

**Sexual and Gender Diverse Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership: A
Qualitative Study**

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Abstract

Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) educational leaders balance intersections of personal and professional identity within the K–12 public school workplace. The problem is the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles are unknown. The perspectives of SGD educational leaders and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles were explored. Relational leadership theory and social identity theory provided the theoretical frameworks for the study. Through a basic qualitative methodology, 19 participants were interviewed who identified as an SGD leader in a K–12 public school in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DELMARVA). Interview responses were coded using an inductive thematic analysis framework. Semi-structured interviews and the data collection processes adhered to ethical protocols with information administered and data analyzed via a secure computer. Results of this dissertation may assist public school institutions in identifying and implementing equitable supports for SGD to present authentically while increasing visibility, promoting inclusive practices, and providing additional research concerning sexual and gender diversity. Recommendations consist of further research promoting and advancing workplace conditions, advocating for the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

Keywords: authentic leadership identity, disclosure, diversity, educational leadership, identity, public school, relational leadership, sexual and gender diverse, social identity

Dedication

Continue to be the voice for those whose voice may not be as strong as yours. I dedicate this to all individuals who continue to navigate a world which may often contradict what is means to live authentically based on the constructs of society. As we continue to explore ourselves within a greater social construct and search for space within communities, this work serves as a continuance for engaging in conversations around identity, belonging, and acceptance.

“Authenticity is more than speaking; Authenticity is also about doing. Every decision we make says something about who we are.”—Simon Sinek

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Educational leaders shape professional leadership identity based on the amalgamation of personal identity, social constructs, and relationships. For sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders, presumed societal norms and social factors may suppress personal identity, impacting professional identity formation and authentic presentation of self (Hossain et al., 2020; Savani & Zou, 2019; Ward & Winstanley, 2003). When infusing aspects of personal identity into professional leadership identity, vulnerability is essential for SGD leaders to build trust and ignite meaningful relationships (Gardner et al., 2021). Workplace conditions may impede relational formations and trust factors needed for SGD leaders to disclose identity (Henderson et al., 2018; Lee, 2020a). Societal and workplace conditions rooted in cis-heteronormativity require shifting practices supporting SGD leaders (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Broussard et al., 2018). Having experienced cycles of injustice and fear, SGD leaders may struggle to infuse personal identity within professional identity (Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Although significant strides are being made to increase awareness and visibility in addressing the needs of SGD students and teachers (Haddad, 2019; Lee, 2020a; Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Tompkins et al., 2019), similar supports have not been afforded to SGD K–12 public school leaders (Lee, 2020c).

Opting to disclose aspects of personal identity in school leadership roles requires leaders to examine relationships and social conditions to present authentically (Capobianco, 2020; Wright et al., 2019). Deciding to disclose aspects of identity may rely on supportive and collaborative workplace environments advocating and increasing visibility for diverse perspectives (Beck, 2017). The problem is the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles are

unknown (Lee, 2020b). The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles.

Within this chapter, an introduction to the study supporting the purpose and problem was provided. Background information on SGD individuals in public school leadership elucidates the need expressed in the purpose and problem statements. Further discussed was the significance of the study and prospective influence on equitable workplace conditions supporting SGD leaders. For this study, the basic qualitative methodology and design are explained, and research questions guiding the study are provided. An overview of the theoretical frameworks of relational leadership and social identity theory supporting the research are included. Terms significant to the study are defined and incorporated into the chapter. Assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations are provided to shape and frame the study. Concluding Chapter 1 is a summary and introduction to Chapter 2.

Background of the Problem

Educational institutions often provide guidance and support for teachers, youth, and caregivers yet neglect to address equitable workplace practices addressing SGD leader needs (Beck, 2017; Craig et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2021). The background of the problem is SGD leaders require inclusive practices embedded into daily work routines, which cultivate environments supporting authentic leadership (Angelle et al., 2021). When assuming a position of educational leadership, SGD leaders contemplate how awareness and relationships influence decision-making processes regarding the authentic presentation of self (Gacilo et al., 2018; Lee, 2020c). Although policies and anti-discrimination laws indicate increased support for SGD

individuals, personal decisions to disclose aspects of self in various environments may be influenced by perceived social stigma (Pachankis & Bränström, 2019).

The tendency of SGD research is to focus on the stigmatic experiences suppressing identity, with limited focus on the impact of inclusive practices encouraging SGD educational leaders to embrace authentic self (Chang & Bowring, 2017). Public school environments provide varying levels of support for adolescents and stakeholders but often lack the same levels of support validating and promoting identity for SGD leaders (Duarte, 2020; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007). Providing opportunities to support and equip current SGD leaders in affirming identity while addressing authentic leadership awareness assists in filling the gap in the existing literature on SGD leaders in K–12 public school leadership (Israel et al., 2016; Lee, 2020a; Leonardi & Staley, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles are unknown (Lee, 2020b). Individuals may be reluctant to disclose and weave elements of personal identity into a professional identity based on potential perceived mistreatment or stigma (Follmer et al., 2020). Complexities exist in how SGD leaders contemplate and enact disclosure decisions relating to awareness, relationships, and decision-making (Chang & Bowring, 2017). Social influences may impact identity disclosure, causing SGD leaders to evaluate relationships in the context of disclosure and the extent to which information is shared (Doan & Mize, 2020).

A profound identity duality may often cause SGD leaders to separate personal and professional identities based on cis-heteronormative assumed identities (Haddad, 2019). As the awareness increases on how personal identity can impact and influence professional identity,

SGD leaders may challenge cis-heteronormative structures and decrease marginalization by integrating perspectives into workplace settings (Gamboa et al., 2021). Assumptions of leadership styles and mannerisms embedded in cis-heteronormativity may increase aspects of identity salience among SGD leaders (Henderson, 2019). Limited research exists exploring conditions needed to lead authentically and present authentic self as an SGD leader in K–12 public school settings (Lee, 2020a, 2020c). The study examined the gap in the literature by exploring how SGD leaders navigate and disclose personal identity when leading authentically and to what extent workplace conditions influence the authentic presentation of self.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of an authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles. Research was limited regarding workplace conditions affirming authentic leadership for SGD public school leaders. Conducting the study provided insight into how SGD leaders navigate personal and professional identity formation, and the social constructs present to enable authentic leadership to exist. Affirming identity within the intersection of personal and professional leadership formation increases visibility and awareness of diverse perspectives often marginalized (Caza et al., 2018; Fine, 2017; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Wilson et al., 2017). If the research was not conducted, opportunities for exploring and enacting equitable practices for K–12 public school SGD leaders to lead authentically would continue to be suppressed and limited in scope.

The proposed qualitative study added to the knowledge base by exploring how perspectives guide individual decisions to disclose identity and the workplace conditions contributing to the authentic presentation of self. As a result of the study, collected and analyzed

data may be shared with public school systems to provide training and protocols regarding equitable and inclusive SGD practices. A gap in the literature exists on workplace supports offered to SGD K–12 public school leaders to promote and affirm authentic leadership, which may contradict societal norms on educational leadership (Duarte, 2020; Lee, 2020b; Payne & Smith, 2018). Perspectives of SGD leaders inform public school institutions on best practices needed to create inclusive environments (Gacilo et al., 2018).

The goal was to understand the conditions influencing SGD K–12 public school leaders to disclose aspects of identity relating to workplace and societal conditions. A basic qualitative design allowed for rich data collection through a questionnaire and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A sample size of 19 participants was used in this study. Participants were recruited through professional leadership and SGD groups on Facebook along with snowball sampling. Exploring how SGD public school leaders disclose their identity and overcome marginalization and stigma allows a deeper understanding of the conditions needed to lead authentically (Follmer et al., 2020). Workplace conditions focused on addressing the dismantling of institutional oppression of marginalized individuals may be facilitated through collaborative relationships and professional learning (Broussard et al., 2018; Holman et al., 2019).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was evidenced by the gap in the literature concerning how SGD individuals disclose identity in K–12 public school leadership roles and the conditions influencing the authentic presentation of self. The study explored conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles. Promoting inclusivity, trust, and collaborative relationships can foster the advancement of minority perspectives while increasing workplace acceptance for SGD leaders

(Gomes & Felix, 2019; Haddad, 2019; Pichler & Holmes, 2017). The study was intended to fill a gap in the needs of SGD school leaders navigating disclosure and embodiment of personal identity within an authentic leadership identity.

Changes in organizational awareness regarding inclusive support and policies for SGD leaders and allies may occur. Although workplace support may be present to validate and affirm perspectives, SGD leaders may be unaware of support systems and benefits provided. Data supporting the needs of SGD youth was prevalent (Garvey et al., 2018; Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019), although limited for SGD public school leaders. For many SGD leaders, the internal struggle to compartmentalize identity in the workplace, conforming to social norms, was intensified by embodying identities not authentic to self (Camacho et al., 2020; Haddad, 2019). Findings from the study may benefit public school systems with SGD leaders and allies by promoting inclusive and equitable workplace practices, increasing awareness and visibility, while emphasizing personal well-being (Krug et al., 2021; McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018; Remedios & Snyder, 2018).

Research Questions

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles. A basic qualitative study design was supportive of the research questions. Research questions strive to address specific focus areas, seeking a greater understanding or discovery based on perspectives of experiences (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Semi-structured interviews implemented field-tested questions to collect and analyze perspective data aligned to the research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: How do perspectives of SGD leaders contribute to presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school settings?

Research Question 2: How is presentation of authentic self for SGD K–12 public school leaders influenced by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable K–12 public school workplace practices influence decisions to disclose SGD identity?

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided and informed by relational leadership theory (RLT) (Hollander, 1979) and social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979). Relational leadership theory investigates the influence and engagement of social relationships on how individuals process social awareness (Early, 2020; Uhl-Bien, 2006). A reciprocal collaboration process is created between the leader and follower, exploring the impact of influence and social settings on the relational dynamic (Deluga, 1988; Hollander, 1979). Accentuating relational leadership as a continuous process highlights the necessity to cultivate and foster supportive relationships, valuing both life and work experiences (Hollander, 1992; Jiang et al., 2019). Establishing and maintaining social relationships are essential for SGD leaders when choosing to disclose aspects of identity while heightening levels of trust and acceptance (Jiang et al., 2019).

Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979) explores how individuals relate, define, and shape self within society through social interaction and comparison.

Individuals categorize self and others into ingroup and outgroup based on perceptions and social group norms (Brown, 2020; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Social identity forms a sense of self through the embodiment of group characteristics and member behaviors (Tajfel et al., 1971). Depending on identity disclosure, SGD individuals may navigate multiple identities,

often conflicting with characteristics and group norms (Wilson & Leaper, 2016). Group membership fosters acceptance and visibility, promoting self-awareness and increasing self-worth through constructive and positive relationships (Williams-Gualandi, 2020). Focusing on relationships influencing identity disclosure, RIT and SIT are appropriate frameworks for investigating conditions influencing SGD leaders to lead authentically in the K–12 public school setting. Theories comprising the theoretical framework were further explored in Chapter 2.

Definitions of Terms

Definitions provide clarity regarding terminology utilized in the study. Terminology relating to sexual and gender diversity is fluid and may change to reflect inclusivity, as well as shifts in culture and society (Perri, 2021). The following terms are pertinent to understanding the foundation and concepts in the qualitative study:

Allyship is defined as advocating and providing support systems for stigmatized individuals (Follmer et al., 2020; Wessel, 2017).

Authentic leadership is defined as a leadership style requiring individuals to be self-aware about how internal and external factors influence the presentation of self, which is genuine and authentic regardless of social setting (Fine, 2017; Lee, 2020a). Authentic leadership refers to individuals who understand the impact of personal identity on professional identity and embrace values when forging and sustaining relationships with followers.

Authentic self is defined as the ability to understand and present self as aligning to daily actions while desiring continuous reflection on awareness to guide decision-making and formation of relationships (Fine, 2017).

Cis-heteronormative is defined as:

Social norms and discourses on the construction of gender identity and sexual orientation that highlight the natural character of sexual binarism (man/woman) as being congruent with gender binarism (masculine/feminine, respectively) (specifically, the Latin prefix “cis-” means “on the same side” and refers to people whose gender identity or expression aligns with their sex assigned at birth. (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2021, p.2)

Cisgender is defined as the alignment of an individual's gender identity with their sex assigned at birth (Henrickson et al., 2020).

Cisnormative is defined as an assumption cisgender is the perceived and presumed dominant group for all individuals, promoting greater privilege based on societal norms (Henrickson et al., 2020; Resnik & Galupo, 2019).

Community is defined as a continuously evolving relational and social partnership addressing workplace goals, functions, and operations (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Organizational community refers to the educational system, involving SGD leaders as members working within set norms and procedures. Core community refers to the individuals comprised within the daily workplace and immediate relational construct.

Gender identity is defined as how individuals internalize one's gender as being male, female, neither, both, or other and may or may not correlate to sex assigned at birth (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2021). Gender identity is fluid and may change throughout life.

Heteronormative is defined as the assumption and belief heterosexuality and cisnormativity are the societal norms (Gamboa et al., 2021).

Identity salience is defined as the withdrawing or hiding an aspect of identity within social situations (Savani & Zou, 2019). Social situations may evoke salient identities (Mell et al., 2020).

LGBTQIA+ is defined as an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2021). The addition of the “+” symbol indicates an opportunity to be inclusive and include identities not listed. May also be listed as LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQ+, or LGBTQIAPP+.

Public school leader is defined as an individual in a leadership role, such as principal, assistant principal, department chair, central office leader, or other positions affiliated with leading educators, students, and school institutions (Duarte, 2020; Lee, 2020a).

Queer is defined as an umbrella term encompassing sexual and gender-diverse individuals who may not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender. Although once used as a derogatory term, it has been reclaimed by queer individuals (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2021).

Sexual and gender diverse is defined as the encompassing of individuals who may not conform to heteronormative and cisnormative norms regarding gender and sexuality (Abed et al., 2019). Individuals viewing gender as beyond the binary of male or female and associate self apart from a binary structure fit within the gender diverse categorization (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2021). Sexual identity is separate from gender identity (Cerezo et al., 2020).

Sexual identity is defined as referring to how individuals think of self in aspects of human sexuality and sexual orientation and how they may be represented by terms such as *LGBTQ* or *heterosexual* (Cerezo et al., 2020).

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas, thoughts, or positions often overlooked during the study, impacting transparency (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Qualitative research is rooted in

exploring assumptions that will guide the research process and inform theory selection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The first assumption was SGD leaders have similar experiences regarding identity disclosure within the K–12 public school workplace. This assumption was necessary for gathering how SGD leaders processed identity disclosure. The second assumption was participants would openly identify as SGD and provide accurate responses regarding personal identity on the recruitment questionnaire.

The third assumption was participants would provide descriptive and genuine answers to the interview questions. Participants received an email containing the interview questions, providing time to craft pertinent responses. The fourth assumption was results of the study would be applicable to all K–12 public school institutions. The fifth assumption was data would be analyzed without bias. Acknowledging bias throughout the study and actively mitigating bias through reflexive practices minimized bias in the analysis process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collection instruments were field-tested for reliability and validity. Field testing of the recruitment questionnaire and interview questions by SMEs ensured application of feedback regarding the instrumentation, aligning to research questions and methodology.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope of the study was limited to K–12 public schools located in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DELMARVA). Potential participants completed an anonymous recruitment questionnaire with built-in exclusion criteria, assisting in obtaining a population meeting the study requirements. Only those participants who self-identified as sexual and gender diverse and currently serve in a K–12 public school leadership position were included. The study was open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Delimitations dictate specific boundaries within the study (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019;

Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Several delimitations included recruitment criteria, sample selection, and interview data collection processes. Delimitations were determined based on a specific population from which participants were recruited, certitude in obtaining data saturation with designated sample size, and safety concerns regarding face-to-face interviews during a global pandemic. Integrating various data collection methods and member checking opportunities supported stronger triangulation of data, and increased credibility (Candela, 2019). Data collection and analysis began once Institutional Review Board approval was granted and was completed over 10 weeks.

Social media leadership groups assisted with dispersing the recruitment flyer through snowball sampling due to potential participant location across several states within the United States. Recruitment through social media leadership groups yielded minimal participants, requiring snowball sampling to gather additional participants. Purposive sampling aided in obtaining a diverse sample of participants, as well as perspectives (Campbell et al., 2020; Gill, 2020). An approved online recruitment questionnaire was implemented to recruit 23 participants. Using purposive sampling, 22 individuals met the selected criteria and 19 individuals participated in the study. Participants were SGD K–12 public school leaders from the DELMARVA region, limiting transferability of findings. Participation in the study was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any point during the study without repercussion or punitive action.

Zoom video conference software was utilized to capture perspectives as participants were geographically dispersed, capturing audio and video recordings of the interview. In addition, Zoom video conferencing software safeguarded participants from face-to-face interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lobe et al., 2020). Participants were provided instructions regarding

the Zoom interview procedures, and instructions to access and operate the conferencing software if unfamiliar with the platform. Time was allotted during each interview to address technology issues, review informed consent, and answer additional questions pertaining to the study. All web-based collection and interview tools were field tested to ensure accuracy and stability of use within the study. Electronic data was stored in an encrypted folder on a personal, password-protected computer integrating two-factor authentication and locked with paper documentation in a personal storage cabinet that was also locked.

Limitations

Limitations may represent potential areas of weakness within a study, impacting conclusions and outcomes beyond the researcher's control (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The first limitation was obtaining a diverse sample of SGD leaders to participate in the study, providing an array of perspectives. Individuals participating in the study would provide a sample which may not be representative of all SGD perspectives and experiences concerning identity disclosure and presentation of authentic self. To overcome the limitation, purposive sampling was used to ensure questionnaires were thoroughly screened and multiple perspectives were afforded an opportunity to participate.

The second limitation was personal bias impacting the study based on similar perspectives and experiences as the participants. Potential researcher bias provides an additional limitation during data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To address the limitation, utilizing field notes and bracketing assisted in isolating personal bias while mitigating personal assumptions (Secules et al., 2021; Shufutinsky, 2020).

The third limitation was the participant's ability to provide robust data addressing the interview questions. Participants may withhold information pertinent to the study based on

personal stigma or conflict with personal beliefs and bias. To overcome the limitation, participants were reaffirmed of informed consent and procedures to ensure confidentiality throughout the study. Open-ended and probing questions were carefully constructed and integrated into the interview process, building trust and facilitating greater openness (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Participants were provided the opportunity to review questions and formulate in-depth responses prior to the interview.

Establishing the trustworthiness of the study was evaluated through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the results (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Participants engaged in member checking, reviewing transcript data to increase credibility (Abdalla et al., 2017; Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Triangulation and member checking established dependability and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The triangulation of semi-structured interview data, field notes, and member checking assisted in substantiating the validity of the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Integrating SGD perspectives from various states and public school institutions enhanced the possibility of transferability. Confirmability occurred through member checking and utilization of reflective journaling to document and mitigate biases (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Chapter Summary

Unsure of the social constructs and relational dynamics within public schools, SGD leaders may struggle to disclose aspects of identity based on previous experiences of fear, hostility, and discrimination (Hossain et al., 2020; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). The goal was to understand conditions promoting SGD to present authentically and explore social and relational constructs influencing professional leadership identity. Provided in Chapter 1 was an overview of the research problem, the research purpose, research questions, and the theoretical frameworks

guiding the study. Terms pertinent to the study were defined; assumptions, delimitations, and limitations were described. The following Chapter includes a comprehensive literature review. Thematic topics correlating to SGD leadership, including awareness, decision-making, relationship skills, and workplace conditions are addressed, building upon the theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Promoting authentic self in various leadership configurations requires organizations to explore perceptions of equitable leadership and engage in processes, which encourage individuals to present and lead authentically (Henderson et al., 2018; Lee, 2020a). Presentation of authentic self for SGD leaders entails examining personal and professional identities while confronting social constructs ingrained in cis-heteronormativity (Cerezo et al., 2020; Henderson et al., 2018). Identities of SGD leaders often fall outside of cis-heteronormative constructed binaries and require acknowledgment within the workplace (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Broussard et al., 2018; Leonardi & Staley, 2018). Intersections of SGD leaders' personal and professional identities may be compromised by fear, stigma, and perceptions of social injustice (Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Remedios & Snyder, 2018). The problem is the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles are unknown (Lee, 2020b). A gap in the literature existed on SGD school leaders navigating self within internal and external social and work environments, contradicting socially constructed sexual and gender roles influencing leadership identity formation (Duarte, 2020; Lee, 2020b; Payne & Smith, 2018).

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles. Through a basic qualitative study, recognizing and addressing the intersections of personal and professional identity for leaders with stigmatized identities may inform promotion and affirmation of equitable leadership practices (Caza et al., 2018; Fine, 2017; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Wilson et al., 2017). The study may contribute to the knowledge base by investigating the environments which promote or

hinder the disclosure of identity for adult leaders. Perspectives shared by SGD school leaders provide insight into intersectionality of workplace conditions, discrimination, and perceptions of inclusivity when choosing to disclose aspects of identity (Gacilo et al., 2018).

Included in Chapter 2 are introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical framework, literature review, counterargument, gaps in the literature, and chapter summary. Theoretical frameworks were relational leadership theory (RLT) and social identity theory (SIT). Theories support aspects of authentic SGD leadership by understanding how personal identity contributes to shaping professional leadership identity through social interactions and workplace relationships. The literature review encompasses four thematic areas: (a) awareness, (b) decision-making, (c) relationship skills, and (d) workplace conditions.

Literature Search Strategy

Exploring language and terminology shaping personal and professional identities of SGD leaders began by separating searches into thematic areas of leadership, sexual and gender diversity, and identity. Understanding sexual and gender diversity required recognizing tenants of personal identity and stigmatized populations, including a perception of self and engaging with environments connected to emotions, empathy, experiences, behaviors, and belief systems (Barnett et al., 2020; Priest & Middleton, 2016). The additional intersectionality of a stigmatized identity adds a level of complexity for many SGD leaders to lead authentically (Duran & Jones, 2019; Gamboa et al., 2021). Due to the overall intricacies of gender and sexual diversity, terminology reflects a broad spectrum devoted to inclusivity (Garvey, 2017; Nelson, 2020).

The American College of Education's library, Google Scholar, EBSCO, ERIC, SAGE, and ProQuest databases were used to locate peer-reviewed articles and research focused on personal and professional SGD leadership identity along with conditions promoting or hindering

the authentic presentation of self. Employing various electronic databases supported an in-depth analysis of multiple perspectives within relevant journal articles, as well as theoretical research applicable to the literature review. Grasping the complexities of SGD leadership required additional research focused on aspects of sexuality, formation, personal and professional identity, and various laws regarding SGD individuals. Searches for the literature review focused on current articles peer-reviewed within a five-year timeframe. Key search terms and a combination of terms included, but not limited to: *administration, awareness, authentic, bisexual, cisgender, cisnormativity, climate, concealment, conditions, culture, decision-making, disclosure, discrimination, diversity, gay, gender, gender minority, gender nonconforming, heteronormativity, Hollander, homosexuality, identity, identity formation, inclusion, intersectionality, K–12, leadership, leadership identity, lesbian, LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBT leadership, othering, outness, personal identity, professional identity, queer, relational leadership, relationships, relationship skills, queer leadership, self, sexuality, sexual and gender diverse, sexual minority, sexual orientation, school leadership, social identity, stigma, Tajfel, transgender, Wenger, and workplace.*

The scope and breadth of research around SGD individuals extend beyond sexual preference or biological factors (Calvard et al., 2020). Exploring research outside a 5-year timeframe entailed exploring *leadership formation, identity formation, inclusive practices, relational leadership, sexuality and gender, and social identity*. Additional studies and dissertations around SGD leadership provided an analysis of existing research and gaps in the literature, primarily focusing on public school leadership. Research was collected, organized, and synthesized into themes.

Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by relational leadership theory (RLT) (Hollander, 1978) and social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979). Research exemplified SGD educational leaders internalize personal identity disclosure (Barnett et al., 2020) and consider the workplace conditions influencing social acceptance when presenting authentic self within leadership roles (Breakwell & Jaspal, 2021). Navigating self within social constructs requires a network of positive supports and environments which encourage belonging and expand visibility (Chang & Bowring, 2017; Craig et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Wilson & Leaper, 2016). Being aware of the juxtaposition of personal and professional identity was a necessary process of internal reflection within leadership identity development (Kawai, 2020).

Relational Leadership Theory

Relational leadership theory (RLT) (Hollander, 1979) considers how individuals perceive and process social constructions within leadership when engaging in social relationships (Early, 2020; Uhl-Bien, 2006). The social structure created between a leader and follower is a reciprocal process of collaboration and influence (Deluga, 1988; Hollander, 1979). Relying on relationships which integrate give and take actions, relational leadership can serve as call and response leadership (Einola & Alvesson, 2021). Interpersonal connections of a leader and follower paradigm emphasize the power of relationships as a process over a person (Hollander, 1992; Peyton et al., 2019).

Historically, inequities in leadership perspective and positionality among SGD leaders have resulted from inequities of power among social status and social group membership (Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). Status within social groups has been shown to have a bearing on levels of influence within working environments (Hollander, 1971). The social dynamic between

leader and follower requires negotiating perceived roles and the influence of interactions within the relationship (Einola & Alvesson, 2021). By focusing on interpersonal connections and individual leader well-being, addressing social needs aids in nurturing reciprocal relationships (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). Extending relational leadership to include empathic connections between leader and follower expands trust and interpersonal interaction (Jian, 2021).

Advocating for support systems to address systematic oppression of marginalized SGD leaders requires a commitment to build and maintain supportive relational connections centered on initiating organizational change (Khattab et al., 2020). Leaders should be mindful of social influence on followers as the experiences shape the functionality and responsibilities of workplace roles (Hollander, 1971). When implemented, relational leadership theory advocates for equitable workplace conditions advanced through collaborative partnerships promoting perspectives. Working to address personal needs in leadership identity formation requires opportunities to display leadership potential beyond skill-based tasks and evoke the sharing perspective and experience (Yip et al., 2020).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979) considers how individuals depend on social groupings to shape self-identity while navigating group acceptance (Brown, 2020). Through active engagement in social encounters, social identity is formed based on the perspectives of either an individual or a group member (Tajfel et al., 1971; Wenger, 1998). Considering the social construction of community and identity, Wenger (1998) expanded notions of mutual engagement within learning spaces, increasing awareness of social dynamics and relational influences. Perspectives of others influence individuals' choices when deciding which social groups fulfill internal and external relational needs (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wang et al.,

2021). Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individuals navigate multiple social identities which may not correspond to the perceptions and traits within self or associated social groups (Wilson & Leaper, 2016). Social grouping allows individuals to shape identity and isolate aspects of self as conforming to social norms occurs (Tajfel et al., 1979; Wenger, 1998). By focusing on identity categorization and self-awareness, SIT considers how group member perspectives increase identity awareness and acceptance (Williams-Gualandi, 2020).

Ingroup identification is critical for individuals desiring a sense of belonging and acceptance leading to self-validation (Brown, 2020; Hogg et al., 2012; Wagoner et al., 2017). Individuals navigate awareness regarding social identity when comparing self to others within specific identity classifications (Follmer et al., 2020). Within the context of group membership, comparing self to individuals within the ingroup or outgroup may increase internal confusion around personal identity (Hogg et al., 2005; Krug et al., 2021; Tajfel et al., 1971, 1979). Due to social competition among the ingroup and outgroup, relational behaviors often shape individual acceptance of social identity or enhance discrimination (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). Self-awareness draws attention to status and positionality within social groups (Bruskin, 2019). Striving for group acceptance while seeking individuality complicates the identity formation of individuals (Hogg, 2018).

Relationships and Identity Acknowledgement

Construction of leadership identity based on personal identity for SGD individuals involves considering degrees of outness, self-awareness, and risk-taking (Barnett et al., 2020; Ferch & Mitchell, 2001; Fine, 2017; Tajfel et al., 1971). Studies of RLT infusing SIT highlight the value of personal identity awareness within professional leadership identity formation (Henderson et al., 2018; Krug et al., 2021; Psychogios & Dimitriadis, 2021). Relational

leadership provides opportunities to incorporate power dynamics which can empower perspectives by acknowledging and increasing identities presented in work environments (Savani & Zou, 2019). Within the leadership power dynamic, examining bias and interrogating personal awareness is critical to acknowledge personal and professional needs around recognizing diversity in identity (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). Working to affirm identities as presented in the workplace escalates visibility of SGD leaders who add value and worth to the organization (Broussard et al., 2018; Singh & O'Brien, 2020).

Social identity is a fluctuating interpretation of self in constant comparison to others (Caza et al., 2018). Through social comparison, individuals adjust how self is presented according to social interactions, group dynamics, and workplace settings (Hogg, 2018). Relational leadership theory (RLT) is beneficial in the exploration of relational dynamics and collaborative partnerships between the leader and follower (Chang & Bowring, 2017; Henderson et al., 2018; Hollander, 1992), while SIT is beneficial in exploring identity formation and social dynamics within roles of leadership (Brown, 2020; Krug et al., 2021). Combining the two theories to investigate the personal and professional needs of SGD leaders may result in greater awareness around relationships and social conditions influencing the disclosure of identity and presentation of authentic self in school leadership roles.

Research Literature Review

Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders process how dimensions of *awareness*, *decision-making*, *relationship skills*, and *workplace conditions* influence the authentic presentation of self within leadership roles. For SGD individuals, the ability to disclose aspects of self in various environments has been increasing in acceptance from the 20th century, forging pathways for policies protecting rights and anti-discrimination laws (Pachankis & Bränström,

2019). Personal decisions to disclose aspects of identity for SGD leaders rely on conditions present within workplace environments (Fletcher & Everly, 2021). Conforming to societal norms rooted in cis-heteronormativity disrupts an authentic presentation of self for many SGD leaders (Miles & Naumann, 2021; Wax et al., 2018). By conforming to varying identities not aligning with self, identity salience increases resulting in negative self-concept (Savani & Zou, 2019). School environments often lack the same levels of workplace support for SGD leaders as provided to youth and adolescents when valuing and embracing SGD identity (Beck, 2017; Craig et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2021).

The literature review consists of four sections, *awareness*, *decision-making*, *relationship skills*, and *workplace conditions*, exploring the intersectionality of internal and external factors shaping the empowerment of SGD perspectives. *Awareness* considers internal aspects related to the navigation of authentic presentation and self, outness, salience of identity, and perception and conformity. *Decision-making* considers the external factors relating to identity disclosure, stigma, discrimination, balancing identities, and identity ownership. *Relationship skills* address the balance between internal and external conditions involving trust, navigating cis-heteronormativity, and group dynamics. *Workplace conditions* analyze workplace aggressions, belonging, allyship, and workplace systems of support.

Awareness

Self-awareness is the internal process of recognizing personal needs in relation to external forces. As SGD leaders develop a professional identity based on internal awareness of self, personal identities guide external relations with others and the dynamic structures within chosen groups (Grabsch & Moore, 2021). Internal struggles to shape a professional identity affected by negative disclosure experiences can perpetuate identity confusion for SGD leaders

and lower self-worth (Breakwell & Jaspal, 2021; Lee, 2020b). Because leadership relies on relationships and the ability to influence self and others (Hogg et al., 2005), presenting an authentic self is crucial in establishing a strong self-concept (Croteau et al., 2008; Wagoner et al., 2017). Leadership relies on ongoing relations, recognizing the conscious process of disrupting self while addressing how one relates to followers (Psychogios & Dimitriadis, 2021). In a quantitative study focusing on the sexual identity disclosure of 1,085 lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals within the United States, Doan and Mize (2020) attested to significant differences between bisexual identity disclosure and disclosure of gay and lesbian individuals, indicating differences in integrating personal identity within social constructs and internalizing personal awareness navigation between heterosexual and non-heterosexual identities. The strength in which SGD individuals embrace personal identity has influence on professional identity (Pichler & Holmes, 2017).

Interrogating self produces a perpetual cycle of reflection and inquiry around the intersectionality of personal and professional identity for SGD individuals (Craig et al., 2017). Identity inquiry analyzes perceived social stigmas associated with leading authentically and the actionable steps needed to overcome the stigma (Chang & Bowring, 2017; Staley & Leonardi, 2019). Self-awareness equips leaders to interrogate self as a contributing factor in influencing others and how the relational influence is present within positions of power (Saarukka, 2014). Leaders reflective of societal privileges, such as gender, race, sexuality, and religion can better relate to followers based on understanding power structure (Cox & Hassard, 2018). Studying the power balance within leadership roles, Hollander (1992) detected social exchanges shift between leader and follower when relationships include rewards and benefits. Drawing attention to the

internal navigation of self requires reflection in spaces where identities are protected, valued, and appreciated (Lee, 2020b; Lugg & Tooms, 2010).

Awareness of Presenting and Leading Authentically

Leading authentically for SGD individuals entails an acute sense of self-awareness regarding personal and professional identity intersections, balancing societal leadership expectations, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity (Fine, 2017). Presentation of authentic self for SGD leaders transpires through reciprocal acts of identity exposure and risk-taking while leveraging societal prejudice and follower perception (Carpenter & Hollander, 1981; Fine, 2017; Tajfel et al., 1964). Every social situation for SGD leaders requires reflection on how personal identity may be shared or withheld. Regardless of the conditions present, SGD individuals should acknowledge personal identity and be willing to appreciate moments of vulnerability in presenting authentically (Alonzo & Buttitta, 2019; Jiang et al., 2019).

As internal navigation of authentic self influences and shapes professional leadership identity, SGD leaders often contemplate disclosing identity while prioritizing self and personal safety (Henderson et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Leaders may overcompensate and overperform to handle feelings of inadequacy regarding identity (Lee, 2020a). Compelled to conform to societal norms, SGD individuals may adopt inauthentic leadership characteristics limiting self-advocacy, ownership of identity, appearance, and communication style (Fine, 2017). Effective relational leadership provides opportunities to engage in influential change by elevating voices, assisting in shaping and influencing workplace conditions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Navigating Awareness Around Outness

Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individuals consistently negotiate internal narratives analyzing public disclosure and the degree to which outness is present (Haltom & Ratcliff, 2020). When understanding the relationships between personal and professional identity regarding the disclosure of sexual or gender identity, considerations should be made regarding the extent to which SGD leaders disclose aspects of identity (Garvey et al., 2018). A growing body of evidence articulates challenges in the coming out process, predominantly when outcomes often consist of negative experiences (Breakwell & Jaspal, 2021; Wax et al., 2018).

Internal struggles may emerge as SGD individuals contemplate decisions to keep personal identity separate from professional identity not to lose ownership in the disclosure process (Hodson et al., 2018). Outness may be affected by environments inside and outside the workplace, causing shifts in identity presentation based on social setting or relational interactions (Garvey et al., 2018; Hodson et al., 2018). Selective outness allows SGD individuals to protect their mental state by being selective with the disclosure process while seeking the validation of individuals within chosen social grouping (Doan & Mize, 2020).

Awareness in the Salience of Identity

Understanding the personal reasons SGD leaders choose to keep identity hidden allows organizations to uncover barriers hindering authentic presentation. Concealment of identity is a process of shielding self from perceived harm or inequality (Hughes & Hurtado, 2018).

Asserting identity salience acts as a shield protecting self from harm, stigma, and judgment (Gomes & Felix, 2019). Although SGD leaders are aware of personal self-identity, individuals may choose to be more discrete ensuring others perceive their leadership beyond sexual and gender identity and align with cis-heteronormative social constructs (Grabsch & Moore, 2021). Social context, settings, and privilege influence identity acceptance by contributing to how

identity is viewed, presented, or hidden (Izienicki, 2021; Wenger, 1998). As SGD individuals decide whether to remain salient or disclose identity, awareness around potential barriers in communication, believability, and exclusion within social groups influence disclosure decisions (Hughes & Hurtado, 2018). Salience of identity may spare some SGD individuals the time investment of continuously outing themselves in social situations and around individuals in which relationships have not been formed (Alonzo & Buttitta, 2019; Wessel, 2017).

Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders explore critical aspects of intersectionality in how identity salience influences other identities, including social, professional, and workplace identity (Craig et al., 2017). Inequities in leadership style, collaboration, and workplace practices promoting and encouraging SGD perspectives may directly affect individuals' identity concealment (Gomes & Felix, 2019). Individuals continuously search for how presumed societal behaviors interact with personal expectations and the interchange between them, influencing individuals' biases to act or react (Dunne, 2018). Circumventing a society heavily influenced by cis-heteronormativity requires SGD leaders to examine local protections and community support, understanding levels of support based on disclosure or the personal safety identity salience provides (Duarte, 2020). Personal identity salience may influence professional salience, creating additional barriers for relationship formation (Grabsch & Moore, 2021).

Perception & Conformity

Perceptions of leadership often center on societal constructs of White masculine males as the epicenter of ideal leadership (Dirik, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Researchers have emphasized stereotypical power struggles exist in the presentation style, actions, language, and leadership characteristics needed to adhere to cis-heteronormative societal identity norms and rules (Dirik, 2020; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Steffens et al., 2019). Awareness regarding social comparisons

of self provides perspective into personal steps needed to disrupt stereotypes of SGD leadership roles and the traits assumed within. Stereotyping SGD leaders according to perceived traits, speech, actions, or leadership style influences decisions to present authentic self (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Steffens et al., 2019). Some SGD individuals may adopt an identity unauthentic to self but one which conforms to assumed societal and workplace norms (Fine, 2017; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Wilson & Leaper, 2016).

Although SGD individuals may conform to aspects of gender or sexual identity within social groups, a disconnect in adhering to a shared group's perceived traits or behaviors may be present (Wang et al., 2021; Wilson & Leaper, 2016). Within research, professional learning, and curriculum design, organizations should examine SGD leaders' opportunities to express identity and present authentic self (Garvey, 2017). Constant reflection on attempting to fit in and navigate social constructs may complicate stakeholder interactions and future relationships.

Decision-Making

For many SGD leaders, internalizing sexual and gender prejudice complicates decisions to present authentically out of fear of discrimination or social outcasting (Barnett et al., 2020). Facing disclosure decision processes in everyday social interactions, SGD leaders continuously analyze personal interactions by negotiating opposing viewpoints (Tompkins et al., 2019). Each time an SGD leader enters a social space, the decision to present authentically and disclose identity is a persistent thought (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). Individuals make a personal choice regarding disclosure and weigh associated personal consequences, both positive and negative.

Decision-making processes to reveal or conceal identity shift the internal reflection to external action, especially when identity can be hidden or concealed (Follmer et al., 2020). In a qualitative study of 18 queer leaders in Canada, Chang and Bowring (2017) observed disclosure

of sexual identity within leadership positions was reflective of feelings around personal safety, interpersonal relationships, and workplace discrimination. Other researchers reaffirmed identity disclosure decisions for SGD individuals provide a voice for those often underrepresented while increasing advocacy and perspective within the workplace (Chang & Bowring, 2017; Pasek et al., 2017; Wax et al., 2018).

Deciding to Disclose Identity

Choosing to disclose sexual or gender identity aspects in leadership roles relies on internal acceptance of identity as an integral external aspect contributing to forming a professional identity (Henderson et al., 2018). No set timeline exists for disclosing aspects of identity, and for SGD individuals, disclosing identity is momentous and usually connected to social timings and positionality (Haltom & Ratcliff, 2020). Additionally, SGD individuals actively decide to disclose any aspect of identity each time when meeting another individual or within new social settings (Alonzo & Buttitta, 2019; Wessel, 2017). Within leadership roles, identity disclosure may prompt discourse around perspectives in ways meaningful to SGD leaders while encouraging an environment of acceptance. Research investigating sexual and gender identity workplace constructs concluded the type of identity one presents or discloses may impact the level of work-related stigma (Camacho et al., 2020; Follmer et al., 2020; Lyons et al., 2017).

Comparing self within ingroup and outgroup complicates the mental negotiation of identity disclosure by evoking feelings of isolation (Henderson, 2019). Forming a personal and unique social space, affirming authentic presentation of self (Cerezo et al., 2020; Hogg, 2018) while limiting the emotional bonds of social comparison may provide comfort for SGD leaders seeking social relationships. The power of comparison can lead to personal identity being

shaped, positively and negatively, by influences of group comparison (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Hogg, 2018). A deeper understanding of personal identity disclosure or salience assists in examining the impact workplace conditions and social identity have on professional leadership identity formation of SGD school leaders (Caza et al., 2018; Haddad, 2019; Henderson, 2019; Nelson, 2020).

For many SGD individuals in the workplace, disclosing identity adds an assumed sense of responsibility in being obligated to speak or represent on behalf of a social group in which the individual identifies (Henderson, 2019). Henderson further stipulated advocacy pressures can add additional stressors, especially if perspectives and experiences do not coincide with all those represented. Understanding the implications of relationships within social groupings, SGD leaders examine how internal coping mechanisms relate to the external impact of identity disclosure (Duarte, 2020). When choosing to disclose identity to peers, Chang and Bowring (2017) indicated individuals who withheld aspects of identity felt isolated or were perceived as sheltered, distant, and unapproachable. Workplace conditions promoting identity authentication of SGD leaders can cultivate collaboration social conditions, allowing increased comfort around disclosure (Pasek et al., 2017).

Disclosure Decisions and Associated Stigma

Because sexual identity and gender identity are passable identities affording opportunities to manipulate or present self in societal binary norms, many identity aspects can be hidden and invisible (Camacho et al., 2020; Wax et al., 2018). Disclosure of identity may catalyze internalized stigma, causing many to question whether to reveal personal information to others (Camacho et al., 2020; Corrigan et al., 2013; Lyons et al., 2017). Concealing and hiding aspects of identity causes greater significant internalized stigma for many SGD leaders (Wang et al.,

2021). Various levels of stigma may be present within the workplace based upon the degree of openness around identity and the systems of support affirming SGD individuals (Pachankis & Bränström, 2019).

The stigmatization of identity for SGD individuals increases the likelihood of identity suppression and increased feelings of invisibility within the workplace (Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Concealment of identity perpetuates the social stigma by cultivating a need to keep identity invisible and suppress authentic self (Pachankis & Bränström, 2019). Creating a supportive and open environment reduces workplace stigma and the internal stress placed on SGD leaders regarding identity disclosure (Jiang et al., 2019).

Discrimination Based on Disclosure Decisions

As greater acceptance occurs for SGD individuals to present authentically in the workplace, social constructs still permeate organizations enabling discrimination and prejudice (Lim et al., 2018; Singh & O'Brien, 2020; Yeck & Anderson, 2019). Although strides have been made around greater acceptance, many SGD individuals still experience harassment within the workplace (Barnett et al., 2020; Brassel et al., 2019). Policies may still represent a sexual and gender binary thinking system reflective of mindsets and beliefs of those opposed to diverse identities (Staley & Leonardi, 2019). Individuals may hesitate to disclose authentic self within the workplace due to fear of policies discriminating against and suppressing SGD identity (Miner & Costa, 2018). Discrimination, sometimes in the form of ingroup hate crimes and workplace microaggressions, produces empathic connections between stigmatized individuals based on similar experiences (Paterson et al., 2019).

Discrimination among SGD individuals may stem from internalized moral conflicts regarding constructs of identity impacted by overt external prejudice (Barnett et al., 2020; Doan

& Mize, 2020). Moral beliefs influence the degree of outness causing greater internalization of sexual prejudice against self and others within social groupings (Barnett et al., 2020). Relational aspects of leadership cultivate a reciprocal exchange of voice constructed in social engagement, morality, and ethical practices (Hollander, 1975; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). Although moral development through interpersonal connections cultivates leadership capacity (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019), moral judgment based on identity, which some assume can be controlled, embeds discriminatory action in the relationship process (Barnett et al., 2020). Individuals may fluctuate between and through multiple stigmatized social groups, exacerbating feelings of isolation and withdrawal (Remedios & Snyder, 2018).

Identity Ownership

Investigating the intersection of personal and professional identities assists with leadership formation (Lee, 2020a). Identity integration allows SGD leaders to accept and appreciate their formed personal identity and the importance of self-awareness in shaping a professional identity (Cerezo et al., 2020). Choosing identity-affirming social groupings, occupations, and work environments containing some form of segregation from others may provide SGD leaders with a coping mechanism for continuously outing oneself (Lim et al., 2018). Mentorship can assist SGD leaders in integrating personal identity into professional identity to overcome feelings of isolation in the workplace (Craig et al., 2017). Relational mentorship can engage social interactions, empowering the sharing of perspectives and strengthening professional leadership opportunities (Early, 2020). Waiting for others to validate personal identity of SGD leaders may inhibit conversations around identity ownership, causing demotivation of self-promotion (Savani & Zou, 2019). Ownership of identity requires personal decisions to embrace self rather than allow others to dictate identity for another.

Relationship Skills

Although interplays between leader and follower are relational, the collaborative exchange relies on transactional processes (Hollander, 1992). Fostering a connection between follower and leader depends upon the willingness of the follower to submit to the leader as part of the relational process (Einola & Alvesson, 2021). Followership is integral for shaping the relational leadership configurations but should be upheld with integrity (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Building the empowerment of followers for SGD leaders consists of forming relationships embracing vulnerability as a positive trust-building factor (Webb, 2021). Educational institutions can enrich relational processes by adopting and integrating leadership training opportunities. Relational power has control factors and great responsibility in fostering influential relationships (Jian, 2021; Webb, 2021). Empowering the follower by sharing perspectives shifts the relational paradigm (Cox & Hassard, 2018; Hollander, 1992).

Workplace relationships affirming identity may grant SGD leaders opportunities to reduce stigma in workplace environments, enabling systems of support, trust, and inclusiveness (Calvard et al., 2020; Henderson et al., 2018; Lyons et al., 2017). Linking internal and external variables of identity disclosure and acceptance for SGD leaders involves relationships valuing trust, inclusion, and empowerment (Hossain et al., 2020). Through sharing perspectives, Webb (2021) emphasized the significance of empathy as a foundation for cultivating a community of dialogue focused on self-need and social interaction. Positive workplace conditions promoting SGD voice and identity acceptance can cultivate shifts in social engagement and belonging where all individuals, regardless of identity, form empathic relationships (Webster et al., 2018). Studies indicated a follower's perspective is integral in developing a professional leadership identity, especially when perspectives often go unnoticed (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Calvard et al.,

2020; Gaither, 2018; Li et al., 2019). Examining relationships through feelings of belonging within social grouping affords opportunities to understand the influence of SGD identity within professional workspace environments (Henderson et al., 2018).

Individuals fluctuate between multiple social groups, integrating personal and professional identity (Mell et al., 2020). The fluidity between social group membership complicates the roles of insider and outsider (Bruskin, 2019). As personal identity develops through acceptance and interaction within social groups, SGD leaders interrogate aspects of belonging and the conditions allowing for authentic presentation of self (Dunne, 2018). By understanding the categorization of self as a member of fluid social constructs (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Garcia et al., 2021), the intrapersonal and interpersonal communication methods impact decision-making and belongingness around identity disclosure (Dunne, 2018; Ferch & Mitchell, 2001; Gaither, 2018; Wagoner et al., 2017).

Identification Within Relationships

Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individuals shape personal identity based on social constructs and chosen group identities. Self-exploration of differences between those perceived to be in the ingroup or outgroup can challenge configurations and dynamics of group identity (Brown, 2020). Strong emotional connections are made when individuals are accepted into a social group. Acceptance within the social group permits individuals to align with shared perspectives while embracing feelings of belonging (Tajfel et al., 1979; Wilson & Leaper, 2016). Within the social groups, comparison of self to ingroup and outgroup members can raise competition and tension (Brown, 2020; Jian, 2021; Tajfel et al., 1971). Individuals embody different communication styles and behavior levels among members of chosen and accepted ingroup and those of the outgroup (Bruskin, 2019; Tajfel et al., 1971).

Processing authentic self in leadership intensifies as personal and professional identity construction within selected social groups intersects with emotional bonds cultivated between members (Paterson et al., 2019). Identity intersectionality may complicate the presentation of an authentic self as aspects of identity salience can suppress identities in favor of others within the ingroup (Dunne, 2018; Gaither, 2018; Mell et al., 2020). Along with salience of identities, SGD leaders internally interrogate personal biases, complicating relationships and communication against those in the ingroup and outgroup (Dunne, 2018; O'Leary et al., 2020).

Relationships and Cultivating Trust

Positive relationships built around trust promote a greater sense of authenticity between leader and follower (Krug et al., 2021). Professional leadership identity accounts for nurturing partnerships formed through vulnerability and willingness to share perspectives developing an inclusive social construct (Beck, 2017; Krug et al., 2021). Forming trusting and supportive relationships between SGD individuals and workplace counterparts entails recognizing and affirming stigma related to identity disclosure (Lyons et al., 2017). Trust is significant when revealing vulnerable aspects of self (Dunne, 2018) and the interpersonal connections needed to isolate self as part of a group collective (Mell et al., 2020). As SGD individuals navigate social grouping and identity, trust is a desired need, and ingroup behaviors rely on affirming relational trust as part of the group association (Dunne, 2018). Trust in leadership allows SGD leaders to identify as part of a team while engaging authentically in social interactions (Beck, 2018; Krug et al., 2021).

Leaders who affirm and embrace group members through identity promotion have a more significant influence on upholding self within the group (Hogg, 2018; Li et al., 2019). Trust forms a collaboration between leader and follower, promoting the willingness to adhere to

workplace expectations while integrating personal perspectives (Hogg, 2018; Hollander, 1992; Krug et al., 2021). Withdrawal from relationships and social groups may occur based on the stigma of past mistrust and the violation of vulnerability when disclosing aspects of identity and presenting authentically (Lyons et al., 2017; Nelson, 2020).

Heteronormativity and Cisnormativity Within Relationships

Workplace environments rooted in heteronormativity and cisnormativity can perpetuate identity suppression, often causing increased distress in self and job satisfaction (Miner & Costa, 2018). A study conducted by Steffens et al. (2019) of 273 gay men in Germany concluded sexual and gender binary stereotypes continued to exist in the workplace, associating authoritative leadership styles with masculine and compassionate and empathic styles as feminine. Heterosexism elevated discrimination against individuals identifying as non-heterosexual and non-cisgender perpetuating the status and power of societal gender (Miner & Costa, 2018). Sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individuals often feel pressure to conform to cis-heteronormative structures within social ingroups based on leader influence and organizational structure (Wang et al., 2021; Wilson & Leaper, 2016).

Many environments within the United States, including schools, still function in a sexual and gender binary structure, emphasizing cis-heteronormativity and excluding individuals based on societal sexual and gender constructs (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Steck & Perry, 2017). Risk factors may be elevated for SGD leaders to fully present authentic self as social constructs often emphasize conforming to a gender binary (Fine, 2017). Conformity within organizations adheres to societal constructs of cis-heteronormativity, creating environments of continued exclusion and oppression for SGD individuals (Lee, 2020b). Evidence indicated strong correlations between

overt workplace heterosexism and the internalization of fear and anger, leading to emotional distress and decreased productivity of SGD individuals (Miner & Costa, 2018).

Relational Group Dynamics

Coping with threats against identity, among self and group, requires forms of engagement based on social interaction and relational dynamics (Breakwell, 2020; Tajfel, 1978).

Relationships rely on social interactions, and SGD leaders gravitate toward individuals who embrace and acknowledge their identity while promoting inclusive practices supporting the conditions necessary to reduce stigma and mistrust (Payne & Smith, 2018). Fear of isolation and rejection of membership within chosen social groups causes SGD leaders to evaluate how leadership styles combat cis-heteronormative workplace conditions (Gamboa et al., 2021). Integrating social support systems within organizational structures aids the dynamic between leader and follower by easing the pressure of follower conformity (Carpenter & Hollander, 1981). Developing strong partnerships within the social constructs elevates perspectives, permitting individuals to see themselves as part of the group and identify as members (Dunne, 2018).

Workplace Conditions

Although efforts are being made to increase protections for SGD individuals, workplace protections, mentoring, and training opportunities are still lacking (Holman et al., 2019).

Inclusive workplace leadership relies on daily human interactions, forming a shared social responsibility while conforming to leadership role identity (Hollander, 1975; Psychogios & Dimitriadis, 2021). Examining the impact of interdependence in relational leadership development entails understanding positionality within the power structure of work environments (Carpenter & Hollander, 1981). Transactional and transformational leadership

characteristics exist in the partnership between the leader and follower, formulating mentoring opportunities (Early, 2020). Mentoring opportunities can be impacted by the level of inclusivity in the workplace (Pascale & Ohlson, 2020). Establishing mentoring and coaching opportunities which support personal and professional identity integration can assist in reducing high levels of personal stress.

Workplace conditions supporting or hindering identity development require integrating awareness skills with effective decision-making processes, cultivating strong collaborative relationships (Early, 2020; Hollander, 1992; Yip et al., 2020). Inequalities in levels of SGD support, hiring, promotional practices, and professional learning opportunities continue to perpetuate an imbalance in opportunity, fairness, and overall workplace well-being (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). When reflecting on equitable practices in hiring staff, institutions should consider the impact of bias against SGD individuals (Lim et al., 2018). Challenging systems of oppression to reveal inadequacies in workplace conditions while attempting to lead authentically without equitable support can be overwhelming for SGD leaders (Berk, 2017; Graves, 2018).

Workplace conditions perpetuating cis-heteronormative stereotypes may invalidate the authentic identity of SGD leaders and hinder the formation of trust within relationships (Calvard et al., 2020; Gacilo et al., 2018). Some SGD leaders may perceive their leadership identity and style as weak or inferior based on followers' perceptions (Wang et al., 2021). Validation of perspective and experience enhance the reciprocal influence between leaders and followers (Hollander, 1992). When examining relational leadership, Resnik and Galupo (2019) expressed significant benefits to workplace climate when everyday practices promote diversity and inclusiveness.

Workplace Aggressions

Navigating workplace microaggressions, SGD leaders internalize the process of disclosing authentic self and choose to reveal aspects of their identity based on existing conditions and workplace climate (Gomes & Felix, 2019; Nair et al., 2019). Additionally, microaggressions utilized within the workplace may reveal hidden biases often going unnoticed within social settings adding to existing trauma (Nair et al., 2019). When encountering microaggressions within the workplace, SGD leaders recognize the relational dynamic as demeaning to personal and professional integrity (Fattoracci et al., 2021). Experiencing repeated microaggressions may sever personal investments SGD leaders have within the organization when overlooked or ignored (Henrickson et al., 2020; Littler & Joy, 2021).

Organizations should employ specific training and opportunities centered on support structures for promoting identity and enhancing awareness of microaggressions (Krug et al., 2021). Institutions offering a series of support systems and interrupting present microaggressions can encourage an atmosphere promoting conversation regarding authenticity and self-value (Alonzo & Buttitta, 2019; Tompkins et al., 2019). Research by Resnik and Galupo (2019) established a need to interrupt workplace aggressions against SGD individuals through increased conversations, raising awareness of bias.

Workplace Belonging

Social conditions influence the construction of personal identity based on daily interactions (Bruskin, 2019). Self-categorization and self-placement within a chosen group (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel et al., 1971) assist with refocusing self-concept while embracing self within a group identification. Belonging provides individuals emotional connection, knowledge, and acceptance (Garcia et al., 2021). Embracing feelings of belonging within chosen groups eases uncertainty around self for SGD leaders (Wagoner et al., 2017).

Personal intersections of identity factor into the social schema as individuals develop a sense of identity based on feelings of belonging (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Wilson et al., 2017). Intersections of sexual, gender, racial, and religious identities can complicate how individuals shape personal identity based on social constructs (Brown, 2020). Although SGD individuals circumvent intersectionality of identity daily, decisions to disclose aspects of identity contribute to feelings of acceptance and belonging within social groups (Gaither, 2018).

Allyship and Workplace Relationships

Working to bridge relationships between gender and sexual diverse (SGD) leaders and allies presents opportunities to explore workplace climate and use of inclusive practices. Allies promoting and initiating movements focused on promoting identity authenticity and disclosure acceptance aid in increasing support systems for SGD leaders (Follmer et al., 2020; Wessel, 2017). Visual representations of support in the workplace promote inclusive spaces where SGD individuals see themselves woven into the social narrative (Beck, 2017). Integrating social justice change through societal privilege allows allies to advocate and increase affirming spaces for SGD individuals (Pryor, 2020).

Allyship involves dedicated activism toward supporting and interrupting patterns of stigmatic influence against those marginalized (DeVita & Anders, 2018). In a study of 371 coworkers, 125 of whom identified as lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB), Wessel (2017) affirmed personal and collaborative relationships with workplace allies provided SGD individuals supportive and vulnerable spaces to disclose aspects of identity. Engaging SGD allies as partners in advocacy and promoting a positive workplace climate requires continuous professional learning focused on empowering others (DeVita & Anders, 2018). Environments encouraging and supporting SGD individuals and perspectives are validated through ally activism and

professional learning partnerships (Allan et al., 2019). Coaching and mentorship programs better assist leaders in examining perceived internalized threats to personal and professional identity based on beliefs, morals, or social biases (Yip et al., 2020).

Workplace Systems of Supports

As of 2021, SGD individuals are protected in the workplace under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Kaminer, 2020). Although protections exist, organizations may continue to engage in workplace practices suppressing authentic perspectives and diminishing lived experiences. Research conducted by Payne and Smith (2018) confirmed acceptance of SGD individuals within school settings is increasing, but administration struggled to comprehend the levels of support needed for those outside realms of cis-heteronormativity. Conditions encouraging disclosure and acceptance of identity for SGD individuals exude greater authenticity around the importance of self-presentation (Breakwell & Jaspal, 2021). Within a qualitative analysis of 150 SGD leaders worldwide, Gacilo et al. (2018) concluded SGD individuals perceive less discrimination and greater investment in job performance in the workplace when feeling appreciated, seen, and valued by leaders based on experiences and perspectives. Organizational structures designed to support stigmatized and marginalized voices while building allyship reduce levels of stigma and discrimination (Allan et al., 2019). Policies designed to affirm voices of oppressed and vulnerable populations significantly impact workplace performance (Hossain et al., 2020).

Presenting an authentic self involves examining intersections of social constructs within workplace environments and the perceived internal and external forces influencing acceptance (Gomes & Felix, 2019). In a quantitative study of 279 college students, Brassel et al. (2019) stipulated organizations should consider policies protecting SGD individuals, including gender

policing, and shifting workplace social norms to foster relationships. Compartmentalizing aspects of sexual identity in the workplace while conforming to associated social groupings causes SGD leaders to internally negotiate presenting separate lived and professional lives while applying code-switching techniques (Haddad, 2019).

Developing a series of relational and interpersonal workplace supports for SGD leaders which interrupt cis-heteronormative structures allows individuals to present authentic selves (Haddad, 2019). Opportunities for SGD leaders to infuse perspective through affinity groups increase workplace visibility and relationship building opportunities (Hossain et al., 2020). Advancement of leaders within sexual and gender minorities provides a detailed introspection of professional training and development practices within the workplace, enhancing inclusivity (Haddad, 2019; Pichler & Holmes, 2017). Organizations can increase visibility through equitable and supportive workplace operations, promoting identity presentation options for SGD leaders (Broussard et al., 2018).

Counter Argument - Identity Erasure as Protection

Benefits of utilizing identity erasure as a protective measure is multifaceted. Concealment or erasure of identity provides a coping mechanism against perceived stigma or acts of discrimination for SGD individuals (Camacho et al., 2020). Selective disclosure may assist individuals in deflecting relational situations where stigmatization may occur. In a study of 95 lesbian, gay, and bisexual Dutch workers, Newheiser et al. (2017) concluded identity salience was a personalized decision to withdraw from situations of possible hurt while noting the salience of identity may initiate greater internalized stigma. Societal pressures and workplace relationships impacted by discrimination, harassment, or lack of support may cause SGD leaders to fully conceal identity to preserve self-esteem and avoid confrontation (Duarte, 2020).

Separation of personal and professional identity provides some SGD individuals comfort in isolating aspects of identity to prevent displaying vulnerability in the workplace and adhere to social norms (Doan & Mize, 2020; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). Erasure of identity voids the comparison of self to others within the ingroup and outgroup by dismissing the identity altogether and eliminating the need to disclose any aspect of self, which may be deemed vulnerable by social norms (Grabsch & Moore, 2021). Shielding aspects of personal identity allows for the control of internal and external safety measures, differing for each SGD individual.

Gap in the Literature

Understanding how geographical location and the local educational dynamics intersect cis-heteronormativity in the workplace increases identity awareness among SGD leaders (Duarte, 2020). A gap in the literature exists around school-based SGD leaders and workplace conditions which promote identity disclosure and allow for authentic presentation of self within leadership roles. This study may assist in filling a gap in knowledge around how school-based SGD leaders exhibit authentic leadership by investigating workplace conditions which empower identity formation, disclosure, and acceptance (Webster et al., 2018). Research often focuses on the inclusive practices and support for school youth, adolescents, and higher education students, but lacks a deep analysis on SGD leader needs (Beck, 2017; Payne & Smith, 2018). The needs of school-based leadership are often ignored as attention is shifted towards youth. Further research can offer greater understanding regarding the needed supports for equitable workplace conditions allowing SGD school leaders to present authentically within leadership roles.

Chapter Summary

The literature review explores the intersectionality of relational and social factors facing SGD leaders' authentic presentation and the impact personal and societal conditions contribute to the disclosure of LGBTQ+ identity. Self-awareness, identity suppression, and social constructs influence how personal identity shapes professional identity. Sexual and gender identity salience is impacted by workplace discrimination, navigation of internal coping mechanisms, and stigmas faced in a non-affirming work environment (Craig et al., 2017; DeVita & Anders, 2018).

Navigating a system where SGD leaders feel intentionally outed creates a sense of distrust and hesitation for joining social circles and causes individuals to explore the value and worth of disclosing aspects of identity (DeVita & Anders, 2018; Miller, 2017; Roffee & Waling, 2017). Perspectives of SGD leaders provide institutions insight into how workplace conditions, discrimination, and feelings of inclusivity contribute to the disclosure of identity (Gacilo et al., 2018). Decisions to disclose any aspect of sexual identity within leadership positions reflect efforts around workplace discrimination, safety, and interpersonal relationships (Chang & Bowring, 2017).

Exploring and investigating inequitable conditions present in the workplace may guide organizations to shift practices regarding sexual and gender norming, social grouping, and decrease stigma for SGD leaders (James, 2019). Navigating internal and external social identity factors influencing identity salience of SGD educational leaders requires collaborative leadership opportunities integrating SGD perspectives (Cech & Rothwell, 2020; Steck & Perry, 2017). By assessing social identity and group acceptance, the gap in the literature addressed explores workplace conditions needed for individuals to present authentic self while cultivating

relationships centered around equitable practices (Doan & Mize, 2020; Singh & O'Brien, 2020; Yip et al., 2020).

In the following chapter, research methodology was addressed in depth, including rationale for utilizing a basic qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews were utilized and recorded to gather data addressing the proposed research questions. Using the transcriptions of virtual interviews, coding identified key themes allowed a greater understanding of the phenomena. An analysis of reliability and validity and steps taken to ensure vulnerable populations were protected within the study were also included. The narrative of SGD leaders will be shared with local school districts and colleges to identify additional means for leadership support of SGD leaders and workplace allyship.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders navigate educational environments which may or may not be diverse and inclusive workspaces, decisions to disclose aspects of identity and present authentic self may influence potential career choices (Capobianco, 2020). Social justice issues can shape the perspectives of SGD leaders, causing organizations to enact reforms in leadership preparation, increasing awareness and visibility (Lucio & Riforgiate, 2019). An imperative aspect of forming personal and professional leadership identity is reflecting on how lived personal narratives contribute to equitable and collaborative work environments (Beck, 2017). Empowering individuals to share perspectives relating to specific situations or events promotes the opportunity to engage in research providing a more profound analysis of an issue or problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The problem is the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles are unknown (Lee, 2020b). Intersections of SGD leaders' personal and professional identities may become compromised by fear, stigma, and perceptions of social injustice (Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Remedios & Snyder, 2018). The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles. Recognizing and addressing the intersections of personal and professional identity for leaders with stigmatized identities can inform the promotion and affirmation of equitable leadership practices (Caza et al., 2018; Fine, 2017; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Wilson et al., 2017). A gap in the literature exists on SGD K–12 public school leaders navigating internal and external environments and workplace conditions, which often contradict socially constructed sexual and

gender roles impacting leadership identity formation (Duarte, 2020; Lee, 2020b; Payne & Smith, 2018). Perspectives of SGD K–12 public school leaders may provide insight into how workplace conditions, discrimination, and feelings of inclusivity affect identity disclosure (Gacilo et al., 2018). The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: How do perspectives of SGD leaders contribute to presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school settings?

Research Question 2: How is presentation of authentic self for SGD K–12 public school leaders influenced by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable K–12 public school workplace practices influence decisions to disclose SGD identity?

Outlined in the following sections are the research methodology, design, and rationale for a basic qualitative study. Next are the researcher's role, research procedures, population and sample selection, instrumentation, and data collection. The following section described reliability and validity measures, including credibility, dependability, transferability, and trustworthiness, along with the ethical considerations for the study. A summary concluded the chapter followed by an introduction to Chapter 4.

Research Methodology, Design, and Rationale

The proposed study utilized a basic qualitative research method. Within the basic qualitative study, participants provided a narrative of perspectives as SGD K–12 public school leaders and how navigating social settings, relationships, self-awareness, and societal dynamics contribute to authentic leadership identity. Validating how SGD leaders perceive, construct, and present aspects of leadership identity through workplace experiences shaped by social and societal constructs relies on examining perspectives (Ruberg & Ruelos, 2020). The effectiveness

of utilizing qualitative studies affords more significant insight into how individuals perceive and integrate social constructs and perspectives to formulate personal reality (Jahja et al., 2021). Data collected through qualitative studies provided opportunities to interrupt internal and external factors heightening self-awareness and creating change (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants reflected on how perspectives and experiences shape and influence awareness, relationships, and decision-making in addressing the research questions relating to social identity. Opportunities to obtain data for the basic qualitative study included a recruitment questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and observational field notes. Additionally, video recorded semi-structured interviews utilized a series of open-ended questions, capturing participants' perspectives.

Methodology

Using perspectives of SGD K–12 public school leaders to identify intersectionality of personal and professional leadership identity perspectives and workplace conditions justified basic qualitative methodology and a constructivist lens best suited for the study. Data collected through qualitative interviews and professional affiliations provided narratives of individuals exploring personal perspectives, processing how meaning is internalized (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Merriam and Grenier recognized qualitative research as having a significant advantage over quantitative research by providing opportunities to explore the construction of personal reality through moments and contexts. Quantitative research focuses solely on numerical data differing from qualitative research, which involves understanding why behaviors exist and the impact on individuals (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Qualitative research allows for creating thematic patterns by examining the effect of social interactions and daily conditions with participants perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

When utilizing constructivism as the theoretical lens, Lisboa (2018) proposed individuals' experiences influence how reality is perceived. Integrating a constructivism paradigm within the study will analyze how participants formulate meaning based on connections between experiences and personal ideas (Mogashoa, 2014; Yazan, 2015). Social identity can influence leadership identity, indicating the use of constructivism as an appropriate theory in examining how individuals make meaning based on social constructs and situations (Bogna et al., 2020; Wenger, 1998).

Design

Methodology designs such as phenomenology and grounded theory were considered. Still, they did not align with the selected design, which focused on the perceptions regarding personal and professional needs for SGD individuals to present authentic self within school leadership roles. Phenomenology seeks to understand the construction of reality by exploring how particular phenomena connect to lived experiences apart from contributing external factors (Halling, 2021; Percy et al., 2015; Qutoshi, 2018; Tende, 2021). Although phenomenology and basic qualitative research studies share similar research components relying on the exploration of lived experiences (Percy et al., 2015), phenomenology was not appropriate for the study as the exploration of perspectives of SGD K–12 public school leaders in presenting authentically in school leadership roles was beyond the select phenomena of SGD leadership identity.

Grounded theory was considered but not suitable for the overall purpose of the study. By utilizing data to discover a particular theory through observation of the population, grounded theory integrates comparative analysis to examine collected data (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Lisboa, 2018; Merriam & Grenier, 2019) and was not the preferred design for examining the presentation of authentic self within leadership roles. A basic qualitative study was best suited to explore a

select group of participants meeting specific parameters by providing personal narratives based on experiences, addressing well-designed research questions (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

The primary role of the researcher within the basic qualitative study was to ensure proper methodology was selected, data collection and analysis aligned with the chosen focus topic, and protection of data and participants occurred (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a gay cisgender male K–12 public school leader who acknowledges sexual and gender identity as an integral aspect of personal and professional identity, the provided personal narratives of the participants within the study may be relatable to my experiences. My interest resided in K–12 public school leaders who identified openly as SGD to understand how the intersectionality of social identity, relational leadership, and workplace conditions influence the ability to lead authentically. Due to preconceived ideas based on personal engagement and experience, reflective strategies were integrated to promote objectivity throughout the study (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Due to the personal nature of the study regarding sexual and gender identity, I addressed the need to cultivate collaboratives and trusting relationships, creating an atmosphere in which participants could share details free of judgment. My role in the study was to foster trusting relationships to effectively and ethically capture and analyze data. Building trust was developed by listening to perspectives, providing effective and timely communication, and asking questions that affirmed and validated experiences (Henrickson et al., 2020). Disclosure regarding personal bias promoted transparency and authenticity of findings (Reid et al., 2018). Following ethical protocols ensured bias was addressed and the protection of participants was maintained (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

My goal as a researcher as observer required constant consideration of self-awareness, biases, assumptions, and utilization of methods to affirm the role of the researcher. Bias identification was a prime responsibility of the researcher to carefully monitor and address personal assumptions, influences, and limitations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Peels, 2019). By utilizing the participants' narrative, participants' experiences were addressed as new discoveries separate from personal connections (Jahja et al., 2021; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Maintaining objectivity required setting aside personal connections to the study and drawing conclusions solely on the provided responses of the participants (Abdalla et al., 2017). Reflective methods and techniques provided strategies to maintain objectivity and practice reflexivity throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Reid et al., 2018).

Bracketing assisted in separating personal perspectives and beliefs which may have influenced the study based on similarities between participants' perspectives and the researcher (Shufutinsky, 2020; Wadams & Park, 2018). Integrating bracketing throughout the study enhanced self-transparency by heightening awareness of personal biases (Shufutinsky, 2020). Implementing bracketing addressed and notated similarities based on similar perspectives, acknowledging and mitigating assumptions (Secules et al., 2021). Bracketing also ensured data analysis did not conflict with personal biases and assumptions around workplace conditions and SGD identity (Ward et al., 2018). Along with bracketing, reflective journaling acknowledged and addressed bias while maintaining transparency throughout the study (Ortlipp, 2008; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013; Shufutinsky, 2020). The combined use of reflective journaling, bracketing, and consistent review of research questions aided in preventing biases from influencing data analysis (Wadams & Park, 2018).

The informed consent section of the recruitment questionnaire provided potential participants with information about the study, ethical issues, personal conflicts, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (see Appendix A). The recruitment questionnaire ended when participants selected pre-determined exclusion choices. For all participants recruited for the study, a confirmation email stated the requirements, a summary of the study, informed consent, and steps to set up a Zoom video interview. Once participants scheduled an interview, a confirmation email included the Zoom link and interview questions. Notifying participants regarding the audio and video recording, transcribing, and storing of data ensured understanding of safeguards to privacy and confidentiality (Cychosz et al., 2020).

Safeguarding the identity of all participants and securing personal information and data were vital concerns throughout the research process (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Potential participants completed a researcher-created recruitment questionnaire outlining informed consent, an overview of the study, participation guidelines, withdrawal information, and security of personal information through a Google link (see Appendices A & B). Once the recruitment questionnaire was submitted, submissions were examined to identify potential participants who met the specified criteria. Inclusion criteria consisted of all adult individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity, who: (a) identified as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+, trans, non-binary); (b) were a current Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) K–12 public school leader; and (c) had been in an educational leadership position 1 year or more.

Participants did not have a direct working relationship with the researcher. The study took place outside the researcher's current workplace department to not influence any aspect of the research, establishing no conflict of interest (Kristensen, 2021). Participants received no compensation or incentive for participation in the study.

Both written and oral permission were obtained before conducting and recording virtual interviews via Zoom conferencing. Transcribed transcripts of the interview provided participants an opportunity to review, edit, and contribute additional information not provided during the interview. Utilizing member-checking reduced researcher bias by allowing participants to review shared perspectives and provide further insight (Abdalla et al., 2017).

An ACE email account served as the communication method between researcher and participants, and a private Google Drive contained the interview data and data analysis. Electronic data was stored in an encrypted folder on a personal, password-protected computer integrating two-factor authentication and locked with paper documentation in a personal storage cabinet that was also locked and only accessible to the researcher with data saved for 3 years. All electronic and paper items pertinent to the study will be kept and secured for 3 years after the conclusion of the study and then destroyed, shredded, and deleted off Google drive. All personal information collected within the demographics section of the recruitment questionnaire resided solely with the researcher and was not integrated into the interview process (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Research Procedures

The research procedures section described the population and sample selection, instrumentation, and data collection processes. Addressing the needs of sexual and gender diverse (SGD) youth has often been the focus of research while investigating the needs of SGD leaders to present authentically within school leadership roles is lacking. Understanding the contributing factors to leading authentically for SGD individuals increases visibility regarding policies and conditions, cultivating supportive workplace environments (Ullman, 2019).

Population and Sample Selection

Participants in the proposed study were individuals who identify as SGD in K–12 public school leadership positions in the DELMARVA region. A total of 22 individuals were recruited as participants through an online questionnaire. Obtaining a diverse sample of SGD leaders in the DELMARVA region promoted representation of minoritized identities (Secules et al., 2021). The study was open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Leadership positions overseeing adults within K–12 public school settings included principals, assistant principals, content area leaders, curriculum specialists, resource teachers, department chairs, team leads, and central office staff. Potential participants were identified and recruited through private Facebook groups focused on educational leadership and SGD support. Obtaining permission from the group administrator or moderator to post approved recruitment materials on social media occurred before the recruitment process.

Recruitment

Obtaining approval from the American College of Education (ACE) Instructional Review Board (IRB) was the initial phase of the selection process (see Appendix C). Social media was the primary recruitment medium for the study. A letter was sent to Facebook group administrators of private leadership and professional organization groups, obtaining permission to post a recruitment flyer (see Appendix D). After obtaining ACE IRB approval, the recruitment flyer (see Appendix E) was posted in private Facebook groups with permission of a group administrator. Upon completion of the study, all identifying information was removed from the appendix. The recruitment flyer contained information pertinent to the study and a link to an approved recruitment questionnaire (see Appendix B) to obtain potential participants.

Sampling Method

After potential participants had time to complete the screening questionnaire, the sample size was determined utilizing purposive sampling. Considering a possibility of participant withdrawal during the study, 18 participants allowed for an appropriate sample representative of a larger population. Interviews from 8-15 participants are recommended for a basic qualitative study (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Smaller homogenous groupings of participants selected for qualitative studies contribute to robust data supporting the study's purpose and investigating select experiences (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Purposive sampling ensured data from multiple SGD perspectives and workplace experiences were captured (Campbell et al., 2020; Etikan & Bala, 2017). Implementing purposive sampling allowed smaller sample sizes in which individuals' direct experiences can be examined more in-depth (Gill, 2020; Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Along with purposive sampling, saturation assists qualitative researchers in understanding how over-collecting data can be counter-productive and diminish the study's results (Saunders et al., 2018). Research regarding sample sizes within qualitative studies found data saturation may occur between 12–15 and upwards of 40 participants depending on the construction and complexity of the research questions (Saunders et al., 2018; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Research conducted by Guest et al. (2020) indicated data saturation occurring within 12 interviews revealing minimal new information is obtained by increasing participant involvement. Data saturation may occur based on a smaller sample population and similarities in responses (Boddy, 2016).

Integrating snowball sampling increased accessibility of potential participants (Leighton et al., 2021). Social media offered rapid dissemination of information to an expansive population for use in conjunction with research conducted online (Reagan et al., 2019). Other researchers did not post similar study recruitment via the researcher's social media, avoiding limited

replicability by crossing shared sample populations (Peels, 2019). Utilizing social media groups and connections which share potential research participants increases bias and decreases the study's validity impacting replicability (Assenmacher et al., 2021). Posting the recruitment flyer on the researcher's LinkedIn page served as an additional sharing of recruitment, although no participants were obtained through the posting. Snowball sampling was utilized (Littler & Joy, 2021) by reaching out to participants who completed the recruitment questionnaire and were considered for the study, obtaining additional names and emails of possible participants.

Data Instruments

Basic qualitative studies utilize interviews to obtain robust data based on perspectives allowing for greater flexibility in design and theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kim et al., 2017). Properly collecting, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data relies on how data collection instruments are chosen or created (Jahja et al., 2021). Understanding the researcher as an instrument requires cultivating a rapport with participants and confronting personal bias as a factor influencing the results of the study (Secules et al., 2021). Instruments chosen to capture the vast array of perspectives involved creating a recruitment questionnaire and questions utilized for semi-structured interviews. The data collection instruments were validated through the integration of subject matter expert feedback. Reflective journaling during the questionnaire and interview question creation processes enhanced awareness of connections to the research topic and interview questions while initiating opportunities to refocus (Shufutinsky, 2020). Participants selected for the study were formally invited to participate in a semi-structured interview utilizing Zoom video software, recording audio and video. Immediately following the interviews, field notes were used to capture additional participant data.

Recruitment Questionnaire

Gathering detailed information relating to a specific focus of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) occurred through a researcher-created Google Form questionnaire. All information collected from the questionnaire was utilized only by the researcher, protecting anonymity of participants. Interested participants completed and submitted a Google Form recruitment questionnaire. Included in the recruitment questionnaire were the background of the study, informed consent, demographic information, and four open-ended questions allowing participants to share perspectives while gathering insight into decisions to participate in the study. The recruitment questionnaire had inclusion and exclusion criteria built-in (see Appendix B), allowing individuals to continue through the questionnaire or discontinue, based on selection choices. Exclusion criteria was established in the questionnaire to obtain a sample population meeting the requirements of the study. Implementing researcher-set criteria within a questionnaire aided in recruiting a sample population with experiences and perspectives applicable to the study (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Four open-ended questions in the final section of the questionnaire assisted in gathering data on self-labeling, current leadership experience, how participants discovered the study opportunity, and personal interest in the study. The recruitment questionnaire remained active throughout the data collection process to ensure saturation was reached.

Instrument Validation

Qualitative research often relies on researcher-created questionnaires and interview questions succinctly addressing the study's purpose, gathering participant information necessary to investigate select phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Utilizing an open-ended questionnaire where participants could respond to a series of prompts related to the study would not obtain the rich data through dialogue afforded in an interview (Jahja et al., 2021). A series of

eight interview questions (see Appendix G) engaged participants in providing a personal narrative, aligning with the research questions. Each question contained sub-questions which aided in fully addressing components of each question. Illustrated by Castillo-Montoya (2016), the Interview Protocol Refinement Framework (IPR) was utilized to examine the instrument's reliability through a four-step review process, improving the interview process's effectiveness. Applying the IPR model to interview question creation allowed reflection on personal bias and assumptions through a reflective system of analysis, ensuring the interview questions aligned to the research questions (Roberts, 2020).

Interview Question Matrix

Creating a matrix template provided a structured visual alignment correlating the research questions to each interview question (see Appendix H). Reviewing the interview questions for clarity and relatability to the study reflected the depth of questions being asked to obtain robust responses (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Roberts, 2020). Following a review of the interview questions, Subject Matter Experts (SME) contributed to the process by providing expert feedback regarding the interview questions, strengthening the study's validity and reliability. Integrating feedback increased transparency while providing perspective regarding question alignment to the research questions and the study's overall purpose (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Utilizing SME feedback to analyze the interview process cultivated a collaborative environment by examining pilot interview questions and reviewing effective interview question order (Roberts, 2020).

Subject Matter Experts

The role of SMEs is to impart expert guidance and feedback on the construction and delivery of materials utilized within a study by examining consistency in wording and providing

suggestions (Díaz et al., 2020). An email invitation invited scholars and leaders specializing in sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBTQIA+ topics to serve as an SME for the study (see Appendix I). Three scholars were identified as SMEs for the study to review and validate the recruitment questionnaire, interview questions, and present any additional feedback (see Appendix J). Addressing input offered by the SMEs through reflective journaling integrated additional support layers in examining approaches to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

The recruitment questionnaire, interview questions, video interview protocol, and field notes incorporated feedback by the SMEs (see Appendix K). Feedback supplied by the SMEs regarding the recruitment questionnaire and interview questions ensured questions were fully developed, aligned with the purpose of the study, and addressed the research questions. Upon completion of the study, all identifying SME information was removed from the appendix. Reflecting on the process in which participants are recruited, contacted, interviewed, and debriefed requires established guidelines promoting transparency and personal protection of participant information (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Roberts, 2020).

Data Collection

The basic qualitative research study utilized a recruitment questionnaire (Abdalla et al., 2017), recorded Zoom video conferencing interviews (Archibald et al., 2019; Self, 2021), and field notes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015) for data collection. Once obtaining ACE IRB approval, the recruitment questionnaire was shared in private Facebook leadership groups with administrator permission through snowball sampling. Implementing Facebook to recruit participants in specialized and private leadership and SGD groups (Littler & Joy, 2021) widened access to individuals meeting the qualification and sharing relevant experiences.

Potential participants interested in the study submitted a recruitment questionnaire accessible on private Facebook leadership and SGD group pages. The recruitment questionnaire was separated into five sections providing a brief overview of the study, informed consent, participant selection screening, demographic information, and additional information. Participants provided a digital signature acknowledging informed consent. Exclusion criteria was built into the questionnaire ending the recruitment process for individuals selecting items irrelevant to the recruitment process. Collecting demographic information assisted in gathering background information, determining if potential participants were an appropriate sample of a larger population (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Percy et al., 2015). When participants completed the questionnaire, a pseudonym and a randomized computer-generated unique identifier was assigned to maintain confidentiality and allow proper tracking of data. Names of participants, pseudonyms, and corresponding unique identifiers were known only to the researcher. Once recruited for the study, an email was sent, inviting individuals to participate. A participation email contained information involving scheduling a recorded Zoom video conference, informed consent, and interview questions (see Appendix F). When data saturation was achieved, the recruitment questionnaire was disabled.

Semi-structured interviews included well-designed interview questions to capture perspectives and social encounters intersecting the authentic presentation of sexual identity in the workplace for SGD leaders (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Lobe et al., 2020). Interview questions utilized an open-ended questioning structure, engaging participants to furnish rich dialogue addressing well-designed research questions (Jahja et al., 2021). Integrating sub-questions (see Appendix G) to serve as probing questions assisted in ascertaining additional information needed

to address the interview questions and elicit hidden and suppressed responses (Weller et al., 2018).

Videoconference interviewing established a significant advantage over face-to-face interviewing in the ability to engage with participants, regardless of geographic location, saving on time and cost (Lobe et al., 2020). Each participant was emailed a Zoom link for the scheduled interview time of 60 minutes, utilizing a different invite code to ensure confidentiality. An email contained the interview procedures, notification of recording, interview questions, and the process of scheduling an interview (see Appendix F).

At the beginning of the interview, a shared screen displayed the informed consent and interview procedures, allowing the participant to review previously signed informed consent and grant a verbal verification to record the interview. Allotting time at the beginning of each interview provided an opportunity to address technical difficulties, including poor internet connection, unfamiliarity with Zoom, and technological issues with the camera or microphone (Archibald et al., 2019). Participants were asked if they required displaying the research questions on the screen throughout the interview; no participant desired the option. The final interview question provided participants an opportunity to supply any additional information. Once the interview was completed, participants were informed of next steps, including the process of member checking of transcripts.

Each participant interview was assigned a field note aligned with the interview questions to capture additional information directly following the interview. Field notes served as a supportive data collection tool tracking evidence of non-verbal cues, behavior, body cues, and emotional reactions not verbally depicted in interviews (Sutton & Austin, 2015) (see Appendix L). To ensure confidentiality and respect for participants were considered, field notes captured

relevant data while protecting the identity of participants throughout the data collection and analysis process (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2018).

Recorded interview data were uploaded to Otter.ai software for initial transcription. Manual review and editing of the interview transcripts occurred before emailing transcripts to the participants, ensuring accuracy (Candela, 2019). Once emailed the transcript for review, an optional follow-up Zoom interview with the participant was offered as an opportunity to clarify any additional clarification questions, although no participants requested this option. Data analysis began once participants verified transcript information. All recorded interviews, transcripts, and field notes were securely stored in an encrypted folder on a personal, password-protected computer integrating two-factor authentication and locked in a storage cabinet, along with paper notes and documentation, with data saved for 3 years. Participants could exit the study at any point and all data collected would be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Inductive thematic data analysis was used in this study. Using an inductive method approach within thematic analysis (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) assisted in capturing main themes regarding participants' authentic experiences relating to perceptions around equitable workplace practices promoting authentic self. Thematic analysis compared the captured data producing pattern clustering and thematic groupings (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Sundler et al., 2019). Collected data were analyzed using open and axial coding.

Open coding allowed large categories to form by examining transcripts, questionnaires, and field notes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Implementing open coding enabled the separation of data into a series of codes based on word choice or phrase (Cascio et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By utilizing the initial codes discovered through open coding, axial coding then

explored how codes connected and related to collected data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Williams & Moser, 2019). Integrating open and axial coding allowed meaning to be constructed based on deep data exploration and analysis (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Before uploading data into NVivo software, the member checked transcripts were manually reviewed to explore key words and phrases provided by participants. Manual coding afforded a deeper understanding of data due to the extensive time required to organize and analyze the data (Mattimoe et al., 2021). Once a manual data review was completed, the participant video files, and transcript data were uploaded into NVivo software. NVivo assisted the manual coding process by uncovering patterns in natural language and thematic analysis while revealing characteristics and perspectives based on the participants' narratives. Implementing NVivo in the qualitative study aided in organizing and managing interview transcripts, identifying codes and developing final themes (Maher et al., 2018). Data were uploaded and stored in encrypted files on a personal, password-protected computer locked in a storage cabinet, along with any paper documentation, with data saved for 3 years. All electronic and paper items pertinent to the study will be kept and secured for 3 years after the conclusion of the study and then destroyed, shredded, and deleted off Google drive.

Reliability and Validity

Establishing reliability and validity was achieved by examining collected data for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the results (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Reliability ensures the appropriate methodology and research strategies utilized within the study were appropriately applied and implemented (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Increasing the reliability and validity of the study occurred through analyzing and implementing critical SME

feedback. Recruitment activities, interviewing processes, and data analysis were carried out, ensuring the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the study (Busetto et al., 2020).

The member checking process integrated participant review of collected and transcribed interview data allowing an opportunity to clarify or modify, strengthening credibility (Abdalla et al., 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Utilizing effectively constructed interview questions eliciting genuine responses increased the study's credibility (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Integrating perspectives of each participant within the data analysis process enhanced credibility (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Dependability relies on the accuracy of analysis for potential replication in future studies (Maher et al., 2018). Addressing consistency through all aspects of the study heightened dependability (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Supplying a rich and robust analysis of the participant data established dependability and confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Thoroughly depicting participants' perspectives and providing a descriptive analysis of the study allows for transferability based on shared characteristics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Investigating whether the results of the study are applicable in future research involves reflecting on sampling choice, participant inclusion criteria, and transparency of data reporting (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Transferability was accomplished by gathering and presenting detailed depictions of the perspectives of SGD K–12 public school leaders.

Due to the vulnerability of the participants' experiences, offering a supportive and engaging environment allowed participants to present authentic selves safely and build trust throughout the study. Increasing levels of transparency through proper documentation, data saturation, data analysis, and disclosure positively affected trustworthiness (Aguinis & Solarino,

2019). Reflecting on the topic and purpose of the study when aligning the interview questions to the research questions cultivated trustworthiness (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Ensuring thematic interpretations of data were based on collected data assisted in establishing confirmability (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Confirmability occurred through member checking, ensuring authentication of interview transcripts. Integrating bracketing and reflective journaling established confirmability by addressing and mitigating researcher bias (Rose & Johnson, 2020; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Triangulation integrated multiple data sources for an intersectional analysis allowing for greater reliability and validity (Candela, 2019). Using NVivo software, data was triangulated by analyzing participant semi-structured interview data, field notes, and participant member checked transcripts (Abdalla et al., 2017; Maher et al., 2018). Validity was determined by triangulating semi-structured interview data, field notes, and member checking (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Utilizing a reflective journal throughout the study aided in bracketing bias and provided transparency.

Using social media as a networking recruitment medium for the study required selecting a sample population representative of the study from the start of the research, elevating the reliability (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Reliability of the study resided in analyzing the relationships between the perspectives of the participants recruited through social media and snowball sampling (Audemard, 2020). Posting of recruitment opportunities was not shared on personal Facebook accounts to protect the identity of the researcher and participants (Littler & Joy, 2021). Recruiting participants through administrator-approved social groups increased credibility allowing greater transparency (Kostere & Kostere, 2021) in support of adherence to ethical standards for future replicability.

Ethical Procedures

Addressing the perspectives of SGD leaders required understanding the ethical protocols which ensure confidentiality and the protection of human rights (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Although participants may identify as SGD to select individuals, the confidentiality and privacy of all individuals was maintained to prevent the possible outing of individuals who may not openly present and identify as SGD. Protection of a marginalized population required building trust through respect, securing confidential information, and acknowledging no conflict of interest within the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study required adherence to guidelines protecting human involvement and ethical protocols in the research process outlined in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) and the IRB protocols. Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are the key principles of the Belmont Report and ensured the protection of human participants' rights throughout a study (Gordon, 2020).

Informed consent (see Appendix A) provided guidance to all potential participants detailing the study, participant's responsibility, and opportunity to withdraw. Protection of human subjects was outlined within the informed consent indicating the purpose of the study, storing and reporting of information, and ability to withdraw from the study without penalty. Approval granted by the ACE IRB ensured proper justification and protection of participants (see Appendix C). Recruiting SGD individuals through social media required integrating privacy settings to protect identity (Littler & Joy, 2021). All communication methods were conducted through email and apart from social networking sites to safeguard the privacy of and anonymity of participants (Gordon, 2020).

Obtaining written documentation of informed consent from all participants was the initial phase of the study. Informed consent (see Appendix A) outlined the study, and participants reviewed the informed consent before the recorded interview process (Self, 2021). If participants did not wish to consent during the recruitment questionnaire, they were dismissed, ending any participation in the study, and any information collected was dismissed and destroyed. All participants had opportunity to withdraw anytime from the study without consequence. Participants agreed to the video recording of the interview and provided verbal acknowledgment of informed consent, which was recorded.

Respect for persons and confidentiality of participant information was critical when addressing vulnerable populations (Cychosz et al., 2020). Participants who may selectively disclose SGD identity in the workplace may fear employment loss, damage to relationships, or a negative social status (Henrickson et al., 2020). Informed consent and outlining de-identification procedures conveyed the protection of privacy to participants (Tolich & Tumilty, 2020). Providing each participant with a pseudonym ensured anonymity throughout the research process, including use in interviews, data analysis, and data storage (Gerrard, 2020).

Participant information, paper and electronic documents, interview transcripts, and other related artifacts were secured in a password-protected personal computer within encrypted folders implementing two-factor authentication and not shared with participants. Two-factor authentication provided an additional level of information security. Participants and researcher communicated through password-protected devices and email accounts (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). All electronic and paper items pertinent to the study will be kept and secured for 3 years after the conclusion of the study and then destroyed, shredded, and deleted off Google drive. All

paper and electronic records will be destroyed as outlined in the guidelines provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).

Building trusting relationships were vital for a study integrating perspectives of vulnerable populations (Thummapol et al., 2019). Respect was critical in designing interview questions from a position of humanity and openness, expanding the knowledge collected from the perspectives of SGD leaders (Henrickson et al., 2020). Encouraging authentic dialogue and providing respect for the perspectives of SGD individuals assisted in cultivating collaborative partnerships built on trust (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although SGD participants may be open in the workplace regarding identity, unintentional outing or disclosing personal information was avoided to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Following ethical guidelines and securing personal data throughout the study ensured minimal risk to participants in the study (Gordon, 2020). The study provided a deeper understanding of how relationships and workplace conditions contribute to SGD disclosing identity aspects. Public school institutions benefit from the research by understanding the processes in which SGD individuals choose to disclose identity and the support necessary to cultivate relationships promoting inclusive practices, which was the focus of the study.

Chapter Summary

Perceptions of SGD individuals differ reflective of cultural, societal structures, and context (Henrickson et al., 2020). In Chapter 3, exploring the details involving a basic qualitative study provided insight on identity self-disclosure and conditions influencing authentic presentation of self. Chapter 3 explained the purpose and problem statement exploring the perceptions of SGD K–12 public school leaders. Included were the research methodology, research design, and description of the role of the researcher. Explained within the research

procedures section were the population and sample selection, instrumentation, and data collection. Data analysis provided an overview of the thematic inductive process.

Trustworthiness ensured reliability and validity within the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Ethical procedures described the protection afforded to vulnerable populations in the study (Gordon, 2020).

Detailed descriptions of how data were collected, sorted, coded, and analyzed are presented in the following Chapter. Included are the results of the study, providing an in-depth analysis of the interviews. A thematic analysis of the data addressing the research questions proposed in the study is provided.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

Supporting sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders to lead authentically by exploring workplace and social constructs around identity disclosure remains underrepresented in research and a topic of interest. Although school systems may address SGD student needs, adult leaders' needs may be overlooked or under-supported (Duarte, 2020; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tooms, 2007). Intersectionality of personal and professional identity presentation along with relational factors within social settings may influence workplace identity disclosure. Perceptions of identity acceptance may require SGD leaders to increase personal awareness of social and community environments, increasing reliance on decision-making and relationship skills. Understanding workplace situations or social and community constructs may be critical for some SGD leaders when contemplating identity disclosure (Henderson et al., 2018; Lee, 2020a; Wenger, 1998). The problem is the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles are unknown (Lee, 2020b). The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles.

Data were collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted over Zoom. Participants were individuals working in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DELMARVA) K–12 public schools who identified as SGD and have held a leadership position for one year or more. Based on responses provided in the semi-structured interviews, data were used to explore SGD leaders' perceptions of authentic leadership and conditions influencing the disclosure of identity in the public school workplace. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How do perspectives of SGD leaders contribute to presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school settings?

Research Question 2: How is presentation of authentic self for SGD K–12 public school leaders influenced by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable K–12 public school workplace practices influence decisions to disclose SGD identity?

Data collection, data analysis, and results are further discussed. Authentic leadership was defined through the participants perspective to support the study. Narratives of perceptions provided the needed context to address the research questions. Reliability and validity of the study, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are addressed. A summary reiterated the findings and provided a transition to the final Chapter.

Data Collection

Upon receiving IRB approval (see Appendix C), data collection began by posting a recruitment flyer (see Appendix E) in private Facebook leadership groups with the approved authorization by the group site administrators (see Appendix D), along with a posting to the researcher's LinkedIn page. Snowball sampling was also utilized, allowing a broader outreach of possible participant connections. The recruitment flyer was directly linked to a Google questionnaire (see Appendix B), enabling interested participants to review the study and apply for participant consideration. The recruitment questionnaire was activated upon IRB approval and remained accessible for 46 days. Potential participants were required to review the informed consent (see Appendix A) and provided a digitally signed consent before completing the following sections of the questionnaire. The recruitment questionnaire was divided into informed consent, participant selection screening, demographic information, and participant information.

The questionnaire data, including the informed consent authorizations, were securely stored with all other data in an encrypted Google Drive. A total of 22 individuals completed the recruitment questionnaire during the recruitment period, and all agreed to informed consent. Of the 22 submissions, 21 individuals met the recruitment criteria.

Participants who completed the recruitment questionnaire and met the criteria were emailed a participant interview invitation (see Appendix F) utilizing Calendly as an interview scheduling tool. All interviews were scheduled using Zoom videoconferencing for 60 minutes and were conducted over 29 days. All 21 individuals scheduled an interview time, providing a 100% response rate. One individual withdrew from the study after scheduling an interview time. Another individual who needed to reschedule the interview did not reschedule, resulting in 19 scheduled interviews. While 18 participants were initially sought for the study, 19 individuals qualified for participation in the study. Once the nineteenth interview was conducted, the questionnaire was disabled, and no further participants were obtained.

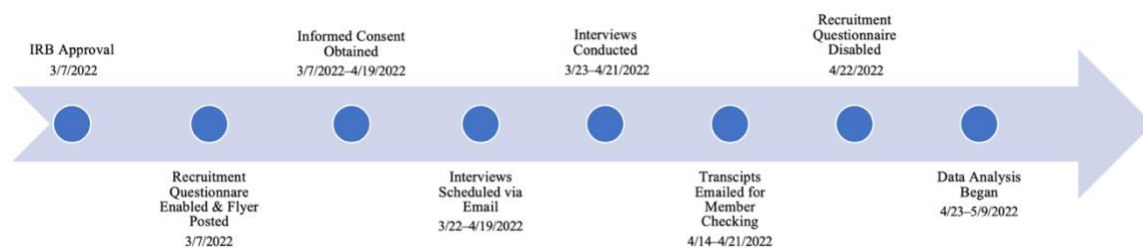
Zoom videoconferencing software was utilized to conduct 19 semi-structured interviews. Once participants entered the virtual interview, the session recording began with an overview of the study, a review and verbal confirmation of the informed consent agreement, and verbal authorization to record the interview. An interview protocol script (see Appendix L) was utilized, outlining the interview process and the interview questions with possible sub-questions. Interview length ranged from 22 minutes to 72 minutes, with an average interview time of 52 minutes. The final interview question allowed participants to ask questions or provide additional information they felt was relevant to the study but not addressed in the interview questions. Participants were informed of the next steps, including member checking transcripts to ensure accuracy of their shared experiences and contributing additional information or edits if needed

(Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Contact information was shared if questions arose during the duration of the study.

Data obtained through the audio and video recorded Zoom interviews were transcribed through Otter.ai and then downloaded as Microsoft Word files. Transcriptions of the interviews were manually reviewed before emailing participants for member checking, ensuring validity and reliability. Transcripts of the interviews were emailed to all participants following the interview for member checking, with 4 participants responding, indicating no changes were needed, and 15 participants not responding. Once the member checking process was complete, pseudonyms replaced the participant names to ensure confidentiality. Figure 1 depicts a detailed timeline indicating each phase of the data collection process from IRB approval through the data analysis phase. Significant to the study was obtaining more participants than anticipated within 46 days from the posting of the recruitment flyer to the interview of the last participant.

Figure 1

Data Collection Timeline



After each interview, field notes were completed (see Appendix L) to reflect on each participant. Integrating field notes assisted by mitigating researcher bias while bracketing similar connections shared with participants. Field notes were captured electronically and stored in a secure Google Drive in the participant folder. All data were secured in encrypted, password-protected files in a password-protected personal computer with two-factor authentication.

No deviations from the data collection procedures discussed in Chapter 3 occurred. No further communication occurred with the participants, and no participants requested a follow-up conversation. There were no significant or unusual circumstances encountered during data collection. The following section presents data analysis and results from the 19 interviews including how participants perceived authentic leadership.

Data Analysis and Results

Interviews were recorded via Zoom videoconferencing software and then run through Otter.ai for transcription assistance. Each interview transcript was manually reviewed to account for inaccuracy of words or over repetition of particular words. Using the transcription software directly linked the audio recording to the transcript, allowing passages to be heard while reviewing. Inaccuracies of transcription did not impact the validity and accuracy of the results and the review of each transcript provided significant immersion in the data. Each transcript was reviewed before sending to participants, ensuring accuracy. Transcripts were emailed to participants for member checking to confirm accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Once all 19 participants were allowed to member check the interview transcripts, pseudonyms and computer-generated unique identifiers were assigned, removing all names and any direct reference to the subjects. The provided pseudonyms were utilized throughout the duration of the study. Names of workplaces, colleagues, and significant others were replaced with pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

As depicted in Table 1, participants self-identified in areas of sexual orientation, gender identity, and racial/ethnic identity. Participants were afforded the opportunity to select provided identity options or self-describe, allowing for greater authenticity in self-describing identity. Providing a breakdown of demographic information was included in the analysis process as

identity is multifaceted and may influence perceptions of authentic leadership and how leaders relate to others based on identity factors and perspectives. The age of participants ranged from 29 to 59. Most participants identified as gay (58%), followed by lesbian (26%). When examining gender identity, 79% of the participants identified as cisgender. Of the 19 participants, 13 (68%) identified as White. Most participants in the study identified as White, gay, cisgender individuals.

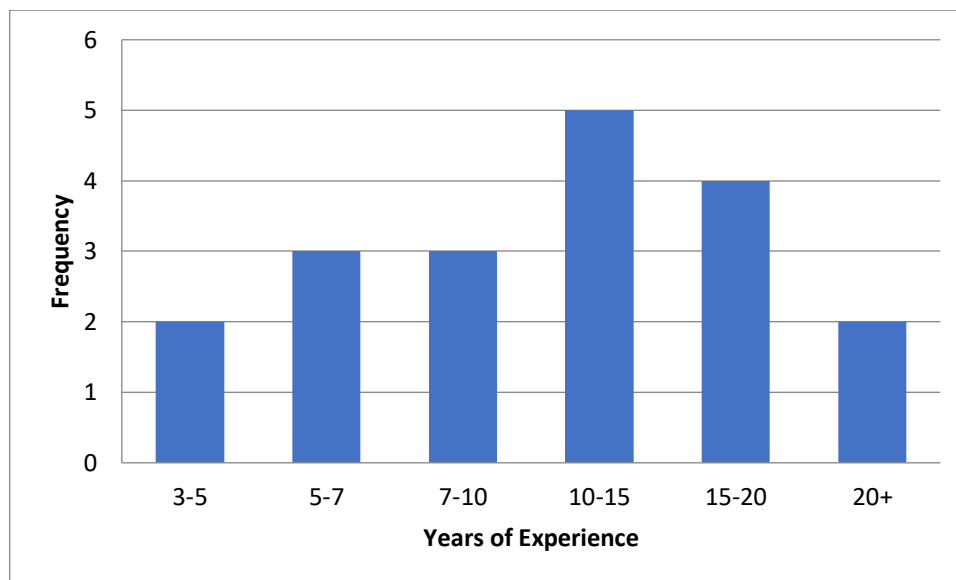
Table 1*Identity Description of Participants*

Identity Factors	Number of Participants
Sexual Orientation	
Bisexual	1
Gay	11
Gay, Pansexual, Queer	1
Lesbian	5
Lesbian, Queer	1
Gender Identity	
Cisgender	15
Transgender/Non-Binary	2
Prefer not to Answer	2
Racial/Ethnic Identity	
Asian or Asian Indian, Hispanic or Latina/e/o/x/@, Multiethnic	1
Black or African American	2
Black or African American, White	1
Hispanic or Latina/e/o/x/@	2
White	13

One aspect of recruitment criteria required individuals to hold a leadership position for 1 year or more. Figure 2 displays the breakdown of participants' years of leadership experience. All participants held a leadership position over 3 years, with no participants holding a leadership position for less than 3 years.

Figure 2

Years of Leadership Experience



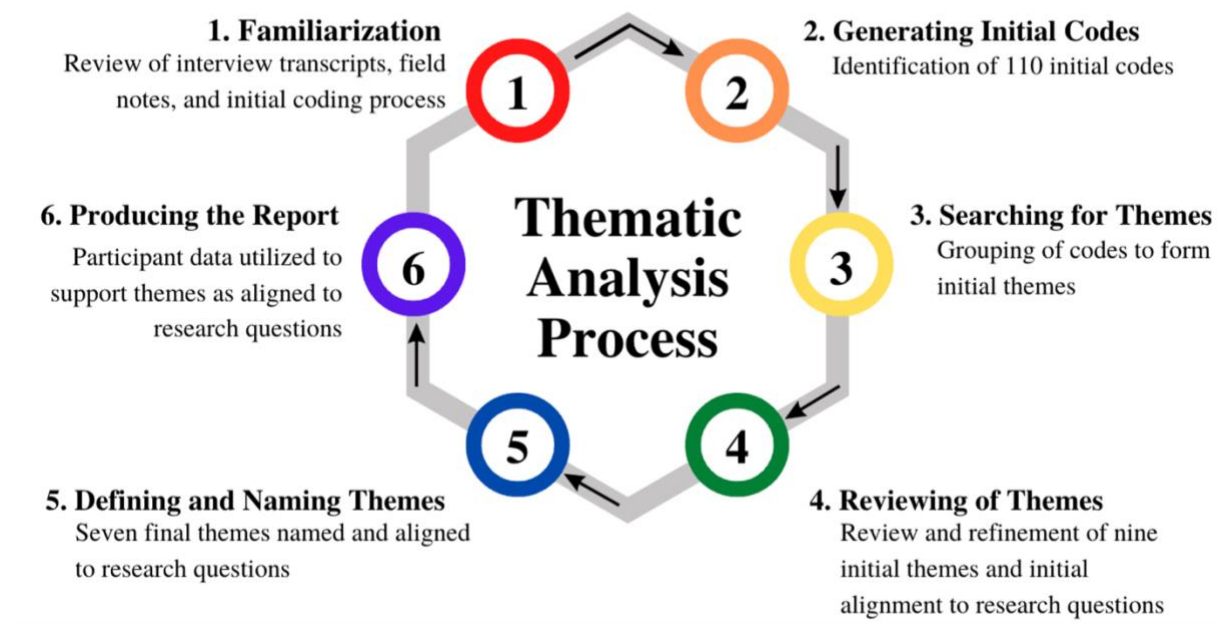
Thematic analysis allows for a detailed organization and understanding of perspective data based on pattern clustering and thematic groupings (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Sundler et al., 2019). Using an inductive approach within thematic analysis (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) assisted in capturing emerging themes based on the participant's perspective data without preconceived codes or themes. Inductive thematic analysis was utilized for this study as outlined in a six-step framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis framework assisted in reviewing collected data, identifying codes, themes, and patterns, along with noting interesting issues presented through the data. Figure 3 outlines the six-step thematic process utilized in the study.

The initial step of the analysis process involved refamiliarizing the interview data, including a full review of each interview transcript. While reviewing each interview transcript, the research questions, alongside relational leadership and social identity theories, were used as guides to assist in categorizing the data into codes. NVivo was utilized to review transcripts and assist in the coding process. Each transcript was reviewed manually through NVivo, highlighting keywords and phrases and organizing data into codes and significant quotes. Open coding revealed a total of 110 descriptive codes. Codes were categorized based on relation to the research question. The interview matrix (see Appendix H) provided greater clarity in coding and aligning data to specific research questions. A deeper analysis and refinement in interpreting the initial codes were accomplished through axial coding revealing emerging themes (Williams & Moser, 2019).

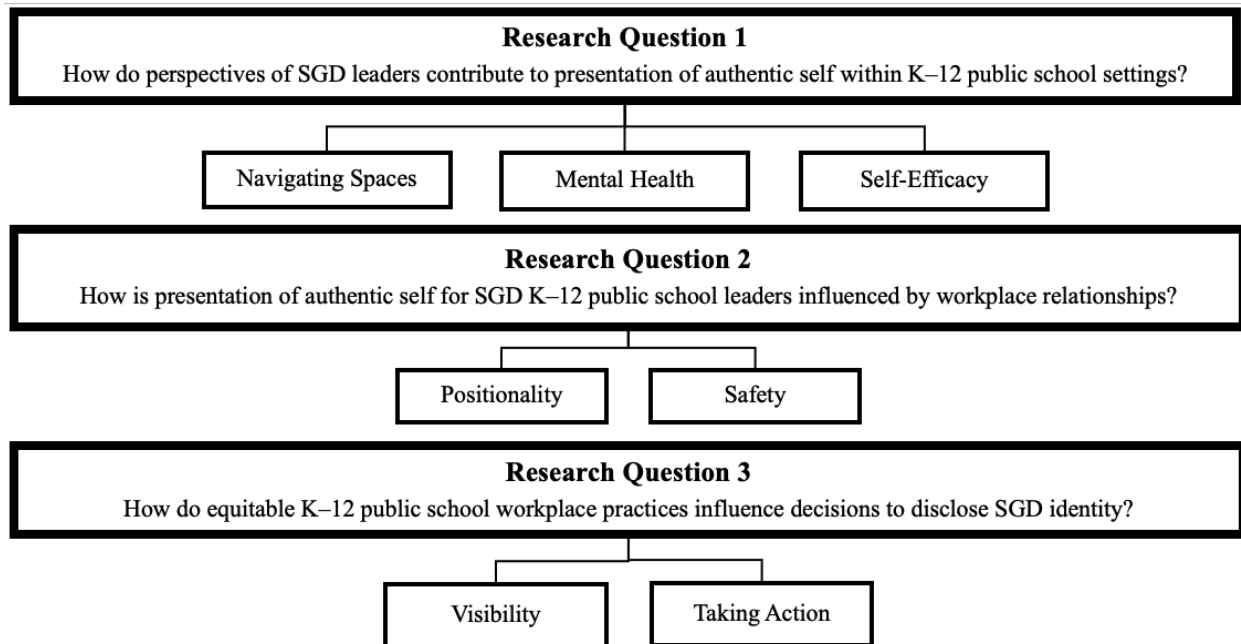
As themes were generated, continuous refinement in the analysis processes provided greater clarity in the thematic alignment to the research questions. The coding process revealed nine initial key themes. Data were refined further, and two themes were collapsed in a final thematic analysis. Seven key themes were defined in the final findings, properly aligning to the research questions. Final themes were reported and aligned to the research questions. The themes for each research question were further described using participant narrative.

Figure 3

Six-Step Data Analysis Process



Data were continuously analyzed to ensure proper alignment to the research questions, ensuring a high level of comprehension. The final themes that emerged are depicted in Figure 4. Three themes address Research Question 1, two themes address Research Question 2, and two themes address Research Question 3. The themes for Research Question 1 isolated how SGD participants explore internal aspects of identity. Exploring how participants navigated interactions between internal and external factors through relational and social dynamics led to the themes addressing Research Question 2. The themes addressing Research Question 3 centered on how participants perceive external factors involved in decision-making processes within the workplace as related to identity. Participants also shared perspectives of how authentic leadership is perceived and influenced through the internalization and sharing of identity.

Figure 4*Key Themes as Aligned to Research Questions***Perspectives of Authentic Leadership**

An individual's perspective contributes to shaping authenticity and authentic leadership based on the fluidity of social world interactions (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The participants discussed relationships with self and within social contexts, resulting in a personal definition of authentic leadership based on perspective and workplace experience. The focus was on disclosing aspects of sexual and gender identity in leadership roles to present authentically within public school leadership roles. Table 2 depicts how some participants verbalized authentic leadership as related to their identity.

Authentic leadership was internalized and executed differently by each participant in the study, and participants addressed each research question through a personal interpretation of authentic leadership.

Table 2*Personal Interpretation of Authentic Leadership*

Participant	Participant Responses
Bayard	“I think authentic leadership means that you lead in a way that allows you to express yourself and your personality.”
Jeanne	“Authentic leadership starts with having a core set of values that you are willing to consistently demonstrate, prioritize and communicate to other people.”
Gilbert	“Authentic leadership is being able to lead from your own faith, beliefs, and vision.”
Phyllis	“To me, it is being exactly who you are in every area of who you are.”
Vic	“It means not hiding and just allowing myself to be me.”

Research Question 1 Thematic Analysis

The first research question was “How do perspectives of SGD leaders contribute to presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school settings?” Question 1 focused on awareness, both internal and external. Perspectives of SGD leaders disclosing aspects of identity contributed to authentic presentation of self, aiding in addressing and answering Research Question 1. Table 3 indicates the related keywords and phrases and the final themes addressing Research Question 1. The related phrases were obtained through the coding process and aided in the construction of three key themes which address and answer the research question: (a) *navigating spaces*, (b) *mental health*, and (c) *self-efficacy*. Key themes addressing Research Question 1 focused on the internal interpretation of identity and processing of self within social constructs. Participants shared perspectives as SGD leaders working in public school education and how the disclosure and concealment of identity related to the empowerment and presentation of authentic leadership.

Table 3*Research Question 1: Related Keywords and Final Themes*

Related Keywords	Final Theme	Participant Experiences
Awareness Navigation Social settings Disclosure Risk-taking Relationships	Navigating Spaces	“I realize there are times I have to think about who I am disclosing to and ask myself, where is the other individual in terms of social issues?”
Self-harm Mental safety Negative self-esteem Discomfort Non-acceptance Shame Guarding self Survival Living in duality	Mental Health	“I was not comfortable to be who I was concealing, so I spent time mentally compartmentalizing things.”
Advocacy for self and others Accountability Responsibility Starting small Understanding abilities Task completion Decision-making	Self-Efficacy	“I had to really practice disclosing who I am while becoming comfortable in the process regardless of situation.”

Theme 1: Navigating Spaces

Being aware of context clues within social settings was noted by almost all participants when selecting to disclose aspects of SGD identity. By examining interactions with others and evaluating whether identity disclosure would contribute to the conversations, the ability to present authentically was considered. Marsha stated, “I made a conscious decision not to tell him anything about myself in that moment, because of the previous experiences that some of my

colleagues had with his comments and making them feel uncomfortable.” How others perceive identity based on appearance was described by a few participants. Mark stated:

My hair was bleached, and I had several piercings. I remember walking through the hall and the principal pulled me aside and said that men do not wear earrings. Although it wasn't really related to my identity, I got the message. I wouldn't say that I didn't feel safe, but I definitely felt like an outsider. As if I wasn't welcome.

When contemplating how identity is brought forth in spaces where relationships are not fully formed, Harvey noted, “in spaces that I know are accepting and free, my authenticity shows up without caution. And in spaces that I'm unsure, it shows up tentatively.” Many participants considered if disclosing their SGD identity was needed to forge relationships or bring additional context to situations.

When examining situations to disclose identity, Jeanne recalled a moment of navigating both self and situation, saying, “When it comes to sharing with colleagues, I think I just let people form their own opinion. And then if I feel like I've built enough of a relationship with them to share anything personal, then I will.” Marsha discussed navigating self as a barrier to disclosing identity in situations, saying:

It's an internal decision. Is this the right time? Are these the right people? It doesn't matter if it is the right time or the right people, this is who I am, and this is who I have to be.

Theme 2: Mental Health

For many participants, struggling with mental health issues related to personal identity was a significant challenge. Some participants expressed they were living in duality by shifting who they were within various social circles and felt an internal struggle to live authentically. A

few participants discussed code-switching when in unknown relational setting as a coping method. Sylvia mentioned:

I got to a point where I could not do it anymore and was tired of phoning it in and had a bit of a meltdown and went into therapy. You can't and shouldn't have to live two lives to be happy.

Self-harm was expressed by a few participants resulting from struggles in self-acceptance and self-worth. Gilbert stated, "I feel like for me, it comes down to self-preservation. When I was in my 20s, I struggled over being gay and that is not a place I ever want to go back to." "I've struggled with some depression. I have struggled with some self-doubt and big issues with not being okay within my own skin" Stefani acknowledged. Acknowledging personal struggles with identity and mental health allowed participants to relate to other leaders and students, validating similar situations.

Theme 3: Self-Efficacy

A common thread through the participants' perspectives was building self-efficacy. Participants described situations of wanting to be admired for leadership ability rather than aspects of personal identity. For some participants, separating their personal and professional identities was a process to build self-efficacy. Rita shared:

I think that I want people to see me as a strong professional in the workplace before they know anything about my personal life. I want them to trust that I could do the job before they know. And I don't know why I associate the two. But I've always felt that before somebody gets to know about my personal life, I have to prove myself and I'm going to be an asset wherever we are.

Eddie stated, “I guess I don’t want to share sometimes because I don’t want my relationship status or sexuality to mask my professionalism or to put a shadow on the kind of leader, educator, or person that I am.”

Authentic presentation of self was influenced by fully embracing personal and professional identity in building self-efficacy. The separation of personal and professional identity was non-negotiable for some participants. Barney said:

I’m not one of those people who can kind of separate the two identities. I know a lot of people who have their work persona, and they have their home persona, and that’s just not who I am. I’m a very flashy person. I’m a very flamboyant person. I don’t know how to or have even tried to separate that side of me. I am who I am and still give someone my authentic self. I feel like I’d spend too much time trying to hide that to really be able to do it.

Cleve provided advice for building awareness around self-efficacy and authenticity, saying, “Take small steps, but you have to start taking steps and putting yourself out there. Because when you are not being you, you are really not being as effective as you can be. Just allow you to be you.”

Research Question 2 Thematic Analysis

The second research question was “How is presentation of authentic self for SGD K–12 public school leaders influenced by workplace relationships?” Research Question 2 focused on how SGD leaders present authentically through workplace relationships. To answer Research Question 2, participants navigated the external interaction and interpretation of identity while examining relationships within social constructs. Analyzing the perspectives of SGD regarding workplace relationships and the influence on identity disclosure clearly showed the positionality

and safety as imperative contributing factors. Table 4 indicates related keywords and phrases and final themes addressing Research Question 2. The related phrases were obtained through the coding process and aided in the construction of two key themes which address and answer the research question: *positionality* and *safety*. Through social interactions, participants described how relationships rely on safety and positionality to influence identity disclosure decisions and promote authentic leadership.

Table 4

Research Question 2: Related Keywords and Final Themes

Related Keywords	Final Theme	Participant Experiences
Representation Role Model Productivity Being present Listening Power structure Positionality	Positionality	“As I entered the workforce the most affirming thing was representation. When I saw someone else within the organization who had risen to power and had a well-respected leadership position and they were gay, it made it possible for me to be more authentic in my experiences.”
Trust Safety Job security Survival	Safety	“I think I make judgments about disclosure every day. And every single time it comes up, I think about when it is safe to reveal, what's not safe to reveal and what is going beyond the boundaries of what parents will tolerate, appreciate, or be conflicted by.”

Theme 1: Positionality

Participants described the significance of examining the impact of positionality as related to relationship formation and decision-making. With positionality, participants mentioned the perceptions of having people watch every move or critique decisions made. Sylvia mentioned, “Somebody is always watching. Somebody is always going to be interested in what you are doing, thinking, and saying. So, it is incredibly important to be your authentic self.” Gilbert recalled a mentoring situation and said:

Somebody who was mentoring me when I was a new principal said to me, just remember that there are always eyes on you. Like, always, and it's so true. As the principal, everybody is watching everything you do and interpreting everything you do. And so, there's an obligation and responsibility to try and be your best self as much as possible and to be your sincere and authentic and responsible to serving others.

Participants discussed situations of using positionality to increase awareness around SGD topics by taking time to address concerns and obtain perspectives. Sylvia mentioned the importance of approachability in positionality, stating, "I don't ever want to be a leader that isn't approachable. And if I'm not my true, authentic self, I'm not approachable. I don't ever want to be that kind of leader." Troy indicated:

I have my job because I am a gay man. And, you know, on a larger scale, everything that I have gone through as a gay man in the world has helped to make me who I am as a leader; it's helped to make me who I am as a practitioner.

Participants talked about building relationships, regardless of the power dynamic, as creating settings where the openness of self was valued and initiated deeper conversations around identity. Harvey described the importance of relationships, saying:

So, as I developed really strong relationships with people I supervised, it was important for me to be authentic with them, or the relationship suffered. And so, the people that I chose to be close friends with, it was a pretty easy reveal. But there are always those moments of, you know, asking is this person a safe place to reveal to? There's a process for deciding whether somebody can handle it. And so, some of it is what do you know about them as a person? What have you heard them say in other discussions, and what seems to be their core values around?

Theme 2: Safety

Aspects of safety resonated with many participants as they described both personal and professional moments of uneasiness in presenting authentically based on their identity. Safety within acceptance was considered by many participants when choosing to take on a leadership role. Participants often discussed examining social settings and relational dynamics to know if spaces were safe to reveal aspects of identity. Bayard discussed safety through perceived acceptance, expressing:

If there is a feeling of any kind of backlash, or you are going to make waves, people don't want to make waves. I don't want to get backlash. I don't want to be retaliated against. I don't want to feel like someone might try to get me out of my role because they may secretly have a problem with how certain people identify. I think when you get into that you are going start having some workplace problems.

Harvey also mentioned safety when disclosing identity with a coworker but from an opposing perspective declaring, "In the moment, I do not believe the other person is in a safe enough space themselves to be able to manage my disclosure and then ultimately protect and value what I am revealing."

Safety was also discussed as a motivator for supporting other SGD individuals and advocating for welcoming environments. Jeanne discussed personal experiences with identity and now advocating for other individuals stating:

I remember not that long ago, being in high school and not being out and not being comfortable with any of that. I just didn't feel safe and to know that I can somehow help others feel safe and have a different school experience; for me, that was enough of a motivator to say - I want to be a part of this work, whatever that looks like.

Alongside advocacy being a support for safety, Marsha discussed fear being a motivator for job protection, saying, “Sometimes I fear not knowing what’s going to happen next year or not knowing if someone is going to say something, if they are going to go above your leadership, or blow things way out of proportion.” Other participants discussed safety through concealment as personal protection from self, others, or a combination. Sylvia shared experiences in the workplace where salience was a form of security at the moment, revealing, “There were sexist comments all the time and I was in a more guarded space where I didn’t feel free to be my authentic self in those 3 years.”

As participants described disclosing aspects of identity within school settings, trust was a reoccurring aspect, especially in forming relationships and navigating safety. Troy discussed cultivating working relationships and trust saying, “Who can I trust in this space based on what I know about them?” Sue talked about taking time to process relationships before disclosing identity saying, “I think I have to keep my guard up all the time. And it takes a great deal of trust.” Participants also discussed the importance of vulnerability in sharing their identity within leadership roles and forging relationships. James said, “As for disclosing, I feel there’s a level of vulnerability there. Opening up to people that way, it makes you very vulnerable. So being your true authentic self, there’s power in that being vulnerable.” Within the participants' discussion around relational dynamics, sharing deeply personal information regarding personal identity was discussed. Rita discussed changes in relational dynamics due to openness of self, noting:

When I finally started to open up and be vulnerable with who I am, people trusted me more and wanted me around. It was like, okay, I’m around because they know that it’s coming from a genuine place. It almost shifts their perception of me.

Rita also brought vulnerability back when discussing authentic leadership, stating, “We are leading a staff and trying to cultivate an environment in the most genuine way, so I feel you have to be completely open and vulnerable to build relationships.” Cleve discussed identity disclosure as a personal journey and opening of self to others more, saying, “The factors of disclosure were just being comfortable with the people that I work with, and feeling that I could trust them.”

Forming safe and trusting relationships was often mentioned by the participants. Frank processed authentic leadership through an intersection of internal and external awareness processing stating:

I think that authentic leadership comes from a place where you are comfortable to present who you are both inside and outside of work. When you are authentic with yourself, you’re able to be authentic with others. And from there, having that authentic leadership means that you are showing trust towards them, and they will trust you.

Sylvia discussed the internal questioning of trust as a reflective strategy in identity presentation stating, “I think about the perspective of the other side of leadership and what do I think the majority of the people that I lead feel about me? Do they feel like I’m my authentic self?”

When discussing trust and relationships, being genuine and validating perspectives resonated with many participants. The participants talked about the importance of being genuine with self when forming relationships. James talked about being genuine with self as a leader and exploring empathic connections saying, “I think creating genuine and authentic relationships with people and caring about what they care about is important. Those shouldn’t be difficult questions.” Trust in self to disclose aspects of identity was prevalent with many participants. Gilbert stated, “I don’t know if people realize the courage it takes to disclose. And maybe it shouldn’t take courage, but it does to me. But I hope that they understand the trust involved and

value sharing and talking openly.” Marsha talked about trust through a personal and professional perspective when building relationships and sharing identity as a leader conveying:

I don’t need trust in order to tell people or tell workplace adults about my identity. I would say that trust is a factor for the community members. I make choices to disclose if it may be an issue with certain parents. But every time I move to a new school, my identity is part of my introduction. I don’t even know them, so I don’t really need to develop trust. I feel like with adults, colleagues, anyway, it’s too bad. If it makes you uncomfortable, I’m just not going to not be who I am. But then with parents and community members, I think trust is a big factor because I don’t ultimately want it to be bad for the students.

Research Question 3 Thematic Analysis

The third research question was “How do equitable K–12 public school workplace practices influence decisions to disclose SGD identity?” Research Question 3 focused on the decision-making process as a leader and equitable workplace practices influencing the presentation of an authentic self. Answering Research Question 3 required participants to describe workplace practices influencing decisions to disclose identity. Some participants also described how leadership decisions are made based on perspectives as a SGD individual. Research Question 3 was further supported through the sharing of experiences and perspectives infusing personal identity and professional identity disclosure within the decision-making processes.

Table 5 indicates the related keywords and phrases and the final themes addressing Research Question 3. Key themes for Research Question 3 focused on decision-making through the workplace serving as a social community. The personal experiences of SGD leaders support

the need to focus on how equitable workplace practices increase visibility while focusing on actionable practices which support self and others. Most participants shared visibility for SGD individuals requires workplace environments fostering collaborative relationships and promoting opportunities to share perspectives. The themes for research question three address how participants integrate relational skills within decisions to disclose identity. The related phrases were obtained through the coding process and aided in the construction of two key themes: (a) *visibility* and (b) *taking action*.

Table 5

Research Question 3: Related Keywords and Final Themes

Related Keywords	Final Themes	Participant Experiences
Curriculum Diversifying leadership Support groups Onboarding Opportunities to share Increased visibility	Visibility	“You have to be very open and strategic about making sure that there are people across the span from teachers to custodians to leadership, that maybe represent LGBTQ issues in some way in their personal worlds. You have that representation embedded within the organization.”
Talk the talk Fidelity Equitable and inclusive Policy and regulation Backed-up Community Professional learning Self-exploration Opposing perspectives Leadership training Collaborative conversations	Taking Action	“You really need to have policies in place for both students and staff, to send that message, but also to ensure that in policy, your ethos around equity is followed. And create supports that send a clear message that we have taken the time and our system has made it a value to not discriminate against people based upon identity factors.”

Theme 1: Visibility

Participants described how visibility aided in the presentation of authentic self and contributed to raising awareness regarding SGD issues. Representation in leadership roles was

mentioned by many participants as a push toward erasing cis-heteronormative norms. Mark stated, “I also try to be visible and present in ways that don’t require a physical presence.”

Harvey talked about using relationships to enhance visibility saying, “As a leader, being able to relate to something or a group personally, creating that human experience can often change. And if not to change perceptions, at least plant the seed that opens the door later for some growth.”

Some participants discussed advocacy for increasing SGD visibility by considering perspectives of individuals who may not fully grasp SGD issues. Troy noted gaps within the leadership training process around SGD issues stating, “We can acknowledge that some people need SGD training. Then we can acknowledge that we need to train additional people and allies so that they can then intervene with kids.”

All participants felt various forms of allyship assisted the visibility of identity and presentation of authentic self. Harvey discussed allyship through a safety lens, saying, “I think SGD people learn from a really early age how to read the room for allies and for physical danger. And so using those experiences, it helps guide the experiences of other people that you lead.”

Troy talked about the value of identifying allies within the workplace:

Those allies are the people that want to ensure that voices are present and are taken seriously and our issues are addressed. You’ve got to find those people. If you have other people that are supportive of you, it makes you feel better about disclosing. I know, I’ve got these other people around me who are going to be supportive of me and will go to bat for me. So, because of that, I don’t need to worry as much about that person down the hall because I have others who have my back.

Observing other SGD disclose identity was also mentioned by participants as a support for others struggling with identity. Cleve said:

I just kind of felt they needed to know there was an ally. And I think a lot of anxiety around what they were dealing with kind of went away because they knew they had an ally here. They knew that this person was supportive and probably had been through it as well.

Theme 2: Taking Action

Relationships and workplace conditions fostering opportunities to cultivate collaborative conversations regarding identity and authenticity were brought forth by almost all participants. Jeanne stated, “I think the most significant part in navigating identity is to always foster the curiosity. I want people to always feel comfortable asking questions, even if information is not offered to them.” Cleve talked about shifts in relationships based on open conversations saying, “I’ve developed deeper relationships with staff, with students, with people in the community, because I am more free about just who I am. It has allowed me to engage in conversations a little more freely.” When choosing to share aspects of self within the workplace, Sue said:

I see these people asking questions in meetings and they want to know, and they want to make things happen. And it’s all about the sincerity of it that I think drives whether or not I’m going to be more open.

Being authentic with self in relationships was also mentioned by many participants. Rita said, “I was able to get so much farther in my career by disclosing, feeling more comfortable feeling and more confident and being better as a human, as a person.” For other participants, relying on self as an advocate to cultivate conversations were discussed. Frank said:

As I’ve gotten into leadership roles, I have leaned into that side of myself, being gay to connect with students and to offer perspectives when we see individuals who might be

struggling with their identity. And I can be someone who has lived that experience and provide my insight and my experiences into the conversations.

Participants also talked about promoting opportunities to acknowledge other's perspectives through the sharing of perspectives and active listening. Stefani described advocacy through conversations increasing awareness revealing:

When those things have popped up, it provides me an opportunity to really enlighten people about the fact that these are diverse issues that deserve to be honored. Just because it's different than what you believe doesn't mean that it's wrong. But it has kind of opened the door for those truthful conversations that help to smush ignorance and to grow understanding, and to help create a more inclusive environment.

Many participants discussed workplace conditions lacking action or equitable supports for SGD leaders beyond initial conversations or policy creation. Most participants did not feel diminished in their leadership capabilities because of identity disclosure.

Workplace opportunities to promote opportunities to increase SGD visibility and provide actionable support systems beyond initial written policies were discussed by most participants. Troy discussed follow through in policies saying, "You really need to have policies in place for both students and staff to send that message, but also to ensure that in policy, your ethos around equity is followed." Barney expressed:

We struggle sometimes as a district. The district is good to say the right things, but they don't always necessarily want to back it up with the right things. And a lot of it is they don't want to call people out when they're not doing the right things.

Gilbert discussed accountability in workplaces reflecting on equitable practices saying:

Have a direct conversation about we support in the system and what is it that we believe. It is being direct, honest, and put it in writing. If it's not writing, then it's not real. And I think from there, it's then putting action to the words, whether that's through more curriculum or somebody in a central office position whose role is to be an advocate. Or whether it's continuing to publish different resources and materials. So, I think it's just first say what you mean and mean it and then show that you mean it.

Participants also discussed the need to provide more equitable opportunities for SGD leaders to collaborate and share experiences, whether within an affinity group or professional learning sessions.

As a leader, Edie noted personal support in navigating various identities that individuals may not fully understand noting, "Being able to share some of those stories with other teachers, other professionals, other leaders, other adults in general, I think could make a huge difference." Sylvia said, "I would love a community group to have a discussion about what obstacles you come across regarding identity or what stopped you from doing stuff based on disclosure."

Other participants mentioned the visibility of SGD leaders making decisions around identity which may impact other SGD leaders and students. Cleve said:

I think having SGD leaders helps people feel more comfortable when we deal with kids and make decisions about students who are also in LGBTQ+. I think it allows people to kind of share and make decisions that are more appropriate.

Phyllis shifted the awareness perspective of the workplace needs to disclose identity away from self, noting, "I don't know so much that my identity is as important as my perspective on how we make rules and verbiage around the student." Ensuring action is taken beyond initial thought or policy wording was mentioned by nearly all participants.

Reliability and Validity

Recruitment for this study resulted in 19 interviews, more than the initial 18 sought. Following the 13th participant interview, the emergence of new codes was not as abundant, and no new codes were identified within the last two interviews. Saturation is achieved when repetition in data is observed and no additional insights are obtained, ensuring greater reliability (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Reliability and validity ensure rigor within qualitative studies through trustworthiness (Coleman, 2022; Cypress, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability increase the trustworthiness of the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Validity was determined by triangulating semi-structured interview data, field notes, and member checking of transcripts (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Through the triangulation of data and use of member checking, credibility was addressed. Transferability was ensured by integrating reviewed data collection and analysis processes which can be utilized in other studies with fidelity. Dependability was established through a reflective review of data collection instruments by implementing qualified subject matter experts. Using reflective journaling and field notes aided in mitigating bias and similar perspectives (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Credibility

Triangulation of data assisted in ensuring credibility was established. Multiple methods of collecting data were applied to the study including semi-structured interview, field notes, and member checking. The recruitment questionnaire captured initial data on each participant, ensuring participants met the criteria. Perspectives were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Each participant was assigned a field note to notate any additional items of consideration that arose during the interview process. Integrating field notes allowed for

reflective journaling and the bracketing of personal bias. Through member checking, participants reviewed the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy (Candela, 2019; Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Only 4 of the 19 responded to the member checking of transcripts, with no participants needing changes made.

Transferability

The structure of the data connection and analysis processes along with the findings of study may be transferrable to other settings beyond the DELMARVA region. The recruitment questionnaire provided opportunities to collect demographic information regarding how participants self-identify in various aspects, current leadership roles, and years of experience. Perspectives were captured through Zoom utilizing a validated interview protocol and properly aligned interview questions. Data collection methods and instruments were validated, increasing the transferability of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Dependability

The recruitment questionnaire and interview questions were reviewed by three subject matter experts. Feedback was provided and integrated into the data collection instruments, increasing the validity of the tools and the dependability of the study (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Replicability of the study would be possible as the findings were consistent based on the interview questions and consistency in participant responses. Data collection and analysis processes were properly documented, maintaining a concise electronic and paper data audit trail. All data were secured in encrypted, password-protected files in a password-protected personal computer with two-factor authentication.

Confirmability

Practices to diminish and mitigate researcher bias were integrated during the data collection and analysis stages to ensure participants' perspectives provided the narrative for the data. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, a reflective journal was utilized to bracket personal bias and isolate shared perspectives, providing greater transparency (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). All participants were afforded an opportunity to review their interview transcripts and provide corrections or add additional pertinent information omitted. Member checking ensured perspectives documented correctly matched what participants provided during the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Processes outlining the recruitment of participants, collection and analysis of data, and reflective journaling were effectively laid out to increase visibility and transparency. Developing themes addressing the research questions required a thorough analysis of collected data. Data were properly documented and continuously reviewed throughout the data analysis phase to ensure the confirmability of the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Chapter Summary

This basic qualitative study aimed to obtain perspectives SGD of public school leaders to better understand conditions influencing the presentation and disclosure of identity within leadership roles. Descriptions of recruitment methods, data collection, and data results and analysis were included. Results of the basic qualitative study aligned with and addressed the proposed research questions. Seven themes were generated from 101 descriptive codes utilizing thematic analysis to address and answer three research questions. Narratives of participants' perspectives were provided to substantiate the themes and address the posed research questions. Research Question 1 explored awareness and how perspectives contributed to disclosing aspects

of SGD identity. For Research Question 2, participants shared relational factors contributing to the disclosure of identity and presentation of authentic self. Research Question 3 allowed participants to explore how workplace practices influence SGD identity disclosure and the decision-making processes taken through their experiences as a leader.

The following chapter presents the findings from the study. Additionally, a review of how the study contributes to the gap in the literature is provided. The conclusions of the study were investigated through the integration of relational leadership theory and social identity theory. The limitations of the study were addressed, and recommendations for future considerations regarding SGD leadership, authentic presentation of self, and workplace practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The journey of locating a community of workplace acceptance is prevalent for many SGD leaders. Through forming relationships, SGD leaders examine partnerships meaningful for the personal acceptance of self and to generate authenticity in both personal and professional spectrums. The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles. Focusing on the needs of SGD leaders isolated the importance of understanding self within the leadership process to increase support.

Data collected from 19 interviews answered three research questions focused on workplace conditions influencing SGD leader perspectives of awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making when disclosing aspects of identity. Providing multiple perspectives afforded a greater examination of equitable workplace conditions needed for individuals to present authentic self while navigating societal constructs and relational factors.

Research Question 1 delved into how the perspectives of SGD leaders contributed to the authentic presentation of self within public school settings. Perspectives shared by participants illustrated the need to reflect on personal and professional awareness of self and community within leadership roles related to identity disclosure. Through the continuous exploration of awareness, the emerged themes revealed processes of navigating spaces when disclosing identity, balancing and considering personal mental health, and advocating for increased self-efficacy.

Research Question 2 explored relational factors contributing to the disclosure of identity and presentation of authentic self. Participants shared the importance of cultivating communities

forged in trust and vulnerability. Positionality and safety emerged as the critical themes, illustrating the internal and external navigation of self and society when disclosing identity while leading authentically.

Research Question 3 strove to understand how workplace conditions influence decision-making processes SGD leaders take when disclosing aspects of identity. The final themes revealed the importance of visibility in various forms and empowering SGD leaders through actionable strategies, promoting the acceptance and display of true self, and increasing equitable opportunities.

Examining data of SGD leaders assisted in filling a gap in the research regarding equitable workplace conditions needed to present authentically and the importance of social community and relationships when disclosing identity. The study provided insight into how adults process disclosure of identity within leadership roles. Robust data illustrated the importance of relationships within the disclosure process and the elevated need to enhance equitable workplace support. Engaging in social communities of acceptance is critical to promoting marginalized perspectives and shifting socially constructed norms around identity (Nair et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Findings, interpretations, and conclusions were further discussed and supported through the review of literature and integration of the theoretical framework. Limitations of the study were addressed. Integrating perspectives data captured in interviews assisted in formulating recommendations and implications for leadership needed to advocate for and support SGD leaders within the public school workplace. A summary concluded the chapter, reiterating the significance of the study and the importance of addressing a gap in the research.

Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions

Exploring existing literature was the initial step of the study, revealing a gap in the literature addressing the personal and professional needs of SGD public school leaders to disclose aspects of identity to lead authentically. Copious studies focused on SGD student needs but lacked addressing SGD adult needs, particularly within leadership and education. After reviewing the literature, three research questions emerged, addressing internal and external navigation of self to present authentically as an SGD leader. A total of seven themes emerged from the study, aligning with the research questions. Theoretical framework guiding this study was developed employing relational leadership theory (Hollander, 1978, 1992) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979; Wenger, 1998). The importance of relationships within identity disclosure and formation were identified. Further supporting the findings within the literature review, data addressed the research questions through perceptions of workplace conditions influencing authenticity. The findings were detailed, aligning to the research questions and correlating to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 explored how perspectives of SGD leaders contributed to authentic presentation of self within public school settings. Participants identified perceptions of authentic self, centering on how identity contributes to self-identification as an individual and as a leader. Isolating awareness relating to personal and professional identity provided insight into processes of juxtaposing self within social and relational contexts. Navigation of identity disclosure and authentic presentation of self is correlated to how individuals processed placement of self within social constructs. Seeing other SGD leaders within leadership positions provided increased visibility and representation of identity, strengthening personal decisions to disclose aspects of

identity. Another component of navigating awareness and identity disclosure was examining social constructs and relational dynamics. Participants noted the importance of understanding social dynamics and deciding if identity disclosure was relevant. Along with reviewing social and situational dynamics, participants reiterated the importance of understanding and embracing self as related to sexual and gender identity. An evolution of self-discovery provides individuals time to understand self and identify as a member of personal and social communities (Steffens et al., 2019).

Understanding mental health was reported as an essential factor in disclosing aspects of identity within leadership roles. Mentioned by many participants was the awareness of self and having to suppress outward actions of authenticity, cultivating significant internal mental stressors. Confiding with other SGD individuals and allies initiated moments to display true self and disclose aspects of identity. The openness of self within trusted communities acknowledged and validated identity for SGD leaders. Confiding with other SGD leaders and seeing SGD individuals holding leadership positions eased the personal stigma associated with identity for many participants. Understanding the importance and value of presenting authentically was a critical component of the identity journey for SGD leaders. Participants noted the importance of workplace belonging to diminish the feelings of shame around personal identity disclosure. Participation within social communities fosters belonging in both personal and professional contexts empowering mutual engagement and providing a sense of familiarity (Scholl et al., 2018; Wenger, 1998).

Wanting to be appreciated for leadership skills and service to the education profession was imperative to all participants. Exploring the intersections of personal and professional identity as related to sexual and gender identity revealed the need to examine awareness around

identity within positionality. A strong desire to be acknowledged for leadership abilities regardless of identity was imperative for most participants. Clearly defining the role of leadership to accomplish tasks allowed participants to define personal and professional boundaries. Allowing space to infuse perspectives and build efficacy skills resulted from the cultivation of communities. Understanding how the intersections of personal and professional identities within leadership needs and decision-making processes also contributed to SGD leaders' awareness of self. Encouraging others to share aspects of identity to increase self-efficacy was also mentioned by participants. As SGD individuals assume leadership positions, visibility increases and assists in representing leaders whose identities may reside beyond socially constructed binaries.

Findings Relating to Existing Literature

Navigating spaces and communities where SGD individuals feel safe and supported to disclose identity aligned with the literature. Awareness of the world through a social lens increases understanding of how the human experience influences full presentation of self (Calvard et al., 2020; Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019; Wenger, 1998). Participants described navigating both self and social factors within relational interactions to understand how authenticity is presented. Presentation of self was detailed as a journey of self-awareness and examining the situations in which identity disclosure contributed to social interactions (Haddad, 2019). Awareness regarding the fusion of personal identity within leadership identity to serve and motivate others was evident in the participant perspectives and the literature (Breakwell & Jaspal, 2021; Grabsch & Moore, 2021; Saarukka, 2014; Yeck & Anderson, 2019).

Supported by the literature was awareness regarding self needs, including self-efficacy and mental health. Participants brought forth perspectives of embracing their SGD identity to

minimize living is a duality. Struggling to keep identity salient was described by many participants as daunting and not living truthful to self, complicating the formation deep relationships (Izienicki, 2021; Lee, 2020a; Savani & Zou, 2019). Hiding integral parts of identity cultivated greater anxiety within social contexts for SGD leaders. Navigating social communities where perspectives were valued and appreciated prompted SGD leaders to disclose with greater confidence and ease (Follmer et al., 2020).

The need to remain salient within certain workplace situations as a personal protective measure was additionally supported by the literature (Doan & Mize, 2020; Parmenter et al., 2022). Seeking identity salience as a personal protective measure was often due to perceptions of others lacking openness and empathy to process the disclosure of identity within a particular moment. Controlling the disclosure of identity may provide reassurance to an individual and a form of ownership in reducing anxiety and distress (Izienicki, 2021; Miner & Costa, 2018). By limiting the degree to which disclosure is shared, SGD individuals may rationalize salience to separate personal and professional identities (Chang & Bowring, 2017; Savani & Zou, 2019). The personal journey of disclosure resides in the individual navigating levels of comfort within community and social constructs (Barnett et al., 2020; Lucio & Riforgiate, 2019). Increasing visibility by disclosing aspects of identity may increase vulnerability and the continued search for acceptance (Garvey et al., 2018). Time was a significant factor in understanding the intersections of personal and professional identity.

Findings in Context of the Theoretical Frameworks

Relational leadership theory (Hollander, 1978, 1992; Uhl-Bien, 2006) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979; Wenger, 1998) were employed to examine the research questions. Significant within both frameworks is the valuing of relationships as an integral

component of identity disclosure. Understanding the reciprocal relations between leader and follower is the structural underpinning of relational leadership theory (Hollander, 1978, 1992). When forming relationships among staff and other leaders, SGD leaders value opportunities to safely disclose identity and increase appreciation of perspective. Being aware of self, as a social community member, also contributed to collaborative discussions regarding identity, trust, empowerment, and advocacy (Jian, 2021). Participants relied on personal awareness of self to disclose identity within the workplace while navigating spaces of acceptance and comfort. Forming relationships and embracing belonging within accepting communities was critical to SGD leaders being vulnerable to share aspects of self. Through increased awareness of self and situation, SGD leaders could correlate personal and professional needs to disclose identity and explore current workplace conditions contributing to authenticity as a leader.

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979; Wenger, 1998) focuses on how individuals view self internally and within social environments, examining belonging and providing a sense of overall identity. As leaders process awareness of self personally and professionally, a cognitive organization of placement and self-categorization occurs. For SGD individuals, searching for belonging within groups may be based on the disclosure of identity and an overall need for social acceptance. The study confirmed many individuals seek a greater understanding of self-identity while navigating social communities where authenticity can be fully presented and appreciated. Participants described the importance of acceptance within SGD communities and affinity networks, noting the ease of disclosing identity to other SGD individuals with less judgment or fear of retaliation. Other participants discussed the easing of mental stress when engaged in supportive communities. Finding belonging in workplace affinity

networks increased self-efficacy and empowered awareness around advocacy and relational formations.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 examined relational factors contributing to the disclosure of identity and presentation of authentic self. Relational considerations were significant and evident in responses centering around safety within communities and trusting relational configurations. Positionality was depicted as a systematic power structure and form of relational reciprocity (Scholl et al., 2018). Identifying other SGD leaders in positions of power encouraged genuine displays of self for many participants. Positionality also afforded a platform to encourage collaborative conversations regarding identity and authenticity. Because of positionality, opportunities to change workplace norms and constructs were afforded. Increasing the visibility of SGD within leadership roles also empowered the participants to be more forthcoming and share aspects of personal identity. Utilizing positionality as a tool to integrate perspectives of marginalized voices ensured representation was valued. Many participants noted a decrease or, often, lack of SGD individuals within leadership positions. Acknowledging a lack of SGD presence in leadership often increased identity salience in the workplace.

Safety within relationships and the process of disclosing identity were prevalent among all participants. Understanding social community configurations allows SGD individuals to determine the method of self-disclosing identity. Forging strong relationships allowed individuals to disclose with less presumed judgment. Workplace conditions forged in collaborative relationships were seen as more supportive environments to disclose identity. Reciprocal relational leadership where empathy and active listening were present was deemed highly imperative for SGD individuals to disclose. Relational communities are altered as school

communities change each year, causing interruptions within social circles. Leadership changes may mean realigning personal and professional needs within power structures and initiating another disclosure cycle.

Findings Relating to Existing Literature

Supported throughout the literature was the importance of forming workplace relationships while navigating social acceptance when disclosing identity. Participants described safely exploring workplace conditions and relationships to present authentic self (Haltom & Ratcliff, 2020; Henderson et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2019;). Through the visibility of other SGD individuals in leadership positions, participants could observe SGD individuals leading authentically. The empowerment of identity within positionality increases representation and provides opportunities to embolden perceptions of self and follow others leading authentically (McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018). Participants acknowledged moments of engaging with other SGD leaders and sharing experiences, increasing visibility, and promoting more inclusive practices within the workplace (Calvard et al., 2020; Cech & Rothwell, 2020). Collegial relationships were strengthened through the sharing of identity, working to confront inequities within workplace conditions for SGD individuals.

Safely exploring relationships where identity can be freely expressed was also mentioned by participants and in the literature. Within social communities, participants expressed desires to challenge systems that diminished authenticity while acknowledging safe boundaries around self-disclosure within leadership roles (Gomes & Felix, 2019; Haltom & Ratcliff, 2020). As leaders, perspectives were provided regarding interactions with various individuals who may not embrace or acknowledge their identity. Within communities containing resistance towards authentic presentation of self, the participants internalized the relational roles needed to

circumvent situations while attending to issues of trust. (Calvard et al., 2020; Cerezo et al., 2020). Knowing the counternarrative within relational communities was prevalent in the narrative of the participants. As a leader, understanding relationships are formed with others who may disagree with how an SGD individual chooses to present self in the workplace was a focus for many participants. Increased identity salience may correlate to a non-supportive workplace culture and climate (Chang & Bowring, 2017; Duarte, 2020). Although SGD leaders seek communities that are inclusive and promote belonging, increasing awareness regarding opposing perspectives often rooted in cis-heteronormative assumptions and binary thinking should be examined (Gaither, 2018; Resnik & Galupo, 2019).

Findings in Context of the Theoretical Frameworks

Both relational leadership theory and social identity theory corroborated the importance of relationships and the expression of authentic self. Forging meaningful and trusting relationships among coworkers provided opportunities to share aspects of identity from personal and professional perspectives. Participants discussed the importance of engaging in conversations around identity, providing multiple platforms to share, listen, and reflect. The relational considerations between leader and follower focused on building greater empathy and enacting genuine care regarding the feelings and perspectives of individuals (Russell et al., 2021). Relationships formed trusted bonds between leader and follower, extending the examination of identity across the school community. Appreciated by participants were leaders willing to deconstruct social norms through cultivating partnership. Creating a partnership where individuals could share perspective without judgment enhanced feelings of belonging and acceptance.

Social identity theory was notable within the results, illustrating the significant need for meaningful connections and engagement within social communities. The participants indicated knowing who was part of their chosen community as imperative to identity disclosure. Internalizing fear of rejection or prejudice may cause SGD individuals to avoid persons within the workplace or social communities who are perceived as non-accepting and judgmental (Barnett et al., 2020). Experiences with microaggressions in workplace communities was also mentioned by participants, heightening issues of trust and fear of discrimination (Fattoracci et al., 2021; Nair et al., 2019; Resnik & Galupo, 2019). Through allyship, the participants mentioned a community of protection willing to embrace their identity while advocating for needed workplace support. Visibility of allies, interrupting microaggressions, and confronting hostile workplace environments increases connectedness and assists in reducing stereotypes (DeVita & Anders, 2018; Shelton, 2022; Wessel, 2017). Belonging consisted of identifying individuals willing to form trusting partnerships and sustain mutual relationships, creating a shared identity often aligning to similar perspectives (Krug et al., 2021).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 explored workplace conditions influencing the decision-making processes SGD leaders take when disclosing aspects of identity. The decision-making process was twofold for participants. Decision-making was described by participants as the process of disclosing aspects of identity to support others, increasing visibility of how aspects of personal identity intersect with leadership decisions. Understanding a situation and the choices being made within a specific moment may require SGD to disclose aspects of self to increase awareness or provide additional perspective.

Increasing SGD representation through positionality, professional learning, advocacy, and policy shifts were all seen as opportunities to increase visibility and encourage openness. Several participants noted comfort in disclosing aspects of identity based on representation within leadership positions. Visibility yielded more significant discussions regarding representation and needed support. As a form of workplace support, SGD navigated situations where their visibility within situations afforded perspective and comfort. Within those relational situations, a connection was made between recipients promoting greater understandings and aligning perspectives. Increasing the visibility acted as a form of mentorship for some participants, empowering each other and enhancing systems of support.

When examining the actions needed to execute decisions, participants strongly indicated the need to follow through with intended plans beyond initial statements. Workplace conditions supportive of SGD perspectives and commitment to ensuring decisions are fully capitalized across leadership were critical. Participants noted how being supported by other leaders in the decision-making process is vital, substantiating and reinforcing decisions made are credible. Promoting workplace conditions integrating space for exploring personal awareness related to identity through collaborative conversations and training opportunities was significant for many participants.

Findings Relating to Existing Literature

Engaging in workplace actions supporting the authentic presentation of SGD leaders through increased visibility is evidenced through the deconstruction of cis-heteronormative structures (Lucero, 2022). The literature review revealed reoccurring navigation of cis-heteronormative perspectives preventing many SGD from presenting authentically (Gamboa et al., 2021; Haddad, 2019; Steck & Perry, 2017); substantiated through participant perspectives.

Decisions to disclose identity may be complicated by workplace policies and practices adopting a cis-heteronormative structure, further encouraging the salience of identity (Resnik & Galupo, 2019). Participants in the study reported a more systemic need for embedding SGD topics within training and onboarding, leading to shifts in workplace culture and climate.

As SGD individuals obtain leadership positions, participants stated the importance of engaging with other SGD leaders to form relationships, creating a trusted networking system within leadership roles (Lee, 2020a, 2020b; McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018). Participants described addressing identity needs across disciplines and offices to create equitable strategies and support aligning to system goals. For many participants, visibility for equitable workplace practices was moving beyond policy and procedures (Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Pryor, 2020). Evident through participant experiences was the need to create visibility through staff reflection around identity and the intentional invitation of individuals into the conversations. Modeling intentional visibility through the deliberate actions of SGD leaders was mentioned to educate others and afford a space to further process identity (Wang et al., 2021). Participants also recognized the importance of addressing workplace culture and climate when disclosing identity and the motivation to educate adult learners within similar supports afforded to students (Wright et al., 2019).

Findings in Context of the Theoretical Frameworks

Relational leadership theory was apparent in the findings showing the importance of workplace conditions influencing relational bonds between individuals. Participants noted the importance of coaching others through identity integration and authenticity while navigating workplace conditions (Yip et al., 2020). The relational process extended beyond individuals, with participants indicating a distinct relationship needed within workplace constructs to present

authentically. Community partnerships are formed through equitable workplace conditions supported by collaborative interpersonal connections (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Wenger, 1998). Along with seeking trusting relationships between coworkers, the participants sought nurturing workplace environments supportive of inclusiveness and empowerment of perspectives beyond a cis-heteronormative structure.

Finding social communities embracing openness regarding self was evidenced by the narratives of participants and connected to social identity theory. Participants expressed workplace conditions evoking genuine investment in diverse perspectives cultivated stronger communities to share experiences as SGD individuals and disrupt oppressive systems. Investing in equitable learning opportunities and structures promoting authenticity beyond SGD identity was frequently mentioned. The deliberate action of leaders to address inequalities was seen as an act of encouraging belonging and confronting resistance towards identities beyond a perceived societal binary.

Limitations

Three limitations pertain to this study. Limitations within qualitative research may consist of unavoidable factors beyond the researcher's control (Ancker et al., 2021). The first limitation was obtaining a diverse sample of SGD leaders to participate in the study and provide an array of perspectives. Due to a limited sample population within a prescribed geographical area, the transferability of the findings should be taken into consideration. Recruitment of participants through private Facebook leadership groups and personal LinkedIn posts reduced the participant outreach. Opening the study to a wider geographical area and expanding outreach for participants could strengthen the credibility of the study. Present in the study was a diverse sample of SGD

individuals. Robust data collected based on perceptions contributed to data saturation after 13 interviews, increasing the transferability of the design and findings (Makel et al., 2022).

The second limitation related to personal bias based on responses provided by participants correlating to personal experiences. Integrating direct quotes throughout the study ensured reliability in the findings. Reflective journaling aided in separating personal connections based on similar experiences to the perceptions provided by the participants, increasing reliability. Implementing member checking, field notes, bracketing, as well as a personal reflective journal ensured confirmability of results and mitigated personal biases (Johnson et al., 2020).

Ensuring each participant provided substantial data to address the interview questions was the third limitation. Perceptions of authentic self in the workplace may change over time or within social communities through relational interactions, workplace conditions, community engagement, and laws and regulations (Barnett et al., 2020; Wenger, 1998). Participants may have experiences within one school or community. Obtaining participants with multiple school experiences may provide greater depth and richness to results.

Recommendations

The research addressed and filled a gap in the literature regarding SGD individuals needs as a public school leader along with workplace conditions needed to present authentically, addition research is needed. Demographic information was not collected from participants on religious affiliation, partnership status, family status which may reveal additional intersectionalities regarding identities and may deepen the research. This study utilized a basic qualitative approach and utilizing a case study or comparative study involving SGD leaders and allies may also contribute to the research regarding workplace conditions and authentic

leadership. Recommendations for further studies were separated into the categories of geographical, generational, positionality, and educational sector. Additional recommendations are provided for public schools to reflect on current workplace practices consisting of leadership training and mentorship, professional learning, policy and practice, and visibility in the hiring practice.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The study considered the problem from the perspective of SGD public school leaders within a specific geographical area. At the time of the study, the geographical area utilized was generally supportive of SGD individuals and leaders. The need to discover participant experiences outside of the selected geographical area is evidenced through state mandates and LGBTQIA+ protections which may undermine workplace equality and communities of acceptance. Participants who worked in public schools outside of the select geographical area brought forth additional perspectives, often unsupportive of identity disclosure and authenticity, warranting additional research. Further research examining workplace conditions, identity disclosure, and authenticity within one selected state or school organization would also be merited.

Alongside geographical considerations, generational experiences should be studied in greater detail. Although the ages of the participants ranged from 29 to 59, integrating generational perspectives within the study may reveal perspectives based on generational differences. Gathering perspectives of identities not represented in the study, including asexual and intersex leaders are needed to advance equitable workplace conditions and practices. Similar studies should integrate various geographical locations, generational considerations, and identities to heighten generalizability.

In the study, I utilized SGD public school leaders within a broad spectrum of positions. Narrowing the focus to one common position within public school leadership, such as a principal focused on the needs of a singular school community may provide additional insight into equitable supports needed to present authentically. The results of the study provided valuable insight into actional support systems, including integrating professional learning communities and affinity networks to provide additional communities of support. Affording opportunities to cultivate communities of acceptance aids in increasing and advancing advocacy on SGD identity (Allan et al., 2019; Pryor, 2020).

Another recommendation is to consider educational sectors outside the K–12 focus, including private education, higher education, and charter schools. Expanding the study beyond the public school sector would inform select educational organizations on the perceptions of workplace support regarding SGD leader needs and increase organizational awareness. Some results may not be transferable where policies do not support SGD individuals. Although the transferability may not directly correlate due to specific organizational policy, it may reveal needed support and equitable workplace conditions for SGD leaders to lead authentically and disclose aspects of identity.

Recommendations for Public School Leadership

Public schools should enhance equitable training and support for all individuals around sexual and gender identity. Participants indicated a greater need to integrate identity work within all staff training and onboarding processes. Obtaining feedback regarding levels of understanding of identity may guide public schools in formulating training and professional learning opportunities. Additional training for all leaders should include in-depth discussions on integrating inclusive language, interrupting cis-heteronormative structures, and opportunities to

reflect and confront personal bias. Opportunities to discuss aspects of identity should reside beyond a singular presentation or training and be embedded within workplace structures. Participants shared the importance of integrating identity within equity work, acknowledging a desire for equitable support and protections. Engaging outside consultants specializing in SGD support to provide guidance and training should be considered to engage in deeper discussions regarding identity. Specialized consultants may offer alternative perspectives, exploring systematic needs from a global perspective.

Relational awareness may be increased through affording opportunities to share about self, identity, significant others, and family (Eliyaho-Levi, 2022). Targeted exploration of themes based on leadership training around identity could provide additional insight for needed workplace support and locating gaps in equitable practices. Providing opportunities within training and meeting spaces to integrate identity was also a shared perspective of participants to encourage and initiate conversations on identity. Sharing pronouns within meeting spaces, signatures, and other social community spaces may increase visibility and reduce the stigma around identity disclosure (Resnik & Galupo, 2019).

Affinity networks for SGD leaders may further contribute to workplace productivity and provide additional social connections (Dennissen et al., 2019; Slootman, 2022). Promoting opportunities to engage in mentorship may also increase communities for SGD individuals to further explore identity. Engaging in relationships focused on shared experiences may strengthen belonging and provide additional opportunities for community. Participants noted the importance of trusting relationships with allies to disclose aspects of identity and engage in personal conversations.

Professional Learning

Workplace professional learning practices should be examined to reflect diverse perspectives addressing the varying identities of staff and community participants (Lucero, 2022). Through greater awareness of the vision associated with professional learning, supports may be examined for inclusive language, empowerment of identity, and sparking conversations regarding identity presentation and disclosure. Focused training regarding identity and leadership authenticity should be embedded within professional learning systems, organizational communities, and core communities. Engaging SGD individuals to share perspectives may provide greater authenticity within professional learning and workplace communities. Additionally, professional learning should integrate actionable protocols and structures for infusing identity into professional learning sessions beyond a singular training opportunity.

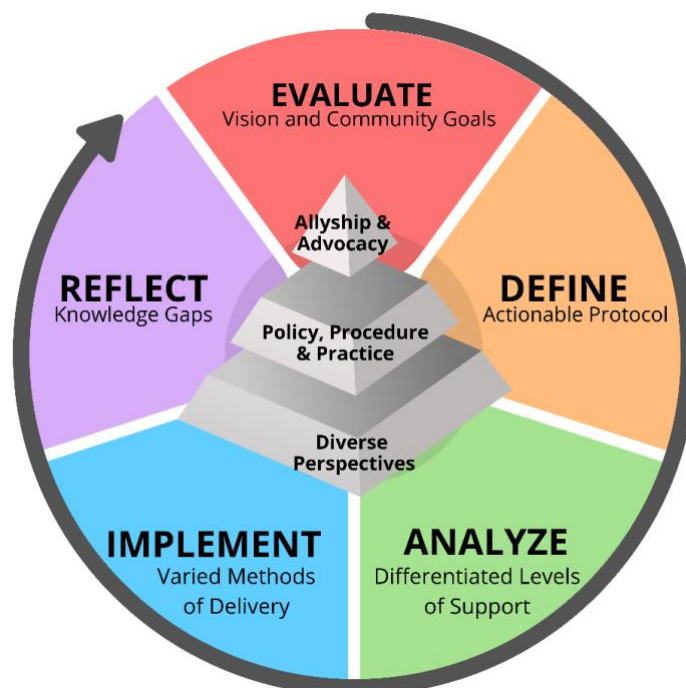
Figure 5 provides a visual for addressing diverse perspectives through a reflexive professional training cycle. Integration of diverse perspectives as a foundational core of the creation and facilitation process provides valuable insight. Utilizing diverse perspectives to review and provide guidance on organization policy and procedures then enhances equitable workplace practices. Advocacy practices enhancing allyship through identity and inclusion conversations promote agency within the professional learning continuum (Rodriguez et al., 2022). Increasing workplace support for allyship through professional learning and coaching opportunities may interrupt systems of workplace oppression and elevate visibility. Critical to integrating identity work within professional learning is the sharing of perspectives to encourage dialogue, raise awareness, and reflect on personal bias (Gamboa et al., 2021; Hossain et al., 2020).

Communities should first evaluate professional learning models and practices, expanding on goals and a commitment to infuse inclusive practices by identifying community strengths and

gaps in knowledge. As communities define actionable protocol for professional learning, obtaining diverse perspectives assists in creating support, raising awareness and starting conversations. Training should be catered for all levels of understanding of identity. Providing guidance on terminology, pronouns, fluidity of identity, and intersectionality may assist individuals in navigating awareness regarding identity and authenticity. When analyzing needed training and support, differentiating workplace needs may be accomplished through tiered systems of support, building capacity based on feedback and conversation. The implementation phase caters to topics obtained through feedback, led by SGD individuals willing to share experiences and engage participants in conversation. Delivery models may include face-to-face, online, or hybrid models created to increase advocacy and awareness. The reflective stage examines knowledge gaps and initiates further discussion on professional learning opportunities.

Figure 5

Addressing Diverse Perspectives Professional Learning Training Cycle



Policy and Practice

Although participants frequently mentioned dictated policy structures supporting youth, most felt a disconnect in wording regarding SGD adults. Policy creation should include insight from SGD individuals and ensure representation is presented throughout the process. Clearly defining workplace policies supporting SGD individuals and any actionable factors when violating policy should be considered. Proper enforcement of policy should be strictly adhered to and outlined within the policy. Policies should be frequently visited and adapted to align with SGD needs and ensure inclusive language is integrated. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion should also be indicated within workplace policies alongside available system supports for SGD individuals and allies. Incorporating inclusive language across policies, communications, curriculum, and other venues, as well as pertinent documentation, addresses the commitment toward identity visibility.

Hiring Practices

Increasing the visibility of SGD leaders within leadership positions was also addressed by participants. Many participants noted hiring an SGD leader should not require the individual to advocate for an entire community or provide all training on identity and SGD topics. A collaborative partnership should be fostered, reducing the stigma around identity disclosure and discussions for all individuals while continuing to consider how personal identity intersects with professional identity (Wang et al., 2021). Public schools should elevate and retain a community commitment to diversity and inclusion, achieved through equitable hiring practices, increased professional learning opportunities, and providing support such as affinity networks. Building a workplace environment where individuals present authentically and can infuse personal identity into professional identity may positively impact motivation and productivity.

Implications for Leadership

Continuing to advocate for diversity is imperative for public school workplaces, focusing on supporting SGD individuals once acquiring a leadership position. The findings in the study have workplace implications for organizational and core communities. Relational leadership involved empathic connections resulting in moments of vulnerability and genuine care. Participants discussed the need to be appreciated as a leader and validated as SGD individuals. When exploring acceptance as a leader and individual, considerations regarding relational leadership should be considered as SGD individuals navigate identity within social and workplace communities, simultaneously.

By focusing on the organizational and core community perspectives, approaches to attend to the needs of SGD leaders and individuals in presenting authentically may be tailored to promote and integrate equitable workplace conditions. Additionally, workplace conditions within the organizational and core communities should confront cis-heteronormative assumptions around identity, including SGD individuals navigating personal bias. As public schools examine culture and climate, the investment into supporting SGD leaders should consider how diversity is valued and processed, continuously advocating for inclusivity (Calvard et al., 2020; Goswami & Goswami, 2018; Resnik & Galupo, 2019). Staff members would benefit from specialized training sessions focused on identity awareness which may enhance relationships within the workplace and encourage further discussions.

Within both the organizational community and the core community, SGD leaders rely on personal awareness to disclose and present authentically (Parmenter et al., 2022). The organizational community could benefit from SGD leaders collaborating on organizational policies and workplace structures to increase visibility and protection through the sharing of

perspectives. Acquiring the perspectives of SGD leaders requires the organizational community to form trusting relationships and examine social constructs from a systematic approach that impedes authentic presentation of self. The core community should build upon daily relational interactions and establish a workplace culture fostering conversation on identity and diversity. The finding of the study indicated the need for taking action and accountability by the organizational community, ensuring efforts toward more equitable and inclusive workplace conditions are afforded.

Conclusion

This basic qualitative study aimed to obtain perspectives of SGD public school leaders to better understand conditions influencing the presentation and disclosure of identity within leadership roles. Corroborated through the findings of the research was the need to lead authentically through equitable workplace conditions supporting identity, identity disclosure, and trusting communities. Validating SGD leaders and presented identities within the workplace encourages authenticity in leadership (Steffens et al., 2019).

Seven themes were identified during the data analysis, correlating to three research questions. Research Question 1 explored the authentic presentation of self as an SGD leader from an awareness perspective. Participants communicated the importance of knowing self and how personal identity infuses within professional identity alongside the embracement of workplace communities supportive of authenticity and the manipulation of systems deterring authenticity. Research Question 2 determined the contribution of relationships towards disclosure of identity and display of authenticity. Relational influences and belonging within social communities enabled participants to disclose aspects of identity and present authentic self within leadership roles. Research Question 3 centered on the connectedness of equitable

workplace conditions on the decisions to present authentic self for SGD leaders. Participants shared perceptions of equitable conditions where authenticity was embraced while detailing contradictions to practices promoting inclusivity.

As SGD individuals assume leadership positions and advance positionality, examining workplace conditions promoting or suppressing authentic presentation of self is significant. The study asserted the need to review workplace conditions and opportunities to elevate perspectives while confronting oppressive systems which minimize perspective and encourage salience of identity. As public schools attend to inclusiveness within communities, obtaining perspectives of SGD leaders and advocating for environments beyond societal binaries can strengthen relationships and advance acceptance while confronting presumed stereotypes (Dirik, 2020; Klysing et al., 2021). School communities should continue examining practices suppressing authenticity to further promote identity disclosure and the authentic presentation of self. Future research should focus on how authenticity emboldens identity empowerment within social communities, cultivating harmony from a cacophony of perspectives within a school landscape.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent for Participation in Research

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Project Title: Sexual and Gender Diverse K–12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership: A Qualitative Study

Researcher: Shane Jensen (he/him), Doctor of Education Candidate

Organization: American College of Education

Ph: [REDACTED] **Email:** shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu

IRB Approval

This research study has been approved by the American College of Education Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approved this study on March 7, 2022. A copy of the approval letter will be provided upon request.

Introduction

My name is Shane Jensen (he/him) and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Melissa Ortega. I am providing information about the project and inviting you to be part of this research. Before you decide, if you would like to contact me with any questions, please feel free to do so. If you have questions about the research process at any time, you may contact me and I will explain.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the perspectives of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school leadership roles. You are being asked to participate in this research study which will assist with data collection necessary to fulfill the purpose of the research. This is a basic qualitative study which will allow for the exploration and analysis of themes related to the perspectives of SGD leaders in K–12 public school education as they relate to conditions supporting aspects of identity self-disclosure in roles of school leadership.

Research Design and Procedures

This study will use a basic qualitative methodology and research design. The study will include three potential components for data collection. First, you will be asked to complete the following questionnaire which will screen for appropriate participants and collect open text responses. Following the recruitment questionnaire, 18 participants will be selected to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview. These interviews will be conducted via video conferencing using the Zoom platform due to travel limitations resulting from geographic diversity and the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Finally, interview participants will be invited to share artifact materials relevant to this study such as professional learning, affinity group membership, organization affiliation, etc.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research due to your experience as a sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leader in public school education leadership who can contribute to the understanding of conditions which support SGD leaders to self-disclose identity in public school leadership roles, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria include: identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+, trans, non-binary), a current educational leader in a K–12 public school in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) consisting of assistant principal, principal, team leader, or central office leader; has been in an educational leadership position one year or more. This study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race/ethnicity. Leadership is defined as an academic or administrative role including principal, assistant principal, department chair, team leader, resource teacher, curriculum specialist, or central office leader.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is voluntary. At any time if you wish to end your participation in the research study you may do so by contacting me to explain that you are opting out of the study. There will be no repercussions for leaving the study.

Procedures

You are being invited to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to complete the following questionnaire. You may also be asked to participate in an in-depth video conference interview over Zoom and/or asked to share any relevant artifacts related to the research study. The types of questions you will be asked will range from demographic details to direct inquiries about your experiences as an SGD leader in public school education as it relates to conditions supporting authentic self.

Duration

The questionnaire portion of the study will require approximately 10–30 minutes to complete. If you are chosen to be interviewed, the time allotted will be 45–60 minutes via video conferencing using Zoom at a time convenient for you. Prior to the interview you will be asked to provide permission to have the interview recorded to allow for the creation of an accurate transcript for data. You will be invited to review and provide any corrections to the transcript.

Risks

You will be asked to share personal and confidential information. You may feel uncomfortable talking about certain topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

While there be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us learn more about conditions which support sexual and gender diverse leaders to present and lead

authentically in school leadership roles. The potential study will aid in understanding the perspectives of SGD in school leadership roles and how the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you provide throughout the study outside of the research team. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of research participants. Any information about you will be coded and not have a direct correlation, which would directly identify you as the participant. Specific job titles and institution names will not be used. Your information will be secured in encrypted, password protected files in a password protected personal computer with two-factor authentication.

Sharing the Results

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. Publication of the results is anticipated so other interested people may learn from the research.

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions, you may ask those now or at any time during the research process. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu. The research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. You may contact this group with any questions at IRB@ace.edu.

Appendix B

Recruitment Questionnaire

Research Participant Recruitment Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to collect information and identify potential participants for a doctoral dissertation research study. The research is related to sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders and presentation of authentic self in roles of K-12 public school leadership.

Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw the study at anytime with no penalty. You will not be compensated for participation in this study.

Informed Consent

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Project Title: Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership: A Qualitative Study
 Researcher: Shane Jensen (he/him), Doctor of Education Candidate
 Organization: American College of Education
 PI: [REDACTED] Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu

IRB Approval

This research study has been approved by the American College of Education Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approved this study on <insert date>. A copy of the approval letter will be provided upon request.

Introduction

My name is Shane Jensen (he/him) and I am a doctoral candidate student at American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Melissa Ortega. I am providing information about the project and inviting you to be part of this research. Before you decide, if you would like to contact me with any questions, please feel free to do so. If you have questions about the research process at any time, you may contact me and I will explain.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of SGD educational leaders, practitioners, professionals, and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within K-12 public school leadership roles. You are being asked to participate in this research study which will assist with data collection necessary to fulfill the purpose of the research. This is a basic qualitative study which will allow for the exploration and analysis of themes related to the lived experiences of SGD leaders in K-12 public school education as they relate to conditions supporting aspects of identity self-disclosure in roles of school leadership.

Research Design and Procedures

This study will use a basic qualitative methodology and research design. The study will include three potential components for data collection. First, you will be asked to complete the following questionnaire which will screen for appropriate participants and collect open text responses. Following the recruitment questionnaire, 18 participants will be selected to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview. These interviews will be conducted via video conferencing using the Zoom platform due to travel limitations resulting from geographic diversity and the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Finally, interview participants will be invited to share artifact materials relevant to this study such as professional learning, affinity group membership, organization affiliation, etc.

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You are being invited to take part in this research due to your experience as a sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leader in public school education leadership who can contribute to the understanding of conditions which support SGD leaders to self-disclose identity in public school leadership roles, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria include: identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+ trans, non-binary), a current educational leader in a K-12 public school in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) consisting of assistant principal, principal, team leader, or central office leader; has been in an educational leadership position one year or more. This study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race/ethnicity. Leadership is defined as an academic or administrative role including principal, assistant principal, department chair, team leader, resource teacher, curriculum specialist, or central office leader.

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Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is voluntary. At any time if you wish to end your participation in the research study you may do so by contacting me to explain that you are opting out of the study. There will be no repercussions for leaving the study.

Procedures

You are being invited to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to complete the following questionnaire. You may also be asked to participate in an in-depth video conference interview over Zoom and/or asked to share any relevant artifacts related to the research study. The types of questions you will be asked will range from demographic details to direct inquiries about your experiences as an SGD leader in public school education as it relates to conditions supporting authentic self.

Duration

The questionnaire portion of the study will require approximately 10-30 minutes to complete. If you are chosen to be interviewed, the time allotted will be 45-60 minutes via video conferencing using Zoom at a time convenient for you. Prior to the interview you will be asked to provide permission to have the interview recorded to allow for the creation of an accurate transcript for data. You will be invited to review and provide any corrections to the transcript.

Risks

You will be asked to share personal and confidential information. You may feel uncomfortable talking about certain topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

While there be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us learn more about conditions which support sexual and gender diverse leaders to present and lead authentically in school leadership roles. The potential study will aid in understanding the lived experiences of SGD in school leadership roles and how the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you provide throughout the study outside of the research team. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of research participants. Any information about you will be coded and not have a direct correlation, which would directly identify you as the participant. Specific job titles and institution names will not be used. Your information will be secured in encrypted, password protected files in a password protected personal computer with two-factor authentication.

Sharing the Results

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. Publication of the results is anticipated so other interested people may learn from the research.

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions you may ask those now or at any time during the research process. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu. The research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. You may contact this group with any questions at IRB@ace.edu.

CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT. I have read the information about this study. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study. I give my permission to videotape the interview if selected as a participant in the study. I understand that by providing and typing my name, date, and email address, I am electronically signing this document.

☐ I consent

☐ I do not consent

First and Last Name

Date consenting to the study

MM DD YYYY

/ /

Email Address

Participant Selection Screening

The following questions will determine whether you meet the inclusion criteria for participant consideration in this research study.

Gender: How do you think of yourself (select all that apply)?

☐ Agender

☐ Bigender

☐ Genderfluid

☐ Genderqueer

☐ Gender non-binary

☐ Gender non-conforming

☐ Intersex

☐ Man

☐ Non-binary

☐ Two-Spirit

☐ Woman

☐ Prefer to self-describe below

☐ Choose not to disclose

If you selected prefer to self-describe gender, provide information here:

Your answer _____

Do you identify a gender different from that assigned at birth?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to answer

Do you consider yourself:

☐ Transgender/Non-binary

☐ Cisgender

What are your pronouns?

If you choose not to disclose, type N/A.

Your answer _____

Sexual Orientation: How do you think of yourself (select all that apply)?

☐ Asexual

☐ Bisexual

☐ Gay

☐ Heterosexual or straight

☐ Lesbian

☐ Pansexual

☐ Queer

☐ Questioning

☐ Prefer to self-describe below

☐ Choose not to disclose

☐ Other: _____

If you selected prefer to self-describe sexual orientation, provide information here:

Your answer _____

Do you work in public school education?

☐ Yes, I currently work in public school education

☐ No, I currently do not work in public education

☐ I have never worked in public school education

What is your current leadership position in public education?

☐ Assistant Principal

☐ Central Office Staff

☐ Curriculum Specialist

☐ Department Chair

☐ Principal

☐ Resource Teacher

☐ School Board Member

☐ Superintendent

☐ Team Leader

☐ I serve in a leadership role not listed

☐ Other: _____

Approximately how many years would you say you have worked in a public school leadership role?

☐ Less than 3 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 5-7 years

☐ 7-10 years

☐ 10-15 years

☐ 15-20 years

☐ 20+ years

Section 4 of 5

Demographic Information

The following questions, relating to personal identity, provide additional context for the research study and will only be used for purposes of analyzing data, trends, and themes by the researcher.

Age *

Short answer text

Current state of residence *

- District of Columbia
- Delaware
- Maryland
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia

Which category describes your racial/ethnic identity (select all that apply)? *

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian or Asian Indian

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic or Latina/e/o/x/@

☐ Middle Eastern or North African

☐ Multiethnic

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ White

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Prefer to self-describe

☐ Other...

If you selected prefer to self-describe racial/ethnic identity, provide information here:

Long answer text

Participant Information

The following questions are possible prompts that may or may not be asked during the interview.

1. What are the labels you use to describe yourself? *

Your answer

2. Describe your current position and experience as a K-12 public school leader. *

Your answer

3. How did you learn about this study? *

Your answer

4. Why are you interested in participating in this study? *

Your answer

Appendix C

Institutional Review Board Approval



March 07, 2022

To : Shane Jensen
Melissa Ortega, Dissertation Committee Chair

From : Institutional Review Board
American College of Education

Re: IRB Approval

"Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership: A Qualitative Study"

The American College of Education IRB has reviewed your application, proposal, and any related materials. We have determined that your research provides sufficient protection of human subjects.

Your research is therefore approved to proceed. The expiration date for this IRB approval is one year from the date of review completion, March 07, 2023. If you would like to continue your research beyond this point, including data collection and/or analysis of private data, you must submit a renewal request to the IRB.

Candidates are prohibited from collecting data or interacting with participants if they are not actively enrolled in a dissertation sequence course (RES6521, RES6531, RES6541, RES6551, RES6561, RES6302) and under the supervision of their dissertation chair.

Our best to you as you continue your studies.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hamlett
Chair, Institutional Review Board
American College of Education

Appendix D**Letter of Permission to Social Media Organizations**

Date: TBD

[Person to Whom You are Writing]

[Title]:

Dear [insert name]:

My name is Shane Jensen and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education (ACE) writing to request permission to recruit members from your organization to participate in a questionnaire and interviews. This information will be used for my dissertation research entitled: Sexual and Gender Diverse K–12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership. The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the perspectives of SGD K–12 public school educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals and the conditions influencing the presentation of an authentic self.

I am seeking 30 participants to complete the questionnaire and planning to select 18 of those for further in-depth interviews. The study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Participants may be asked to provide artifacts related to their experience such as professional learning experiences, affinity group affiliations, etc. Participants will be provided with anonymity for this study.

Important contacts for this study include:

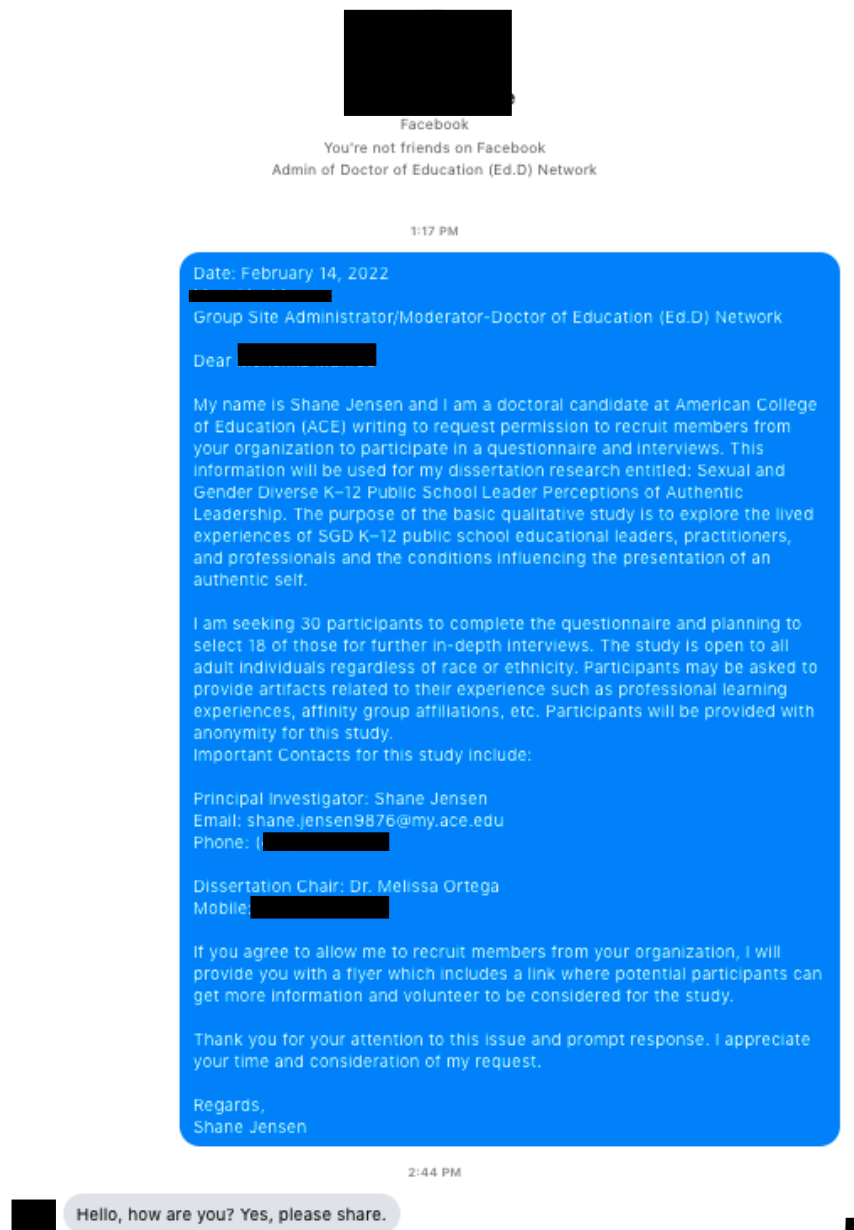
Principal Investigator: Shane Jensen
Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu
Phone: [REDACTED]

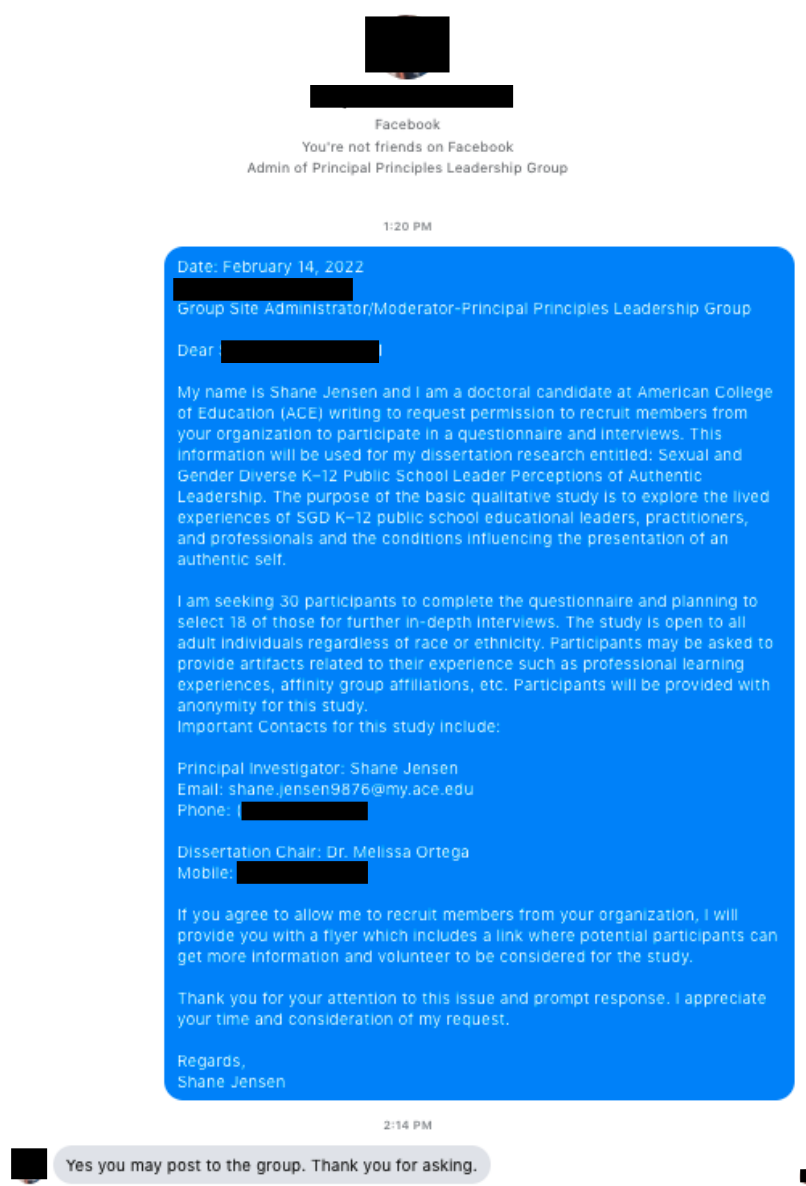
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Melissa Ortega
Mobile: [REDACTED]

If you agree to allow me to recruit members from your organization, I will provide you with a flyer which includes a link where potential participants can get more information and volunteer to be considered for the study.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards, Shane Jensen





Facebook
You're not friends on Facebook
Admin of Working Folks' Guide to a PhD/EdD

7:08 PM

Date: February 14, 2022

Group Site Administrator/Moderator-Working Folks' Guide to a PhD/EdD

Dear [REDACTED]

My name is Shane Jensen and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education (ACE) writing to request permission to recruit members from your organization to participate in a questionnaire and interviews. This information will be used for my dissertation research entitled: Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership. The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of SGD K-12 public school educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals and the conditions influencing the presentation of an authentic self.

I am seeking 30 participants to complete the questionnaire and planning to select 18 of those for further in-depth interviews. The study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Participants may be asked to provide artifacts related to their experience such as professional learning experiences, affinity group affiliations, etc. Participants will be provided with anonymity for this study.

Important Contacts for this study include:

Principal Investigator: Shane Jensen
Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu
Phone: [REDACTED]

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Melissa Ortega
Mobile: [REDACTED]

If you agree to allow me to recruit members from your organization, I will provide you with a flyer which includes a link where potential participants can get more information and volunteer to be considered for the study.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,
Shane Jensen

Admin

You have our approval here! Please post and let us know if you need anything more official. Best of luck!

Date: February 14, 2022

[REDACTED]

Group Site Administrator/Moderator

Dear [REDACTED]

My name is Shane Jensen and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education (ACE) writing to request permission to recruit members from your organization to participate in a questionnaire and interviews. This information will be used for my dissertation research entitled: Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership. The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of SGD K-12 public school educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals and the conditions influencing the presentation of an authentic self.

I am seeking 30 participants to complete the questionnaire and planning to select 18 of those for further in-depth interviews. The study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Participants may be asked to provide artifacts related to their experience such as professional learning experiences, affinity group affiliations, etc. Participants will be provided with anonymity for this study.

Important Contacts for this study include:

Principal Investigator: Shane Jensen
Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu
Phone: [REDACTED]

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Melissa Ortega
Mobile: [REDACTED]

If you agree to allow me to recruit members from your organization, I will provide you with a flyer which includes a link where potential participants can get more information and volunteer to be considered for the study.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,
Shane Jensen

[REDACTED]

Have you used this group yet? **Dissertation Survey Exchange**

Dissertation Survey Exchange – Share Your Research Study, Find Participants

I moderate these groups and you may post here:

#DoctoralMomLife

LiteratureReviewResources

Dissertation Success Forum

Parents Completing Doctoral Degrees

You could ask admin of these large groups

PhiniseD/FinishEdD (Drs/Future Drs) #WhoGotNext

Working Folks' Guide to a PhD/EdD



Facebook
You're not friends on Facebook
Admin of The Qualitative Study Group

Thu 7:13 PM

Date: February 14, 2022

[REDACTED]
Group Site Administrator/Moderator-The Qualitative Study Group

[REDACTED]

My name is Shane Jensen and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education (ACE) writing to request permission to recruit members from your organization to participate in a questionnaire and interviews. This information will be used for my dissertation research entitled: Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership. The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of SGD K-12 public school educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals and the conditions influencing the presentation of an authentic self.

I am seeking 30 participants to complete the questionnaire and planning to select 18 of those for further in-depth interviews. The study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Participants may be asked to provide artifacts related to their experience such as professional learning experiences, affinity group affiliations, etc. Participants will be provided with anonymity for this study.

Important Contacts for this study include:

Principal Investigator: Shane Jensen
Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu
Phone: [REDACTED]

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Melissa Ortega
Mobile [REDACTED]

If you agree to allow me to recruit members from your organization, I will provide you with a flyer which includes a link where potential participants can get more information and volunteer to be considered for the study.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,
Shane Jensen

[REDACTED]

You have approval to post your flyer in the Qualitative Study group once you receive IRB approval from your university.



Facebook

You're not friends on Facebook

1:10 PM

Date: February 18, 2022

Group Site Administrator: LGBTQ+ of Virginia

Dr. [REDACTED]

My name is Shane Jensen and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education (ACE) writing to request permission to recruit members from your organization to participate in a questionnaire and interviews. This information will be used for my dissertation research entitled: Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership. The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of SGD K-12 public school educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals and the conditions influencing the presentation of an authentic self.

I am seeking 30 participants to complete the questionnaire and planning to select 18 of those for further in-depth interviews. The study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Participants may be asked to provide artifacts related to their experience such as professional learning experiences, affinity group affiliations, etc. Participants will be provided with anonymity for this study.

Important Contacts for this study include:

Principal Investigator: Shane Jensen
Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu
Phone: [REDACTED]

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Melissa Ortega
Mobile: [REDACTED]

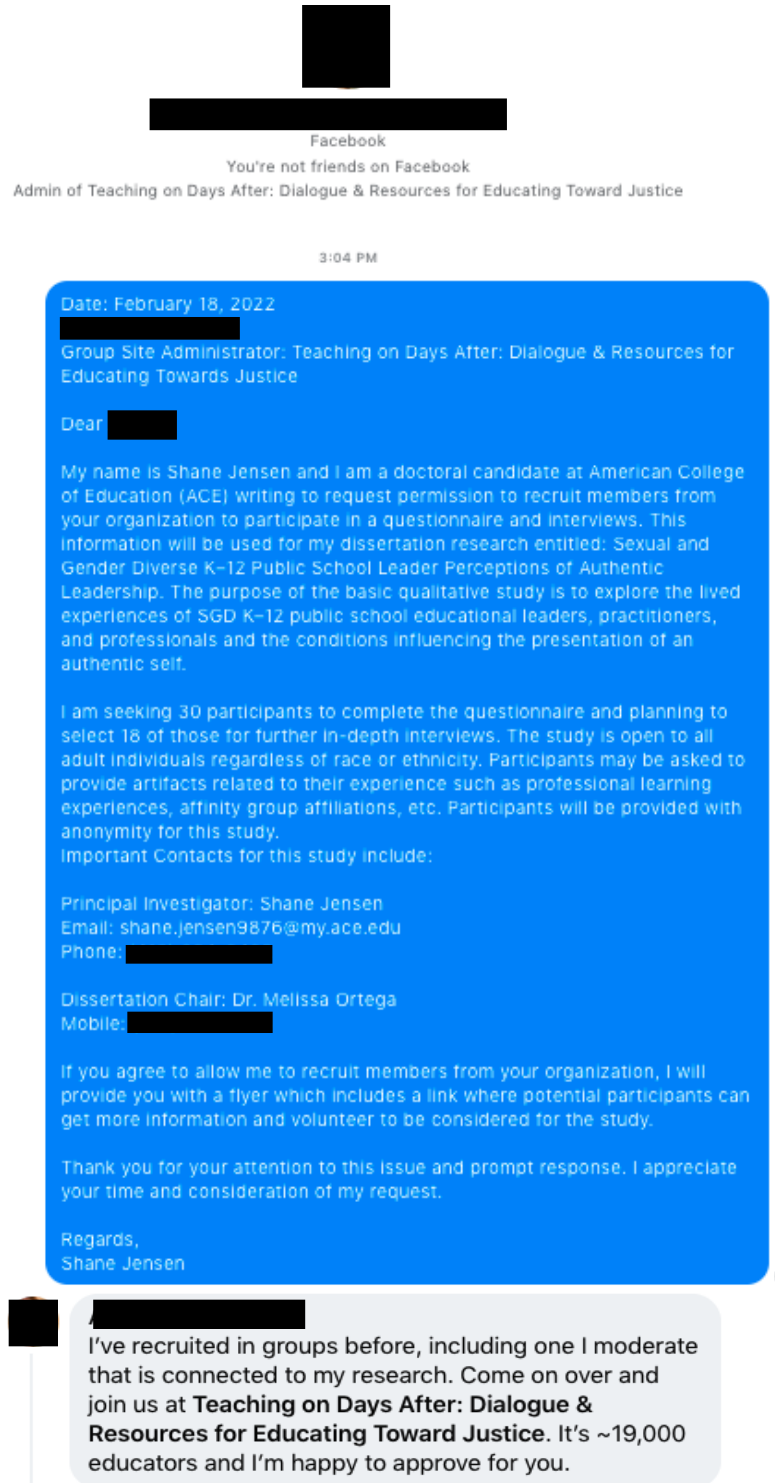
If you agree to allow me to recruit members from your organization, I will provide you with a flyer which includes a link where potential participants can get more information and volunteer to be considered for the study.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,
Shane Jensen

1:53 PM

Your request is approved. I will approve the post



Appendix E

Recruitment Flyer




Research Study Opportunity for Sexual & Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leaders



Sexual and Gender Diverse K-12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership

This study is seeking to understand the experiences of sexual and gender diverse educational leaders in public schools and conditions which support and influence self-disclosure of identity and presentation of authentic self. The study is being conducted in fulfillment of dissertation requirements for a doctoral program.

Participants will not be compensated but will contribute to understanding conditions which support sexual and gender diverse leaders to present and lead authentically in K-12 public school leadership roles.

Participation will include:

- Completion of a brief online questionnaire
- A 45–60 minute interview with the researcher via Zoom
- An invitation to review and provide feedback on a transcript of your interview
- Possible brief follow-up questions if necessary

Time commitment for this study will be 1-2 hours total.

Location

- Interviews will be conducted via Zoom at a time and date convenient for the participant.

Are you eligible?

Eligible participants are individuals who:

- Identify as Sexual and Gender Diverse
- Work in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia in a K-12 public school setting
- Hold a position of leadership (principal, assistant principal, department chair, team leader, resource teacher, curriculum specialist, or central office leader)

The study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race/ethnicity

If you have questions about participating, please contact the researcher:

Shane Jensen (he/him)
Doctoral Candidate
American College of Education

Phone/Text: [REDACTED]
 Email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu

TO APPLY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY, PLEASE COMPLETE SCAN THE QR CODE OR USE THE SECURE QUESTIONNAIRE LINK BELOW:

<https://forms.gle/jP8hAifmyd4rtGiT8>

IRB Approval No.:

IRB Approval Date:

Appendix F

Participant Interview Invitation

Dear [insert participant name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study examining the experiences of sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individuals in K–12 public school leadership. Your informed consent was provided on the recruitment questionnaire you completed. However, you may ask questions or withdraw consent at any time.

This study is specifically seeking to address the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do perspectives of SGD leaders contribute to presentation of authentic self within K–12 public school settings?

Research Question 2 How is presentation of authentic self for SGD K–12 public school leaders influenced by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable K–12 public school workplace practices influence decisions to disclose SGD identity?

Your participation involves an interview to take place over Zoom and a date and time of your choosing. The interview will be scheduled for an hour but is expected to last 45-60 minutes. The interview will be recorded to allow for generation of a transcript and other data collection purposes. You will be provided with a copy of your interview transcript and invited to ask questions or make amendments to ensure it accurately reflects your perspectives and experiences.

The interview will not be viewed by anyone other than the researcher and will be saved in an encrypted file in a password protected computer with two-factor authentication. Your confidentiality will be protected throughout this process. You will be given a pseudonym which will be used to identify you in all documents related to the study. Other identifying information such as workplace names, specific locations, and job titles will be generalized.

The following questions will guide the interview:

1. Describe your experiences as a sexual/gender diverse individual working in K–12 public school education.
2. Talk about the factors which have attributed to your decision to self-disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the K–12 public school workplace.
3. Describe a moment or situation when you chose not to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and the reasoning behind the decision?
4. Describe a moment or situation when you chose to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and why do you think it was important?
5. How would you describe the importance of being able to bring your authentic self (as it relates to your SGD identity) to your workplace?
6. How would you describe your educational organizations culture and climate in relation to your identity and presentation of authentic self?

7. From your experiences, describe any recommendations in which K–12 public schools could allow SGD leaders to lead more authentically in the workplace.
8. Is there anything not addressed in these questions you would like to add or expand upon?

I am providing them in advance to give you an opportunity to reflect on the questions before we meet. You are also invited to bring or share any artifacts you feel may be useful. This includes documents such as membership in professional organizations, SGD affinity groups, professional learning opportunities, or anything else you deem useful.

Please let me know if you have time available the week of [insert week]. Once you confirm your availability, I will send you a calendar invitation to participate in our Zoom meeting.

If you have any questions about this process or anything else related to the study, please reach out to me at any time at shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu or (██████████)

Thank you,

Shane D. Jensen

Appendix G

Interview Questions/Instrumentation

Questionnaire Open Text Questions

1. What are the labels you use to describe yourself?
2. Describe your current position and experience as a K–12 public school leader.
3. How did you learn about this study?
4. Why are you interested in participating in this study?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Prompts

1. Describe your experiences as a sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individual working in K–12 public school education.
 - a. How has your career progressed?
 - b. How long have you worked in K–12 public education?
 - c. How has your personal identity influenced your professional identity?
 - d. What is your workplace environment like for SGD leaders?
 - e. What differences do you notice regarding interactions in school versus larger system-wide settings?
2. Talk about the factors which have attributed to your decision to self-disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the K–12 public school workplace.
 - a. How open are you regarding your identity in the workplace?
 - b. Has your level of comfort regarding your identity evolved over time?
 - c. What obstacles do you face regarding your identity in the workplace?
 - d. How do your relationships change regarding your level of openness?
3. Describe a moment or situation when you chose not to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and the reasoning behind the decision?
 - a. How has the workplace community influenced disclosure decisions?
 - b. What are your feelings around concealing identity in the workplace?
 - c. What factors contributed to your concealment of identity?
4. Describe a moment or situation when you chose to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and why do you think it was important?
 - a. How did the workplace conditions influence the decision?
 - b. What are your feelings around disclosing identity in the workplace?
 - c. What factors contributed to your disclosure of identity?
5. How would you describe the importance of being able to bring your authentic self (as it relates to your SGD identity) to your workplace?
 - a. How does your awareness influence your decisions?
 - b. How has the identity disclosure of colleagues or stakeholders influenced your disclosure decisions?

- c. How does decision-making influence your ability to present authentically?
6. How would you describe your educational organizations culture and climate in relation to your identity and presentation of authentic self?
 - a. How do workplace policies contribute to identity presentation?
 - b. How has workplace climate contributed to your disclosure of identity?
 - c. Describe conditions where you felt supported in disclosing your identity and presenting authentically.
 7. From your experiences, describe any recommendations in which K–12 public schools could allow SGD leaders to lead more authentically in the workplace.
 - a. Describe your ideal workplace conditions to disclose identity and lead authentically.
 - b. Describe proactive steps K–12 public schools can take to affirm the identity of leaders?
 - c. What strategies and assistance do you have for leaders struggling to disclose identity and lead authentically?
 8. Is there anything not addressed in these questions you would like to add or expand upon?

Appendix H

Interview Question Matrix

RQ1: How do perspectives of SGD K–12 public leaders contribute to presentation of authentic self within public school settings?

RQ2: How is presentation of authentic self for SGD K–12 public school leaders influenced by workplace relationships?

RQ3: How do equitable K–12 public school workplace practices influence decisions to disclose SGD identity?

	Background	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
I1	X	X	X	X
I2		X		X
I3				X
I4		X		X
I5			X	X
I6		X		X
I7		X		
I8	X	X	X	X

Note: "RQ" refers to research questions. "I" refers to interview questions and prompts. "X"

indicates which research question aligns to the interview question.

Appendix I

Identification of Subject Matter Experts and Validation Agreement

SME #1: [REDACTED]

Greetings [REDACTED]

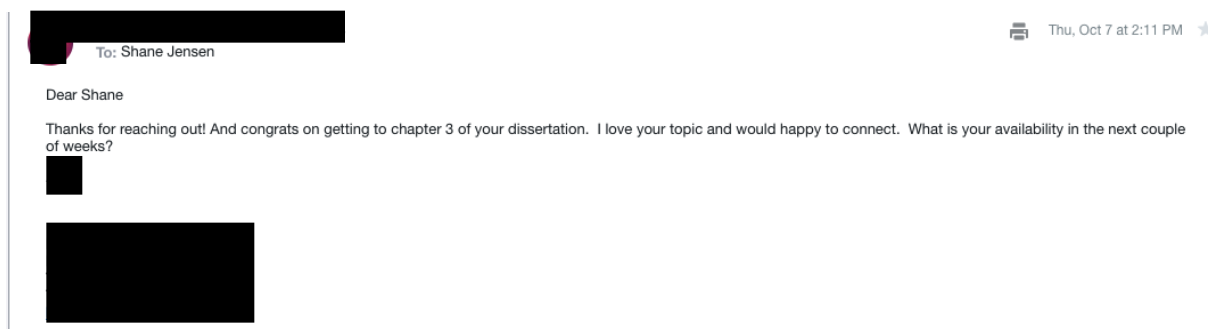
Thank you for your work and research increasing the literature around sexual and diverse individuals. I am reaching out as a doctoral candidate at American College of Education and currently in Chapter 3. Utilizing a basic qualitative study, I plan to interview 15-18 SGD school leaders to examine the conditions impacting self-disclosure of identity in public school leadership positions. The theories integrated in the study are Relational Leadership Theory and Social Identity Theory.

I am working on the questionnaire which will be constructed in a Google form. As part of the questionnaire, individuals will answer 6 questions that will be the same on the semi-structured interviews. I am writing to seek SME assistance in reviewing the questionnaire and provide any additional guidance in the process. As a SME, I would need written feedback and your written willingness to assist in the process.

I can be reached by email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu or my cell is [REDACTED]

Thank you for the consideration and I am happy to talk further to address any questions.

-Shane Jensen



SME #2: [REDACTED]

Subject: Shane Jensen - SME assistance - Sexual and Gender Diverse Leaders

Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you for your work and research increasing the literature around sexual and diverse individuals. I am reaching out as a doctoral candidate at American College of Education and currently in Chapter 3. Utilizing a basic qualitative study, I plan to interview 15-18 SGD school leaders to examine the conditions impacting self-disclosure of identity in public school leadership positions. The theories integrated in the study are Relational Leadership Theory and Social Identity Theory.

I am working on the questionnaire which will be constructed in a Google form. As part of the questionnaire, individuals will answer 6 questions that will be the same on the semi-structured interviews. I am writing to seek SME assistance in reviewing the questionnaire and provide any additional guidance in the process. As a SME, I would need written feedback and your written willingness to assist in the process.

I can be reached by email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu or my cell is [REDACTED]

Thank you for the consideration and I am happy to talk further to address any questions.

-Shane Jensen



Subject: Subject Matter Expert

Sure I'd be more than happy to take a look. 😊

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SME #3: [REDACTED]

Subject: Shane Jensen - SME assistance - Sexual and Gender Diverse Leaders

Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you for your work and research increasing the literature around sexual and diverse individuals. I am reaching out as a doctoral candidate at American College of Education and currently in Chapter 3. Utilizing a basic qualitative study, I plan to interview 15-18 SGD school leaders to examine the conditions impacting self-disclosure of identity in public school leadership positions. The theories integrated in the study are Relational Leadership Theory and Social Identity Theory.

I am working on the questionnaire which will be constructed in a Google form. As part of the questionnaire, individuals will answer 6 questions that will be the same on the semi-structured interviews. I am writing to seek SME assistance in reviewing the questionnaire and provide any additional guidance in the process. As a SME, I would need written feedback and your written willingness to assist in the process.

I can be reached by email: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu or my cell is [REDACTED]

Thank you for the consideration and I am happy to talk further to address any questions.

-Shane Jensen

[REDACTED]
To: Shane Jensen

Dear Shane:

Thanks for reaching out to me, I'd be happy to assist you. It would probably be helpful for me to understand how you're framing the study, so if you could send me chapters 1 and 2 in addition to the questionnaire, that would be great.

Best,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix J

Email to Subject Matter Experts with Instructions for Validation

Greetings [insert SME name]-

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback regarding my dissertation. Below, you will find links to the recruitment questionnaire using a Google link (click the next button when in the form to view the next section) and a form to provide further detailed feedback regarding the questionnaire and the interview questions. The interview questions are listed in the SME feedback form and feedback can be provided for each interview question. You will find the purpose and overview of the study in the participant recruitment questionnaire.

I would appreciate an email back providing any feedback in relation to the items and how they align to my research questions and the study along with the readability and depth of the interview questions. The interview questions tie back to the research questions (RQ1 focuses on awareness, RQ2 focuses on relationships, RQ3 focuses on decision-making) and your thoughts around valuable sub-questions would be appreciated.

Research Question 1: How do perspectives of SGD leaders contribute to the presentation of authentic self within public school settings?

Research Question 2: How is the presentation of authentic self for SGD public school leaders impacted by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable public school workplace practices impact decisions to disclose SGD identity?

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SME FEEDBACK FORM](#)

Please email me if you have any further questions: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu. Responses are appreciated within five business days.

Thank you,

Shane Jensen

From: Shane Jensen <shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, October 26, 2021 8:16 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: SME Review of Questionnaire and Interview Questions

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - USE CAUTION]

Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback regarding my dissertation. Below, you will find links to the recruitment questionnaire using a Google link (click the next button when in the form to view the next section) and a form to provide further detailed feedback regarding the questionnaire and the interview questions. The interview questions are listed in the SME feedback form and feedback can be provided for each interview question.

I would appreciate an email back providing any feedback in relation to the items and how they align to my research questions and the study along with the readability and depth of the interview questions. The interview questions tie back to the research questions (RQ1 focuses on awareness, RQ2 focuses on relationships, RQ3 focuses on decision-making).

Research Question 1: How do the lived experiences of SGD leaders contribute to the presentation of authentic self within public-school settings?

Research Question 2: How is the presentation of authentic self for SGD public-school leaders impacted by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable public-school workplace practices impact decisions to disclose SGD identity?

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE](#)


[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SME FEEDBACK FORM](#)

Please email me if you have any further questions: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu. Responses are appreciated within five business days.

Thank you,
Shane Jensen

CONFIDENTIAL EMAIL: This e-mail is intended solely for the addressee. The information contained herein is confidential. Any dissemination, distribution or copying of this e-mail, other than by its intended recipient, is strictly prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify me immediately and delete this message.

Re: SME Review of Questionnaire and Interview Questions

 Tue 11/2/2021 5:33 PM
To: Shane Jensen

Please be cautious

This email originated from outside of ACE organization

Hi Shane,

I completed the questionnaire below. I think your research questions make a lot of sense. Some of my feedback to the interview questions (for example, the question about recommendations) speak to aligning the research questions with the interview questions. Let me know if you have any questions about those comments or want to discuss that more.

Good luck with your research - I think this is a very exciting study!

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Shane Jensen <shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu>
Sent: Friday, October 29, 2021 9:33 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: SME Review of Questionnaire and Interview Questions

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback regarding my dissertation. Below, you will find links to the recruitment questionnaire using a Google link (click the next button when in the form to view the next section) and a form to provide further detailed feedback regarding the questionnaire and the interview questions. The interview questions are listed in the SME feedback form and feedback can be provided for each interview question. You will find the purpose and overview of the study in the participant recruitment questionnaire.

I would appreciate an email back providing any feedback in relation to the items and how they align to my research questions and the study along with the readability and depth of the interview questions. The interview questions tie back to the research questions (RQ1 focuses on awareness, RQ2 focuses on relationships, RQ3 focuses on decision-making) and your thoughts around valuable sub-questions would be appreciated.

Research Question 1: How do the lived experiences of SGD leaders contribute to the presentation of authentic self within public-school settings?

Research Question 2: How is the presentation of authentic self for SGD public-school leaders impacted by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable public-school workplace practices impact decisions to disclose SGD identity?

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SME FEEDBACK FORM](#)

Please email me if you have any further questions: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu. Responses are appreciated within five business days.

Thank you,
Shane Jensen

CONFIDENTIAL EMAIL: This e-mail is intended solely for the addressee. The information contained herein is confidential. Any dissemination, distribution or copying of this e-mail, other than by its intended recipient, is strictly prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify me immediately and delete this message.

RE: SME Review of Questionnaire and Interview Questions



To: Shane Jensen

Please be cautious

This email originated from outside of ACE organization

Hi Shane,

I just completed the online form. I provided a lot of feedback on your interview questions. If you would like a further conversation, just let me know.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Shane Jensen

Tue 10/26/2021 8:17 AM

To: [REDACTED]



Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback regarding my dissertation. Below, you will find links to the recruitment questionnaire using a Google link (click the next button when in the form to view the next section) and a form to provide further detailed feedback regarding the questionnaire and the interview questions. The interview questions are listed in the SME feedback form and feedback can be provided for each interview question.

I would appreciate an email back providing any feedback in relation to the items and how they align to my research questions and the study along with the readability and depth of the interview questions. The interview questions tie back to the research questions (RQ1 focuses on awareness, RQ2 focuses on relationships, RQ3 focuses on decision-making).

Research Question 1: How do the lived experiences of SGD leaders contribute to the presentation of authentic self within public-school settings?

Research Question 2: How is the presentation of authentic self for SGD public-school leaders impacted by workplace relationships?

Research Question 3: How do equitable public-school workplace practices impact decisions to disclose SGD identity?

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SME FEEDBACK FORM](#)

Please email me if you have any further questions: shane.jensen9876@my.ace.edu. Responses are appreciated within five business days.

Thank you,
Shane Jensen

RE: SME Review of Questionnaire and Interview Questions



Wed 11/3/2021 8:56 AM

To: Shane Jensen

**Please be cautious**

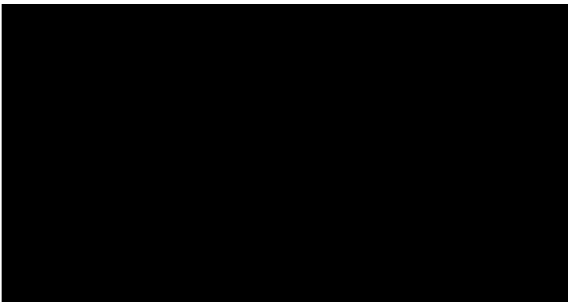
This email originated from outside of ACE organization

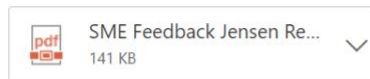
Good morning, Shane:

I completed the feedback form for the recruitment questionnaire and the survey questions. I give you permission to utilize the communication in your appendix.

Good luck with your research! I look forward to reading the results of this important work!

Best,





Greetings [REDACTED]

A few edits have been made within the recruitment questionnaire. To align with the recruitment criteria, a few sections have been eliminated as they did not address the specifics within the criteria. Those sections included age, relationship status, racial/ethnic identity, relationship type, and question regarding children. Although they may contribute to personal identity, the specific questions are not addressed in the recruitment criteria. I have attached the updated recruitment questionnaire and appreciate any feedback. The changes to the recruitment questionnaire better align with the recruitment criteria found below.

Participant selection criteria include: Must identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+, trans, non-binary); a current Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) K-12 public school leader; and a current educational leader in a public-school setting consisting of assistant principal, principal, team leader, or central office leader; has been in an educational leadership position one year or more.

Thanks, Shane Jensen

Re: Jensen - Recruitment Questionnaire SME Feedback

Dear Shane,

This looks good to me. My only suggestion is that to publish this work eventually you really need to collect **age** and **race/ethnicity** of the participants. Reviewers/editors will expect to be able to describe your sample and for you to be able to comment on the generalizability of your findings.

This can be done implicitly through your inclusion criteria statement. Age is relevant to your recruitment/IRB because participants must be 18 years or older (so asking about age on your demographic/recruitment criteria is a way of validating that).

Often, I will include in my recruitment that the study is open to individuals of all racial/ethnic backgrounds. This serves as a welcoming statement to POC, and this would also allow you to confirm racial/ethnic background in your recruitment questionnaire. Not including race/ethnicity in your demographic questionnaire will be a red flag to POC who might not think you are attending to their identities as relevant to the experiences as a queer educator.

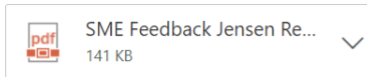
Could you change your criteria to:

Participant selection criteria include: Must identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+, trans, non-binary); a current Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) K-12 public school leader; and a current educational leader in a public-school setting consisting of assistant principal, principal, team leader, or central office leader; has been in an educational leadership position one year or more. **This study is open to all adult individuals regardless of race/ethnicity.**

I think the goal of aligning the questionnaire to your recruitment statement is important, but you will really limit your ability to describe your sample, and to use age/race/ethnicity in your analysis by leaving them out of the recruitment questionnaire. And, as I mentioned above, it will be very difficult to publish these data without these having data on these important variables for your entire sample.

Hope that helps and happy to answer any other questions that arise!

[REDACTED]



Greetings [REDACTED]

A few edits have been made within the recruitment questionnaire. To align with the recruitment criteria, a few sections have been eliminated as they did not address the specifics within the criteria. Those sections included age, relationship status, racial/ethnic identity, relationship type, and question regarding children. Although they may contribute to personal identity, the specific questions are not addressed in the recruitment criteria. I have attached the updated recruitment questionnaire and appreciate any feedback. The changes to the recruitment questionnaire better align with the recruitment criteria found below.

Participant selection criteria include: Must identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+, trans, non-binary); a current Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) K-12 public school leader; and a current educational leader in a public-school setting consisting of assistant principal, principal, team leader, or central office leader; has been in an educational leadership position one year or more.

Thanks, Shane Jensen

Hi Shane:

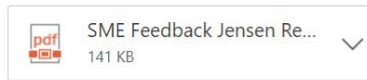
I hope you're well. This looks good. Two comments:

Number 7 is missing a word – should say “Do you identify with a gender different from that assigned at birth?”

I'm sure the decision to narrow your geographic region was purposeful, but if I recall correctly, you need quite a few participants. I don't know if you're going to find enough people who meet your criteria in the limited geographic region. Just something to think about.

Best,

[REDACTED]



Greetings [REDACTED]

A few edits have been made within the recruitment questionnaire. To align with the recruitment criteria, a few sections have been eliminated as they did not address the specifics within the criteria. Those sections included age, relationship status, racial/ethnic identity, relationship type, and question regarding children. Although they may contribute to personal identity, the specific questions are not addressed in the recruitment criteria. I have attached the updated recruitment questionnaire and appreciate any feedback. The changes to the recruitment questionnaire better align with the recruitment criteria found below.

Participant selection criteria include: Must identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+, trans, non-binary); a current Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia (DELMARVA) K-12 public school leader; and a current educational leader in a public-school setting consisting of assistant principal, principal, team leader, or central office leader; has been in an educational leadership position one year or more.

Thanks, Shane Jensen

Hi Shane,

I only have one comment regarding Question 12. It's possible that both option 2 and 3 are true. I think what you want to ask is "No, I currently do not work in public education but have in the past." I know you only want those who are current.

So, you could just have two options

Yes, I currently work in education

No, I do not currently work in education or have in the past.

Do you work in public school education?

Mark only one oval.

Yes, I currently work in public school education

No, I currently do not work in public education

I have never worked in public school education

[REDACTED]

1 2 3

Appendix K

Subject Matter Expert Research Instrument Feedback

The select panel of subject matter experts (SME) review and provide feedback regarding a recruitment questionnaire and interview questions created by the researcher. Utilizing a Google form to capture SME feedback, suggestions on wording and interview question analysis result in written changes necessary to better align with the study and research questions. Screenshots of the SME questionnaire and interview feedback form provide clarity in wording. Changes to the interview questions shown within the interview screenshot document indicate implementation of SME feedback and suggestions within the document and in the right-hand margins. A final review of edited interview questions provides an opportunity to refine questioning based on SME feedback.

First and Last Name of Subject Matter Expert	1. Provide any feedback on Section 1 of the questionnaire: Research Participant Questionnaire Overview	2. Provide any feedback on Section 2 of the questionnaire: Informed Consent	3. Provide any feedback on Section 3 of the questionnaire: Participant Selection Screening	4. Provide any feedback on Section 4 of the questionnaire: Demographic Information	5. Provide any feedback on Section 5 of the questionnaire: Additional Information	Provide any additional information regarding the recruitment questionnaire
	Because there are two "ands" close together in the study title, it makes it a bit hard to read. Can you change to something like: Authentic Identity and Sexual/Gender Diverse School Leaders in K-12 Public School Settings: A Qualitative Study	NA	Participant Selection: when you say "Must identify as sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+; trans, non-binary)" this means the person must be sexual diverse AND gender diverse, which I don't think you mean. You need and/or there as someone could identify as heterosexual and transgender. I think this needs to be reworded to: Do you identify with a gender different from your assigned sex at birth? One of your criteria for participation is having at least one year of experience, so this should be changed to: 1 to 3 years: Approximately how many years would you say you have worked in a public school leadership role? You might also want to have a "less than one year" response that would potentially weed out anyone who doesn't meet the criteria.	Race/ethnicity: Prefer not to self-describe below should say Prefer to self-describe below	Avoid yes/no questions, even though I understand what you're asking. Change question 2 to Please describe your current position and experience as a school leader.	
	It might be helpful to specify K-12 leadership when saying school leadership (if that is, in fact, your target population). The wording "may be terminated at any time" makes it sound like you (as researcher) could terminate them as participants at anytime. I'm not sure that's the message you are hoping to convey. Instead, I think you mean that "participation is voluntary and they can choose to discontinue the study at anytime with no penalty", something like that (or with no negative consequences).	Under Introduction - I think you should put your pronouns after your name. This will be inviting to participants and show that you will respect their pronouns should they choose to participate. Purpose: Again, I would state k-12 Research Design and Procedures: may be helpful to describe the anticipated length of the interview.	Under Participant Selection: I would find it much easier to follow if you bulleted the inclusion criteria. Procedures: "you will be asked to complete the following questionnaire", maybe add "following screening questionnaire" Benefits: the two sentences in this section feel redundant to me. Confidentiality: only speaks to dissertation defense. Do you want to leave open the possibility of publishing these data? If so, that should be disclosed and you should ensure that you would protect their identity. Do you plan to have the interviews transcribed? If so, at that point with the actual video be deleted? Usually once interviews are transcribed the videos are deleted. (Otherwise, you might want to explain the purpose of the recording the interviews).	I actually don't see any demographics included on this form. I would think you would want to collect some - especially in case you have more than 18 people submit interest - having some demographic info (gender, orientation, race/ethnicity, leadership role, etc.) may help you ensure that you have a diverse sample	I think the DURATION section is confusing (the way it talks about duration for the questionnaire and then the duration for the interview all in the same section).	
	I think you need an additional word in this sentence. See at (CAPS) suggestion. "The research is related to sexual and gender diverse (SGD) leaders and (ONES)	Participants have to some how identify that meet some criteria. You seeking a specific sample of the population.	No feedback - this section looks good.	No feedback - this section looks good.	I'm not sure I understand question 1 "What are the labels you use to describe yourself?" You previously ask gender and sexual orientation. What additional	Don't hesitate to contact me if you need further clarification or additional information. -CK

First and Last Name of Subject Matter Expert	Interview Question 1: Describe your experiences as a sexual and gender diverse (SGD) individual working in public-school education.	Interview Question 2: Can you describe your level of comfort regarding your awareness of openness relating to your sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace?	Interview Question 3: Describe what disclosing aspects of sexual and diversity identity in the workplace looks like to you. What factors attributed to your process in self-disclosing?	Interview Question 4: Can you describe a moment or situation when you chose not to disclose your sexual orientation or gender identity within the workplace and the reasoning behind the decision?
1				
2	<p>Again, the "and" between sexual and gender implies participants will be both. Just be careful of what you're asking there.</p> <p>Are you asking for experiences directly related to these identities? Or, just in general? You might want to clarify that.</p>	<p>This question doesn't make sense to me. What are you trying to get at? How out someone is at work? Maybe reframe to:</p> <p>Describe how open you are at work about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity.</p>	<p>I would reword this, too. Something like:</p> <p>Talk about the factors that have attributed to your decision to self-disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity at work.</p> <p>Be mindful of double-barreled questions, too. You don't want to ask participants two different questions at the same time as you might get the answer to one and not the other.</p>	<p>Avoid the yes/no. Simply change to: Describe a moment....</p>
3	I like this question - good broad opening - assuming you will have asked basic demographics both related to identity and work demographics (how long in public education, how long in current leadership role, etc.)	<p>not sure what "Regarding your awareness of openness relating to"</p> <p>Looking at questions 2 and 3 they look fairly similar. How are you seeing them as different (what do you imagine the answers would look like to these questions - and how different might they be - knowing that might help you decide whether it would make sense to combine them or rephrase so that you are getting at different concepts)</p>	I think the wording of this question is a little confusing "Disclosing aspects of. . . ." feels awkward and makes it so that I'm not clear on what you are asking. This seems to assume that all participants have disclosed at least somewhat. Not sure if you will have a demographic question allowing you to know how out they are / how much they have disclosed in their school environment.	I like this question. You could pair it with a parallel question (Can you describe a moment or situation when you chose to disclose - and why did you think it was important to. . .)
4	This is a very broad question. Even in the workplace there are different settings. Interactions within an ones specific school/office versus the a	You can go deeper with this question too. Has the level of comfort evolved over time? Has it changed due to contact with specific people/community?	Does this question assume there is already some level of disclosure? The wording is weird to me. You asking about the factors that contribute to the	Question assumes there has been such moment. Let them describe first. Then ask about the reasoning. Don't ask both questions at the

First and Last Name of Subject Matter Expert	Interview Question 5: How have workplace relationships between colleagues or stakeholders been affected by your disclosure of identity?	Interview Question 6: How would you describe the educational organizations policies, culture, climate, and initiatives in relation to your identity and presentation of authentic self?	Interview Question 7: What recommendations would you make which would better allow SGD leaders to lead authentically in the public-school workplace?	Interview Question 8: Is there anything you would like to add which was not addressed in these questions regarding workplace conditions and presentation of authentic self as a SGD school	Provide any additional information regarding the interview questions
	<p>Because of the setting being the school, you may be asking two different things here. I think schools are unique settings because of the stakeholders: kids, families, communities. Someone might be very open with colleagues, but very private with their identities when interfacing with stakeholders. This may come out in this question and might be something worth paying attention to.</p> <p>This question assumes directionality (it assumes that disclosure has impacted workplace relationships). It is just as likely that workplace relationships have impacted peoples decisions of disclosure. I would find a way to ask about the relation between 1) workplace relationships and 2) disclosure of identity - in a way that doesn't assume the direction of the relationship. Otherwise this ends up feeling like a leading question.</p> <p>You're assuming that all workplace relationships are equal. Are you also interested in how relations with</p>	<p>"organizations" needs an apostrophe</p> <p>And, I would ask... How would you describe your school's policies, culture... "the educational organization's" seems less personal.</p> <p>Your research questions have authenticity front and center. I am wondering if before you ask this question you add in a question of 1) how important it is to you to be able to bring your authentic self (as it related to your SGD identity) to your workplace. Knowing this will allow you to better understand how your participants are approaching question 6</p> <p>Each one of those things listed may be different. You can't ask all of them at the same time.</p>	<p>Recommendations in general or recommendations in their school? I think you mean in general? If so, maybe something like this?</p> <p>Describe ways in which public-schools could allow SGD leaders to lead more authentically in the workplace</p> <p>Who is the audience for the recommendations? Are these recommendations for the educational institution/public schools (in order to inform policy)? Are these recommendation to employees who might want to make the workplace more inclusive? or to SGM employees who are trying to navigate these spaces? You will want to think on this as it relates to your research questions.</p> <p>You make this more personal. From your experiences, are there any recommendations</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>sometimes you use "workplace" which it is technically, but really you are specifically asking about the public school system. Think about when it might be helpful to be more specific in your language.</p> <p>You may want to start by reminding the of some of the things you talked about. "We've gone over a lot of</p>	<p>I think you will get a lot of rich data from these questions!</p> <p>Good luck!</p> <p>Overall this sounds like you're writing survey questions. This should feel</p>

Interview Questions for Participant

1. Describe your experiences as a sexual/gender diverse individual working in <u>K-12</u> public school education.	Shane Jensen Deleted: and	
a. How has your career progressed?	Shane Jensen	Deleted:
b. <u>How long have you worked in K-12 public education?</u>		
c. How has your personal identity impacted your professional identity?		
d. What is your workplace environment like for SGD leaders?		
e. <u>What differences do you notice regarding interactions in school versus larger system-wide settings?</u>		
2. <u>Talk about the factors that have attributed to your decision to self-disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the K-12 public school workplace.</u>	Shane Jensen	Deleted: Describes your level of ↓
a. How open are you regarding your identity in the workplace?	Shane Jensen	Deleted: ?
b. <u>Has your level of comfort regarding your identity evolved over time?</u>		
c. What obstacles do you face regarding your identity in the workplace?	Shane Jensen	Formatted ↓
d. Do your relationships change regarding your level of openness?	Shane Jensen	Deleted: ? ↓
3. Describe a moment or situation when you chose not to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and the reasoning behind the decision?	Shane Jensen	Formatted ↓
a. How has the workplace community impacted disclosure decisions?		
b. What are your feelings around concealing identity in the workplace?		
c. What factors contributed to your concealment of identity?		
4. <u>Describe a moment or situation when you chose to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and why do you think it was important?</u>	Shane Jensen	Formatted ↓
a. How did the workplace conditions impact the decision?	Shane Jensen	Formatted ↓
b. What are your feelings around disclosing identity in the workplace?	Shane Jensen	Formatted ↓
c. What factors contributed to your disclosure of identity?	Shane Jensen	Formatted ↓
5. <u>How would you describe the importance of being able to bring your authentic self (as it relates to your SGD identity) to your workplace?</u>	Shane Jensen	Deleted: How have workplace ↓
a. How does your awareness impact your decisions?	Shane Jensen	Deleted: do relationships impact ↓
b. How has the identity disclosure of colleagues or stakeholders impacted your disclosure decisions?	Shane Jensen	Deleted: What types of workplace ↓
c. <u>How does decision-making impact your ability to present authentically?</u>	Shane Jensen	Deleted: <8>How does the social ↓
6. How would you describe <u>your</u> educational organizations <u>culture and climate</u> in relation to your identity and presentation of authentic self?	Shane Jensen	Deleted: the ↓
a. How do workplace policies contribute to identity presentation?	Shane Jensen	Deleted: policies, culture, climate, ↓
b. How has workplace climate contributed to your disclosure of identity?		
c. Describe conditions where you felt supported in disclosing your identity and presenting authentically.		
7. <u>From your experiences, describe any recommendations in which K-12 public schools could allow SGD leaders to lead more authentically in the workplace.</u>	Shane Jensen	Deleted: What recommendations ↓
<hr/>		
a. Describe your ideal workplace conditions to disclose identity and lead authentically.		
b. Describe proactive steps <u>K-12</u> public schools can take to affirm the identity of leaders?		
c. What strategies and assistance do you have for leaders struggling to disclose identity and lead authentically?		
8. Is there anything you would like to add which was not addressed in these questions <u>you would like to add or expand upon?</u>	Shane Jensen Deleted: regarding workplace conditions and presentation of authentic self as an SGD school leader	

Greetings Dr. [insert SME name]-

Thank you for the time you spent providing feedback on my recruitment questionnaire and interview questions. Based on the feedback provided by the SMEs, I have edited the interview questions for your review below. If there is any additional feedback to the questions and/or sub-questions, I would be appreciative of your thoughts. Your expertise is greatly appreciated.

- Shane

Interview Questions for Participant

1. Describe your experiences as a sexual/gender diverse individual working in K–12 public school education.
 - a. How has your career progressed?
 - b. How long have you worked in K–12 public education?
 - c. How has your personal identity impacted your professional identity?
 - d. What is your workplace environment like for SGD leaders?
 - e. What differences do you notice regarding interactions in school versus larger system-wide settings?
2. Talk about the factors which have attributed to your decision to self-disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the K–12 public school workplace.
 - a. How open are you regarding your identity in the workplace?
 - b. Has your level of comfort regarding your identity evolved over time?
 - c. What obstacles do you face regarding your identity in the workplace?
 - d. How do your relationships change regarding your level of openness?
3. Describe a moment or situation when you chose not to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and the reasoning behind the decision?
 - a. How has the workplace community impacted disclosure decisions?
 - b. What are your feelings around concealing identity in the workplace?
 - c. What factors contributed to your concealment of identity?
4. Describe a moment or situation when you chose to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and why do you think it was important?
 - a. How did the workplace conditions impact the decision?
 - b. What are your feelings around disclosing identity in the workplace?
 - c. What factors contributed to your disclosure of identity?
5. How would you describe the importance of being able to bring your authentic self (as it relates to your SGD identity) to your workplace?
 - a. How does your awareness influence your decisions?
 - b. How has the identity disclosure of colleagues or stakeholders impacted your disclosure decisions?
 - c. How does decision-making impact your ability to present authentically?
6. How would you describe your educational organization's culture and climate in relation to your identity and presentation of authentic self?
 - a. How do workplace policies contribute to identity presentation?
 - b. How has workplace climate contributed to your disclosure of identity?
 - c. Describe conditions where you felt supported in disclosing your identity and presenting authentically.

7. From your experiences, describe any recommendations in which K–12 public schools could allow SGD leaders to lead more authentically in the workplace.
 - a. Describe your ideal K–12 public school workplace conditions to disclose identity and lead authentically.
 - b. Describe proactive steps K–12 public schools can take to affirm the identity of leaders?
 - c. What strategies and assistance do you have for leaders struggling to disclose identity and lead authentically?
8. Is there anything not addressed in these questions you would like to add or expand upon?

Re: SME Feedback and Revised Interview Questions - Verification



To: Shane Jensen

Please be cautious

This email originated from outside of ACE organization

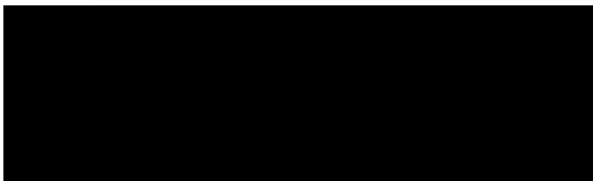
Hi Shane

These open-ended questions are great - seeing the associated prompts really helps get a sense of what you hope the interview will cover.

- Looks like 1d should be "like" rather than "life"
- I like the way questions 3 & 4 parallel each other
- I like the prompts you chose for 7
- I think 6 does a great job of addressing both policies and climate.

Overall, I think you have a well-rounded and well-thoughtout interview schedule. I think you will get really great data with it!!

-p





Thu 11/4/2021 8:25 AM

To: Shane Jensen



Please be cautious

This email originated from outside of ACE organization

See responses below!

I think your edits are spot on and will allow you to answer your research questions better than the initial set of questions. You should be excited about this! ☺

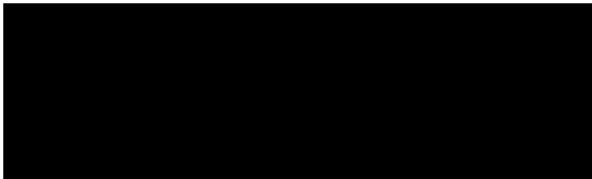
Here are a few references I cited in my dissertation that might be relevant to your work:

Ragins, B. R., Singh, R., & Cornwell, J. M. (2007). Making the invisible visible: Fear and disclosure of sexual orientation at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(4), 1103–1118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.4.1103>

Huffman, A. H., Watrous-Rodriguez, K. M., & King, E. B. (2008). Supporting a diverse workforce: What type of support is most meaningful for lesbian and gay employees? *Human Resource Management*, 47(2), 237–253. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20210>

Day, N. E., & Schoenrade, P. (2000). The relationship among reported disclosure of sexual orientation, anti-discrimination policies, top management support and work attitudes of gay and lesbian employees. *Personnel Review*, 29(3), 346–363.

Chiaburu, D. S., & Harrison, D. A. (2008). Do peers make the place? Conceptual 139 synthesis and meta-analysis of coworker effects on perceptions, attitudes, OCBs, and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*



Appendix L

Interview Protocol and Field Notes

Interview Protocol and Field Notes on Sexual and Gender Diverse K–12 Public School Leader Perceptions of Authentic Leadership	
Participant Pseudonym: Participant ID: Date:	Start Time: End Time:
<p>Script prior to the interview:</p> <p>Welcome and I will now begin recording the interview. I'd like to thank you (participant pseudonym) once again for your willingness to participate in the interview aspect of my study via Zoom. As I have mentioned to you before, the purpose of the basic qualitative study is to explore the perspectives of SGD K–12 public school educational leaders, practitioners, and professionals and the conditions influencing the presentation of authentic self within school leadership roles. The study seeks to explore the conditions supporting SGD educational leaders to self-disclose aspects of sexual and gender identity in K–12 public school leadership roles. The research aims to document your perspectives as an SGD K–12 public school leader to better understand how equitable workplace practices support SGD leaders in presenting authentically in leadership roles, as the findings of the data may be a valuable resource tool. Our interview today lasts approximately 45 to 60 minutes. I will be asking you a series of questions, which were provided to you when the interview was scheduled so you could reflect on your experiences. The interview questions explore awareness, relationships, and decision-making skills as relating to leading authentically as an SGD leader in K–12 public schools. You provided a digital signature by typing your name, date, and email within the informed consent during the recruitment phase located in the questionnaire. Do you have any additional questions regarding the informed consent for this study? [Answer any questions regarding informed consent].</p> <p>Are you still ok with me video recording (or not) our interview today? ____Yes ____No</p> <p>If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.</p> <p>If no: Thank you for letting me know. Would you be willing to record the interview without your camera on?</p> <p>If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.</p> <p>Before we begin, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in the study, you can ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.</p>	
Interview Question	Researcher Notes

<p>Question 1: Describe your experiences as a sexual/gender diverse individual working in K–12 public school education.</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How has your career progressed? b. How long have you worked in K–12 public education? c. How has your personal identity influenced your professional identity? d. What is your workplace environment like for SGD leaders? e. What differences do you notice regarding interactions in school versus larger system-wide settings? 	
<p>Question 2: Talk about the factors which have attributed to your decision to self-disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the K–12 public school workplace.</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How open are you regarding your identity in the workplace? b. Has your level of comfort regarding your identity evolved over time? c. What obstacles do you face regarding your identity in the workplace? d. Do your relationships change regarding your level of openness? 	
<p>Question 3: Describe a moment or situation when you chose not to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and the reasoning behind the decision?</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How has the workplace community influenced disclosure decisions? b. What are your feelings around concealing identity in the workplace? c. What factors contributed to your concealment of identity? 	
<p>Question 4: Describe a moment or situation when you chose to disclose your sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the workplace and why do you think it was important?</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How did the workplace conditions influence the decision? b. What are your feelings around disclosing identity in the workplace? c. What factors contributed to your disclosure of identity? 	
<p>Question 5: How would you describe the importance of being able to bring your authentic self (as it relates to your SGD identity) to your workplace?</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How does your awareness influence your decisions? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. How has the identity disclosure of colleagues or stakeholders influenced your disclosure decisions? c. How does decision-making influence your ability to present authentically? 	
<p>Question 6: How would you describe your educational organizations culture and climate in relation to your identity and presentation of authentic self?</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How do workplace policies contribute to identity presentation? b. How has workplace climate contributed to your disclosure of identity? c. Describe conditions where you felt supported in disclosing your identity and presenting authentically. 	
<p>Question 7: From your experiences, describe any recommendations in which K–12 public schools could allow SGD leaders to lead more authentically in the workplace.</p> <p><i>Sub questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Describe your ideal workplace conditions to disclose identity and lead authentically. b. Describe proactive steps K–12 public schools can take to affirm the identity of leaders? c. What strategies and assistance do you have for leaders struggling to disclose identity and lead authentically? 	
<p>Question 8: Is there anything not addressed in these questions you would like to add or expand upon?</p>	