leaders in the workplace has been minimal (Fassinger et al., 2010; Morton, 2017). Barrantes and Eaton (2018) use implicit leadership theory to understand the perceptions of gay men in leadership roles. Implicit leadership theory posits that society’s norms about leaders guide the overall expectations of ideal leaders in the workplace (Schyns & Meindl, 2005). Within the United States this means leaders are viewed as white, cis-gender, straight men. Barrantes and Eaton (2018) found that gay male leaders are perceived to be more communal, meaning they are more relational and focused on interdependence, which can be a limitation to acquiring high level jobs. Interestingly, gay males were also rated to also possess the male characteristics of assertiveness and independence. Morton (2017) suggests through his study that there was no difference in leadership effectiveness between LGBTQ+ and straight leaders. The findings confirm that gender performance matters in higher education and that the male presidents conform to gender norms, while female presidents commit to being themselves, while at the same time acknowledging masculine qualities they exhibit. A queered higher education eliminates the
expectations and norms associated with enacted gender performance, hiring and advancing leaders based on skills and capacity rather than gender performance.

This study found that all of the nine presidents mediate and leverage their sexuality in regard to their leadership. This interaction with other LGBTQ+ people offers support and reframes the possibilities for leadership; for straight colleagues concepts of heteronormative leadership are transformed. This finding confirms the research, which indicates that the presence of LGBTQ+ leaders in the workplace leads to possibilities for LGBTQ+ employees as well as dismantling heteronormative environments. Fassinger et al. (2010) proposed a comprehensive leadership model for LGBTQ+ leadership in the workplace that takes into consideration sexuality, gender and interaction with leaders and followers.

**Engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities.** The findings indicate that all of the nine presidents approached queering their campus with the ideology that higher education was largely heteronormative, white, and born of cis-gender men. This perspective allowed the male presidents to recognize their privilege and to challenge stakeholders who brought similar privilege forward. For the female presidents there was recognition as to instances where their L&G male president colleagues, despite recognizing their privilege, still leveraged its power. These findings support the literature, which acknowledges the heteronormative nature of higher education and the difficulty of queering higher education. Gibson, Marinara, and Meem (2000) discuss queering curriculum from the faculty perspective, noting that queering involves an “academic mindset that assumes the centrality of white, middle-class, male, heterosexual values and desire” (p. 93).

Hierarchies and power dynamics can be associated with a person’s status and role; the same individual may be afforded different levels of power in different settings according to
relative position (Kumashiro, 2000). The range of power the L&G presidents held varied based on the environment they were in. This range of power also mediated the level with which they could mediate or create queer possibilities. Policy and practices were changed relatively swiftly and easily by the presidents in their roles; more difficult was transforming the culture of the campus or shifting viewpoints or beliefs. Power was more difficult to leverage when donors were involved and in these instances created quandaries for the presidents to consider to what level they would remain authentic to their self or push back when marginalized.

All of the nine L&G presidents queered their campuses in formal and informal ways. Informally, this occurred through being out and in the position of president. The campus community is challenged to reject the traditional narrative of a college or university president and re-envision a new normal. The straight narrative is disrupted repeatedly through a same gender couple attending athletic events, walking on campus, and hosting students at their house for dinner. The lived experience of the L&G presidents is informally rejecting labels and existing power structures. Formally presidents created queer possibilities through asking the difficult questions about campus climate and inclusion, challenging policies, and ensuring their campuses are deconstructing norms. These findings add to the limited literature and research on queering higher education. Queer theory rejects binary understandings of sexuality, which ultimately rejects the current power differential (Beasley, 2005). Rejecting labels and identities that have traditionally been used to exclude or limit the power of individuals who do not conform to them creates an empowered space for individuals to embrace new identities (Beasley, 2005; Butler, 1993b).

**Cracking the lavender ceiling.** The L&G presidents in this study experienced the limitations of the lavender ceiling throughout their job searches to move towards presidency.
This occurred with all of the presidents in their interview process by way of biased comments from interviewers, being passed over for positions and later learning it was due to their sexuality via search committee members, and experiencing limits as to the type of institution that is willing to have an LGBTQ+ president. The findings confirm the research, which posits the existence of impenetrable barriers for LGBTQ+ people in job attainment based on discrimination. Friskopp and Silverstein (1995) introduced the term lavender ceiling based on a study of 100 of their gay peers. The lavender ceiling is comprised of, “systematic barriers which prevent recruitment, retention, and promotion of openly gay and lesbian people” (Swan, 1995, p. 52). Unger (2011) describes the lavender ceiling as impenetrable; based on this study this statement is confirmed. The L&G presidents in this study have certainly created fissures and cracks in the ceiling; shattering the ceiling would see L&G presidents at large research one, Ivy league, and top ten institutions. Based on the experiences of the L&G presidents who have more than one underrepresented identity, such as being Hispanic or being a woman in addition to their sexuality, cracking the ceiling was even more difficult, which supported the research citing lower numbers of underrepresented presidents. Approximately, four percent of university presidents identify as Hispanic, and approximately 26% of university presidents identify as women (American Council Education, 2016).

**Overcoming fear and taking risks.** The nine cases in this study discuss risk from several vantage points: career pathway, job search, decision making within the role of president, and within relationships. One of the participants used the word serendipity—which was a concept that emerged, but was not clearly understood by any of the participants. There was some hesitancy to admit the role of serendipity within their pathways. The theme of overcoming fear and taking risks does not align with any of the literature gathered prior or
during the study. This theme emphasizes the need to better understand how senior level leaders, like presidents, navigate taking risks.

Manroop (2017) presents job search literature from a multi-paradigm perspective, ultimately calling for a critical approach to job search literature. In support of Manroop’s call for a critical approach, the findings support this through all nine presidents using the job search as a means to queer traditionally heteronormative spaces. This occurred through bringing their partners to be a part of the search process, challenging discriminatory practices and comments, and incorporating their sexuality as part of their leadership practice. These actions were enmeshed in overcoming fear and taking risks, but for all the cases yielded some positive outcomes and pushed against the lavender ceiling. There is a need for further research to better understand how overcoming fear and taking risks are interconnected and lived experiences that matter.

**Better to be gay than from student affairs.** Four of the nine L&G presidents whose pathways were from student affairs administration received more push back based on their career pathway than their sexuality. This finding is a conditional theme for the study that demonstrates the depth of bias and discrimination that exists within higher education. The findings from this study support the heteronormative environment that exists in higher education; however, the presidents essentially cite that a functional area within higher education is looked at more negatively than sexual orientation. The assumptions embedded in the traditional pathway towards presidency are indicative of dynamics that empower and privilege particular individuals without considering the experiences, skills, and assets of others. The findings from this study support and confirm the research, which indicated a substantial divide between academic affairs and student affairs has continued to persist. Cook and Lewis (2010)
discussed the tension that exists between faculty and staff and began to lay the foundation for the stigma that they deem as sometimes attached to the work of student affairs practitioners in *The Divine Comity*. Cook and Lewis’ research delves into the difference between being a practitioner and a scholar and acknowledges that academic affairs views the academy in a traditional manner that preferences the scholar. The findings of this study support the existence of a bias by faculty towards presidents whose pathways have journeyed through faculty rank and tenure. Approximately, 45% of college and university presidents held a position within academic affairs/faculty one year prior to their current presidency, compared to only 16% of presidents holding a senior executive position outside of academic affairs one year prior to presidency (American Council on Education, 2016).

**Implications**

While the focus of this study is on L&G presidents, there are implications that may be gleaned to assist institutions of higher education with ways in which they may begin to dismantle heteronormative environments. L&G practitioners at all levels may use the findings of this study to better understand and reflect upon their pathway in higher education. The queering of higher education will occur through action and practical application (Renn, 2010), underscoring the transferability of this research. The three sections below offer recommendations and suggestions for policies and practices in higher education, L&G practitioners, and for future research.

**Policies and practices for higher education.** Research confirms that colleges and universities are heteronormative environments (Bazarsky, Morrow, & Javier, 2015; Vaccaro, 2012). Despite this knowledge, the heteronormative and patriarchal structures still persist. Queering higher education requires campuses to systematically remove barriers and consider the
existing structures that perpetuate heteronormativity for students, faculty, and staff (Renn, 2010). Small changes, such as including LGBTQ+ questions on admissions applications or providing housing options that meet the needs of LGBTQ+ students, begin to challenge the norm; however, the presence of policies and practices that dismantle heteronormative structures are needed (Kulick et al., 2016). These include examples such as representation in marketing materials, firm policies on instances of bias and microaggressions, and courses that are representative of LGBTQ+ experiences (Wright & Smith, 2015). Campuses must consider who is guiding change and where that change is coming from. Additionally, campus stakeholders must keep a pulse on campus climate and leverage stakeholders from across campus to invest in the education and accountability that is needed to move the needle towards a more inclusive campus climate (Wright & Smith, 2015). More broadly, a “think tank” group similar to The Queering Education Research Institute (QuERI), is needed to examine higher education structures, policies, and practices. QuERI, which focuses primarily on youth and K-12 education, is engaged in action-oriented qualitative research that seeks to change policy and shape schools.

Knowing that the lavender ceiling exists and presents barriers for LGBTQ+ individuals to access jobs, how campuses are ensuring that a looming lavender ceiling does not hover above their campus is critical (Swan, 1995; Ungar, 2011). At the presidential level, where search firms are often used, it is important to align with a search firm that represents the mission of the institution. Additionally, colleges and universities should make it clear they are open to and interested in LGBTQ+ candidates. This also requires education and development of board of trustee members, alumni, and internal stakeholders—faculty, staff, and students. Campuses should also ensure that LGBTQ+ faculty and staff are represented across campus, which
supports students through finding affinity with similar faculty and staff as well as ensuring diversity of perspective across campus (Renn, 2010; Wright & Smith, 2015). Training across campus in regards to diverse recruitment and managing bias in search processes may decrease discriminatory practices in the recruitment of faculty and staff. Training and development are also needed in developing an inclusive environment. Underrepresented employees may carry the burden of being tokenized or minimized within their functional areas.

**L&G practitioners.** As an L&G higher education practitioner, I found myself reflecting upon what this study means for me. The answer to this question has shifted and shaped over the course of the study. The most salient theme, and perhaps the most personal, is the importance of coming out. L&G practitioners must consider the risks associated with being out and think of coming out as an ongoing process because new students are continually coming to campus and faculty and staff are not static (Gedro, 2009; Renn, 2003). Being out not only sends the message that one’s sexuality is nothing to hide; it also signals to other underrepresented groups that there is support on campus and that diverse perspectives are powerful. I sometimes forget that I have a responsibility to come out more intentionally and regularly to remind campus of my sexuality and how it shapes my leadership. Just because I am out with the students I advise via the LGBTQ+ student organization does not mean that colleagues on across campus committees I serve on know my sexuality.

Creating a pathway is certainly a responsibility that each professional carries; however, LGBTQ+ leaders should also create pipelines of support to mentor and sponsor entry and mid-level LGBTQ+ professionals within higher education. This was modeled by the L&G presidents in this study as they turned to one another for support in their presidencies. Similarly, entry level professionals may need mentorship to better understand the challenges
they may face, such as how to handle instances of bias or discrimination and how to develop confidence in the professional coming out process—formally via coming out to colleagues and informally by way of preparing vitae’s and resumes.

**Additional Implications for future research.** This study underscored four important components to be included in future research. First more studies need to be grounded in queer theory and use it as a framework through which the research becomes actionable (Renn, 2010). This study answers the call of Brazelton, Renn, and Stewart (2015), who most recently challenged researchers to queer their work. This more recent call builds upon Renn’s call for building research with queer theory as a central framework in 2010. Unfortunately, 18 years later the existing literature is still largely void of research driven by queer theory. Second, while research regarding sexuality and workplace has steadily grown over the past ten years (Lehtonen, 2016; Wright & Smith, 2015), few studies have examined these issues within the setting of higher education (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009). More research is needed to understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ faculty, staff, and students in the context of higher education.

Third, in 2016, ACE still did not include questions to capture the experiences of LGBTQ+ presidents on the American College Presidents Survey, despite having questions capturing other underrepresented identities. The 2016 results provide newly accessible data around campus climate and other intersecting identities. Inclusion of questions that capture the experiences of LGBTQ+ presidents will provide an opportunity for quantitative and qualitative inquiry to better understand the experiences of presidents with underrepresented sexuality and gender. These data also further the narrative of the status of the lavender ceiling.

Finally, further research is needed to explore how entry and mid-level LGBTQ+ practitioners enter into and through the field of higher education. Within this research,
institution and position type should be triangulated with sexual and gender identity to better understand pathway progression based on identity.

**Conclusion**

Richard Dawkins (1998), a famous ethologist and biologist, sought to remove the mystery and magic from the phenomena of the rainbow via scientifically deconstructing the way in which a prism can bend light or a drop of rain can split white light into separate colors. In this same vein, L&G presidents have the potential to reframe the heteronormative culture of higher education through their role as leaders of colleges and universities. The heteronormative environment and culture of schools exists due to the failure by campus stakeholders to acknowledge heteronormativity’s embedded presence in the very fabric of institutions of higher education. L&G Presidents can work toward systemically dismantling heteronormative structures on campuses through changing policies, challenging and eliminating bias and microaggressions, and ensuring that multicultural competence education occurs for all constituents. Each of the L&G presidents echoed the ripple effect that can occur for underrepresented groups by way of progress for one underrepresented group.

Despite the progress that has been made with over 48 out L&G presidents working to change higher education, there is much work to still be done to address bias, discrimination, and transform the heteronormative structure of higher education. This study sought to understand the experiences of L&G presidents as well as their pathways to presidency. The experiences of L&G presidents demonstrates the grit and resiliency needed to overcome discrimination and the laser focus required to perform the functions of a university president while mediating one’s intersecting identities, which are ever present and scrutinized regularly. The pathways of the
L&G presidents in this study have paved the way for future L&G practitioners and have begun to create fissures in the proverbial lavender ceiling.
Appendix A

*Invitation to be sent out to members of LGBTQ Presidents Higher Education Organization:*

Dear (Insert name of the University President):

The purpose of this letter is to introduce myself and request your participation in a study I am conducting on *out* Lesbian and Gay Presidents of colleges and universities. My name is Patrick Englert and I am a doctoral candidate in the Education and Social Change program at Bellarmine University. I am also the Assistant Dean of Students/ Director of Student Engagement at Bellarmine. I am currently working on a qualitative study examining the pathways of Lesbian and Gay university presidents.

Participation by *out* Lesbian and Gay presidents is important for the success of this study. The research design for this study is organized into three areas: (1) Critical Incident Questionnaire (2) Artifact Review (artifact is to be brought and discussed in first interview) (3) and two Individual Interviews (one in person and one by telephone).

In order to participate in this study you must meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as and *out* lesbian and gay university president
2. Belong to the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education organization

If you meet the above criteria for this study participation involves:

1. Contacting the Principal Investigator to acknowledge interest in participating in the study and request a consent form.
2. Completing a consent form and agreeing to the terms and conditions of the study which will include completing an electronic critical incident questionnaire and sharing of an artifact (document, photo, item, etc.) you will bring to the first interview.
3. Participating in two interviews, one in-person semi-structured interview with the researcher on an agreed upon time and location that is comfortable for you, and the second semi-structured interview via telephone. The first interview will take approximately two hours and the second interview will take approximately one hour, for a total of three hours.
4. Engage in a member checking process, where you will be asked to review the transcripts of your interviews for accuracy.

I am excited to hear about your experiences as a lesbian or gay president within higher education. If this study is of interest, please email me at penglert@bellarmine.edu or call me at 502-272-8323. Thank you in advance for considering participation.

Sincerely,

Patrick Englert

Assistant Dean of Students/ Director of Student Engagement
Appendix B

Experiences Viewed through the Prism: Out Gay and Lesbians Pathways to University Presidency

Subject Informed Consent

Introduction and Background Information
You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Patrick Englert, Doctoral candidate, and Dr. Elizabeth Dinkins, Assistant Professor of Education. The study is sponsored by the Annsley Frazier Thornton, School of Education, Bellarmine University. The study will take place at multiple universities across the United States. Approximately 20 subjects will be invited to participate. Your participation in this study will last for two days and approximately three hours (two hours for an in-person interview, and 1 hour for a follow-up phone interview), with the study ending on March, 2016.

Purpose
The purpose of this research study is to add to emerging research on workplace environment exploring the experiences of out gay and lesbian presidents’, career pathways and presence of bias and support within the higher education context. The study seeks to provide implications for practice within higher education.

Procedures
This study will consist of one written survey (critical incident questionnaire) (approximately 30 minutes to complete), one in-person interview (approximately 2 hours), and one follow-up phone interview (approximately 1 hour). Your participation in this study is voluntary and at any point throughout the study you may choose not to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or you wish not to answer. You may also choose not to participate in this study at all. Upon completion of this consent form you will be assigned an alias to protect your identity and that will be used instead of your name.

Prior to the first interview you will be invited to complete an electronic survey, titled as a critical incident questionnaire, which will ask for specific examples about your experiences with bias and support as they relate to being an out lesbian or gay university president. The critical incident questionnaire will be administered via SurveyMonkey; your identity will be protected via the use of an alias, which you selected upon completing the consent form for this study. The critical incident questionnaire requests your alias versus your name.

Next, you will be invited to participate in an in person interview. This interview will take place in a location of your choosing that is comfortable for you. Additionally, the interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. This interview will take approximately two hours. You will be invited to bring an artifact (photo, item, document) of your choosing to share that represents your identity as an out gay or lesbian individual.
Experiences Viewed through the Prism: *Out* Gay and Lesbians Pathways to University Presidency

**Subject Informed Consent**

You will also be asked approximately 16 questions seeking your perspectives or experiences. Your interview will be recorded via a digital recorder. Recordings will be transcribed within 24 hours and immediately following all digital recordings will be deleted. You will have the opportunity to review your transcribed interview and remove or edit any content.

Lastly, you will be invited to participate in a second interview. Prior to this interview you will receive a transcript of your interview to review and check for accuracy. You will have the opportunity to remove or edit any content. The second interview will take place via telephone and review themes that have emerged from the initial interviews. Approximately six more questions will be asked to seek further perspectives or experiences. This interview will be recorded via a digital recorder. Recordings will be transcribed within 24 hours and immediately following all digital recordings will be deleted. You will again have the opportunity to review your transcribed interview and remove or edit any content. All transcripts and data will be maintained under lock and key in a file in a filing cabinet in 225-L Horrigan Hall.

**Potential Risks**

There are risks associated with participating in this study. Due to the nature of this study and the limited number of *out* lesbian and gay presidents it may be possible for individuals to make assumptions about the identity of participants. These assumptions could lead to discriminatory actions towards participants which could impact employment, well-being, or finances. While complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, protection of participants will include using aliases and not revealing identifying elements such as the names of institutions within research findings, publications, and presentations.

**Benefits**

The possible benefits of this study include opportunity to reflect upon your experiences as a lesbian or gay president within higher education. Additionally, through participating in this research you will be informing the field in an area where limited research has been conducted. The data collected in this study may not benefit you directly. However, the information learned from this research may be helpful to others in the future.
Experiences Viewed through the Prism: *Out* Gay and Lesbians Pathways to University Presidency

Subject Informed Consent

Confidentiality
Although absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. The study sponsor or the Institutional Review Board may inspect your research records. Should the data collected in this research study be published, your identity will not be revealed.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or losing benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. If you terminate participation with this study all recordings, transcripts, and data collected relevant to you will be destroyed, erased, or deleted.

Your Rights as a Research Subject and Contact Persons
If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Institutional Review Board Office at 502.272.8032. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions, in confidence, with a member of the Board. This is an independent committee composed of members of the University community and lay members of the community not connected with this institution. The Board has reviewed this study.

You acknowledge that all your present questions have been answered in language you can understand. If you have any questions about the study, please contact (PI) Dr. Elizabeth Dinkins, 502-272-7958 or (Co-Investigator) Patrick Englert, 502-272-8323.

Consent
You have discussed the above information and hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study. You have been given a signed copy of this consent form.

____________________  ______________________
Signature of Subject or Legal Representative  Date Signed

____________________  ______________________
Signature of Investigator  Date Signed

____________________  ______________________
Signature of Person Explaining Consent if other than Investigator  Date Signed
Appendix C

**Critical Incident Questionnaire:**

1. Think about a defining moment in your pathway to presidency where you experience bias or discrimination based on your sexuality, please describe this incident below.

2. Describe the details of disclosing your sexuality in your current position. *You might discuss the emotions and feelings you felt, reactions you witnessed, what it involved in regards to disclosing (discussing a partner, etc.) and how you determined it was appropriate to disclose.*

3. Share an example of a time when sexuality played a significant role in your position as president. Why was it significant and how did it inform or shape the situation?

4. Discuss a specific practice, policy, or effort you have instituted as a means of challenging the heteronormative environments present within higher education.

5. Reflect upon daily duties or leadership activities that you think may inform the topics of bias and support or provide depth to pathways of presidency. What are examples of these?

6. Would you be willing to allow the researcher to observe you in your daily duties or leadership activities?
Appendix D

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

First Interview Out President’s:

Introductory Questions:

- Please discuss how long you have been in your current position as President.
- Please share your pathway to your current position.
- What percentage (1-100) does sexuality contribute to your overall sense of self? 
  Probe ➔ Describe this...
- Discuss your artifact... What does it represent about your identity and why?

Being Out in the Workplace

Q1. What does being Lesbian or Gay mean to you? 
  Probe ➔ How does it influence your daily life?
Q2. When did you come out in the workplace? 
  Probe ➔ What prompted you to disclose? 
    How did you disclose to these individuals?
Q3. Describe how you have negotiated disclosure of sexuality? 
  Probe ➔ Who do you share with and why?
Q4. What factors influenced your being out as a higher level administrator or President? 
  Probe ➔ How do you perceive the environment in regard to sexuality? 
    What do you think influences the culture/environment?

Bias & Support

Q5. What are examples of support you have experienced along the pathway to your presidency? 
  Probe ➔ What do you think influences this support? 
    What are examples of support you are currently experiencing within your presidency?
Q6. What are examples of bias you have experienced along the pathway to your presidency? 
  Probe ➔ What do you think influences this bias? 
    What are examples of bias you are currently experiencing within your presidency?
Q7. Anything else you would like to share in regards to support and bias as a University President?

_Campus Climate_

Q8. How does your sexuality impact campus climate?

Probe→ Other Faculty/Staff?
   Students?
   Alumni?
   Board of Trustees?

Q9: How has being lesbian or gay impacted your career path?

Q10. How do you think higher education has evolved in regard to sexuality and identity?

Probe→ What are some specific examples?

_Pathway to Presidency_

Q11. What creates opportunity for future gay and lesbian professionals to be _out_ university presidents?

Q12. How has your pathway to presidency influenced who you are as a leader and queer person?

Q13. Describe your most significant moment as a gay or lesbian university president?

Q14. Does being an _out_ gay or lesbian university president impact your personal life, social interactions, etc.?

Q15. Share how you include or do not include your partner as a member of the campus community and how you came to navigate in this manner

Probe→ How does this affect your daily professional life
   How does this affect your Personal life?

Q16. Is there anything else that you would like to share that you deem would be relevant or important to this study?
Appendix E  

Emergent Interview Protocol

Second Interview for L&G President's:

Introductory Questions:

I want to confirm that you did receive the transcript that I provided you prior to this interview.

1. Did you receive the transcript?
2. Does the transcript reflect accurately what we discussed in the previous interview?  
   Probe → If not, what would you like to see changed or added?

Questions for this interview will be emergent from selected themes developed through the initial interview. Questions will focus on further examination of these themes.

From the data collected thus far I have developed several themes to further analyze the pathway to presidency, which the following questions will focus on.

1. The [insert theme here] emerged as a central phenomenon within this study. Please discuss how you have encountered this concept within your role as a gay or lesbian President.

2. Can you share a specific incident when this has occurred?
Appendix F

Codes and Themes

What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education?

1. Committing to Being Out in Higher Education
2. Supporting Frameworks for Being Out
   a. Mentorship via Faculty and Staff as Support
   b. Partner Supports
   c. L&G President Support
3. Experiencing heteronormativity as an entrenched concept
   a. Bias and microaggressions
   b. False paradigms of progress
   c. Bias leads to support
4. Navigating expectations of what it means to be a queer leader
   a. Leading with the gay
   b. Gender performance
5. Engaging with opportunities to create queer possibilities Queer Leadership

How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?

1. Cracking the Lavender Ceiling
2. Overcoming Fear and Taking Risks
3. Better to be Gay than from Student Affairs

Codes Reduced into Thematic Clusters Broken Out by Research Question:

RQ1: What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education?

**Cluster 1-Coming out (12):** Coming out in the workplace, Coming out, Essence of being lesbian, Expectation to be out, Gay Identity, Geography and coming out, Generational difference LGBTQ, Inauthenticity-hiding, Sharing identity to support others, Sense of Place and Identity, Search Process and Coming Out, Personal and professional life connected

**Cluster 2-Support (14):** Creating support networks, Family support, Find a mentor, Mentorship and support, LGBTQ organization relationship-support, Networking, Part of the “in” group, Partner experience as first lady/man, Professional pathway advice, Self-care, Sponsorship, Support frameworks, Support from other LGBTQ people, Professional pathway advice

**Cluster 3-Heteronormativity & Bias (12):** Challenging student situations, Confronting bias incidents, Erasing false assumption about gay men, Expectations of gay presidents, Gay marriage as normalcy, Heteronormative impacts, Higher education as a safe space, Historical context, Institutional culture, Intersectionality of identity, Microaggressions and discrimination, Supportive of LGBTQ people-environment
**Cluster 4 - Queer Leadership (17):** Boundaries with gay culture, Decisions conflict with LGBTQ, Future leadership, Gay Leadership, Gender expectations and performance, Gender denial, Growing into leadership, Growth and movement LGBTQ identity, Identity as a role model, Impacts on lives, Lack of affinity with LGBTQ populations on campus, Passion for the work, Political savvy, Resiliency, Role as a woman, Vulnerable leadership

**Cluster 5 - Queering (11):** Creating queer possibilities, Critical understanding, Diversifying boards & leadership, Hope and optimism, Identity impacts policy, Impact on students, Lavender ceiling, State of higher education, Underrepresented women, Understanding diversity Queer perspectives, Queering spaces,

*Themes reduced from findings clusters (8):*
Institutional background
Justice minded
Legitimacy strategies
LGBTQ generational differences
Longevity and routine
Presidents as ego and affinity
Pressure of performance
Roles of boards

RQ2. How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?

**Cluster 1 - Lavender Ceiling (16):** Coming out in the workplace, Coming out, Discernment, Discrimination in pathway, Expectations of presidents by institution, Gay leadership, Heteronormative impacts, Institutional background, Institutional culture, Lavender ceiling, Partner experience as first lady/man, Pathway, Pathway confusion, Political savvy, Queering spaces, Roles of boards

**Cluster 2 - Overcoming Fear (6):** Partner experience as first lady/man, Passion for the work, Personal and professional life connected, Search process-coming out, Sense of professional self, Serendipity-overcoming fear

**Cluster 3 - Student Affairs Challenges (1):** Student affairs background

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**Codes Divided by Research Question to reduce towards themes:**

RQ1: *What are the experiences of out L&G University Presidents within Higher Education? (74)*
Coming out in the workplace, Boundaries with gay culture, Challenging student situations, Coming out, Coming out in the workplace, Confronting bias incidents, Creating support networks, Decisions conflict with LGBTQ identity, Diversifying boards & leadership Erasing false assumption about gay men, Essence of being lesbian, Expectation to be out
Expectations of gay presidents, Family support, Find a mentor, Future leadership, Gay identity, Gay Leadership, Gay marriage as normalcy, Gender expectations and performance, Gender denial, Generational difference LGBTQ, Geography and coming out, Growing into leadership Growth and movement LGBTQ, Heteronormative impacts, Higher education as a safe space, Historical context, Hope and optimism, Identity as a role model, Identity impacts policy, Impact on students, Impacts on lives, Inauthenticity-hiding, Institutional background, Institutional culture, Justice minded, Lack of affinity with LGBTQ populations on campus, Lavender ceiling Legitimacy strategies, LGBTQ generational differences, LGBTQ organization relationship support, Longevity and routine, Mentorship and support, Microaggressions and discrimination Networking, Part of the “in” group, Partner experience as first lady/man, Passion for the work Personal and professional life connected, Political savvy, Presidents as ego and affinity, Pressure of performance, Professional pathway advice, Resiliency, Role as a woman, Roles of Boards, Search process-coming out, Self-care, Sense of place and identity, Sharing identity to support Others, Sponsorship, State of higher education, Support frameworks, Support from other, LGBTQ people, Supportive of LGBTQ people-environment, Underrepresented women, Understanding diversity, Vulnerable leadership, (Deductive Codes) Queering spaces, Intersectionality of identity, Critical understanding, Queer perspectives, Creating queer possibilities

RQ2. How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?(23)
Coming out in the workplace, Coming out, Coming out in the workplace, Discernment, Discrimination in pathway, Expectations of presidents by institution, Gay leadership, Heteronormative impacts, Institutional background, Institutional culture, Lavender ceiling Partner experience as first lady/man, Passion for the work, Pathway, Pathway confusion, Personal and professional life connected, Political savvy, Queering spaces, Roles of boards, Search process-coming out, Sense of professional self, Serendipity-overcoming fear, Student affairs background

81 Individual Codes- (Reduced and Combined Codes):

(Inductive Codes)

1. Boundaries with gay culture
2. Challenging student situations
3. Coming out
4. Coming out in the workplace
5. Confronting bias incidents
6. Creating support networks
7. Decisions conflict with LGBTQ identity
8. Discernment
9. Discrimination in pathway
10. Diversifying boards & leadership
11. Erasing false assumption about gay men
12. Essence of being lesbian
13. Expectation to be out
14. Expectations of gay presidents
15. Expectations of presidents by institution
16. Family support
17. Find a mentor
18. Future leadership
19. Gay identity
20. Gay leadership
21. Gay marriage as normalcy
22. Gender expectations and performance
23. Gender denial
24. Generational difference LGBTQ
25. Geography and coming out
26. Growing into leadership
27. Growth and movement LGBTQ
28. Heteronormative impacts
29. Higher education as a safe space
30. Historical context
31. Hope and optimism
32. Identity as a role model
33. Identity impacts policy
34. Impact on students
35. Impacts on lives
36. Inauthenticity-hiding
37. Institutional background
38. Institutional culture
39. Justice minded
40. Lack of affinity with LGBTQ populations on campus
41. Lavender ceiling
42. Legitimacy strategies
43. LGBTQ generational differences
44. LGBTQ organization relationship-support
45. Longevity and routine
46. Mentorship and support
47. Microaggressions and discrimination
48. Networking
49. Part of the “in” group
50. Partner experience as first lady/man
51. Passion for the work
52. Pathway
53. Pathway confusion
54. Personal and professional life connected
55. Political savvy
56. Presidents as ego and affinity
57. Pressure of performance
58. Professional pathway advice
59. Resiliency
60. Role as a woman
61. Roles of boards
62. Search process-coming out
63. Self-care
64. Sense of place and identity
65. Sense of professional self
66. Serendipity-overcoming fear
67. Sharing identity to support others
68. Sponsorship
69. State of higher education
70. Student affairs background
71. Support frameworks
72. Support from other LGBTQ people
73. Supportive of LGBTQ people-environment
74. Underrepresented women
75. Understanding diversity
76. Vulnerable leadership
77. Queering spaces
78. Intersectionality of identity
79. Critical understanding
80. Queer perspectives
81. Creating queer possibilities

78 Individual Codes- (NVIVO Coding):

(Inductive Codes)
1. Boundaries with gay culture
2. Challenging student situations
3. Coming out
4. Coming out in the workplace
5. Confronting bias incidents
6. Creating support networks
7. Decisions conflict with LGBTQ identity
8. Discernment
9. Discrimination in pathway
10. Diversifying boards & leadership
11. Essence of being lesbian
12. Expectation to be out
13. Expectations of gay presidents
14. Expectations of presidents by institution
15. Family support
16. Find a mentor
17. Future leadership
18. Gay identity
19. Gay leadership
20. Gay marriage as normalcy
21. Gender expectations
22. Gender performance
23. Gender Shame
24. Geography and coming out
25. Growing into leadership
26. Growth and movement LGBTQ
27. Heteronormative impacts
28. Higher education as a safe space
29. Historical context
30. Hope and optimism
31. Identity as a role model
32. Identity impacts policy
33. Impact on students
34. Impacts on lives
35. Inauthenticity-hiding
36. Institutional background
37. Institutional culture
38. Justice minded
39. Lack of affinity with LGBTQ populations on campus
40. Lavender ceiling
41. Legitimacy strategies
42. LGBTQ generational differences
43. LGBTQ organization relationship-support
44. Longevity and routine
45. Mentorship and support
46. Microaggressions and discrimination
47. Networking
48. Partner experience as first lady/man
49. Pathway
50. Pathway confusion
51. Personal and professional life
52. Political savvy
53. Presidents as ego and affinity
54. Pressure of performance
55. Professional pathway advice
56. Resiliency
57. Role as a woman
58. Roles of boards
59. Search process-coming out
60. Self-care
61. Sense of place and identity
62. Sense of professional self
63. Serendipity-overcoming fear
64. Sharing identity to support others
65. Sponsorship
66. State of higher education
67. Student affairs background
68. Support frameworks
69. Support from other LGBTQ people
70. Supportive of LGBTQ people-environment
71. Underrepresented women
72. Understanding diversity
73. Vulnerable leadership
74. Queering spaces
75. Intersectionality of identity
76. Critical understanding
77. Queer perspectives
78. Creating queer possibilities

53 Individual Codes- (Initial Coding):
(Inductive Codes)

1. Coming out
2. Coming out in the workplace
3. Confronting bias incidents
4. Creating support networks
5. Decisions conflict with LGBTQ identity
6. Discernment
7. Discrimination in pathway
8. Diversifying boards & leadership
9. Essence of being lesbian
10. Expectation to be out
11. Erasing false assumptions about gay men
12. Gay identity
13. Gay leadership
14. Gay marriage as normalcy
15. Gender expectations
16. Generational difference LGBTQ
17. Geography and coming out
18. Growing into leadership
19. Heteronormative impacts
20. Higher education as a safe space
21. Historical context
22. Hope and optimism
23. Identity as a role model
24. Impact on students
25. Impacts on lives
26. Institutional background
27. Institutional culture
28. Justice minded
29. Lavender ceiling
30. Legitimacy strategies
31. LGBTQ organization relationship-support
32. Mentorship and support
33. Microaggressions and discrimination
34. Part of the “in” group
35. Pathway
36. Personal and professional life connected
37. Political savvy
38. Presidents as ego and affinity
39. Professional pathway advice
40. Resiliency
41. Role as a woman
42. Roles of boards
43. Search process-coming out
44. Self-care
45. Serendipity-overcoming fear
46. Sharing identity to support others
47. Sponsorship
48. Student affairs background
49. Support frameworks
50. Support from other LGBTQ people
51. Supportive of LGBTQ people-environment
52. Understanding diversity
53. Vulnerable leadership
Appendix G

Process Map of Study

Reading Literature, Reflecting, Informational Interviews
- Read articles about LGBTQ college presidents
- Reflected on personal experiences being a gay practitioner
- Conducted four informational interviews with LGBTQ presidents

First Cycle Coding: Stage 1
- Initial coding of in-person interview transcripts via pencil & paper
- 53 codes generated
- Codes helped generate second interview protocol

Second Cycle Coding: Stage 2, Phase 2
- Codes were combined into clusters groupings of similar concepts. These clusters were used to develop themes.

Second Cycle Coding: Stage 2, Phase 3
- Codes were further reduced into emerging themes. Five themes were developed for research question one with eight subthemes and three themes for research question two.

Identified Research Questions
- What are the experiences of out LGBTQ University Presidents within Higher Education?
- How does being an out practitioner impact pathways to presidency?

Conduct First Round of Interviews & Collect Artifacts and Documents

Conduct Second Round of Interviews & Collect Documents

First Cycle Coding: Stage 2, Phase 1
- Member checked data coded in Nvivo
- 78 codes were developed including four deductive codes focused on critical post-modern and queer theory

Second Cycle Coding: Stage 2, Phase 2
- The 81 codes were then divided among the two research questions. Four codes were eliminated as they did not relate to the research questions.

Second Cycle Coding: Stage 2, Phase 3
- Presentation of themes were considered and developed.
- Findings are constructed.

First Cycle Coding: Stage 2, Phase 2
- Initial 53 codes in the first cycle were compared with the 78 codes from the first cycle-phase one and reduced and combined. Resulting in 81 codes across the coding process.

Writing of Single and Across Case Findings

Read literature, created Conceptual Framework
- Compiled literature review
- Developed conceptual framework consisting of critical post-modern theory, queer theory, and the prism metaphor.

Created and Piloted Interview Protocol & Created and Piloted Critical Incident Survey

Reflective Journaling
- Analytic Memos were drafted
References


Leipold, B. (2014). Navigating straight waters: The lived experience of how out, white gay males have successfully navigated the college presidential search process. PhD Diss. St. John Fisher University.


