

**LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL (LGB)
IDENTITY AND SCHOOL
LEADERSHIP: ENGLISH LGB SCHOOL
LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES**

A dissertation submitted to The University of Manchester
for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Humanities

2011

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Final Word Count: 14,971

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ABSTRACT

Heteronormativity is an organiser of social power which pathologises deviation from 'normal' heterosexual identities through marginalising and stigmatising lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) identities. Despite experiencing the subordinating effects of heteronormativity, LGB school leaders in England exercise considerable power in their professional environments. This dissertation seeks to explore for the first time the relationship between heteronormativity and English LGB school leaders' identity and professional practice by exploring three areas; the impact of formative heteronormativity, the significance of school context and being out.

Data were collected for collective interpretative case studies of five LGB current and former school leaders through in-depth, asynchronous email interviews.

Findings indicate congruence with some major themes identified in American studies. Specifically, these were; a significant emphasis on advocating for young LGB people, but also on fighting discrimination more generally by promoting inclusive school cultures; resilience resulting from multiple aspects of LGB identity; the ability to see alternative viewpoints; and the employment of internal surveillance strategies to manage performed identities. Differences from previous studies include a lesser degree of experienced fear, a greater attachment to LGB labels and to the importance of coming out. This study is the first anywhere to consider explicitly the influence of school context on identity and practice; it concludes that school context is a heterogeneous concept which nonetheless contributes significantly to leaders' practice and identity. The study recommends that leadership development programmes should incorporate LGB experience both to disrupt heteronormativity and understand better leading *from* and *for* diversity. It recommends further that research should address the multiply affective nature of school context; the relationship between LGB school leader identity and the inclusiveness of school culture; how multiple marginalised identities intersect; and to what extent fear underpins LGB school leaders' practice and identity.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in England have won increasing rights and freedoms, including protection from discrimination (Equality Act 2010) and the right to form a legally-binding union (Civil Partnership Act 2004). Nevertheless, the acquisition of rights does not necessarily translate into increased social power, and several writers (e.g. Mac An Ghail, 1994; Connell, 1987) have noted how heteronormative Western societies construct and stabilise heterosexual identities through the social and institutional marginalisation and stigmatisation of LGB people. Schools are an important site where this heteronormative socialisation takes place. A profound sense of subordinated difference is therefore integral to a developing LGB identity (Downs, 2005).

Despite a policy context characterised by accountability and surveillance (e.g. Wright, 2001), school leaders in England wield significant power. This begs two questions. First, how is leadership operationalised in LGB school leaders with a stigmatised sexual identity which experienced and experiences reduced social power relative to dominant heterosexual identities? Second, how do they negotiate their identities as a lesbian, gay or bisexual person and as a school leader in a society whose conceptualisations of leadership are reluctant to embrace diversity?

The four studies which have explored these themes were carried out in the United States, where the absence of nation-wide constitutional legal protection from homophobic discrimination appears to have produced a distinctive climate of fear (Denton, 2009).

This is the first empirical work to examine whether the English context has produced divergent narratives from those few already recorded.

Research Aims

This dissertation explores the relationship between heteronormativity and school leadership in England by examining the identities and practices of five LGB school leaders in this country. Conducted through asynchronous email interviews, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. How might the experience of stigma and/or other manifestations of formative heteronormativity affect identity and professional practice?
2. What differences to identity and practice might a supportive or stigmatising school context make?
3. What differences to identity and practice might being out or not make?

An important element of this dissertation is its recommendations to improve the support and development of LGB school leaders, drawn from my analysis. This research has evolved from an earlier assignment for this Master's degree (Courtney, 2011a).

Key terms

Here, I define key acronyms and other lexical items which I use throughout this study.

LGB: Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. The literature often refers to *LGBT*, meaning Transgendered, or sometimes *LGBTQ*, meaning Questioning or Queer. For some, this additive inclusiveness instead creates division through naming separate constituent communities, obscuring real congruence of experience; these scholars

(e.g. Capper, 1999; de Lauretis, 1991) often prefer 'queer' I predominantly use LGB because these are the identities claimed by my participants.

Out: Open about one's LGB sexual identity (verb: **come out**). The opposite is **closeted**, though the implied binary is actually a continuum in practice (see discussion below). The related noun is **outness**. I use these words throughout the dissertation without inverted commas.

Limits of the study

This study's focus is the relationship between heteronormativity and LGB school leaders' identity and practice. This may reify and over-privilege one identity over others which are just as important to leaders, such as ethnicity and gender. Nonetheless, it is beyond the remit of this dissertation to address the multiple ways in which these identities interact. Therefore, whilst a lesbian necessarily experiences the effects of patriarchy, I do not address these effects directly.

Neither do I address how LGB leadership is perceived within schools and how that influences subsequent practice, since my only source of data is the leaders themselves.

This study adopts a socially-critical group perspective (Courtney, 2011b); it seeks to problematise the power structure which produces LGB marginalisation (heteronormativity) by exploring the stories of LGB school leaders. There is a conceptual paradox here, however; in accepting these labels, this study might be guilty of *reproducing* these structures through the reification of sexual categories. The normative value of uncovering positive corollaries of LGB identity with

leadership practice similarly can be questioned; this study cannot advocate the continuance of a marginalising social system simply to derive these effects.

In anticipating these charges, I draw on Lumby and Coleman (2007), who justify their similarly vulnerable contribution to diversity and leadership by pointing out that inaction is not an option:

Failing to act can only serve the interests of the dominant in organisations and society...increasing knowledge and deepening reflection may, over time, bring about positive change.

(Lumby and Coleman, 2007: 5)

Significance

This study is empirically significant, examining for the first time the relationship between heteronormativity, LGB identity and school leadership practices in England. It exposes heteronormativity as a discourse which may limit LGB teachers' access to or effectiveness in leadership roles, for example through employing identity management strategies owing to fear of stigmatisation. It also illuminates practices which may arise as a positively constructed effect of the interplay between heteronormativity's *structure* and LGB leaders' *agency*.

This study is conceptually significant, testing the robustness of the theories and models used most commonly to theorise about educational leadership and seeking to understand better the relationship between marginalisation, power and leadership.

This study is politically significant, challenging policy makers to improve the experiences of current and future LGB school leaders for moral and legal reasons. Morally, LGB leaders should have the right to live lives they value, in dignity, while contributing productively to their organisation (Lumby and Coleman, 2007:

5). Legally, the provisions of the Equality Act (2010) require school leaders and employers to address discrimination.

Finally, this study is heuristically significant, prompting questions about how, for example, multiple marginalised identities experience and enact school leadership.

Policy Context

Neither policy nor leadership development programmes specifically address LGB school leadership in England. The quasi-autonomous government body responsible for school leadership development in England is the National College for School Leadership. It is typical in addressing sexual orientation in leadership only together with other aspects of diversity such as ethnicity and disability, and for which it has developed a generic strategy (see National College, 2010), rather than as a subject meriting specific attention. The strategy contains the following statement:

And evidence from experts and professional associations suggests that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues are not being given sufficient attention and consideration, and many educational institutions and staff do not challenge homophobia or transphobia either because they feel unprepared to do so or think they will be unsupported if they do take action. No teacher or leader should face discrimination in their career development opportunities on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

(National College, 2010: 3)

Whilst there is a welcome admission here of the lack of consideration to LGB school leadership, this statement reveals an equation of LGBT issues with discrimination, where homo/bisexuality is exclusively a characteristic in need of protection rather than as a construct which might have something useful and important to say about leadership and schools generally.

Personal motivation

After years of emotional anguish, I stopped trying to believe that I wasn't gay at the age of sixteen. After graduating, I pursued a career teaching French and Spanish in secondary schools, quickly seeking leadership positions, becoming first Head of Modern Foreign Languages and then Assistant Headteacher. This research therefore supports Richardson's conclusion that "[p]eople who write are always writing about their lives, even when they disguise this through the omniscient voice of science or scholarship" (2001: 34).

My sexuality was perfectly obvious to other children at my school, whose homophobic bullying tactics ranged from ostracism to physical assault; I sat my GCSEs with a black eye and a chipped molar. My reasons for pursuing a leadership career at all in an environment where I had been intensely miserable are as unclear as they are interesting to me. Whilst latterly as an Assistant Headteacher I fought against homophobia in my schools; coming out in an assembly to over a thousand pupils, I cannot claim that this was my motivation when I began teaching. Indeed, I made every effort to hide my sexual identity from pupils for years, even when I knew I could have eased the suffering of some of those who simply wanted to know they weren't alone. Moreover, the boy who had experienced such stigmatisation was still there in the leader; but how did he make himself known in my leadership?

The purpose that Richardson ascribes to writing I therefore attribute to this piece of research; through it, I am seeking to understand myself and my world better.

Dissertation structure

This dissertation has six chapters. Following this first introductory chapter, in the second I review literature relevant to this study. In the third chapter, I set out and justify the methodology. In the fourth chapter, I present my findings in the form of vignettes. In the fifth chapter, I analyse them in relation to existing findings, and present recommendations for future research and for policy. Finally, in the sixth chapter, I summarise the whole study.

Summary

In this introduction, I have established why this study is necessary from a research, professional, political and personal perspective. I have set out the aims of my study, provided definitions of key terms which will be used throughout and summarised its structure. Next, in the literature review, I locate my study and its participants in their socio-historical and conceptual context.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Today's school leaders in England started to form their identities in a society predicated on 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Mac An Ghail, 1994: 9), manifested through its legal institutions and culture (Stonewall, 2011). Scholars have explored the impact of this phenomenon, heteronormativity, on developing (sexual) identities (Forrest, 2006), society, policy (Carabine, 2004), pupils (Hunt and Jensen, 2007) and teachers (Griffin, 1992).

However, only four studies explore heteronormativity and LGB school leadership (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Denton, 2009). All are American and three are flawed: Denton mis-categorises her data; for example, in distinguishing categories which are conceptually identical; *role models* and *courageous trail-blazing*. Koschoreck offers no analysis and Jones-Redmond pathologises her subject matter by reporting only negative aspects of the relationship between homo/bisexuality and leadership. Nevertheless, their scarcity enhances their significance.

Here, I synthesise these studies to illuminate patterns of experience after reviewing the international literature on identities, heteronormativity, stigma and coming out. I invoke my participants' English context by reviewing the literature describing this country's heteronormative legislation.

Finally, I review theories of educational leadership and queer theory to assess their robustness in exploring LGB school leaders' experiences.

Identity

Post-structuralist epistemologies have moved conceptualisations of identity away from essentialist innateness towards a socio-historically contextualised performative model (Carabine, 2004; Wilkerson, 2007; Bauman and Vecchi, 2004; Ellis and High, 2004). Identity may be 'a reflection of external contingencies' (Bernstein, 2000: 70) but is nonetheless characterised by agency; 'a task to be performed...over and over again' (Bauman and Vecchi, 2004: 11). Identifications cannot capture the self, however:

Identification is, of course, identification with an other, which means that identity is never identical to itself. This alienation of identity from the self it constructs...does not mean simply that any proclamation of identity will be only partial...but rather that identity is always a relation, never simply a positivity. (Crimp, 1992: 12)

Bauman sees this *other* as potentially dangerous, 'to identify oneself with...ö means to give hostages to an unknown fate which one cannot influence... ø (Bauman and Vecchi, 2004: 30). Within this discourse, distinctions between practice and identity are blurred; one *is* what one *does*.

Sexual identity

Sexual identity differs; constructions of *homosexual* are essentialised, imposed and stigmatised (Foucault, 1976). To escape stigmatisation, one can reject the label, whatever one's sexual practices; Fraynd and Capper (2003) theorise that this is what both their female participants have done.

Wilkerson (2007) observes that theorists of sexual identity formation have embraced constructionism reluctantly, partly because acknowledging the role of agency

removes a central tenet of the justification for LGB social justice. Rejecting neurological explanations, he argues that sexuality is socially constructed from mutually impacting experiences, biology, choices and social responses (governed by social context). Others problematise conceptualisations of desire as historically stable (Katz, 2001) or of sexuality as unchanging over a lifetime (Rasmussen, 2004) to support this constructionist model of sexual identity. In these readings, formative heteronormativity *produces* LGB sexual identity as much as represses it. For Evans (1999) and Mac An Ghail (1994), heterosexual identities depend on the creation and stigmatisation of homosexuality as their *abject* in repudiation of which they are defined. Sexuality is conceived contemporarily as core to other identities:

[Hiding my sexuality] excludes or drastically distorts almost every aspect of my daily life, affectional, intellectual, political and aesthetic. (Spraggs, 1994: 180)

This happened only at the end of the nineteenth century. In Foucault's words, 'the sodomite had been a recidivist, the homosexual was now a species' (1976: 59, my translation), whose sexuality governed all his actions and whose self, constructed to become an object of knowledge, became subject to disciplinary power. This explicit connection of sexual identity to power through discourse underpins queer theory, discussed below.

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity assumes 'that heterosexuality is the norm from which lesbian, gay, and bisexual people "deviate"' (Smith, 2004). It underpins and is reproduced by social institutions, including schools, in enactments (Mac An Ghail, 1994) and silences (Evans, 1999). Professional practice and research within educational leadership function within this paradigm, through assuming heterosexuality and

advocating it explicitly as a pre-requisite of leadership (Blount, 2003). Heteronormativity constrains not just those who do not fit the pervasive but often invisible model of allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, performed gender, and sexual desire (Kentlyn, 2007: 65), but everyone, since it organises social power (Capper, 1999). Whilst human sexuality operates along a continuum (e.g. Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948), heteronormativity functions dyadically; *heterosexual* and *homosexual* are constructed antithetically (Evans, 1999).

Stigma

Stigma operationalises heteronormativity; its manifestations maintain the disempowerment and relegation to the margins of society of [LGB people] (Fassinger, Shullman and Stevenson, 2010: 206). Stigma can be institutionalised in legal, medical and religious discourses (Herek, 2007). In England since 2003, the state has retreated from its role in stigmatising non-heterosexuals legislatively, although equal employment protection is denied LGB staff in the third of maintained state schools categorised as faith schools and the 14% of faith academies (Department for Education, 2011).

Herek (2007) identifies three manifestations of individual stigma; *enacted* (open hostility); *felt* (sensitivity towards and anticipation of stigma) and *internalised* (where the negative values ascribed to homo/bisexuality are, in Deleuze's (1988) terms, *folded into one's* core identity). All three forms can be experienced by heterosexual and LGB people, influencing behaviour and identity; in heterosexuals internalised stigma produces sexual prejudice, in LGB people, prejudice and internalised homophobia.

In educational leadership, heteronormativity and stigma feature repeatedly to influence the enactment and perception of school leaders' identity and practice. Figure 1 below, from a previous literature review (Courtney, 2011a), shows how both formative and school-based stigma may influence practice, and how that practice when filtered through a stigmatising school culture may be perceived as less effective (Eagly and Chin, 2010). Practice, especially where it transgresses gender boundaries, may also influence levels of stigma within schools (Fassinger et al., 2010).

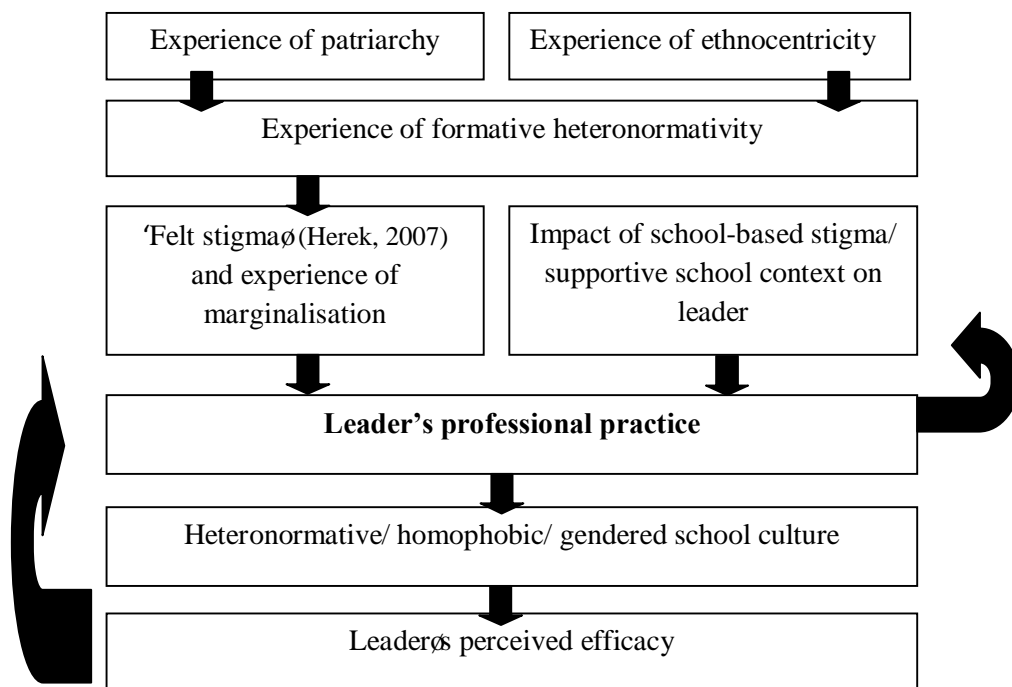


Figure 1. A model to demonstrate the relationship between formative and school-located heteronormativity, and school leaders' professional practice, actual and perceived. (adapted from Courtney, 2011a)

Institutional heteronormativity: the English legal context

Following recommendations in the Wolfenden Report (Wolfenden, 1957), homosexual acts in private were decriminalised between men over 21 in England and Wales (Sexual Offences Act, 1967) (lesbian acts never having been criminalised).

The simultaneous criminalisation of sexual acts between more than two men, or in public (including hotel rooms), maintained the legal institutionalisation of homosexuality as deviancy (Carabine, 2004). Homosexuality as moral incompatibility with teaching was legally enforceable, demonstrated by the separate cases (in Parker-Jenkins, 1987) of Gardiner and Bowly, dismissed after conviction for gross indecency.

The period preceding 1988 was legislatively quiet concerning homosexuality, though socially it was marked by increasing LGB politicisation against a heteronormative legislative framework (Stonewall, 2011).

In education, LGB relationships were increasingly supported by some local authorities, notably Haringey (Redman, 1994). However, the Inner London Education Authority's 1986 introduction of the book *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin* (Bösche, 1983) for use in schools was the catalyst for a significant religious, media and political backlash (Redman, 1994; DePalma and Atkinson, 2006). This culminated legislatively in Section 28 of the Local Government Act (1988), which stipulated that:

1. A local authority shall not
 - a. intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
 - b. promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship...(Section 28 Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1988)

The legislation never applied to schools, nonetheless it impacted there greatly. Amongst teachers, it led to 'self-surveillance' (Mac An Ghail, 1994: 155), legitimised homophobia (Epstein, 1994), exacerbated LGB stigmatisation (Ellis and High, 2004) and created uncertainty about the legality of challenging homophobia

(Buston and Hart, 2001). It also politicised UK LGB communities; for example, Stonewall, an organisation still campaigning for LGB rights, was established in response.

Section 28 was repealed in England and Wales in November 2003, the period since is characterised legislatively by increasing LGB rights (e.g. Civil Partnership Act 2004) and protection from discrimination (e.g. Equality Act 2010).

Formative heteronormativity

English children experience from an early age institutional and social sexual stigma (Renold, 2000). Forrest (2006) cites Brownø (1995) study of children aged under eleven, demonstrating their profoundly heteronormative views. Adopting an LGB identity in this context can cause unhappiness and isolation for three reasons; stigma; marginalisation; and reconciling a multi-faceted identity with a societally-imposed, essentialised construction. (Forrest, 2006; Denton, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007). A report into gay pupilsø experiences in UK schools for *Stonewall* found that 65% had experienced homophobic bullying, 75% in faith schools. More than 50% felt unable to be open at school (Hunt and Jensen, 2007).

Dentonø (2009) study reflects these findings. The fear and shame of stigma induced these leaders to adopt or project a heterosexual identity as youths, or compartmentalise and conceal their stigmatised sexual identity. -Carolø remembers her shame being intensified through stigmatisation from her own family. Overcompensation is a deflecting mechanism (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Denton, 2009); -Nateø for example, was -everyoneø best friend, best son, best grandson, best studentø (Denton, 2009: 126).

In summary, today's school leaders have experienced profound formative heteronormativity, both individual and institutional, whose extent and childhood impact I have outlined. Next, I locate within the international literature findings on heteronormativity's impact on American school leaders as adults.

Biculturalism and marginalisation

Fassinger et al. (2010) applied to leadership Brown's (1989) prediction that sexual minority identity might lead LGB people to develop a bicultural perspective; seeing the dominant view whilst imagining alternatives. Heteronormativity may also produce marginalisation, whose effect in leaders may be to promote an outsider perspective, one which potentially challenges the status quo. This view is supported across the fields of education (e.g. Asher, 2007), educational leadership (Denton, 2009; Fraynd and Capper, 2003) and psychology (Eagly and Chin, 2010).

Empirical support also exists for Fassinger et al.'s (2010: 206) hypothesis that 'learning to cope with the stresses related to marginalization may catalyze certain kinds of skill development that aid LGBT individuals in leadership roles'. One such is improving leaders' resilience:

The stubborn behavior was more around why I wouldn't let others define who I was or what I could do with my professional aspirations. (Eric in Denton, 2009: 164)

The second such skill identified by Fassinger et al. is 'advocat[ing] for themselves and others within systems of power and privilege' (2010: 206). This presupposes first *awareness* of the power structures and second, *empathy* towards those suffering in consequence. Fraynd and Capper's (2003), Koschoreck's (2003) and Denton's (2009) studies evidence all three. First, participants report an increased awareness of

unequal and unjust power relations within school: 'It [sexuality] has heightened my sensitivity to multiple issues of discrimination' Kathy in Denton (2009: 186). Second, leaders 'unanimously agreed that being empathetic to the struggles of your staff, students and families is critical...' (Denton, 2009: 182). Third, they advocated for disadvantaged, especially LGB, pupils and staff:

I get what it feels like to be marginalized. That helps me deal with my Black students, my poor students. I am a better principal for them because I am gay. ('Carol' in Denton, 2009: 180)

In these studies, *advocacy* is developed beyond Fassinger et al. (2010) conceptualisation. It includes speaking out on behalf of the disadvantaged, supporting minority students (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003; Denton, 2009), challenging school heterosexism, coming out, modelling inclusive behaviour and attitudes, promoting inclusive school cultures (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Denton, 2009), challenging community homophobia, supporting staff professional development on LGB issues, creating Gay/Straight Alliances and enacting/ enforcing anti-discrimination policies (Fraynd and Capper, 2003).

Fassinger et al.'s third hypothesised advantageous product of marginalisation is the creation of support networks, identified independently by Denton (2009). These networks involve LGB leaders as individuals and as part of LGB organisations.

Fear

Fear resulting from felt or internalised stigma (Herek, 2007) appears in all four field studies. Indeed, Denton ascribes to fear *all* identified products of heteronormativity, including marginalisation. I suggest the inverse: marginalisation; finding one's

sexual identity societally constructed as (*despised*) *other* is fundamental; the fear identified is of the stigma attached to that identity.

LGB school leaders report fear of essentialisation (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Denton, 2009), not being promoted, , job loss through school or community hostility, loss of safety and comfort, (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Denton, 2009) humiliation or judgement from coming out or being outed (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007), accusations of paedophilia (Jones-Redmond, 2007; Denton, 2009), vandalism, loss of staff, student or community respect (Fraynd and Capper, 2003) and accusations of recruitment (Denton, 2009).

Fear may produce advantageous leadership qualities; Denton (2009) ascribes to it her participants' increased resilience and confidence.

Internal surveillance

Deviation from heteronormativity is pathologised through normalisation, which is a process of ensuring that behaviour judged as normal becomes the only acceptable behaviour (Perryman, 2006: 151). Foucault (1975) saw normalisation as one of the most significant tools of power; the mechanism operationalising it for LGB school leaders is fear. Fear may motivate them to subject themselves to internal surveillance to present a normalised identity (Lugg and Tooms, 2010). Fraynd and Capper describe how LGB school leaders, both act and are acted upon (2003: 90), exemplifying mutual disciplinary power through Foucault's metaphor of the panopticon. They explain how the panopticon functioned:

[T]he panopticon was a prison design that represented an architectural system of social discipline that could be applied not

only to prisons but also to asylums, factories, and schools. By positioning the guard tower in the middle of the structure, the idea was to create the illusion for prisoners that they could be under surveillance at any moment. This, prison designers hoped, would create an internal sense of fear that would keep prisoner behaviors under control. (Fraynd and Capper, 2003: 90-91)

Denton (2009), too, whilst not linking her categorisation to Foucault, identifies the same phenomenon in her leaders as *caution*.

Fraynd and Capper locate school leaders at the panopticon's centre to perform the tasks of monitoring students' bodies and behaviors (2003: 91); I propose that they are simultaneously in the tower *and* wings, anticipating and enacting surveillance. This interpretation has support (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Denton, 2009); 'You are always aware of your actions and your students. Always' 'Rick' in Denton (2009: 151).

Internal surveillance may produce caution, from which 'Melissa' (Fraynd and Capper, 2003) derived strength and reflectiveness. Caution is typically constructed negatively, however; Denton (2009: 114) categorises it as a product of 'safety loss' her participants report it in their body language and dealings with parents, students and colleagues. Herek's (2007) conceptualisation, however, positions caution more frequently as a behavioural response to the *perceived possibility* of safety loss rather than exclusively as the product of its enactment, invoking Foucault's panopticon.

Identity Management

Societal fragmentation has led to an abundance of interacting and potentially conflicting social contexts which give meaning to identities. To understand the complexity of one's humanity, identity is conceived pluralistically (Jones-Redmond, 2007) and 'their' coherence problematised (Bauman and Vecchi, 2004). In this

discourse *identity management* dominates, especially for LGB school leaders, whose sexual identity is both stigmatised and concealable (Chung, 2001) and whose multiple identities experience power differently; exercising it as leaders and submitting to its effects as a stigmatised minority. Privileging one identity may diminish another (Sapon-Shevin, 2004).

This management is reflected in all four empirical studies, as a response to fear (Denton, 2009; Jones-Redmond, 2007; Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003), "societal expectations of a school leader" (Jones-Redmond, 2007: 72), and desire for authenticity (Jones-Redmond, 2007; Denton, 2009).

Some leaders project a heterosexual identity, reject LGB labels or distance themselves from LGB stereotypes by demonstrating gender-appropriate behaviours and long-term monogamy (Fraynd and Capper, 2003; Jones-Redmond, 2007). This last reflects Lugg and Tooms' (2010) notion of *the right kind of queer*, where out school leaders stay within heteronormatively-defined parameters governing identity presentation. An example is work ethic; participants in Denton's (2009), Jones-Redmond's (2007) and Fraynd and Capper's (2003) studies all report their need to over-achieve to counter the stigma attached to their LGB identity; this may be a reason why some LGB people become leaders (Downs, 2005).

The emotional and physical costs of these management strategies predicted by Herek (2007) are confirmed across the studies.

I wasn't out, and there was a constant fear that consumed a lot of energy and it was exhausting. ("Jordan" in Denton, 2009: 119-120)

Coming out

The phenomenon of *coming out* attempts to reconcile contemporary Western society's obsession with authenticity (Handler, 1986) with a social reality conceived as intersecting identities. The devalorised homosexual identity reclaims and asserts itself (Spraggs, 1994), yet as seen above, identification with this identity is partial, an effort and a choice; for Connell (1995: 152), coming out is *‘coming in’*

Chung (2001) builds on Griffin's (1992) model to propose five levels of outness: *acting*; having a heterosexual relationship to conceal homosexuality, *passing*; changing details to construct a heterosexual narrative, *covering*; omitting information to allow a heterosexual presumption, *implicitly out*; talking of partners using the correct pronoun but without mentioning sex or LGB labels, allowing others to form their own conclusions; and *explicitly out*; presenting an LGB identity. For Chung, the scale is progressive, largely mirroring people's *‘accomplished level of sexual identity’* (2001: 39), whereas for Griffin (1992), Spraggs (1994) and Fraynd and Capper (2003), the degree of outness is contextually dependent, negotiated carefully, and moves fluidly between stages. Coming out is a repeated rather than a single event with changing incentives and risks (Spraggs, 1994; Sapon-Shevin, 2004).

Concealing can be problematic in leadership. Jones-Redmond (2007: 78) reports that to avoid discussions of partners, *‘many lesbian and gay administrators severely limit their peer social involvement...cutting themselves out of social networks that may be essential for career advancement’* Mintzberg (1975) and Wrapp (1967) go further, citing the maintenance of excellent formal and informal social and information networks as key to successful leadership.

Coming out can result in violence, ostracism or public humiliation (Spraggs, 1994; and Herek, 2007). Fraynd and Capper (2003) participants identify eight reasons for remaining closeted, summarised here as witnessing discrimination and wishing to avoid typification, ridicule and career harm.

Concealing sexual identity may remove its stigma, but damages well-being and confidence (Barreto, Ellemers and Banal, 2006; Denton, 2009) and how leadership is enacted and perceived (Oswald, 2007). It can lead to a failure to identify fully with the job, reducing satisfaction (Jones-Redmond, 2007), or inauthenticity; incongruence between one's felt and presented identities (Denton, 2009).

For some, coming out promotes authenticity and challenges the heterosexual assumption (Koschoreck, 2003). It illuminates alternative LGB identities to those imposed by heteronormativity (Spraggs, 1994). Coming out provides young LGB people with role models (Hexter, 2007), and combats societal heterosexism most effectively (Bridgewater, 1997). Carol supports Griffin's (1992) finding that it empowers LGB educators:

I always talk about the coming out as not allowing others to have power. When you come out, you kind of take that power back from others.

(in Denton 2009: 169)

Rasmussen (2004) challenges these statements as constituents of a normative *coming out discourse*, whose correlating counter-narrative is that reluctance to come out denotes weakness and disempowerment. She and Britzman (1995) doubt whether coming out can challenge heteronormativity because it reifies the gay/straight binary and assumes that heterosexuals' *acceptance* of this knowledge is unproblematic in a heteronormative paradigm. Fraynd and Capper (2003) concur, finding no correlation

between their participants' degree of outness and their capacity to disrupt heteronormativity.

Educational leadership and homo/bisexuality

Theories and models of educational leadership do not address homo/bisexuality. Lugg and Koschoreck (2003: 4) call it 'the final unrecognized and unexamined closet'. This represents more than simple omission; Blount (2003) claims that the obligatory heterosexuality of U.S. school and district leaders has been central in developing the role. From their beginnings in the 1850s, school leaders 'existed in figurative relationship to teachers as husbands did to wives' (2003: 9), and heterosexuality (indicated by marriage) as a pre-requisite for leadership became increasingly entrenched throughout the twentieth century in the face of public moral fear. *Heterosexual* can therefore be added to white, masculinist and able-bodied as a characteristic embedded in Western conceptualisations of school leadership (Blackmore, 2006; Lumby and Coleman, 2007; Blount, 2003); this *type* is reproduced in schools (Tooms, Lugg and Bogotch, 2010) and reinforced by research (Gunter, 2006).

Bush (2003) identifies nine leadership models; managerial, participative, transformational, interpersonal, transactional, post-modern, contingency, moral and instructional. Literature on the relationship between LGB school leaders' experiences and these models does not exist; I conclude not that more research is needed, but that such typologies are not conceptually well-suited to the task.

Conceptual incongruities exacerbate the silences; I exemplify these by briefly analysing transformational leadership. Lumby and Coleman (2007) describe how transformational leadership inspires followers to achieve consensus around higher

moral objectives. This paradigm has become dominant in England, where, to improve public services, the state privileged it through policy prescription, research and training (Gunter, 2006: 259). Many scholars (e.g. Lumby and Coleman, 2007; Allix, 2000; Gunter, 2006) express concern that behind *consensus* lies a negation of difference and the fallacy that consensus is a pre-requisite of school improvement. The formative heteronormativity literature suggests that LGB leaders' experience of marginalisation makes assumptions of sameness problematic or irrelevant.

Queer theory and educational leadership

Queer theory draws epistemologically on critical poststructuralism and is characterized by a variety of methods of interrogating desire and its relationship to identity (Watson, 2005: 67). Where most theories of educational leadership derive their link to practice from their normativity, queer theory prompts change through problematising existing social structures, 'a politics of transgression' (Watson, 2005: 68), originating in community-centred activism (Rottmann, 2006). Watson and Rottmann describe how queer theory, first articulated by de Lauretis (1991), drew on Foucault and feminist scholarship to offer an emancipatory political strategy problematising *discourse* and *identities*; refusing categorisations derived from insufficient and limiting binaries. Criticisms of queer theory, summarised as its disengagement from practice and its constituent communities (Watson, 2005; Rottmann, 2006), are partly contested by Britzman, who conceives queer as a verb, 'signify[ing] *actions*, not actors' (1995: 153, italics in original).

Britzman identifies three tenets of queer theory which may deepen pedagogical understanding and which I apply to educational leadership. First, as a 'study of limits' (*ibid.*: 156), queer theory asks what the compulsory invisibility of

homo/bisexuality in educational leadership remarked by Lugg and Koschoreck (2003) says about the discourse which produced both it and also *everyone's* idea of normality. Second, heteronormativity requires the abjection of homo/bisexuality for heterosexual self-identification. This problematises the notion that simply increasing the visibility of LGB school leaders will result in attitudinal change:

...receiving knowledge is a problem ... particularly when the knowledge one already possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one's ignorance or when the knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others. (Britzman, 1995: 159)

Third, Britzman notes that heteronormativity is characterised by *knowing* and *ignorance*, in which the 'normal' is presumed to know and the 'other' obliged to confess. This confessed identity must be stable for it to be surveilled and controlled. Viewed through a queer lens, the *coming out discourse* identified by Rasmussen (2004) is not just practically and politically questionable, but is a product of the discourse it seeks to disrupt. Capper (1999: 10) queer question for educational leadership research: 'How is coming out different for persons in positions of power?' should be seen in this context.

Further queer research questions proposed for the field concern *normalisation*, e.g. 'How is sexual surveillance enacted and how does it perpetuate existing discourses of power?' (Capper, 1999: 10); 'What educational devices exist in your province/state/district/school/classroom that maintain normative heterosexuality?' (Rottmann, 2006: 11) and *socially constructed binaries*:

How can we similarly 'queer' other prevalent dichotomies in the field of educational administration (for example the distinction between leader and follower)? How might this process democratize educational leadership? (Rottmann, 2006: 12)

Rottmann's questions demonstrate queer theory's scope; far from being limited to LGB activism and people, it can interrogate society-wide power structures and highlight their effect on *everyone* in schools.

Summary

Heteronormativity is the organiser of social power under whose influence LGB leaders select and enact identities. It is operationalised by stigma institutionally, e.g. through legislation, and individually, e.g. through homophobia. It was and is experienced by the participants in the four studies conducted in this field. These studies have identified awareness of injustice and alternative viewpoints, empathy, advocacy, resilience, fear and internal surveillance as its effects on LGB school leaders, who manage their identities, especially through their degree of outness. Theories of educational leadership contribute little to an understanding of homo/bisexual leadership, yet queer theory proposes a promising paradigm for discussions of sexuality *and* educational leadership.

Key implications for my study issue from this review:

The following themes may emerge from my data; marginalisation, stigma, fear, identity management, internal surveillance, resilience, advocacy, empathy, awareness of unjust power structures or alternative viewpoints and commitment to an inclusive school culture. Some themes, such as fear and identity management, cut across all three of my research questions. This is because the relationship between my research questions is revealed in the literature to be complex and mutually impacting (figure 2).

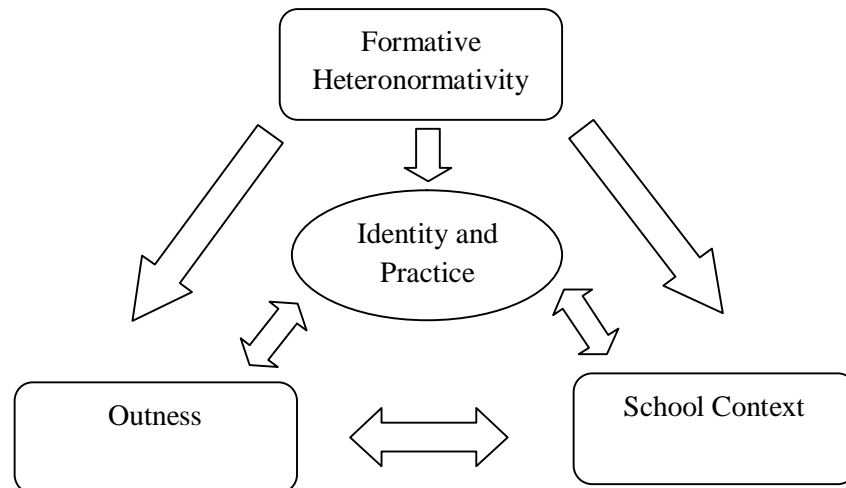


Figure 2. A model to demonstrate the relationship between the four elements of my research questions; formative heteronormativity, school context, outness and identity/practice.

As the model shows, identity and practice are influenced by all three elements to be researched, but additionally, outness is continually negotiated in relation to school context. Outness is both a producer of practice, in that out leaders conduct themselves differently to closeted ones, and a product of it; outness is performed identity constituted of practices.

This means that analysis which treats these questions distinctly may falsely demarcate lived experience, meaning a thematic treatment is preferable.

Identity is assumed to be constituted of performed practice. Closeted LGB leaders problematise this assumption by performing an identity dissonant with their sexual identity. This study must examine, therefore, how this impacts on leadership.

Queer theory's problematisation of power structures aligns with my study's purpose.

I claim therefore a queer perspective for my study, whilst acknowledging that some scholars (e.g. de Lauretis, 1991) would point to its adoption of LGB labels as heteronormative.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this section, I describe and justify my methodology and my data collection method within the context of the study's theoretical framework. I discuss the ethical implications of my research and the measures I undertook to ameliorate them. Finally, I describe the research process itself and explain how I analysed my data. My methodology is evaluated in chapter six.

Theoretical framework

A queer constructivist epistemology underpins this research. Charmaz (2006: 187) describes constructivism as a perspective [which] assumes that people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate. Rosenthal (1976) highlights its inherent methodological dangers; the researcher's appearance, age or feelings and the participants' response to these may alter the examined reality. In mitigation, I adopted the distancing medium of email, thereby enhancing validity. However, I accept Gunter's (2004) assertion that as a researcher, I bring my history to the interview, the research questions and to my data analysis.

This research is queer in that it explores and exposes the influence of heteronormativity on the professional practice and identity of LGB school leaders.

Research questions

The questions addressed are:

1. How might the experience of stigma and/or other manifestations of formative heteronormativity affect identity and professional practice?

2. What differences to identity and practice might a supportive or stigmatising school context make?
3. What differences to identity and practice might being out or not make?

Methodology

In seeking to make sense of the lived experiences of members of a societally constructed population to which I belong, I judge that a qualitative methodology where data is drawn from collective interpretative case studies is best suited to achieve the objectives of the research.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) explain how case studies locate both researcher and participant within the context of the research question under examination, which aligns with this study's theoretical framework. This 'unique and dynamic' (*ibid.*: 253) context produces rich, complex stories of how actors encounter a phenomenon; these stories do not produce generalisable statements in the positivist sense, but rather promote recognition of these phenomena and the development of theory. This research represents the first attempt to hear the stories of LGB school leaders in England, yet assumptions as to what these stories might contain are found in related literature. An interpretative approach offers the most suitable means both of capturing complexity and scrutinising these assumptions (see Merriam, 1988).

I am exploring collective case studies because the social phenomenon examined can be seen as an aggregate of similar, yet distinct identities; those of lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women. Multiple voices enhance the validity of the study, although they do not claim to be representative; it will not be possible to make generalisations from this study. Rather, they constitute the building blocks of a new 'collective story' (Richardson, 2001).

The following sections on ethics and methodological justification draw on material from an unpublished paper, assessed as part of my Master's degree (Courtney, 2011c).

Ethical implications

This research is classified as high risk because it addresses an issue which may be sensitive to participants... (i.e. the research has the potential to create a degree of discomfort or anxiety...) (University of Manchester: 4). Lee (1993) suggests that a common thread to definitions of sensitivity in research is the degree of potential costs to those involved (Lee, 1993: 4). He identifies three areas; research which *intrudes*, which is *stigmatising* or which disrupts or exposes *power structures*. I demonstrate below how my research potentially touches all three.

This research into homo/bisexual identity is intrusive in three ways. First, these groups are societally constructed according to the object of sexual rather than romantic desire. Therefore, this research may invoke semantically an intrusion into sexual practice. Second, it may produce uncomfortable memories or biographical reinterpretation for participant or researcher. Third, my reinterpretation of participants' narratives may intrude into their self-constructed sense of identity.

I have described in the literature review how, in an educational leadership context, stigma operationalises heteronormativity to influence the formative development of LGB leaders, their leadership practices and how these are perceived within school. Should participation in this research become known in a hostile environment, stigmatisation may result. Equally, Lugg and Koschoreck (2003) note how scholars researching LGB issues have been susceptible to stigmatisation from their peers.

For some queer theorists (e.g. Capper, 1999), the marginalisation experienced by LGB leaders and students demonstrates how schools, as a microcosm of society, reproduce inequitable power structures which maintain the 'other' status of LGB people, reducing their political agency. My research will interrogate and may disrupt local political and power relations.

In the following section, I establish how my methods were designed to address these ethical issues and confer other methodological advantages.

Data collection

Methods

Data were collected from in-depth asynchronous semi-structured email interviews with five participants, who received around eleven questions over time periods of between one to three weeks.

Ethical rationale

I selected email over, for example, instant messaging because content could be encrypted should the participant prefer. This requirement precluded a synchronous method and its inclusion was necessary for my research to be granted ethical approval. My original plan for compulsory encryption was rejected after the pilot participant found the process over-emphasised secrecy and difference, inadvertently contributing to the very marginalisation this research aims to explore.

I chose the internet as the interview medium because the physical absence of the researcher reduces participant anxiety, especially where the subject matter is sensitive (Lee, 1993.) The distance between online correspondents is conceptually distinct to that which exists in a pen-and-paper method, however. Costigan (1999)

and Sudweeks and Simoff (1999) describe the peculiar co-existence of intimacy and distance caused by the virtual presence of the interviewer anywhere there is internet access; whose space the research process belongs to becomes contestable. This question has ethical and methodological significance because I wanted respondents to feel safe by answering the questions alone, yet with a sense of my presence to authenticate the notion of 'interview'. The 'collapse of distance' (Costigan, 1999) produced by the internet is a credible way to achieve this.

Best (2010) argues that in asynchronous internet interviews, respondents are less likely to feel compelled to answer a question through the momentum of the process itself, which they might, given reflection time without the interviewer, have preferred not to answer. The format also affords the opportunity to reflect more deeply on, or edit, the answer before sending (Tourangeau and Smith, 1998); ethically preferable because of the respondent's enhanced control over the data. (Whether it becomes less reliable after such re-storying, or is more honest, as is the case with much data produced privately and transmitted digitally, (Tourangeau and Smith, 1998; Joinson and Paine, 2007) is a question for future research.) Finally, the respondent can elect not to answer the question at all without the whole data set being lost. This *iterative consent* is an essential ethical element of my methodology.

Other methodological advantages

Couper and Nicholls II (1998) note the advantages of Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) in terms of both economic and data-processing efficiency; important considerations to a lone researcher. Sudweeks and Simoff (1999) cite studies showing positive methodological effects of computer-mediated communication, including Dubrovsky, Kiesler and Sethna (1991), who found that it

equalised status differences, and Rice and Love (1987) who noted increased socioemotional connections (both in Sudweeks and Simoff, 1999: 42). Cohen et al. (2007) cite differences in wording, emphasis and rapport as negatively influencing the reliability of interviews; adopting a computer-mediated approach reduces these.

Interview guide

The interviews were semi-structured to maintain the consistency essential in interpretive collective case studies (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007) and to improve reliability. Merton and Kendall (1946) characterise the structure as *focused*, since it seeks to scrutinise existing assumptions found in the literature with a number of participants in the same social phenomenon, whilst maintaining the flexibility to uncover deeper subjective meaning and new heuristic detail.

The assumptions can be summarised as follows; that certain leadership styles and practices are identifiably preferred by LGB leaders; that these result from differentially-experienced societal marginalisation; that being *out* influences leadership; as does a stigmatising or supportive school context.

My interview guide (see appendix 3) moves from questions which establish professional context and sexual identity to a number which explore the issues above. As a set, the questions are conducive to the production of a narrative arc, moving from formative to current experience, and encourage participants to reflect on the relationship between past and present.

Identifying and locating participants

Locating a group of lesbian, gay or bisexual current or recent middle/senior leaders in an English primary or secondary school posed considerable ethical and practical

challenges. I included middle leaders because, as Bennett, Newton, Wise, Woods, and Economou (2003) note, they ‘can stimulate organisational change and teacher-initiated improvements... [and must show] expertise in human relationships’ (Bennett et al., 2003: 8). Munby (2011) agrees, calling:

...those energetic and committed leaders, operating below headteacher level, who play a critical role in driving improvement and raising standards in our schools ...‘the engine rooms of school improvement’.

Although there are no formal networks of LGB school leaders, the organisation *Schools Out* exists to support LGB teachers in the UK. A key informant there passed my details to some of her contacts, some of whom contacted me to take part or passed my details on again (see Appendix 4). Advertisements on the *Schools Out* website did not produce any participants. One participant was a direct contact, raising the ethical question of potential coercion. However, I only contacted this acquaintance out of a number who were eligible because this person had a history of LGB activism, and was therefore more likely to see this research as welcome political action. Second, despite discussing the research, I required this leader to contact me in order to participate and thereby demonstrate volition.

One potential participant was located through a contact of mine; again, this leader had to contact me in order to participate. I did not disclose to the intermediary contact whether the chain was productive to reduce the possibility of participation being advantageous to either one. Despite answering the first three questions, contact was lost. Another potential participant dropped out before answering a question.

I purposely incorporated measures for iterative consent, and was therefore unsurprised that two leaders took advantage of them to change their mind about

participating. This did not affect the quality of the data collected, nor its spread, as the five remaining participants covered primary and secondary phases, and lesbian, gay and bisexual identity. The non-response proved that the ethical measures I took to prevent coercion worked, though I was fortunate in retaining adequate numbers.

The process

Since all emails were to be deleted immediately to protect data, I created a grid to maintain an overview of the times at which I had sent and received answers to questions. One participant opted for encryption.

I emailed the questions, mostly individually, and waited for a reply, from which I cut the text and pasted it into an encrypted file under the participants' pseudonym. Learning from the pilot, I maintained a 'conversational' tone throughout to encourage the production of rich data, and asked supplementary questions where answers had been unclear or an interesting thread developed.

The questions were emailed mostly one to three at a time, though two factors meant that for two participants, I sent up to four questions at once. These factors were first, that ethical approval for the project was only gained near the end of the summer term, meaning that I needed to ensure the data was collected before the participants went on holiday. Second, some leaders took longer over their answers than anticipated, and would not have completed in a reasonable amount of time. Despite concerns that the resulting data might be superficial, the format straying close to a questionnaire, in fact it was intimate and conversational. I attribute this to the relaxed and friendly email relationship that I had established with the participants up to that point over several weeks.

Data analysis

I employed the pattern-matching method to ascertain the degree of congruence in my data with identified findings in the literature (Campbell, 1975). These patterns were thematic, including fear, identity management and awareness of injustice. In order to capture significant unexpected themes, I also employed the central tendency method of data analysis, presenting themes identified most commonly from my participants' testimony. I was able both to confirm the robustness of the conceptual model developed in response to my review of the literature (figure 2) and to use it to locate my themes as I was analysing them.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described and justified my research design, including ethical considerations and a summary of the data collection and analysis processes. The methodology will be evaluated in chapter six. The next chapter presents the findings from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present my findings in the form of vignettes, one for each participant. I have selected this format to maintain the integrity and humanity of these leaders' stories. The vignettes capture the essence of the leaders' lived experiences and are thematically structured around formative heteronormativity, outness and school context to reflect my research questions. Further detail appears in the following section, where I analyse these experiences more deeply in relation to the literature.

Annabel

Annabel is married to a man, has children and identifies as bisexual, remarking, '*I could have as easily ended up with a woman as my most significant long term partner*'. She sees sexuality as '*fluid and changing*'; her own developed out of her feminism, which taught her to be '*aware of the societal pressures to conform with looks, etc*' and not to need a man, and her Christianity, which '*strongly influenced [her] sense of justice, equality, [and] sticking up for the powerless*'. Annabel believes these last two influenced her subsequent identity more fundamentally than formative heteronormativity. Indeed, her mother ensured Annabel grew up knowing that '*same-sex attraction was an option*'.

Annabel was appointed to this, her first headship, last year. Her small Church primary school '*serves a very diverse population*' in a large Northern city. Annabel's governors are supportive of her vigorous anti-homophobic stance and her inclusion of same-sex relations on the sex education course; this has encouraged her to

continue this work and promote these values. Homophobic bullying *'occurs far less than in any other school... [she's] worked at'*.

Coming out in her twenties gave Annabel *'a sense of pride'* and made her realise that *'things are rarely as disastrous as they might seem'*. Annabel doesn't hide her sexuality, and doesn't correct some parents' assumptions that she is LGB, based on her *'being a Ms with sensible shoes and no understanding of foundation and powder'*.

She has been out to differing degrees at different points in her career, reflecting her caution of community and school reaction. She remembers that being closeted as a Deputy Head compromised her ability to model a proud, authentic LGB identity.

Jim

Jim is Deputy Headteacher of an ethnically diverse primary school in London, and knew he was *'different from other children pretty much as soon as...[he] started primary school'* in a large Northern city; *'the stereotypical gay kid'* who *'played mostly with the girls'* and *'much preferred studying to playing rough and tumble'*. Only negative stereotypes of gay people were visible; these *'reinforced... [his] belief at the time that [they and he] were objects of fun; sad, pathetic people...'*

Jim was *'bullied incessantly'* throughout school and, feeling he *'was never going to find anyone to love who loved... [him] back equally'*, attempted suicide at 17. Leaving home to become a teacher represented escape and a chance to lead his life authentically.

His formative experiences have *'made... [him] a fighter'*, who participates in many anti-homophobia and bullying initiatives to prevent children suffering as he did. This

work, and recent equality legislation (Equality Act 2010), has empowered him. His formative experiences have made him resilient, though he does still *'kind of walk around with an invisible suit of armour'*.

Jim is completely out to staff, and *'some of the parents and some kids know as well'*. Generally, because he has *'been relaxed about it [his sexuality], so have other people'*. This openness allows him to perform at his best in his role generally and also to *'have conversations with parents and kids (and staff) about being gay and... positively challenge their prejudices'*.

Jim's school is *'very supportive of him as a gay man'*, which has allowed him to be more open about his sexuality, and therefore *'a "whole" person with everybody'*. This *'takes away any shame or guilt that [he] might have had...around... [his] sexuality'*.

Kathy

Kathy has led both curriculum and pastoral teams in her 12 years at her multi-cultural London secondary school. She is currently leading a project in which she develops teachers' capacities nationally in making their schools LGBT friendly.

Kathy identifies as a lesbian, but believes *'sexuality is a fluid thing'*. Formative heteronormativity was not significant for her; she remembers no-one telling her in her youth that same-sex attraction was *'wrong'*, or even realising some thought it *'different'*; she *'was always very proud of being attracted to women'*.

Being *'very open to staff, students...parents and anyone else who asks'* is very important to Kathy; she *'think[s] it is absolutely essential for students to have role models and ...for me to be myself in the work environment'*. This openness has made

her a powerful advocate for LGBT rights through her role; *'Students need the "facts" about LGBT people, not the perceived views spun by various ignorant organisations'*. Her advocacy in school *'has made a massive difference to the lives of not only the young LGBT students, but everyone'*.

Kathy's school is very supportive of her work in this field. She feels, however, that her LGBT advocacy has both developed and limited her career. She was recently passed over for promotion and suspects the Senior Leadership Team may *'have forgotten about... [her] other skills'*. On the other hand, her school *'has completely steered... [her] career to a path... [she] never envisaged'* which has given her skills in public speaking and staff relations as well as the understanding that she is *'deeply political'*.

Nick

Nick identifies as gay, but his *'sexuality hardly affected...[him] until 16'* because he was unaware of it. Formative heteronormativity was not significant in his developing identity; attempts to bully him for his sexuality were unsuccessful because by 16, he had earned sufficient social capital amongst his peers to be able to dismiss them.

Nick has been out at school since before his first headship and has *'quite a camp personality'*. He has been supported in being out by managers and staff over the years, but still monitors his image and actions because of *'bigoted and short-sighted people that have misconstrued and mis-interpreted... [his] good intentions'*.

Nick believes a series of unsupportive contexts have impacted significantly on his practice and career, particularly since moving to a predominantly rural local authority after two primary school headships in a Midlands city. The Diocese offered

him the job of temporary Headteacher in a Church school, but was *'made to withdraw the offer by the Governors when they met... [him]- pure homophobia'*.

He quickly obtained another post leading a small primary school, but the local authority suspended him following a meeting with parents to discuss a poor Ofsted report when the school was inspected within a month of his appointment. Additionally, two or three staff members accused Nick of grooming children, triggering a local authority investigation. The allegations were *'shown to be false and malicious'* but Nick's career in school leadership was over. He now works in a prison.

He attributes all the problems he has experienced in education to homophobia; these negative experiences, despite having *'a great [negative] effect on... [his] personal life'* have nevertheless led him *'to protect all and educate against bigotry and discrimination... treat all people openly, honestly and with respect'* and be *'more committed to fighting injustice and prejudice'*.

Lee

Lee is Assistant Headteacher of an ethnically diverse primary school in a Midlands city, many of whose pupils experience socio-economic disadvantage. Like Jim, he realised he was *'different to other boys'* from an early age; he *'didn't like things that generally other boys liked and consequently all... [his] friends were girls'*. His move to middle school aged eight made him ill through anxiety at being *'forced to "be a boy"'*.

Home was *'always very loving and supportive, but the expected roles and futures were defined early on...being gay was not an option'*. Fear came with his

understanding, aged around 13, that he was gay, for in his world, *'gay people just didn't exist'*.

His formative experiences have influenced his leadership enormously; he is *'conscious of being a role model all the time'* and he is *'passionate about doing LGBT work in primary schools so that no LGBT young person goes through the experiences of isolation [he] went through'*.

Lee was *'still pretending to be straight'* in his first school by maintaining a relationship with a woman. Despite being fearful because of Section 28, he came out in his second school in 1999. His manager and Headteacher supported him, but his parents feared he would be accused of paedophilia and recommended he leave teaching. In his third school, Lee eventually came out even to the children and enjoyed *'nothing but support from the parents and children'*. In his current school he came out during the interview, motivated by having *'spent so long hiding... [his] sexuality'*. Despite this, he is not out to children there, which he hates because he feels he is *'a rubbish role model'*.

Lee has mostly enjoyed support for his sexual identity in the schools and communities he has worked in. His plans for tackling homophobia through the curriculum in his current school, whilst supported ideologically by his Headteacher and local authority, were initially difficult to put into action largely because of the latter's fears about the reaction of the largely Muslim community. Senior leadership and governors finally endorsed Lee's plans, without community backlash.

Sometimes, Lee thinks that his anti-homophobia work detracts from his role's focus on school improvement, though his position of authority *'makes pushing new initiatives easier'*.

Summary

The five school leaders I interviewed lead or have led in a variety of contexts, and their stories are unique, personal accounts of histories touched to a greater or lesser degree by heteronormativity, whether experienced formatively or as leaders. Nevertheless, themes do emerge; in the following section I analyse these themes and relate them to the literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relationship between my research questions suggested by the model created in response to my literature review (see figure 2) is confirmed by these findings. Therefore, some themes emerge which transverse research questions, for example, advocacy. To explicate this phenomenon, I have transposed the themes of my findings onto figure 2. The resulting model (figure 3) forms the structure of the following discussion.

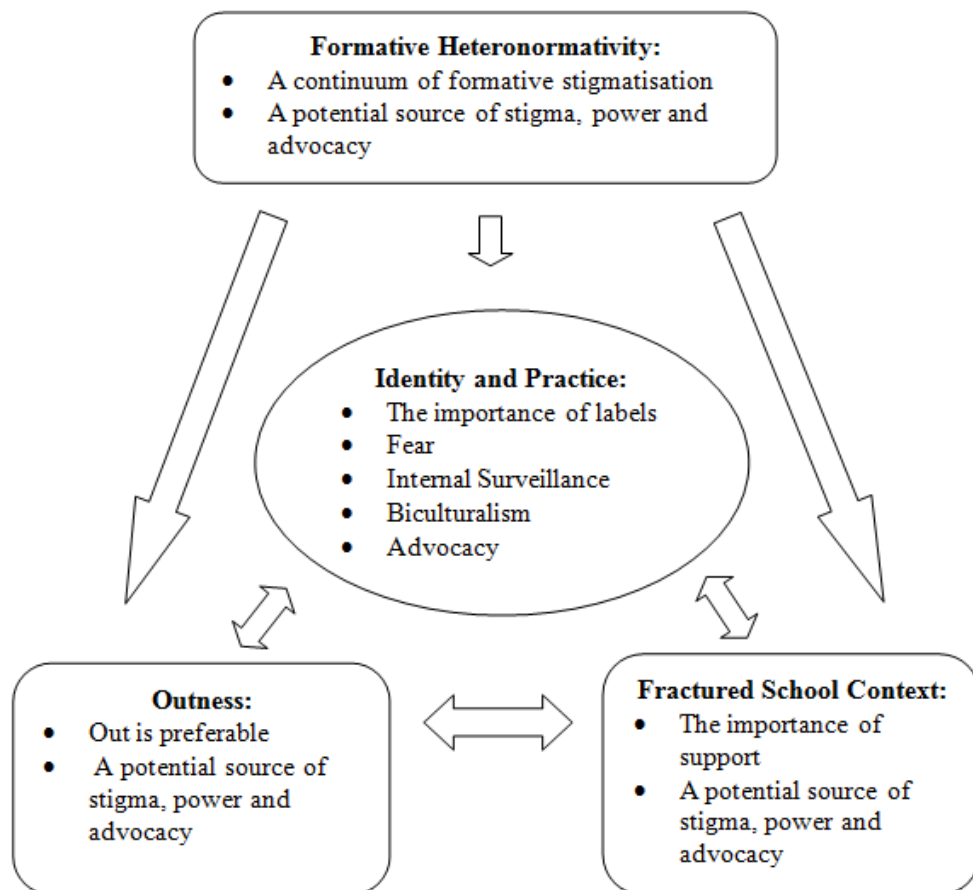


Figure 3. A model to locate my findings within the four elements of my research questions; formative heteronormativity, school context, outness and identity and practice.

A continuum of formative stigmatisation

My participants' formative experiences can be located along a continuum of stigma. At one end, with neither *enacted* nor *felt* stigma (Herek, 2007), lies Kathy, for whom *'it seemed a perfectly natural thing...to be with a woman'*. Kathy's view of sexuality as fluid was formed through her experiences with her peers:

I did find that most of my best friends were attracted to me too, even though most are now married to men.

Kathy's sexuality was a source not of stigma, but of pride, *'even though [she] didn't really know any other 'out' lesbians'*.

Annabel's relationship with formative stigma is complex. She first became aware of the patriarchal stigma attached to her identity as a woman and rejected it through adopting feminism. Her rejection of her Christian church's heteronormative view of sexuality occurred before she started personally to identify as bisexual:

[I developed] an understanding that what was an ideological stance (we're all bisexual, or at least- sexuality is fluid and changing) might be fun to explore when the opportunity presented itself.

Annabel sees her bisexuality as *'almost a product of'* her Christian faith, which taught her not to care *'about the judgements of others'*, and feminism, which encouraged her belief that she didn't need a man. Annabel was therefore profoundly influenced by stigma, though only a small part was heteronormative, and initially, she *'didn't think it necessarily applied to [her]'*. Rather, she was subject to *felt* sexual stigma without being part of the stigmatised group. As Herek (2007) notes, this can influence behaviour and identity; in Annabel's case it led her to adopt the stigmatised identity. This is congruent with her personal history of locating herself in

opposition to prevailing discourses of power, e.g., patriarchy, and demonstrates her considerable agency in selecting her sexual identity.

Nick became susceptible to *enacted* sexual stigma through bullying only at around 16 years old, and so *'was already in a position of power at school by then and well protected by the establishment'*. Nick did not *fold* any of this stigma into his identity (Deleuze, 1988) remaining *'very naively unaware of [his] sexuality'*.

Lee felt profoundly marginalised and isolated, stigmatised initially because of his unwillingness to conform to the gender role prescribed for him.

From about the age of five I knew I was different to other boys in my class. I knew this because I just wasn't like them...and consequently all my friends were girls.

Lee's memory that *'gay people just didn't exist'* reflects Herek's (2007) description of the *heterosexual assumption* underpinning institutional sexual stigma.

Furthest along the continuum, Jim's stigmatisation also grew from gender nonconformity; he *'much preferred studying to playing rough and tumble with the boys'*. He became increasingly isolated; *'I felt I had no one to turn to'* and was bullied *'incessantly'* by other boys and some teachers; *'Looking back on it...I don't know how I kept going'*. Herek (2007: 907-908) recognises this treatment as another of the tools sustaining heterosexism:

[W]hen people with a nonheterosexual orientation become visible, heterosexism problematizes them. Nonheterosexuals, homosexual behavior, and same-sex relationships are presumed to be abnormal and unnatural and, therefore, are regarded as inferior, as requiring explanation, and as appropriate targets for hostility, differential treatment and discrimination, and even aggression.

These data reflect Rivers and Cowie's (2006) findings that gay or bisexual boys are significantly more likely to encounter physical homophobic bullying than lesbian or bisexual girls. Since the subsequent careers of all five reveal LGB advocacy, it cannot be concluded that formative marginalisation is a prerequisite. Nevertheless, where sexual stigmatisation did occur, these leaders report a profound impact on their leadership in that they strive to prevent others enduring similar experiences.

The importance of labels

Coming out involves the adoption of a pre-defined sexual identity. The men in my study identify unequivocally as gay; the women as lesbian or bisexual despite seeing sexuality as fluid. This willingness to claim a potentially stigmatising label is significant; the women especially, in Bauman's terms (Bauman and Vecchi, 2004: 30), are 'giv[ing] hostages to fortune by fixing their 'fluid' sexuality to an identity they do not control.

Jim, Annabel and Nick also *perform* their label through adopting gender nonconformist behaviours, disrupting the heterosexual assumption and circumventing the need to continually come out; e.g. *'I'm naturally camp and don't bother to hide it'* (Jim).

As a married bisexual woman, Annabel notes the difficulty in *'being married to a bloke- declaring a sexuality that in essence only defines what you'd do if your partner drops dead'*. That she nonetheless does so indicates the importance of the label to her. Similarly, neither Jim nor Lee's adoption of a gay identity was straightforward. Their earliest memories are not of homosexuality, but of *difference*. Both started by demonstrating gender nonconformity; Jim *'was really camp'* and Lee *'didn't like things that generally other boys liked'*. As Connell (1995: 145) notes,

‘[such] stories...in childhood [are] common among homosexual men’. Moreover, representations of gay people during their childhood consisted mostly of negative stereotypes: Jim writes, ‘*I grew up thinking gay people were lonely paedophiles who should be pitied at best. I knew I wasn’t like that*’. In Lee’s world, ‘*gay people just didn’t exist*’. Their progression from this state to ready identification with a gay identity therefore invokes Connell’s (1995) emphasis on individual agency in choosing and *working at* sexual identity rather than the unproblematic realisation of an innate sexuality claimed by Nick, Jim and Lee, and highlights the importance these leaders attach to the identification.

This contra-indicates findings by Fraynd and Capper (2003), who identified reluctance on the part of the leaders in their study to accept an essentialised LGB identity. These leaders preferred a ‘straightened’ (p. 98) version, characterised by long-term monogamous pairings and gender-appropriate behaviour. Fraynd and Capper (2003) suggest that this represents an attempt to position themselves closer to the heteronormative ideal, abjecting stereotypical LGB identities as ‘other’ to render themselves more acceptable as leaders. Conversely, what the four explicitly out leaders in my study feel compelled to disclose is an unashamedly essentialised identity; even Annabel, whose status as a married bisexual would permit her to *pass* easily (Chung, 2001), chooses to suggest a stereotypical minority sexual identity through performing gender ambiguity. This may mean that minority sexual identity is simply less stigmatised in England than in America, though Nick’s experiences out of the cities indicate important national variation. It may also indicate more cultural and conceptual congruity between LGB identity and English notions of *school leader* than in America, where the role was constructed to mirror a husband’s position as head of the (heterosexual) family (Blount, 2003).

The implication for practice of these leaders' identification with LGB labels is that any disruption of heteronormativity in schools takes place within reifications established by that paradigm. They do not question inadequate binary definitions of sexuality (Rottmann, 2006); but are nevertheless '*passionate about doing LGBT work*' (Lee) as members of that community. Fassinger et al. (2010: 207) note that LGB leaders in the future, used to more freedoms than those currently available,

may be less likely to settle for equitable participation in existing institutions and more likely to demand deeper change, the cornerstones for enacting transformational and other modern leadership approaches.

Multiple sources of power

These LGB school leaders draw power and resilience from many sources, supporting Fassinger et al.'s (2010) prediction that strength and resilience in leadership may be a product of LGB identity related to the stresses caused by heteronormativity. Nick believes he has '*the fight of the underdog*' in him as '*part of an oppressed minority*' who has suffered considerable homophobia and Jim believes that his '*experiences at school made [him] a fighter*'. Marginalisation is not the only source of power; Annabel derives it from her governors' support as well as from her experience of coming out. This corroborates testimony from the leaders in Denton's (2009) study who derived personal power from their families, their experiences of fear and coming out.

Fear

Fear is experienced less intensely by these leaders than in Denton's (2009), Jones-Redmond's (2007) or Fraynd and Capper's (2003) studies. Denton (2009) in particular finds it pervasive, underpinning all the distinctive experiences identified

by her LGB school leaders. For Jones-Redmond (2007) and Fraynd and Capper (2003), the fear experienced by leaders in their studies relates predominantly to the consequences of their sexual identity becoming known. The leaders in my study are generally more out, though this does not necessarily remove all fear, since meeting new people necessitates a fresh decision about disclosure (Sapon-Shevin, 2004).

Jim is the only leader who mentions explicitly that he lives with fear, and he is conscious of adopting a *leader persona* to overcome it:

I still feel frightened when walking past groups of teenagers...and I find going in to secondary schools a real challenge. This is when the leader in me kicks in.

Fear is nonetheless implicitly present throughout the leaders' testimony; for example in Annabel and Lee's caution about coming out more fully and in the theme of internal surveillance explored below.

This difference between national contexts may be attributable to the more supportive legislative context in the UK, where, unlike in the U.S.A., there is national protection from discrimination. Jim corroborates this view; '*The Equality Act [2010] is a tremendous support [to LGB school leaders]*'. Nick, however, offers a cautionary warning about '*individuals' attitudes not keeping up with policy and the legal framework*'.

Another factor may be a growing ideological commitment among school leaders to diversity per se. Gunter (2006: 257) is typical in noting 'an emphasis on diversity management by training personnel to value and respect all who make up the community'. This reflects Lee's experience:

Apparently the day after I was appointed the head teacher told the staff 'we have appointed an Assistant Head, and he's gay. He

would want you to know that. I was quite surprised that she did that, and I quizzed her about it when I found out. She said 'Well you told us in interview so I thought you weren't bothered, and I wanted the staff to know. We're a diverse staff'.

These leaders' principal challenges within this theme have been dealing with others' fears; Kathy was '*surprised by the level of fear from the Head and staff*' when she began work on LGB advocacy, and Lee fought against his local authority's fear of the reaction of the school's Muslim community to his LGB work.

Internal surveillance

Leaders in this study, as in previous ones, monitor their actions and image, though Fraynd and Capper's caveat that this may be attributable as much to politics as to normalisation is also pertinent here. Lee is cautious about coming out to pupils in his current school; he believes his inability to do so reproduces a message of fear; '*I am modelling that you should hide; "don't tell anyone; it's not safe"*'. He and his students are exercising what Foucault (1975) would call disciplinary power. Fear of his students' reactions governs Lee's actions, which in turn influence theirs.

Annabel describes how she has monitored her performed identity in the past for fear of community reaction:

Often it's the teaching assistants and the conduit of gossip to the local community that have been a barrier to being open. Sometimes, waiting until the lie of the land has been assessed means assumptions are made that become hard to correct.

Nick knows from experience the necessity for internal surveillance:

As a gay man in primary schools you have to be very aware of image and how you can so easily be accused of grooming or exploiting children.

Jim, too, controls his image; *'I never fully let down my guard except with a few really close friends (including some parents) who I've "tested" and "vetted" thoroughly!'*

Kathy represents a dissonant case; at no point does she mention caution. This can be seen as internally consistent, given her positive formative experiences. However, pursuing *without caution* a role defined by homo/bisexuality may, she believes, have had a negative impact on her career development. She may inadvertently have become what Fassinger et al. (2010: 202) term a "professional gay," in which LGBT identity and issues form the core of one's leadership role...[rather than a "gay professional" thereby limiting her potential in the eyes of employers.

Biculturalism

Biculturalism, identified by Brown (1989) as a product of LGB identity, can usefully be conceived as an effect of difference rather than marginalisation. The implication of subordinated power in the latter is not present here. Its advantages in leadership are described by Fassinger et al. (2010: 206); "existing in two worlds may permit more expansive views of ways to resolve difficulties" Eagly and Chin (2010: 220) hypothesise that this may extend to managing diverse views within teams:

Leaders who are themselves from groups traditionally excluded from leadership are likely to have more of the multicultural competence that can ease the challenges of managing diversity to reap its advantages.

Leadership practices influenced by biculturalism emerge in my findings. Jim writes:

I can provide unbiased, balanced information from all possible angles ... I can understand why people are prejudiced or hold bigoted views; I can understand how people's religious beliefs underpin their views.

Nick, too, sees benefits of LGB identity to leadership, which I attribute to biculturalism:

You tend to see things from many viewpoints ...In a case I have had to deal with of sexual discrimination, flirtation and coercion by a member of the management team I was able to be 'outside' the situation and very neutral but supportive to all parties.

Advocacy

Fassinger et al. (2010) hypothesised that LGB leaders might be more willing to advocate for disadvantaged groups. Advocacy is a significant theme in my findings, emerging strongly from the testimony of all five leaders interviewed. Its provenance cannot be ascribed to a single source; for Annabel, it derives primarily from her politics and her faith, for Kathy, it is how she expresses her rejection of essentialised stereotypes of LGBT people. Jim and Lee attribute it to their formative stigmatisation and Nick to his experiences as an adult. In all cases, it follows necessarily from biculturalism.

These leaders advocate in three ways. First, they challenge essentialised LGB identities; Kathy particularly sees this as central to her leadership. Annabel extends this to include '*assumptions about gender roles*'. Second, they demonstrate '*a fierce commitment to anti-homophobic practice*' (Annabel). Jim uses his leadership role to prevent young people suffering as he did:

The legacy of these experiences is also that I don't want any child I teach to go through what I went through. This makes me hyper-

sensitive to any bullying situations that might arise. I'm the anti-bullying coordinator for the school.

Lee is similarly motivated:

My experience has made me passionate about doing LGBT work in primary schools so that no LGBT young person goes through the experiences of isolation I went through.

Personal experience of suffering is not necessary to fight for its end; Kathy is motivated by '*a desire to ... create a better understanding...of LGBT people and what **they** have had to suffer to get to the place we are at now legally*' (my emphasis). In my study, it is more likely to produce empathy, however. Jim mentions on three occasions how he is more empathetic as a result of his experiences, which helps him deal effectively with bullying at school.

Third, they promote inclusive cultures, for whilst advocacy may originate in LGB experience, all of the leaders were keen to explain how it benefits *all* pupils:

The knock-on effect is that this work doesn't just benefit the (possible) "gay" kid but all kids who have been bullied ... because they don't fit someone else's idea of what the "norm" should be.
(Jim)

There is increasing scholastic support for the view that the promotion of inclusive school cultures is an essential step in encouraging both school improvement and the development of all students as active citizens, and that school leaders have an important role to play here (e.g. Ainscow and Sandill, 2010; Kugelmass, 2004; Grossman, 2008; Riehl, 2000). Queer scholars in education have long held that LGB leaders who have experienced subordination might not only use power to the advantage of marginalised students, but that their problematisation of power

differentials might benefit all students (e.g. Capper, 1999; Britzman, 1995). This study's findings support these views.

A fractured school context

Interrogating the importance of school context in influencing practice and identity presupposes a unified and coherent definition of the term. This study, however, reveals *school context* to be a fractured concept, the attitudes of *all* a school's stakeholders combining to create a multiply affective and shifting environment.

Several leaders mention the importance of the support of more senior colleagues in challenging heterosexism; for example, Jim '*experienced a fair bit of homophobia initially but...approached the Headteacher and he sorted it out*'.

The Headteacher's support does not always suffice, however:

When two members of staff voiced their bigoted views... that really knocked me for six ... My Headteacher also found it difficult to deal with ... The NUT got involved and the members of staff were given a written warning. They now participate in our "Diversity Week" in February though I think they've still got a long way to go. (Jim)

Lee, too, has a supportive Headteacher, but still encountered problems because of the local authority's reluctance to accept his lesson plans challenging homophobia. Ultimately, it was the support of governors which swung the balance in his favour. Annabel, too, points out the importance of her governors' support to her anti-homophobia stance, '*although they haven't all drawn the same conclusion about my sexuality*'.

This highlights another aspect of the fracturing of school support; what is being supported? For Annabel, it is a set of values, for Lee, his identity is fully supported

yet his scheme of work encountered political opposition. Kathy is well supported in her role as an LGBT champion, her school:

has allowed me pretty much a free rein to work with departments on LGBT lesson plans and projects, invite in outside agencies, take students to go and perform, lead assemblies with all year groups, give me time to attend conferences, speak at events and appear with students in numerous articles and radio interviews.

However, her leadership aspirations are less well supported, and perhaps diminished. These findings problematise any simplistic notion that the most significant object of school/community support is leaders' outness, or their sexual identity per se.

The importance of support

At worst, the absence of support may cause job loss. In a group characterised by qualified school support, Nick stands out as having encountered considerable enacted stigma variously from governors, staff, and local authorities; he believes he lost (or was not considered for) up to three headships as a result. He is the only leader in the group to have led in rural communities, where most of his problems occurred. His experiences exemplify the fears expressed by some leaders in Fraynd and Capper's (2003), Jones-Redmond's (2007) and Denton's (2009) studies, that they might lose their job, be accused of paedophilia or fail to gain promotion should their sexuality become known in a hostile environment.

As indicated above, however, lack of support does not have to be total in order for it to be damaging; Lee almost left his job during his struggle with the local authority despite his Head's support. Lack of support from less senior colleagues is similarly damaging; Jim was '*really knocked for six*' when '*two members of staff voiced their bigoted views*'.

The absence of support may also influence identity and practice. Nick writes that it *'made... [him] feel very personally vulnerable and at the same time more committed to fighting injustice and prejudice'*, demonstrating that it may produce changes which can be interpreted both positively and negatively, highlighting the importance of individual agency in response to structure (Gunter, 2006).

Out is preferable

Rasmussen (2004) problematises what she terms the *coming out discourse*, noting that concealment may not simply be legitimated by political or practical considerations, but may actually empower. The leaders in my study, even in those situations where they are not out, nonetheless see being out as preferable for three reasons.

First, it promotes authenticity. LGB school leaders must continually disrupt the *heterosexual assumption* (Herek, 2007) in order to achieve congruence between their felt and extrinsically-perceived identities, which leads to enhanced confidence and well-being (Barreto et al., 2006).

I can be myself in front of staff, students and parents and do not have to hide- I am a really bad liar so keeping things about myself secret is impossible. (Kathy)

Lee spent 13 years living *inauthentically*, which *'has made [him] want to tell everyone...that [he's] gay. It's very important'*. Annabel points out the cost of inauthenticity as a leader:

In a previous school there was a younger staff member who was struggling with her sexuality and it was affecting her work. It was difficult to explain to the head what we should be doing to support her as she had no idea of my background. It was hard encouraging

the young teacher to be out and proud without being able to demonstrate what that looked like.

This leads to the second reason why out is preferable, which is that it allows leaders to act as role models. This term is employed differently by these leaders. For Kathy and Jim, their outness to students underpins their capacity to model positive LGBT identities:

In school I believe we have a duty to 'usualise' different types of people from all kinds of backgrounds and act as role models for young people so they are educated about different kinds of people they will meet on their journey through life. (Kathy)

Lee agrees; he feels his non-disclosure to students prevents effective role-modelling and encourages inauthenticity:

I am not open to the children in my current school and I hate it. The impact is I am not being true to myself and I am not modelling to the children that it's important to be who you are and not to hide.

Annabel is not out to students and does not feel it necessary; she believes she is modelling inclusive behaviour and attitudes more generally.

Third, coming out is empowering. Jim believes it allows him to *'have conversations with parents and kids (and staff) about being gay and ...positively challenge their prejudices'*. Annabel, too, sees it as empowering, the process having made her more resilient.

Summary

These findings indicate that heteronormativity plays a repeated role in the development and enactment of these LGB school leaders' practice and identity. For some, formative stigmatisation is its most important manifestation, yet the advocacy

this has produced is found in other leaders as a result of their adult experiences, their politics or their faith. This advocacy extends beyond LGB rights, and may promote inclusive school cultures which benefit all children.

The benefits to authenticity, role-modelling and personal empowerment of coming out is largely unquestioned by these leaders; their willingness or ability to do so is tempered by considerations of fear, or caution; school context and personal politics. They come out as LGB, preferring fixed to fluid *sexual identification* despite sometimes seeing *sexuality* as fluid.

Most of these leaders employ or have employed internal surveillance to monitor their image and actions, revealing a persistent if less intensely experienced (than by leaders in American studies) theme of fear. This fear is occasionally well-founded; job loss despite legal protection still occurs.

School context is revealed to be multiply affective and heterogeneous. Lack of support from any one of a number of stakeholders may negatively influence identity, confidence or practice, or threaten employment. Where support is felt to exist, it may strengthen inclusive cultures as well as the leader's identity and confidence.

These leaders feel that being LGB has conferred on them advantageous leadership skills; these include resilience, which I interpret as multiply-provenanced; and the capacity to see many viewpoints, which I attribute to biculturalism.

These themes emerge despite considerable differences between the leaders and reflect themes found in the literature. I am therefore confident that these findings are valid. They are also heuristically provocative, suggesting questions for future research which I will address in the following section.

Recommendations

For research

I recommend that research into school context explore more fully the variety revealed in this study in both *subjects* and *objects* of support/stigma. Second, I recommend that research be conducted which compares how inclusive the cultures of LGB-led schools are compared to others. Third, this study has frequently uncovered evidence of the importance of intersecting identities. It was beyond my means and remit to examine these here; I recommend others explore how sexual identity intersects with class, ethnicity and gender to influence how leadership is experienced and enacted. Fourth, I recommend that researchers explore the extent and impact of fear in influencing school leaders' identity and practice.

For Professional Development

I echo Nick's call for the National College for School Leadership to recognise LGB leadership beyond problematising it under the umbrella term 'diversity'. Its leadership programmes must not only draw on LGB experiences to understand better what is meant by leading *from* and *for* diversity, but would additionally benefit from engaging with queer scholarship to interrogate conceptually the ways in which current leadership development is heteronormative, constraining *all* leaders and their followers.

Summary

In this chapter, I have analysed my findings and made recommendations for research and development. Next, I summarise the study and consider its implications.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter, I summarise the aims, methodology, findings and significance of this study. I evaluate my research design and discuss the wider implications of this study for my professional and personal understanding, for leaders' development and for theories of school leadership.

Aims of the study

I aimed to explore the relationship between heteronormativity and LGB school leadership in England by looking at three areas; formative heteronormativity, outness and school context, and relating these to identity and practice. The reasons included my own experiences as a gay former Assistant Headteacher and middle leader; the lack of previous research and the suspicion in the literature that this absence indicates more than mere omission, and evidences heteronormativity, which as a normalising tool of power affects everyone in schools, not simply LGB people.

Methodology summary and evaluation

I conducted in-depth asynchronous email interviews with five LGB school leaders in order to obtain rich data without imposing my physical presence onto the discussion, which may have produced anxiety. My offer of encryption, to increase data security, was accepted by one of the five. The amount and relevance of intimate detail shared persuades me that this was an appropriate methodology for the purposes of this study. It succeeded in collecting data which could be used to assess robustly the relevance to the lives of these leaders of findings in studies already conducted, and

did so in a way which caused the least amount of emotional anguish to them in the recounting as possible.

Main findings

Heteronormativity permeates these LGB school leaders' practice and identity. Formative stigmatisation is a significant producer of some leadership practices identified, such as empathy and advocacy, yet other causes can be equally important, such as leaders' adult experiences of marginalisation, their politics or their faith.

Advocacy derives from multiple aspects of LGB identity, and here takes three forms; challenging essentialised identities, fighting homophobia and promoting inclusive school cultures to the benefit of all children.

The school leaders in this study largely valorise coming out, relating it to authenticity and their capacity to role model effectively, and partly attributing their resilience to their experience of it. They are occasionally deterred from coming out through fear of a negative reaction in the local or school community or from students. They come out as lesbian, gay or bisexual, preferring fixed to fluid *sexual identification* despite sometimes seeing *sexuality* as fluid.

Fear, although experienced less intensely than by the American leaders in previous studies, encourages the employment of internal surveillance strategies by most of these leaders to control their performed identity. This fear is sometimes based on the reality of job loss, accusations of paedophilia or loss of staff support, and may be another source of resilience.

School context is a heterogeneous concept; its internal incoherence does not preclude the observation that lack of support from any quarter may negatively influence

identity, confidence or practice, or threaten employment, though the support of more senior colleagues, governors, unions or local authorities may prove decisively important in strengthening inclusive cultures, leaders' identities, resilience and confidence. *Objects* of support or stigma are as heterogeneous as their *subjects*.

Biculturalism has produced identifiable leadership traits in some of these leaders, particularly the capacity to see alternative viewpoints.

Significance

This study is the first to have explored the relationship between the uniquely English heteronormative context and LGB school leadership; whilst *all* Western societies are heteronormative, differences in legal protection (i.e. institutionally enacted stigma) and local cultural attitudes belie any assumed homogeneity.

As a collective interpretative case study, it is not possible to make generalisations from this research about 'the English experience' compared to 'that' in America. In fact, the breadth of these leaders' lived experiences revealed in these findings is a compelling indicator of this study's validity. Further ethnographic studies might usefully be conducted which add to what Richardson (2001) calls a 'collective story' by drawing on the experiences of leaders in rural settings, or those whose ethnicity, gender or disability further problematises conceptualisations of 'leader'

As a study which does not attempt to be representative, the congruity between the themes identified here with those in other studies is therefore remarkable. Some of these themes, e.g. advocacy and biculturalism, derive from psychology, which *does* attempt to make generalisable statements about human experience. Nevertheless, I do find the consistent discrepancies concerning the *level* of fear between this study

and previous ones to be interesting. Fear is a primary determinant of both practice and identity through internal surveillance and normalisation and so the possible reasons for, and the impact of this discrepancy should be explored in more detail in future studies.

There is ambiguous evidence for the *queering* of conceptualisations of leadership in this study. On one hand, these leaders accept pre-defined sexual identities and work towards improved rights for LGB people within a heteronormative paradigm which reifies and reproduces these identities. On the other hand, they operationalise power from the perspective of the marginalised, seeing injustice, empathising with its victims and changing school cultures. This ambiguity owes much to inconsistencies in how *queer* is defined, yet I believe these are sufficient grounds for placing increased faith in the conceptual capacity of queer theory to examine critically school leadership and to improve it for the benefit of the whole school community.

Reflections

I started this journey with one story in mind; my own. I believed, if I thought about it at all, that I became a leader and led the way I did in spite of the sexual stigma I encountered. These leaders have shared personal stories which have encouraged me to reflect that perhaps it was partly *because* of those experiences that I chose leadership, led in the ways I did and was driven by those values. Fundamental questions concerning how school leaders are *made*, distinct from how they are developed, are clearly suggested, yet ignored in policy and professional development programmes. Until leadership theories engage with the personal, they will fail fully to capture what is happening in schools and cannot tell leaders how they might improve. I propose this study as a tentative step towards achieving that coherence.

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APPENDIX ONE: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The University
of Manchester

MANCHESTER
1824

Title of study: Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) identity leadership: English LGB school leaders' perspectives.

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a study as part of a student project which will provide the research base for a Masters degree dissertation. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the study? *Steven Courtney, postgraduate student in the School of Education, Ellen Wilkinson Building, The University of Manchester.*

What is the aim of the study? *The vast majority of current leadership literature does not take into account the impact of diversity generally on professional practice, much less sexual identity. This research aims to collect qualitative data on the relationship between formative societal heteronormativity and professional practice/ identity in LGB school leaders in England, and to identify some possible reasons for this. In other words, how has growing up LGB in a society which privileges heterosexuality affected your identity and your practice as a school leader?*

Why have I been chosen? *You have been chosen through my contacting the organisation 'Schools Out', because you are known to me personally, because you have been given my details by someone who does or because you have contacted me after learning about this project. You are one of three to nine participants, all of whom identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and all of whom are, or were until recently, middle or senior leaders in an English primary or secondary school.*

What would I be asked to do if I took part? *If you took part, you would first decide if you wanted to conduct the emailed interview via encrypted attachments rather than using unsecured, unencrypted email. This would be to protect your data, though you may decide that you do not wish to encrypt your answers (and of course, you may change your mind during the process). If you did opt for encryption, you would install 7-Zip software on your home laptop/ pc. Then, you would receive up to 15 questions from me, one to three at a time (encrypted or not, as you prefer). At your convenience, you would reflect on, write down, (encrypt) and email back to me your answers, as well as any questions you would like to ask me. The reason for this format lies in the potentially sensitive subject matter being discussed- it is important that you feel able to give an answer you feel happy with in an environment you have control over and with an easily-effected right of veto over any of the questions. Some scholars think that it is unfair for me to make you feel vulnerable by being the only one to disclose personal information; this is why you can ask me your own questions, if you wish, about my experiences as a gay former school leader.*

The reasons for the online format are treated in more detail below:

1. My physical absence reduces anxiety.
2. You are less likely to become swept along into answering a question you might, with hindsight, have preferred not to answer thanks to the gap between questions.

3. You can take the opportunity offered by the format to reflect more deeply on the answer, editing and modifying it before sending it back to me.
4. You can elect not to answer one or more of the questions at all, simply by emailing back to me the word *next*.
4. You can answer the questions at times that suit you.

Although it is not my intention to cause you anxiety or embarrassment, it is possible that some aspect of this process may inadvertently do exactly that. We will be discussing the effects that growing up as a lesbian, gay man or bisexual person has had on your leader identity and practice, and this may stir unpleasant memories or make you reinterpret your own history in a way which is uncomfortable for you. Equally, my interpretation of your testimony may reflect ideas and themes of which you were not aware, and could potentially cause you unease. It is not possible to predict at the outset whether, or exactly how, such emotional responses will occur, but it is my ethical commitment to your well-being which has led me to construct the research methodologically in the way that I have; specifically in order for you to have as much control over the process and output as possible.

What happens to the data collected? *The data collected will be used only as the basis of a 15,000 word thesis for the degree of Master of Arts. The primary data will be destroyed five years after the confirmation of the degree, in accordance with university policy.*

How is confidentiality maintained? *I will do my utmost to maintain confidentiality. I will do this by using pseudonyms in our emailed correspondence and keeping real names (and mobile numbers if you opt for encryption) on a separate laptop at my home address, which will be encrypted and password protected. You have the option for the questions not to be in the main body of the email, but sent as encrypted attachments. The password to decrypt the attachment will change every question, and will be sent to you by text. Whichever method you choose, the accumulating data, including analysis, will be encrypted, stored and worked on only on my home PC, which is password-protected. The data will be associated only to your pseudonym on my PC. The emails will be deleted immediately upon receipt to remove the data from the online email network.*

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind? *It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you decide not to answer a particular question but wish to remaining the study, you are free also to do that without detriment.*

Will I be paid for participating in the study? *There is no funding for payment of participants.*

What is the duration of the study? *The study consists of one interview, comprising between 9- 15 questions. Each participant will take a different length of time to answer all the questions, though I do not foresee the whole process taking more than a total of two hours spread over up to two weeks. I recommend that participants try to answer at least one question every day in order for this time scale not to be exceeded. Participants can shorten the process by responding more quickly.*

Where will the study be conducted? *The study will be conducted wherever the participants choose to open their emails. For data-protection reasons I recommend that participants consider carefully where they open their emails.*

Will the outcomes of the study be published? *The thesis produced will be filed in the library of the University of Manchester and searchable by any user of that library. There is also the possibility that the thesis will be published in an academic journal, and that articles*

and reports arising from its findings will be published both in academic journals and distributed to bodies with an interest in school leadership and LGB issues.

Contact for further information

*I can be contacted for more information by email:
(steven.courtney@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)*

What if something goes wrong?

Should you want help or advice during the research project, you can contact me through the means given above.

If a participant wants to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the study they should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

APPENDIX THREE: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. First, I'd like to get a picture of your context. Can you tell me briefly about the area where you work, your school and what you do there?
2. How do you identify your sexuality?
3. How did your sexual identity influence your experiences growing up?
4. How have those formative experiences influenced you now as a **person** and a **leader**?
5. How open are you about your sexuality at school?
6. What has influenced your openness?
7. What has the impact of (not) being open been?
8. To what extent is your school supportive of you as a lesbian/gay/bisexual person and/or LGB issues generally? Please give examples.
9. What impact does this have on you as a person and a leader? Please give examples if you can.
10. What differences, if any, do you think being LGB has made to your identity and practices as a leader? Please give examples if you can.
11. What do you think should be done to improve the support and development of LGB school leaders?

APPENDIX FOUR: PARTICIPANT LOCATION

