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MOLLY M. STREAR

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

FORECASTING AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE: ACCESSIBLE SCHOOL
COUNSELING STRATEGIES TO DECONSTRUCT
EDUCATIONAL HETERONORMATIVITY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Molly M. Strear

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
Counselor Education and Supervision

August 2015

This Dissertation by: Molly M. Strear

Entitled: *Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education, Program of Counselor Education and Supervision

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ABSTRACT

Strear, Molly. M. *Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2015.

School counselors can use intentional practices to identify and reduce barriers that prohibit equal access to high quality public education. The following study was designed to elucidate how school counselors can apply a social justice paradigm to reduce the educational barriers that persist for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning, and ally (LGBTQIQA) individuals. A classical Delphi method was employed to engage a panel of 14 school counselor educators, school counselors, and school counselor researchers in a critical discourse to generate school counseling strategies to deconstruct educational heteronormativity. Practical strategies for initiating small changes that may lead to substantive change over time to foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals were illuminated.

This study resulted in 51 school counseling strategies to deconstruct educational heteronormativity. The final strategies can be conceptualized through the following overarching themes: advocacy (9 strategies); protection and enforcement (5 strategies); allies and collaboration (4 strategies); curriculum reform (8 strategies); inclusive language (4 strategies); policy change to promote inclusion (5 strategies); professional development for change (5 strategies); rituals and ethos that promote inclusion (8 strategies); and signs of acceptance and inclusive facilities (3 strategies). These strategies

are offered in the context of an overview of the roles of school counselors, queer theory, and educational heteronormativity to demonstrate how school counselors can engage in social justice advocacy through intentional practices.

Keywords: school counselor, educational heteronormativity, LGBTQIQA, Delphi

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation study to my parents. Thank you for providing the unconditional love and support to allow me this honor.

I am humbled by this tremendous privilege.

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The magnitude of this accomplishment is a reflection of those that have provided support throughout the process. I would like to thank my committee for the unique contributions that each has provided in the culmination of my doctoral program. Dr. Elysia Clemens is and has always been the foundation, providing unwavering encouragement, support, and guidance. From the letter of recommendation Dr. Clemens wrote for my doctoral application, to the final revisions of this study, she has brought balance and inspiration. My drive as a researcher and my belief that school counselors and school counselor educators can make remarkable changes in public education are due to the foundation provided by Dr. Clemens. Dr. Heather Helm provides the heart in what I do on a daily basis. The wisdom and calming support provided by Dr. Helm has kept me moving forward at the most challenging times and reinforced the reasons I began this endeavor. Dr. Helm inspires me to be the best clinician I can be in order to provide a voice for children, adolescents, and families.

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the courage to share my perspective, even if that means I must use I statements when I write. Dr. Schwartz provided the nurturance and guidance necessary to include my story in the meta-story that is my doctoral program and dissertation study. In many ways, it was the voice that Dr. Schwartz encouraged that allowed me to understand the why behind my dissertation research that has kept me motivated at times when I thought it would never come to an end. With that, I thank each of you for helping me to become the person I am today, and for providing the unique elements of support necessary for the gestalt of my doctoral program.

Thank you to the Queer Strear Family Home Show... To my Moms. To the social justice advocate and the social constructionist. As distinct individuals who inspired a common message. To think critically and question the world, my beliefs, and the construction of values and practices that shape our lives. To not only follow in the steps of great thinkers such as Foucault, Paulo Freire, Mahatma Gandhi, and a little Gramsci... But to follow with action and practical application to initiate change. For teaching me academics without action are lost, while action without academics may lack reflection. For providing both the inspiration and the tools for research and practice, as that defines my hope for the field and my place in academe. I hope to never find myself gazing down at others, however, if ever found in that position, I am confident in the tool belt I have developed, and I will be equipped with my bat-grappling hook to return safely to level ground to continue my journey to walk beside others in my hope for humanity. For helping me to see the big picture, even if at times that just means getting bigger paper and stickers.

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To the newest member of the Queer Strear Family Home Show, Pirooz. For your unexpected, enthusiastic entrance, stage left. For joining the cast with such genuine appreciation and kindness for each character. For opening my eyes to the world around me and the greatness of discovery. For inspiring me to see beauty in the most microscopic elements of life. For continuing to drive even though we have arrived at our

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I would also like to pay tribute to September School for igniting my love to learn by believing in me, for moving beyond tolerance, to embracing and nurturing the queerness that each and everyone of your students embodies. For inspiring me to believe in the resilience and possibility of adolescents when they are making every attempt to mask themselves in spiky, distracting chain mail.

Each individual who has contributed to who I am today is worthy of recognition. I will conclude by paying gratitude to those who have inspired my desire for advocacy,

activism, and critical-consciousness. In the last few months I have retold my own educational story, which in many ways marks my true transformation. As I began to focus my attention on my dissertation, I learned a great deal about identity development and transformative learning experiences. I do not recall the exact day, time, or conversation (because I wouldn't), but there was a moment at 32 years of age when I realized, I AM part of the LGBTQIQA community. I am not simply “the child of”, but rather, an actual, card-carrying member. As I excitedly shared this with my bio-mom, who has been by my side longer and more consistently than anyone else in this world, she responded with patience and wisdom as she always has, as she said, she had been aware of my membership all along, but she was pleased to welcome me to the community now that I had internalized this piece of my identity. It was at that moment I realized that these components of our identity are so heavily influenced by external factors and one can only hope to be in an environment that is safe to integrate and appreciate these aspects of ourselves that truly make each and every one of us unique. I had finally arrived at the intersection of identity, and I was welcomed with warmth and appreciation. My hope is this work will foster a few more spaces in this world for others to have similar experiences to safely embrace themselves, making this project a success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem	8
	Purpose of the Study	9
	Research/Guiding Question	10
	Significance of the Study	11
	Delimitations	12
	Definitions	15
II.	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	20
	Educational Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally Individuals: The Roles of School Counselors	20
	Social Justice Paradigm	49
	Queer Theory	62
	Educational Heteronormativity	73
	The Delphi Method	79
	Conclusion	94
III.	METHODOLOGY	96
	Epistemology	96
	Theoretical Foundation	99
	Researcher Stance	101
	Research Question	104
	Methods	105
	Trustworthiness	123

	Conclusion	125
IV.	RESULTS.....	127
	The Position of an Expert	127
	Generative Round Results	129
	Round Two Results	133
	Round Three Results	134
	Final Review Round	141
	Conclusion	141
V.	DISCUSSION.....	142
	Positioning the Process	142
	School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity	143
	Positioning the Results Through Context and Practice	146
	Advocacy	147
	Advocacy: Protection and Enforcement	148
	Allies and Collaboration	150
	Curriculum Reform	151
	Inclusive Language	152
	Policy Change to Promote Inclusion	153
	Professional Development for Change	155
	Rituals and Ethos that Promote Inclusion	157
	Signs of Acceptance and Inclusive Facilities	158
	Significance of the Study for the Practice of School Counseling	159
	Implications for School Counselor Educators	161
	Limitations	163
	Directions for Future Research	167
	Conclusion	168

REFERENCES.....	170
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APPENDIX

A.	Overarching Theme Structure.....	195
B.	Email for Initial Participant Contact.....	197
C.	Script Guidelines for Initial Participant Phone Contact.....	199
D.	Participant Informed Consent Document.....	202
E.	Participant Instructions for Round One.....	205
F.	Participant Demographic Questionnaire.....	208
G.	Email for Snowball Sampling Procedures.....	210
H.	Institutional Review Board Approval.....	212

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1.	Example One of Generative Round Coding.....	130
2.	Example Two of Generative Round Coding.....	131
3.	Distribution of Generative Round Strategies by Theme.....	133
4.	Distribution of Strategies Retained After Round Two by Theme...	134
5.	Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity.....	135

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The emerging role of school counselors as agents of social change positions them as leaders, collaborators, and integral stakeholders who support the academic, personal, social, and career development of all students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; Education Trust, 2009). As such, it is the role of school counselors to identify and eliminate barriers that prohibit students from accessing high quality public education (ASCA, 2012; Education Trust, 2009). School counseling must promote a social justice counseling paradigm meaning school counselors integrate

social advocacy and activism as a means to address inequitable social, political, and economic conditions that impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals, families, and communities. (Ratts, 2009, p. 160)

School counselors are charged with the responsibility to actively advocate for those populations who remain marginalized within public education environments. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning, and ally (LGBTQIQA) youth, many barriers exist within K–12 public education environments, inhibiting educational experiences, and contributing to hostile school climates (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). Although progress has been made to support the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals, research indicates LGBTQIQA individuals continue to struggle within public education environments (Kosciw et al., 2014). Thus, the purpose of this dissertation study was to elucidate how a social justice paradigm can be applied in

school counseling to reduce the educational barriers that persist for LGBTQIQA individuals.

Although literature reflects examples of school counseling contributions to more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals (e.g., Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul, Walsh, & Dam, 2009; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Kayler, Lewis, & Davidson, 2008; Singh & Burnes, 2009), it is imperative that school counselors engage in discourse regarding the educational barriers that remain. One significant barrier to equal access to education for LGBTQIQA individuals is pervasive heteronormative beliefs and practices that saturate current educational policies, practices, and environments (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). For the purpose of this study, educational heteronormativity was defined as “the organizational structures in schools that support heterosexuality as normal and anything else as deviant” (Donelson & Rogers, 2004, p. 128). Many belief structures and practices in public education environments perpetuate heteronormative values, ultimately creating environments that are inherently exclusive of LGBTQIQA individuals. For example, discussions of difference frequently occur within schools, such as lessons on racial, political, or religious injustice; however, sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression are rarely included in this discourse (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Such exclusion perpetuates heteronormativity, which may result in LGBTQIQA individuals feeling invisible within educational environments (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). As agents for social change, the field of school counseling has a responsibility to proactively engage in

leadership and advocacy efforts to facilitate institutional reform to deconstruct heteronormative structures within schools, fostering more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIA individuals (ASCA, 2013; Education Trust, 2009).

The tenets of queer theory provide the context for understanding educational heteronormativity in the current study. The theoretical lens of queer theory and the desired goal to develop strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity guided this dissertation research. Queer theory is a conglomerate of many theories and prominent theorists who have explored the ways sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression have been defined over time through constructions of values, beliefs, and language to position some individuals in power, while simultaneously demonizing and disenfranchising others (Watson, 2005). Queer theorists challenge the binary association of sexuality and gender, suggesting sexuality and gender are variant, and the exclusion of such variance has positioned those who do not identify with the preferred way of being (e.g., heterosexual and cisgender) as deviant (Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1984; Huffer, 2010). The canons of queer theory raise questions about constructions of meaning and how social systems develop and sustain through language, rules, and the inclusion or exclusion of knowledge to create regulatory practices (Foucault, 1984). Such regulatory practices have a reciprocal effect, as individuals initially gave them meaning, but over time, these practices begin to shape the thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs of individuals (Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990). Critical theories such as queer theory also ignited a paradigm shift from studying difference by examining individuals or groups of individuals, to the critical examination of regulatory practices that privilege some individuals over others (Butler, 1990; Chambers, 2007).

Heteronormativity is one such regulatory practice that has significantly influenced beliefs, values, social systems, and consequently, the lives of many individuals. Historically, public educational environments have existed within a heteronormative paradigm, establishing normalizing policies, practices, and beliefs privileging heterosexual and cisgender identities (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). In fact, many educational stakeholders report reluctance to include sexuality or gender variance in educational discourse out of fear, personal beliefs, lack of understanding, and in some cases, tradition (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009a; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Gunn, 2011; Pennington & Knight, 2011). Thus, educational heteronormativity persists within public educational environments as evidenced by exclusion of sexual and gender variance in curricula, instructional practices, documents, resources, images, clubs, athletics, language, etcetera (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). For example, the tradition of prom queen and prom king is a normalizing practice and glaring display of heteronormativity. The few examples of schools and students that have challenged this heteronormative practice by hosting LGBTQIQA proms, or electing two prom kings or queens, indicates progress towards acceptance; however, such examples are often tolerated as a novelty, rather than a paradigm shift of inclusion. As posited by DePalma and Atkinson (2010), LGBTQIQA individuals in education systems often fluctuate from being silenced by educational heteronormativity, to screaming as a spokesperson or representative for sexuality and gender variance.

Educational heteronormativity undoubtedly has negative effects on the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals. According to the results of the 2013 National Climate Survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), LGBTQIQA individuals experience high levels of harassment and victimization as a result of their sexuality or gender variance (Kosciw et al., 2014). An alarming number of LGBTQIQA students reported feeling unsafe within educational environments, also indicating they avoided school and believed their access to education had been directly inhibited because of hostile school climates (Kosciw et al., 2014). Further, substantive evidence suggests LGBTQIQA individuals experience increased risk for mental health concerns (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Dragowski, Halkitis, Grossman, & D'Augelli, 2011; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011), and negative educational outcomes such as truancy, detachment from school, and poor educational achievement (Kosciw et al., 2014). As posited by Grossman et al. (2009), narratives of 31 LGBT high school aged youth revealed prevalent accounts of educational heteronormativity, resulting in experiences of oppression and marginalization within educational environments.

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2013), school counselors must be aware of the unique experiences, challenges, and educational needs of LGBTQIQA youth. Recent literature suggests it is undeniably the role of school counselors to be aware of incidents of homophobia and heterosexism, while proactively fostering more inclusive school climates (Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009). As advocates and agents of social change, school counselors are responsible for implementing educational and remedial interventions to promote inclusive educational

environments for LGBTQIQA individuals (Curry & Hayes, 2009). Although limited, evidence supports a progression towards improved understanding regarding the ways school counseling practices can contribute to more inclusive educational environments (e.g., Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Muller & Hartman, 1998; Singh & Burnes, 2009). For example, DePaul, Walsh, and Dam (2009) suggested school counselors actively engage in establishing proactive strategies to cultivate inclusivity through various levels of intervention such as the promotion of inclusive nondiscrimination school policies, language, and symbols (e.g., Safe Zone stickers). Similarly, Singh and Burnes (2009) asserted that school counselors must advocate for transgender youth from an ecological perspective, taking into account advocacy efforts at individual, school, and community levels. Examples of such efforts suggest school counselors engage in establishing more inclusive educational environments through increased understanding of sexual and gender identity development (Bidell, 2011; Chen-Hayes, 2001; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Kayler et al., 2008; Luke, Goodrich, & Scarborough, 2011; Singh & Burnes, 2009), implementation of LGBTQIQA counseling groups (Craig, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Muller & Hartman, 1998), gay-straight alliances (GSAs) (Bidell, 2011; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Goodrich, Harper, Luke, & Singh, 2013), and collaboration with educational stakeholders to improve knowledge, attitudes, and skills to meet the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals (Bauman & Sachs-Kapp, 1998; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Chen-Hayes, 2001; Curry & Hayes, 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Ratts et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009).

Efforts to bolster school counseling practice are essential, however, evidence reveals a demand for increased intentionality in the ways school counselors are trained to address the needs of LGBTQIQA students and families (e.g., Andrews, 2004; Bidell, 2012; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich & Luke, 2010; Schmidt, Glass, & Wooten, 2011). According to Bidell (2012), school counseling students reported low levels of perceived competence regarding the knowledge and skills necessary for working with LGBTQIQA individuals. Similarly, Andrews (2004) reported that school counselors' perceived competence for addressing the needs of same sex parented families was heavily influenced by school counselors' attitudes about sexual identity and sexuality, suggesting personal beliefs and values may influence school counselors' level of competence for providing appropriate school counseling services for LGBTQIQA individuals. The results of this study also suggested misperceptions about school climate and inclusivity may influence school counselors' motivation to address inequality (Andrews, 2004). Thus, it is probable school counselor competence, training, and practice will benefit from increased understanding of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression in order to address the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals.

Although increased understanding of sexuality and gender variance is integral for improving school climate through comprehensive school counseling services, a thorough understanding of barriers to inclusivity is essential for sustainable educational reform. Thus, in concordance with a social justice paradigm, school counseling practice must shift attention to the critical examination of educational environments and the social structures that perpetuate inequality. The aforementioned tenets of queer theory and understanding of the regulatory practice of heteronormativity are efficacious tools for

facilitating the educational reform necessary for LGBTQIQA individuals to become heard in educational discourse. As long as educational heteronormativity persists, so too will inequitable educational environments that perpetuate the status quo and inhibit LGBTQIQA individuals from accessing high quality public education.

Statement of the Problem

School counseling research reflects the role of school counselors and school counselor educators as advocates for LGBTQIQA students (Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009). Much of the literature addressing LGBTQIQA students and families is incongruent with this role and is founded in a paradigm that highlights the unique characteristics of this population. This approach results in reactive interventions that require LGBTQIQA students and families to identify themselves in order to access services (Talbert, 2004). Interventions such as counseling groups, GSAs, and inclusive curricula are integral for fostering inclusivity, however, such interventions may be limited in scope and influence if LGBTQIQA students do not feel safe enough within their environments to access services (Kosciw et al., 2014). Thus, it is probable that in order to facilitate more inclusive educational environments, systemic change is necessary to address the heteronormativity that continues to permeate educational environments. Current school counseling literature calls for such social justice advocacy at an institutional level, yet a gap in the literature remains regarding practical ways school counselors can proactively deconstruct heteronormative educational policies and practices to foster more inclusive educational environments. To this end, as social justice advocates, school counselors and school counselor educators must expand their knowledge and understanding of educational environments to include the

heteronormative structures that perpetuate inequality while employing strategies to deconstruct such regulatory practices.

Purpose of the Study

Heteronormativity is a complex belief system that “reveals institutional, cultural, and legal norms that reify and entrench the normativity of heterosexuality” (Chambers, 2007, p. 664–665). As such, the process of deconstructing heteronormative practices and policies in K–12 public education requires institutional reform. As leaders and agents of social change, school counselors are uniquely positioned to lead this difficult discourse. The purpose of this study was to identify the ways in which school counselors can begin deconstructing educational heteronormativity through intentional practice. Although systemic change towards social justice and more inclusive educational environments is a complex and time consuming process, this study was intended to illuminate practical strategies for initiating small changes that may lead to substantive change over time.

A classical Delphi method was selected as an initial step to develop school counseling strategies that may be effective for deconstructing educational heteronormativity because of the complexity of educational heteronormativity and the difficulty of institutional reform. The classical Delphi method was developed as a forecasting strategy to generate information about phenomena that lack an established knowledge base (Grisham, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). This method is characterized by an iterative process of questioning and controlled feedback designed to generate consensus among an expert panel (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). The classical Delphi method is an effective way to better understand complex phenomena and guide future practice (Grisham, 2009; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Ziglio, 1996). Thus, the Delphi method

is an advantageous technique to begin the difficult dialogue regarding school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity.

A classical Delphi method was employed to identify the ways in which school counselors can deconstruct heteronormative policies and practices through intentional strategies to facilitate inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. A panel of school counselor educators, school counselors, and school counselor researchers who have demonstrated expertise through research and leadership to address the needs of LGBTQIQA individuals were selected to generate school counseling strategies to increase awareness and remediation of educational heteronormativity. Specifically, the goal of this study was to identify practical ways that school counselors can begin a critical and informed discourse about educational heteronormativity within public education environments. Because of the prevalence of educational literature outlining educational heteronormativity in K–12 education environments (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007), participants were asked to focus on the unique roles of school counselors in deconstructing such heteronormative policies and practices through intentional practice. The identification of such strategies may also contribute to improved school counselor education by preparing school counselors to become leaders and advocates for social change, contributing to more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals.

Research/Guiding Question

The following overarching research question was constructed to guide the progression of this study:

- Q1 How can school counselors deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K–12 public education environments to facilitate institutional reform?

Significance of the Study

According to 2013 National School Climate data, negative school climates continue to be a pervasive problem threatening the safety and educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals (Kosciw et al., 2014). According to Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, and Greytak (2013), the marginalization of LGBTQIQA students within educational environments contributes to lower self-esteem and academic achievement. Similarly, Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, and Koenig (2011) asserted that homophobic victimization contributed to decreased perceptions of school belonging and self-esteem. To this end, school counselors and school counselor educators must actively advocate for LGBTQIQA individuals and for more inclusive educational environments in order to facilitate equal access to education for LGBTQIQA individuals.

The need for educational reform at an institutional level is integral for continued progress toward inclusive educational environments, and directly aligned with a social justice paradigm for school counselors and school counselor educators. As outlined by the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC), “struggles arise not as a result of individual dysfunction, but as a result of a natural response to increased stress of living in an environment that is hostile to those who hold a particular identity” (ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013, p. 4). Further, DePalma and Atkinson (2006) elucidated the need for systemic change in order to foster more inclusive educational environments by differentiating between strategies for institutional reform, and individual interventions focused on incidents of homophobia or sexism. Based on this premise, it is probable that reactive interventions

designed for LGBTQIQA individuals are limited to students and families who are comfortable publicly identifying as LGBTQIQA to access such services (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006).

School counseling practices must identify ways in which educational environments contribute to the continued oppression of LGBTQIQA individuals, impeding equal access to education for these students. In congruence with a social justice paradigm, school counselors and school counselor educators will benefit from increased knowledge and understanding of the ways in which heteronormative structures are maintained within K–12 public education environments. Improved understanding of heteronormative policies and practices will further school counselors' ability to actively facilitate the systemic change necessary to foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. Further, the adoption of a critical lens of inquiry to actively examine the structures within educational environments that perpetuate inequality is integral for creating educational environments that embrace and include difference, ultimately making schools safer and more effective for all students. Although focused on school counselors' roles in fostering equal access to education for LGBTQIQA youth, the institutional reform necessary to deconstruct educational heteronormativity will contribute to more inclusive climates for all LGBTQIQA individuals within educational environments (i.e., LGBTQIQA youth, families, and staff).

Delimitations

Although there are inherent limitations to every research design (Gelso, 1979), it is imperative to make informed and intentional decisions to limit them whenever possible to ensure methodological congruence (Creswell, 2007). The subsequent chapters examine

the methodology and limitations of this study in further detail, however, it is valuable to make note of the delimitations of this study at this time. According to Ellis and Levy (2009), delimitations provide parameters for research designs which are determined by decisions made in the forefront of the study regarding what factors and variables will be excluded in order to develop a manageable research design. Within the context of this study, several delimitations were considered, such as the rationale for participant selection, utilization of definitions, selection of supporting literature, research question construction, and participant question construction.

The rationale and specific selection criteria of this study are described in greater detail in Chapter III, however, it is noteworthy to mention the intentional exclusion of participants outside of the school counseling profession. Many professionals in education and clinical counseling have contributed to the advancement of LGBTQIQA rights, however, the intended goal of this study was to magnify the roles of school counseling practices in this essential discourse. It is the author's belief that school counselors and school counselor educators have unique insight into the roles and responsibilities of school counselors, thus, the focus of this study was on individuals who have expert knowledge of the field of school counseling, as well as the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals.

Although many definitions exist for the terms found throughout this study, the author determined the definitions provided by the ALGBTIC Competencies for Counseling with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Ally (LGBQQIA) Individuals (ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013) provided continuity and a common voice for the counseling profession. The literature

selected for review was determined based on the same rationale, excluding substantive amounts of literature on sexual and gender identity development, and other psychological and educational research. Whenever possible, this literature base was excluded to limit the various perspectives that emerge across different fields, as well as to specifically examine how these topics are being addressed within the counseling field. However, because of a dearth of literature in school counseling addressing educational heteronormativity, educational literature that was congruent with the theoretical lens of this study was included as necessary to provide a clearer picture of educational heteronormativity in K–12 public educational environments.

An examination of national climate data and school counseling literature provokes many questions about why LGBTQIQA individuals are still being subjected to hostile school climates, and respectively, why educational stakeholders are not doing more to intervene. However valuable questions, the research question constructed for this study was developed in congruence with a critical lens intended to move school counseling practice from a traditional, individualized paradigm, to a social justice paradigm focused on proactive, institutional intervention. Based on the desire to promote a social justice paradigm, subsequent decisions were made by the author to construct questions to solicit practical strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity. Although a review of literature elicits many questions that would be helpful for improving the educational outcomes of LGBTQIQA individuals, the question constructed for this Delphi study was designed in congruence with a social justice paradigm, queer theory, and a desire to develop accessible school counseling strategies to initiate change.

Definitions

School counselors are leaders and agents of social change, and as such, they are in need of a unified professional identity. In congruence with this belief, it is the author's perspective that school counselors and school counselor educators may benefit from a collective voice. To this end, this study incorporated definitions provided by the ALGBTIC Competencies for Counseling with LGBQQIA Individuals (ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013). In addition to being a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA), the ALGBTIC is affiliated with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Therefore, the definitions incorporated within this study were selected to reflect the common professional identity associated with ALGBTIC.

In congruence with the terminology utilized by ALGBTIC, the author referred to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning, and ally youth (see individual definitions below) throughout this study. Because of the systemic scope of educational heteronormativity, it is the author's belief that heteronormativity affects all LGBTQIQA individuals. Therefore, the author utilized LGBTQIQA whenever possible. However, when referring to the works of other authors, the individual identities (e.g., LGBTQIQA) demarcated by those authors were used to avoid confusion or generalizations to include other identities not intended by the authors of those works. Although the majority of definitions referring to sexuality and gender variance were based on the definitions constructed by the ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce (2013), the author utilized the term sexual orientation rather than affectional orientation. The decision to utilize sexual orientation instead of affectional orientation

was to reduce confusion when referring to this term. The author is in agreement with the rationale provided by the ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce (2013), which explains an intention to shift individual's perspectives from over emphasizing sexuality while conceptualizing sexual orientation. However, it is the author's belief this transition in vocabulary is incongruent with extant sexual and gender identity literature, and may lead to increased confusion at this time. Because of the intended goal of this study to provide accessible school counseling strategies, it is the author's belief adopting significantly different terminology may hinder understanding of the desired results. Therefore, the term sexual orientation was used in this study as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2008). As posited by APA (2008), "sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes" (p. 1).

In addition to the definitions provided by the ALGBTIC (2013) and APA (2008), the author selected the following definitions of social justice and deconstruction, as there is often variability among the definitions of such terms. Within the scope of this study, social justice was defined as the use of

social advocacy and activism as a means to address inequitable social, political, and economic conditions that impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals, families, and communities. (Ratts, 2009, p. 160)

The term deconstruction was utilized throughout this study to illuminate the importance of language and values in the construction of normalizing truths (Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1984). For the purpose of this study, deconstruction was used to represent the critical examination of a dominant narrative, which perpetuates institutional norms. The term deconstruction was not intended to represent the dismantling of such dominant narratives,

but rather, the act of deconstruction is to critically examine dominant narratives such as heteronormativity in order to allow alternative narratives to emerge free from the normalizing power of a preferred way of being (Chambers, 2007; Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990).

The following definitions were selected from the definitions provided by the ALGBTIC Competencies for Counseling with LGBQQIA Individuals (ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013, p. 38–43) and based on the language utilized most frequently throughout this study. For a complete list of definitions refer to the definitions appendix of the ALGBTIC Competencies for Counseling with LGBQQIA Individuals (ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013, p. 38–43). The following definitions are direct quotations of the definitions provided by the ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce (2013) and should be referenced as such:

- **Ally:** This term as used in this document refers to a counselor or a client who provides therapeutic or personal support respectively, to a person or persons who self-identify as LGBTQIQ. Allies include friends, family, significant others, colleagues/associates, mentors, those who seek counseling before they identify as allies and may be heterosexual and cisgender, and/or members of the LGBTQIQ Communities (e.g., A cisgender, bisexual woman who is a transgender ally). Additionally, in this document we reference pejoratives used against allies (particularly heterosexual and cisgender allies), to demonstrate ways that allies may experience discrimination or experience difficulty finding a place within the LGBTQIQA community. These terms, used primarily by the LGBTQIQA community, include, but are not limited to, words such as fag hag, homo honey, fag stag, fruit flies, breeders, or references to those who are not LGBTQIQA as “the enemy.” The authors felt it important to include these terms to begin a discussion that is rarely had about the experiences of Allies within LGBTQIQA communities and to urge LGBTQIQA communities to become more inclusive but also urge the reader caution in how these terms are used so that they do not further injure others.
- **Bisexual:** A man or woman who is emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually oriented to bond and share affection with men and women.

- **Cisgender** refers to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Gay**: A man who is emotionally, physically, mentally and/or spiritually oriented to bond and share affection with other men. Also used sometimes as an umbrella term, referring to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, queer, and/or bisexual.
- **Gender** reflects one's identity and expression (clothing, pronoun choice, how you walk, talk, carry yourself) as women, men, androgynous, transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and so on that may or may not line up as socially constructed with one's biological sex. Social constructions are made within each culture for what is deemed appropriate for one's gender identity and expression, however, sometimes a person's gender identity expression does not fit traditional socially constructed categories (e.g., one's sex and gender are congruent the way that people should behave and present themselves based on their gender).
- **Gender identity** refers to the inner sense of being a man, a woman, both, or neither. Gender identity usually aligns with a person's birth sex but sometimes does not.
- **Gender expression**: The outward manifestation of one's gender identity, through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms, and other characteristics.
- **Heteronormative**: The cultural bias that everyone follows or should follow traditional norms of heterosexuality (e.g., where a man and woman meet, fall in love, get married, usually have children, and stay together). Additionally, this bias also includes the idea that both individuals have cisgender identity, where males identify with and express masculinity and females identify with and express femininity.
- **Heterosexism**: This refers to the assumption or idea that all people are heterosexual or should be. It represents an ideological system that denies, denigrates, ignores, marginalizes, or stigmatizes anyone who is LGBTQ by seeking to silence or make invisible their lives and experiences. It is pervasive within societal customs and institutions, and itself, like other forms of privilege, is not openly challenged in the dominant discourse, thus is passed on generation to generation through the process of socialization.
- **Heterosexual**: This is a term that is used to describe an individual who is emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually oriented to bond and share affection with those of the "opposite" sex. Although most people are familiar with this term, the authors felt it important to note that many people who are heterosexual prefer this term over the use of the term straight because the term straight infers "correctness."

- **Homophobia:** An aversion, fear, hatred, or intolerance of individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or questioning or of things associated with their culture or way of being. It often is used to target the way that gender norms are being challenged by individuals. Homophobia also can be internalized, which is seen when lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or questioning individuals believe they are indeed deserving of ill treatment because of their identity.
- **Intersex:** An individual who was born with male and female characteristics in their internal/external sex organs, hormones, chromosomes, and/or secondary sex characteristics, formerly termed hermaphrodite. Although the term hermaphrodite is still used by some members of the Intersex community, it has gone out of favor with many people who are intersex due to its pejorative use.
- **Lesbian:** A woman who is emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually oriented to bond and share affection with other women.
- **Queer** generally refers to individuals who identify outside of the heteronormative imperative and/or the gender binary (e.g., those from the LGBTQIQ community, individuals who are opposed to marriage, individuals who practice polyamory). Queer may also connote a political identity as one who is committed to advocacy/activism for LGBTQIQ rights. Queer is also used as an umbrella term referring to the LGBTQIQA community. This term has historically been and still can be used as a pejorative by those outside of the community who hold negative attitudes/beliefs/actions toward the LGBTQIQA community. In this document, however, it is used as it has been reclaimed by members of the LGBTQIQA community.
- **Questioning:** Individuals who are unsure if they are emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually attracted to women, men, or both.
- **Sex:** The sex one is assigned at birth is intended to identify a person as female, intersex, or male and is determined by the words society have used to denote a person's sexual anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones. Because many transgender people do not resonate with words like "biological sex," it is preferable to use the words sex and assignment when discussing these constructs.
- **Transgender (or trans)** is an umbrella term used to describe people who challenge social gender norms, including genderqueer people, gender-nonconforming people, people who are transsexual, crossdressers and so on. People must self-identify as transgender for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a thorough review of school counseling literature pertaining to the identified roles of school counselors in addressing the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals within a school environment. Based on the premise that the roles of school counselors are moving toward a social justice paradigm, a review of extant literature supporting the integration of social justice in school counseling is provided. In congruence with the theoretical lens utilized for this study, an overview of queer theory is presented, including examples of the integration of queer theory in school counseling and related educational fields. Finally, literature regarding educational heteronormativity and the application of the Delphi method in the counseling field is explored.

Educational Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally Individuals: The Roles of School Counselors

Regardless of one's personal beliefs about sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression, it is the responsibility of professional counselors to provide high quality services within their scope of practice, free from discrimination and the imposition of one's personal values (ACA, 2014; Cox, 2013; Shiles, 2009). In response to recent legal concern regarding counselors' hesitance to working with LGBTQIQA individuals because of conflicting personal values (e.g., *Bruff vs. North Mississippi Health Services*, 2001; *Keaton vs. Anderson-Wiley*, 2011; *Ward vs.*

Willbanks, 2012) (Demitchell, Hebert & Phan, 2013), professional discourse is becoming more explicit about the inclusion of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression, indicating that failure to respect the rights of LGBTQIQA individuals is a direct violation of the counseling profession's ethical codes of conduct (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2010; ASCA, 2013; Demitchell et al., 2013). Pertaining specifically to school counseling, it is undoubtedly the responsibility of school counselors to strive for equal access to education for all students (ASCA, 2010; ASCA, 2013; Education Trust, 2009). According to ASCA (2013),

professional school counselors promote affirmation, respect, and equal opportunity for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Professional school counselors promote awareness and education of issues related to LGBTQ students as well as allies and encourage a safe and affirming school environment. (p. 1)

Therefore, school counselors are charged with the responsibility to actively advocate for the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals.

Current literature illuminates various roles of practicing school counselors in addressing sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression within educational environments (e.g., Bidell, 2011; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Kayler et al., 2008; Luke et al., 2011). As described by ASCA (2013), school counselors must be cognizant of the complex experiences and educational needs of LGBTQIQA youth. Further, literature indicates it is the role of school counselors to be aware and proactive about issues pertaining to school climate regarding homophobia and heterosexism (Curry & Hayes, 2009). In addition, as active advocates for LGBTQIQA students, school counselors may be responsible for implementing

educational and remedial interventions as necessary to foster accepting educational environments (Curry & Hayes, 2009).

The unique positioning of school counselors is invaluable for increasing knowledge and acknowledgement of LGBTQIQA individuals within educational environments. School counselors are positioned to support the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals by fostering more inclusive, safe, and affirming educational policies and practices (DePaul et al., 2009; Harper & Singh, 2013). School counselors' increased understanding and proactive efforts for welcoming LGBTQIQA individuals into accepting discourse in public education are imperative for fostering inclusive and safe school climates (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). School counselors are effectively positioned to actively engage educational stakeholders in the development and implementation of inclusive practices to include LGBTQIQA individuals, furthering affirmative school climates.

Educational Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally Youth

Although great strides have been made to foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals, evidence suggests LGBTQIQA individuals have yet to experience equal access to public education (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Kosciw et al., 2014). Extant research continues to reflect the educational and mental health needs of LGBTQIQA individuals are not currently being addressed in educational environments (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2014; McCabe, Robinson, Dragowski, & Elizalde-Utnick, 2013). The 2013 National Climate Survey conducted by GLSEN unveiled an alarming number of LGBTQIQA youth

perceive their school environments as hostile and unsafe (Kosciw et al., 2014). Of this national sample of students ($n = 7,898$), “55.5% of LGBT students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 37.8% because of their gender expression” (Kosciw et al., 2014, p. xvi). In addition,

74.1% of LGBT students were verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 55.2% because of their gender expression. 36.2% were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 22.7% because of their gender expression. (Kosciw et al., 2014, p. xvii)

A distressing number of students did not report experiences of verbal harassment or assault to school staff (56.7%), and of those who did seek adult support, 61.6% reported no attempts of remediation were made by school staff (Kosciw et al., 2014, p. xvii). Further, LGBTQIQA youth experiencing victimization within educational environments have higher levels of absences, lower educational aspirations and academic achievement, and poorer psychological well-being than students that do not identify as LGBTQIQA (Kosciw et al., 2014).

In addition to national climate data, literature reflects experiences of victimization and discrimination of LGBTQIQA youth, resulting in negative educational outcomes (e.g., Almeida et al., 2009; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Darwich, Hymel, & Waterhouse, 2012; Dragowski et al., 2011; Greytak et al., 2009; Grossman et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2013; McCabe et al., 2013; Poteat et al., 2011; Russell et al., 2011). One such account presented by Grossman et al. (2009) shared the voices of 31 LGBT high school aged youth as they disclosed feelings of detachment from their school communities and disempowerment in their educational experiences. The youth in this study shared common beliefs that their high school environments perpetuated their

minority status, privileging heteronormative beliefs and values (Grossman et al., 2009). The narrative accounts depicted by Grossman et al. described experiences of power differentials and victimization, leading to feelings of exclusion and desire to distance oneself from their school environment.

Poteat et al. (2011) utilized data from a survey of more than 15,000 youth in grades 7–12 to explore the educational outcomes of youth experiencing homophobic victimization at school. Poteat et al. suggested homophobic victimization had negative effects on students' perceptions of school belonging. Kosciw et al. (2013) reported similar findings while examining the effects of in-school victimization on the educational outcomes (i.e., absences and grade point average) and self-esteem of LGBT youth ages 13 to 21 ($n = 5,730$). As posited by Kosciw et al., experiences of in-school victimization predicted poorer educational outcomes and self-esteem for LGBT youth. Furthermore, victimization of LGBTQIQA youth has been associated with higher levels of mental health concerns, suicidal ideation, self harm, (Almeida et al., 2009; Russell et al., 2011), and posttraumatic stress symptoms (Dragowski et al., 2011).

Analogous accounts focusing on educational experiences of transgender youth and same sex parented families reveal similar findings. According to Greytak et al. (2009), transgender students experience high levels of harassment and victimization within educational environments. Further, many transgender students reported higher absences and lower academic performance and aspirations as a result of reported safety concerns and hostile school climates (Greytak et al., 2009). Similarly, national climate data of same sex parented families within public education revealed a staggering number of students reported the presence of biased, derogatory language within their schools, and

nearly half of the participants reported feeling unsafe as a result of their familial dynamics or their own personal sexual orientation ($n = 154$) (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Comparable accounts of educational experiences containing pervasive heteronormativity, homophobia, and microaggression in the form of biased language can also be heard in substantive personal narratives of children and adolescents raised in same sex parented households (Fairtlough, 2008; Garner, 2005; Howey & Samuels, 2000; Snow, 2004).

An exploration conducted by Welsh (2011) evinced complications that arise for same sex parented families upon entering educational environments. Accounts of 14 adolescents uncovered commonalities of feelings of marginalization in school environments, which were reported most intensely throughout the middle school years (Welsh, 2011). A content analysis of previously published reflections of growing up in same sex parented households revealed complimentary findings, including experiences of marginalization and social pressure (Fairtlough, 2008). According to Fairtlough's (2008) analysis,

what came over most strongly in the young people's accounts was that they identified that the problems they experienced with having a lesbian or gay parent arose almost entirely from other people's negative views about lesbian and gay people. (p. 525)

Thus, the prevalence of accounts of discriminatory perceptions and social pressure elucidate a distinct need for school counselors and educational stakeholders to heighten their awareness regarding school climate and inclusivity.

The educational barriers experienced by LGBTQIQA students are concerning, however, evidence suggests intentional efforts to provide educational support for LGBTQIQA students can greatly improve the educational experiences of these youth (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Kosciw et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2013; Poteat et al.,

2011). For example, the 2013 National Climate Survey results demonstrated the presence of GSAs, inclusive educational curriculum, supportive school staff, and explicit bullying and harassment policies contributed to improved educational outcomes and school climate for LGBTQIQA youth (Kosciw et al., 2014). Kosciw et al. (2013) also found the presence of these school based support systems (e.g., GSAs, supportive adults, inclusive curriculum and policies) mitigated negative educational outcomes for LGBT youth. In addition, Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2009) conducted a secondary analysis of the Internet Survey of Queer and Questioning Youth ($n = 2,172$), indicating systemic levels of intervention also have moderating effects on perceived victimization and harassment of LGBQ students, such as the presence of inclusive educational policies and practices. Although the aforementioned interventions are promising for fostering more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals, little is known about the ways in which school counselors are, or should, engage in such educational reform.

Findings that demonstrate positive effects of educational supports are undoubtedly optimistic for the future inclusivity of educational environments (Kosciw et al., 2014; Kosciw et al., 2013); however, these results must be observed with caution. Although the value of having a connection to supportive adults is imperative for the educational success of LGBTQIQA youth (Kosciw et al., 2014; Kosciw et al., 2013), evidence suggests educators' personal attitudes and beliefs have a significant effect on whether or not they ultimately intervene on behalf of LGBTQ students (McCabe et al., 2013). Such findings illuminate inconsistency of adult intervention, corroborating accounts from LGBTQ youth about a lack of adult advocacy and intervention (Kosciw et al., 2014). Further, the results of the 2013 National Climate Survey unveiled only half

(50.3%) of the participants reported the presence of GSAs, while fewer still reported the inclusion of LGBTQIQA inclusive curriculum or knowledge of comprehensive bullying and harassment policies (Kosciw et al., 2014). Nevertheless, “almost all LGBT students (96.1%) could identify at least one” supportive staff member within their school, highlighting the importance of a safe and trusted adult connection (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2014, p. xx). To this end, it is probable with accurate knowledge, training, and confidence; the unique positioning of school counselors may have a substantive effect on the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA students. Nonetheless, comprehensive guidelines for practicing school counselors and school counselor educators to employ for fostering more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals are still lacking from this imperative discourse.

School Counselor Education

In order for school counselors to effectively advocate for LGBTQIQA individuals within educational environments, it is imperative they have accurate knowledge and training to ensure they are practicing within their scope of competence (ASCA, 2010). As the needs of clients become increasingly complex, so too do the demands of professional counselors and counselor education programs. According to ACA (2014), it is the ethical responsibility of professional counselors to maintain current knowledge and understanding of culturally diverse populations and refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices. In addition, it is the ethical responsibility of school counselors to ensure,

all students have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including: ethnic/racial identity, age, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language,

immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity and appearance. (ASCA, 2010, p. 1)

Further, ASCA (2013) has taken steps to explicitly include competencies that address the diverse needs of LGBTQIQA students. In addition to ethical codes of conduct, the CACREP 2009 and proposed 2016 standards for training professional counselors and counselor educators affirm professional intentions for cultural competencies that include knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to provide high quality services to diverse populations. Thus, it is imperative counselor educators intentionally integrate LGBTQIQA inclusive curriculum throughout professional counseling training programs to ensure counselors are equipped with the knowledge required to affirm and practice within the intended scope of the profession.

Literature supports momentum of professional counseling organizations to include sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression in counselor education curriculum (e.g., Goodrich & Luke, 2010; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2013; Luke & Goodrich, 2012; Luke, Goodrich, & Scarborough, 2011; Matthews, 2005; Rutter, Estrada, Ferguson, & Diggs, 2008; Smith, Foley, & Chaney, 2008; Whitman, 1995). Several authors have provided suggestions for designing curriculum to include LGBTQIQA populations in general counselor education curriculum (Matthews, 2005; Smith et al., 2008; Whitman, 1995) and school counselor education curriculum (Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2013; Luke & Goodrich, 2012; Luke et al., 2011). Further, recent efforts have been made to empirically evaluate such efforts in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of this imperative curricular reform (Dillon et al., 2004; Israel & Hackett, 2004; Rutter et al., 2008).

Although sparse, counselor education literature reflects progression towards intentional inclusion of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression in counselor education curriculum. In order to foster more inclusive counselor education curriculum, Whitman (1995) provided an outline of a five week counselor education course, including content about sexual orientation and sexual identity development, as well as common misconceptions and biases about gay and lesbian populations. Through professional literature, role plays, videos, and personal reflections, Whitman intended to guide students to improved understanding and acquisition of affirmative counseling skills for gay and lesbian clients. Matthews (2005) offered a similar curriculum design, providing specific examples of how gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics can be included into core counseling courses (e.g., professional identity, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, research and program evaluation) (CACREP, 2009, 2016). Matthews also offered suggestions for applicable resources and application to clinical practice such as increased exposure to affirmative counseling practices, diverse clientele, and counseling related concerns that may be relevant for LGB clients (e.g., discrimination, oppression, coming out, HIV/AIDS, etcetera). As posited by Smith, Foley, and Chaney (2008), curricular reform such as this also requires heightened awareness to oppressive social structures that perpetuate inequality and challenge the lived experiences of many clients. Smith et al. asserted counselor education curriculum would benefit from increased inclusion of topics regarding the intersections of identity development to include other oppressive social assumptions such as classism, ableism, and heterosexism.

Comparable contributions to inclusive curricular reform have also emerged specifically pertaining to school counselor education. Byrd and Hays (2012) presented a framework for school counselors in training to promote students' self-awareness, understanding of sexual identity development, and characteristics of LGBTQ affirmative school climates (e.g., visibility, communication, inclusive language, active interventions). Lloyd-Hazlett and Foster (2013) utilized cognitive developmental theory to guide school counseling students in the development of LGBTQ affirmative school practices. The progression of Lloyd-Hazlett and Foster's curriculum scaffolds learning experiences based on the developmental levels of school counseling students as they're guided through a series of didactic, experiential, and reflective lessons designed to encourage understanding of the needs of LGBTQ students, as well as their roles as school counselors in supporting LGBTQ students through comprehensive school counseling practices.

Luke and Goodrich (2012) extended the discourse for LGBTQ responsive school counselor education curriculum to include a model for school counselor supervision. Emerging from Luke and Bernard's (2006) School Counselor Supervision Model, Luke and Goodrich developed the LGBTQ Responsive School Counseling Supervision Model to highlight the ways in which school counselors will be called upon to address the needs of LGBTQ students and educational stakeholders, thus, requiring more informed supervisory support. In addition to providing examples of how LGBTQ issues may be addressed within each school counselor domain (e.g., curricula, counseling, advisement, systems support), Luke and Goodrich outlined how school counselor supervisors can intentionally select their supervisory role (e.g., teacher, counselor, consultant) to

determine the focus of their supervisory interventions (e.g., conceptualization, personalization, intervention). The authors also provided example vignettes to illustrate the application of the LGBTQ Responsive School Counseling Supervision Model (Luke & Goodrich, 2012).

Although integration of LGBTQIQA students in the school counselor education and supervision curricula is promising for providing improved school counseling services for LGBTQIQA students, Luke, Goodrich, and Scarborough (2011) conducted a national survey of 123 school counselor educators regarding the inclusion of LGBTQI responsive services in school counselor education curriculum, uncovering concerning results. In congruence with the progression of the field of professional school counseling, participants reported increased integration of the needs of LGBTQI students in school counselor education curriculum (Luke et al., 2011). However, results indicated participating school counselor educators

appeared to privilege male and female gender, as well as lesbian and gay sexual/affectual identity over that of bisexual, transgender, or intersex identity, raising questions as to whether school counselors are being adequately trained to work with a full range of LGBTQI student identities. (Luke et al., 2011, p. 93)

Further, results of this study indicated inclusion of such course content did not typically extend beyond one class period, lacking the integration necessary for providing comprehensive understanding of the needs of diverse student populations (Luke et al., 2011).

The development of LGBTQIQA inclusive counselor education curricula is essential for fostering development of multiculturally competent counselors. The effects of such efforts were demonstrated by Israel and Hackett (2004) in an experimental research design intended to determine if the inclusion of LGB inclusive curricula such as

lectures about sexual identity development and exposure to stories, videos, and case studies about sexual orientation, discrimination, and oppression would affect counseling students' knowledge and attitudes about LGB individuals ($n = 161$). The results of this study demonstrated exposure to knowledge about LGB individuals led to knowledge acquisition, however, exposure to attitude-exploration exercises increased negative attitudes towards LBG individuals (Israel & Hackett, 2004). According to Israel and Hackett, the results of this study suggested LGB inclusive curriculum leads to improved knowledge, promoting intentional integration of such activities. The authors also hypothesized that the negative outcome after being exposed to activities that facilitated attitude-exploration may have been a result of students acknowledging their actual attitudes about LGB individuals, rather than providing more socially desirable responses (Israel & Hackett, 2004). The results of this study are certainly intriguing and future research may be helpful for better understanding the ways in which LGB inclusive counselor education preparation is approached in classroom settings.

Dillon et al. (2004) further supported the importance of transformative learning experiences for affecting the knowledge and attitudes of counselors in training through qualitative analysis of heterosexist bias and attitudes towards LGBTQIQA individuals. The resulting narratives of 10 master's level counseling students elucidated themes of personal socialization (i.e., family and general), homophobic self-consciousness (i.e., research team atmosphere), motivation for participation, preconceptions regarding sexual identity development (i.e., sociopolitical awareness, insight-oriented learning, affective experience, reflections on sexual self-identity, reflections on one's own LGB-affirmativeness, professional development), critical events (i.e., external and research

team), growth toward affirmative-action, and active commitment to continued self-exploration (Dillon et al., 2004). As posted by Dillon et al. and echoed by the accounts of the research team participating in this study, the process of becoming aware of one's own biases and attitudes about LGBTQIQA individuals and privileged social structures such as heterosexism, is incredibly complex and requires a great deal of investment and guidance. The accounts from this study are a reminder that in order to truly develop LGBTQIQA affirmative counseling practices, counselors and counselors in training must be committed to personal exploration, reflection, and transformation (Dillon et al., 2004).

In congruence with findings indicating LGBTQIQA inclusive counselor education curriculum affects counseling students' knowledge and perceptions about LGBTQIQA populations (Israel & Hackett, 2004; Dillon et al., 2004), Rutter, Estrada, Ferguson, and Diggs (2008) utilized a pre- and post-test research design to determine if intentional inclusion of LGBT affirmative counseling curriculum affects school counseling students' perceived competency on the Sexual Orientation Counselor Competency Scale (SOCCS; Bidell, 2005). Although this study had a limited sample size (control $n = 17$ / treatment $n = 21$), the results suggested implementation of an LGB competency training program led to higher competencies in the knowledge and skills subscales (Bidell, 2005; Rutter et al., 2008). However, there was no significant difference between groups on the awareness sub-scale (Bidell, 2005; Rutter et al., 2008). In addition, Goodrich and Luke (2010) found that school counseling students who co-facilitated Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in local high schools, while simultaneously participating in reflective activities in an introductory school counseling course to process their work with LGBTQIQA students, reported increased knowledge, awareness, and skills for

working with LGBTQIQA youth. Thus, these results in concert with the aforementioned findings of the impact of more inclusive counselor education curriculum suggest intentional integration of LGBTQIQA inclusive curriculum is not only effective, but integral for improving knowledge, skills, and competency of counselors working with LGBTQIQA individuals.

It is evident the field of counselor education is actively promoting increased understanding and inclusion of diversity and the development of culturally sensitive practices. Counselor education curriculum and training standards are reflective of increased efforts to include sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression in counselor education training programs. Counselor education is the current foundation and training standard for mental health practitioners practicing psychotherapy at the master's level, therefore, it is essential that counselor educators provide comprehensive knowledge about sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression in order to train counselors to competently work with LGBTQIQA individuals. A solid foundation at the training level is imperative for fostering competency and confidence for meeting the unique educational and mental health needs of LGBTQIQA individuals.

School Counselor Competency

As described in the ethical guidelines of ACA (2014) and ASCA (2010), it is imperative for professional counselors to practice within their scope of competence. Therefore, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of practitioners' ranges of abilities and a means to capture the outcomes of school counselor education. Specific to creating LGBTQIQA inclusive environments, competency is defined as "the attitudinal

awareness, knowledge, and skill competencies needed to work effectively with” LGBTQIQA individuals (Bidell, 2012, p. 201). Investigations by Andrews (2004), Bidell (2012), Graham, Carney, and Kluck (2012), and Schmidt, Glass, and Wooten (2011) have provided insight into the current state of counselors’ competence for working with LGBTQIQA individuals. Increased understanding of counselor competence is essential for the progression of the counseling field, and integral for ensuring school counselors have the means to competently contribute to more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals.

In an attempt to develop a measurement tool to gauge counselors’ competence for working with LGB clients, Bidell (2005) developed the Sexual Orientation Counselor Competency Scale (SOCCS). Graham et al. (2012) utilized this scale with a sample of 234 master’s and doctoral level counseling students to assess their perceived competence working with LGB clients. The results of this study suggested,

participants endorsed a high level of self-perceived counseling competency in awareness but a more moderate level in the knowledge domain and a low to moderate level of self-perceived counseling competency in the skills domain. (Graham, Carney, & Kluck, 2012, p. 12)

Graham et al. also observed higher levels of perceived competence in doctoral level participants, suggesting higher levels of education and clinical experience may lead to higher levels of competence. These results are concerning because many school counselors enter schools with a master’s degree and limited exposure to working with LGBTQIQA individuals in educational environments. Therefore, it is likely attention is needed to ensure practicing school counselors are working within their scope of practice and are equipped to meet the needs of LGBTQIQA individuals.

Bidell (2012) augmented the concern of school counselor competence in a similar assessment demonstrating that school counseling students reported significantly lower sexual orientation counselor competencies in comparison to clinical mental health participants. Further, Schmidt et al. (2011) surveyed 46 school counseling students to reveal a discrepancy between participants' beliefs about the knowledge necessary to competently work with LGB individuals, and the actual knowledge acquired by the participants. Andrews (2004) observed comparable inconsistencies in an examination of school counselors' perceived competence in addressing the needs of same sex parented families. According to Andrews, results suggested counterintuitive responses that as school counselors' perceptions of inclusive climates increased, their perceived knowledge of issues that may affect same sex parented families declined. Although Andrews indicated a need for further analysis to draw conclusions from this data, the negative correlation found in this study provoked questions regarding perceptions of inclusivity, and the ways such perceptions influence school counselors' motivation to address inequality. Kozik-Rosabal (2000) further substantiated a lack of awareness regarding the actual climate of educational systems, suggesting beliefs of equality may actually contribute to oversights in addressing issues such as homophobia and heteronormativity. To this end, misconceptions about inclusive school climate and the necessary knowledge and skills required for competently meeting the needs of LGBTQIQA individuals may lead to less investment in establishing proactive strategies and hesitance to advocate for LGBTQIQA students because of questionable levels of school counselor competence. The aforementioned accounts of school counselor competence for working with LGBTQIQA individuals is unsettling, as effective practice can only be attained if

practitioners possess the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to practice within their scope of competence (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2010; Bidell, 2012).

School Counselor Practice

It is undoubtedly the role of school counselors to actively acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to meet the needs of LGBTQIQA students (ASCA, 2010, 2012, 2013; Chen-Hayes, 2001; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Kayler et al., 2008; Singh & Burnes, 2009).

Professional literature is reflective of this role and several authors have provided guidance for the field at various levels of practice, including knowledge of school counselors' legal and ethical responsibilities, and individualized, group, and systemic interventions (DePaul et al., 2009). For example, DePaul et al. (2009) suggested school counselors actively engage in establishing proactive strategies at multiple levels of intervention (i.e., individual, small group, and school wide interventions). Therefore, in order for school counselors to become actualized as leaders and advocates for the needs of LGBTQIQA students, integration at multiple levels of intervention is essential for inclusive educational environments that support the educational needs of all students.

Legal and ethical responsibilities. Although time and resource restraints put additional pressure on school counselors to limit individualized attention to optimize the number of students served, documented risks of LGBTQIQA students in today's educational environments make it imperative that school counselors understand the risks and unique needs of this student population (DePaul et al., 2009; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Kayler et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2012). As posited by Goodrich, Harper, Luke, and Singh (2013) best practices for school counselors working with LGBTQ youth begin

with a thorough understanding of the ethical and legal considerations of discussing sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression within educational environments. As previously espoused, both ACA (2014) and ASCA (2010) affirm the responsibilities of school counselors to advocate on behalf of LGBTQIQA individuals. School counselors must have keen understanding of current legislation, as rapid changes occur and state and federal mandates often appear contradictory about the responsibilities of educational stakeholders to advocate for LGBTQIQA students (Goodrich et al., 2013). According to Goodrich et al. (2013), it is imperative for school counselors to familiarize themselves with

various extant laws, including the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment (U.S. Constitution amendment XIV), Title IX of the Amendment Acts (1972), the 1st Amendment (U.S. Constitution amendment I), and the Equal Access Act (1984). (p. 313)

Further, school counselors must have accurate knowledge of the ways current political and legal events affect the lives of individual students and families, such as the visible political upheaval surrounding the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) (Goodrich et al., 2013).

Individual intervention. At the individual level of intervention, a thorough understanding of sexual and gender identity development is imperative for providing comprehensive services for LGBTQIQA students (Bidell, 2011; Chen-Hayes, 2001; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Kayler et al., 2008; Luke et al., 2011; Singh & Burnes, 2009). School counselors must have a clear understanding of the complexity of adolescent identity development, coupled with the additional challenges one must confront if they do not identify with the dominant narratives of being heterosexual or cisgender (DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon,

2009; Kayler et al., 2008; Singh & Burnes, 2009). Singh and Burnes (2009) emphasized the importance of this understanding and provided a detailed presentation of language, terms, and concepts school counselors need to know to meet the needs of LGBTQIA youth. Specifically, Singh and Burnes focused on offering school counselors increased insight into the lives of transgender youth by describing common experiences of gender identity development at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Singh and Burnes suggested possible roles and strategies for school counselors at each stage, such as increased awareness of distress indicators for gender-variant children, and effective communication strategies for educational stakeholders to discuss gender variance. Chen-Hayes (2001) detailed analogous descriptions of gender identity and expression, while offering a strengths-based counseling model to be employed by school counselors. Chen-Hayes also provided an extensive list of transgender and gender-variant advocacy activities for school counselors such as understanding correct gender and pronoun use, nuances of cross-dressing and gender presentation, and recognition of multiple oppressions.

Similarly, Kayler et al. (2008) utilized Cass's (1979) model of sexual identity development to structure individual counseling interventions based on the following stages of development: "identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis" (p. 10). Based on this approach, school counselors may be able to assist LGBTQIA students in understanding their experiences, while offering guidance for appropriate interventions at each stage such as providing a safe space for client-centered exploration, bibliotherapy, and access to educational and community resources (Kayler et al., 2008). However, a challenge

inherent to this approach may be the dated and static conceptualization of sexual identity development, and the assumption that stage based models accurately reflect the current experiences of LGBTQIA students. Although worth acknowledging, it is possible more current conceptualizations of identity development may be advantageous for school counselors to address the needs of LGBTQIA students. For example, the theoretical framework of intersectionality has evolved in detailed analyses of the ways in which categories of difference, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation interact to create the tapestry of one's lived experiences (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Craig, 2013; Hancock, 2007; Harper & Singh, 2013). Integration of such extant theories of identity development into comprehensive school counseling approaches may in fact be more efficacious for meeting the current needs of LGBTQIA students than traditional stage based models of development (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Craig, 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013).

In addition to understanding sexual and gender identity development and experiences of feeling different from dominant social narratives, school counselors must be knowledgeable of risk factors associated with being LGBTQIA (DePaul et al., 2009; Curry & Hayes, 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Greytak et al., 2009; Kayler et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2013). Although an exhaustive explanation of the risks to LGBTQIA youth is beyond the scope of this review, school counselors must have awareness of risk associated with LGBTQIA youth such as low self-esteem, poor academic achievement, truancy, depression, anxiety, internalized homophobia, victimization, violence, suicide, substance use, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, and familial conflict (DePaul et al., 2009; Curry & Hayes, 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Greytak et al., 2009; Kayler et

al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2013). Thus, school counselors must also have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement appropriate interventions to support LGBTQIQA students as necessary.

At an individualized level of intervention, extant school counseling literature suggests a person-centered counseling approach may foster an environment in which LGBTQIQA students feel comfortable exploring the complexity of identity development and resulting risks and rewards of this developmental process (DePaul et al., 2009; Curry & Hayes, 2009; Kayler et al., 2008). The primary conditions of a person-centered counseling approach, empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard, may facilitate development of a trusting and safe relationship, which has been identified as an essential element for improving educational experiences for LGBTQIQA students (DePaul et al., 2009; Greytak et al., 2009; Kayler et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2014). Curry and Hayes (2009) offered alternative suggestions for facilitating therapeutic rapport through the integration of narrative, bibliotherapy, and arts-based counseling approaches. Similarly, Frank and Cannon (2009) recommended biblioguidance, or the use of literature to facilitate students' identity development and personal understanding. Once rapport has been established, school counselors may also be positioned to assist LGBTQIQA students in communicating with their parents, peers, or other educational stakeholders in order to increase support, acceptance, and access to resources (DePaul et al., 2009). While providing such support, school counselors must be cognizant of their own personal biases, beliefs, and values in order to ensure they provide informed and appropriate support, education, and resources (DePaul et al., 2009; Kayler et al., 2008).

Group intervention. At the group level of intervention, literature supports the use of both small counseling groups (e.g., Craig, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Muller & Hartman, 1998) and classroom guidance curriculum (Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009). Although an integral aspect of comprehensive school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012), professional school counseling literature is lacking specific guidance surrounding integration of LGBTQIQA related topics in classroom guidance curriculum. In congruence with this finding, Griffin and Ouellett (2003) stated, “curriculum is one of the most neglected areas in the literature on LGBT issues in schools” (p. 111). Curry and Hayes (2009) articulated support for increased classroom guidance curriculum focused on LGBTQIQA related topics, however, the suggestions provided were primarily general recommendations regarding lessons pertaining to perspective taking, empathy, and pro-social behaviors. Similarly, general suggestions for small group counseling for LGBTQIQA students have been provided such as offering support groups for LGBTQIQA students (Curry & Hayes, 2009) and small groups focused on sexual identity development, coming out processes, and related pressures some students may experience (DePaul et al., 2009). Of these suggestions, there is general agreement non-directive, person-centered, and existential approaches may be helpful for facilitating small groups with LGBTQIQA students (Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009). Curry and Hayes also noted the importance of engaging the support of other educational stakeholders (e.g., administration, teachers, parents) by explicitly outlining small group proposals that include a rationale, member selection process, group meeting outline, informed consent parameters, and baseline and outcome measures to demonstrate effectiveness.

A few structured approaches to small group counseling for LGBTQIQA students have been presented, including specific curriculum to meet the unique needs of LGBTQIQA individuals (Craig, 2013; Muller & Hartman, 1998). Muller and Hartman (1998) outlined a 25-week, group counseling design intended for LGBTQIQA students. This group counseling curriculum focused on the coming out process through writing letters to parents, psychoeducation on stages of coming out, self reflective activities, and exposure to community resources through field trips and guest speakers. Similarly, Craig (2013) outlined the Affirmative Supportive Safe and Empowering Talk (ASSET) group counseling model for LGBTQIQA youth. This noteworthy intervention was designed to foster resilience and moderate stress of marginalization (i.e., Minority Stress Theory) through school-based group counseling interventions (Craig, 2013). Preliminary analysis of the ASSET model resulted in evidence of significant improvements in participants' self-esteem and proactive coping abilities ($n = 263$) (Craig, Austin, & McInroy, 2014). According to Craig, the 8 week, ASSET Model is guided by themes of LGBTQIQA identity development, hope, and the identification of stressors, coping strategies, and personal strengths. Although small group interventions are integral for improving school climate, it is probable such interventions are necessary, but insufficient for fostering truly inclusive educational environments (Kosciw et al., 2014; Kosciw et al., 2013). As previously mentioned, such interventions highlight individual groups of students and are limited to those who feel comfortable accessing such services (Kosciw et al., 2014). Because of the limited scope of small group interventions, it is probable systemic interventions that address school climate and educational policy reform remain necessary for fostering LGBTQIQA inclusive education environments.

Systemic intervention. School counselors must advocate for the systemic educational reform necessary for LGBTQIQA inclusive, affirmative educational environments for the field of school counseling to truly embrace a social justice paradigm. Further, school counselors must position themselves as leaders in educational environments, while making efforts to actively acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for such educational reform. In congruence with this stance, progress towards systemic reform is substantively supported by professional school counseling literature, reflecting the integral role of school counselors for promoting more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals (e.g., Bauman & Sachs-Kapp, 1998; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Ratts et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009).

One of the first steps in systemically promoting more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals is having an accurate understanding of current climate (Harper & Singh, 2013). Accountability and program evaluation are essential elements of comprehensive school counseling programs, and integral for understanding how to effectively meet the educational needs of LGBTQIQA students. Kosciw, Greytak, and Diaz (2009) examined national climate survey data of 5,420 LGBT secondary school students, determining that the location of a school within a particular region and community could be utilized as indicators of school climate (e.g., biased and homophobic remarks and LGBT victimization). For example, schools located in impoverished and rural communities were more likely to experience school victimization (Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009). Conversely, LGBT youth in schools in more affluent communities with higher levels of education were less likely to report hostile school climates (Kosciw et al.,

2009). Thus, thorough understanding of each unique school community is essential for the development of systemic interventions to improve school climate (Harper & Singh, 2013). As noted by Harper and Singh (2013), the ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies (2013) provided recommendations for LGBQQ sensitive program evaluation strategies such as intentional sampling and understanding the limitations of research methods and program evaluation strategies for accurately assessing experiences of LGBQQIA individuals.

After school counselors gain an understanding of their school community, they begin to make proactive efforts to increase positive representations of alternative gender and sexuality narratives (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013). “Children pay close attention to who is represented and who is not. Visibility or invisibility establishes which groups are powerful and which are marginalized,” perpetuating the importance of awareness and proactive strategies for explicitly fostering inclusive educational environments (Family Equality Council, 2011, p. 11). Several authors have provided suggestions for school counselors to increase representation of LGBTQIQA narratives by making efforts to transform schools into safe spaces (Bidell, 2011; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Harper & Singh, 2013). The concept of safe spaces typically includes the visible representation of LGBTQIQA affirmative symbols (e.g., pink triangles, rainbows) and Safe Zone signs, alerting the school community that the person or environment endorsing the space is an ally of LGBTQIQA individuals. Based on recommendations from GLSEN, Bidell (2011) offered additional suggestions for school counselors to employ to foster more inclusive environments such as initiating a day of silence and no name-calling or no hate weeks.

In addition to safe spaces, Cerezo and Bergfeld (2013) asserted it is the role of school counselors to facilitate the development of counterspaces for LGBTQIQA individuals. The concept of counterspaces emerged from Critical Race Theory and is applied to challenge the oppression and marginalization of minority groups (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013). Counterspaces are groups of individuals within a community that actively explore the history of oppression and strive for improved understanding of skills to combat oppressive conditions (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013). Although not analogous, the formation of GSAs is similar to a counterspace in that both groups are developed to challenge the oppressive conditions LGBTQIQA individuals are confronted with in various social environments.

The presence and benefit of a GSA is well documented and commonly associated with improved educational outcomes for LGBTQIQA youth (Bidell, 2011; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2014). Results of the most recent National Climate Survey indicated students with an established GSA within their school reported feeling more safe and connected to their school communities, as well as reporting fewer incidents of biased language, harassment, and victimization (Kosciw et al., 2014). Further, extant literature suggests that school counselors are positioned in schools to promote and maintain the establishment of a GSA. Although typically student-led, school counselors may assist students in promoting the GSA, recruiting members, procuring space, and ensuring the GSA remains a safe and respectful group for all students (Bidell, 2011; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013). In addition, it may be the role of school counselors to solicit support of other educational

stakeholders in environments where resistance to such groups may exist. According to Cerezo and Bergfeld (2013), school counselors may expand upon traditional approaches to a GSA, which typically refer to safe, supportive environments, to include the promotion of “GSAs as political groups where LGBTQ and ally students can learn about LGBTQ history, civil rights movements, and gain skills to advocate for improved school culture” (p. 364).

As leaders and advocates for social change, it is the role of school counselors to advocate for LGBTQIQA affirmative environments by collaborating with educational stakeholders through workshops, trainings, applicable policy reform, and the development of community partnerships (Bauman & Sachs-Kapp, 1998; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Chen-Hayes, 2001; Curry & Hayes, 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Ratts et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009). School counselors are trained to facilitate conversations and self-reflection, while simultaneously processing both the process and content of language, making them viable agents for facilitating trainings and dialogues about LGBTQIQA topics (Goodrich et al., 2013). Further, school counselors’ ability to view systems through both an individual and systemic lens, positions them to effectively initiate the complex educational reform necessary to improve school climate (Harper & Singh, 2013).

Bauman and Sachs-Kapp (1998) described an outline for a series of sexual orientation workshops conducted by school counselors to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity. The workshops engaged students and faculty in activities to promote effective communication, personal awareness, respect, and understanding regarding repercussions of hate, victimization, and discrimination (Bauman & Sachs-

Kapp, 1998). School counselors have been identified as appropriate leaders for facilitating Safe Space Program trainings (Ratts et al., 2013), as well as other available trainings designed to meet the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals such as dropout prevention programming, anti-homophobia workshops, and the promotion of LGBTQIQA affirmative environments (Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008). School counselors may also be called upon to provide trainings about sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression, including the accurate use of language, common myths and misconceptions, and available resources pertaining to LGBTQIQA individuals (Chen-Hayes, 2001; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009). In addition, it is the role of school counselors to promote inclusive educational environments by advocating for school policies to enforce inclusive language in documents, promotional items, technology, curricula, instruction, and hiring practices (e.g., revision of interview questions), as well as explicit policies prohibiting exclusion or discrimination based on sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression (Chen-Hayes, 2001; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009). Additional policy reform may also include protocol for classroom organization, restrooms, school functions, clubs, athletics, dances, etcetera (Goodrich et al., 2013). To this end, it is the role of school counselors to advocate for LGBTQIQA individuals within educational environments, and although further reform is necessary, school counselors are positioned to support such reform through various levels of intervention.

Comprehensive school counseling practice. According to ASCA (2012), school counselors engage in comprehensive services that include various levels of intervention to address the academic, personal, social, and career development of all students. In

addition, services provided by school counselors are preventive in nature and designed to facilitate equal access to public education for all students (ASCA, 2012). Thus, the aforementioned interventions suggested for school counselors to address the unique needs of LGBTQIQA individuals are essential for bridging the gap between theoretical assertions of comprehensive school counseling programs and the daily practice of school counselors. Understanding of the legal and ethical responsibility of school counselors to attend to the needs of LGBTQIQA individuals is integral for improved practice, as well as promoting increased understanding of educational stakeholders. Further, intentional strategies for working with individuals and small groups are essential for providing responsive services for LGBTQIQA students (ASCA, 2012). Although the suggestions provided for systemic interventions are valuable, comprehensive services for facilitating systemic educational reform are still lacking in regards to evidenced-based practices and implementation. Moreover, attention is warranted regarding the ways in which school counselors can engage in social justice advocacy and the effects of such interventions on improving the inclusivity of educational environments.

Social Justice Paradigm

Applying a social justice paradigm to school counseling practice is essential for addressing the inequities that remain for LGBTQIQA individuals in educational environments (Kosciw et al., 2014). Further, extant literature and professional standards support the momentum of the fields of professional counseling and counselor education toward increased focus on social justice (e.g., ACA, 2010, 2014; CACREP, 2009; Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010; Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011; Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002; Ratts, 2009; Ratts & Wood, 2011). As defined by Ratts (2009),

a social justice counseling approach uses social advocacy and activism as a means to address inequitable social, political, and economic conditions that impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals, families, and communities. (p. 160)

Although emphasis on social justice is not new to the professional counseling field, integration of such policies, practices, and beliefs has been slow to emerge (Ratts, 2009; Ratts & Wood, 2011).

According to Ratts, D'Andrea, and Arredondo (2004), social justice may in fact be the “fifth force” of the profession, implying movement to a systemic, preventive paradigm is equally as important as historical trends in the field such as “the psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, existential-humanistic, and multicultural counseling forces” (Ratts, 2009, p. 161). Similarly, the ASCA (2012) National Model depicts comprehensive school counseling programs as preventive in design with emphases in leadership, advocacy and systemic change. Conceptually, it is difficult to deny the importance of a social justice movement; however, substantive discrepancies remain between professional dialogue regarding a new paradigm, and the emergence of a social justice counseling paradigm in which professional counselors and counselor educators actively integrate social justice into current research, practice, and beliefs (Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Prilleltensky, 1997; Ratts & Wood, 2011).

As posited by Ratts and Wood (2011), the inclusion of the diffusion of integration theory may be helpful for conceptualizing the emergence of a social justice paradigm for the counseling profession. Based on diffusion research and the ways in which new ideas are adapted into organizations, the diffusion of integration theory includes the assumption that new information (i.e., innovation) is communicated among members of a social

system through various avenues, often over a substantive period of time (Rogers, 2003).

According to this perspective, the inclusion of a social justice paradigm will undoubtedly take time and integration on a variety of levels such as counselor education curricula, practical application, and individual counselors' commitment to social justice.

Comprehensive understanding and integration of social justice practices are necessary for shifting the current paradigm of school counseling to include more intentionality in the inclusion of social justice into comprehensive school counseling programs and practices.

Social Justice Paradigm in School Counselor Education

Ratts and Wood (2011) demonstrated purposeful efforts to integrate a social justice paradigm in the counseling field by providing a series of suggestions for intentional pedagogy to elucidate the importance of social justice counseling in professional counseling curricula. Social justice pedagogy includes intentional articulation throughout graduate school experiences of the benefits of transitioning to this paradigm for clients and counselors alike (Ratts & Wood, 2011). The authors provided strategies for integrating social justice into counselor education courses such as journaling and self-reflective questions pertaining to social change, social justice focused case studies, advocacy projects, and service learning activities (Ratts & Wood, 2011). Further, Ratts and Wood described a need for continued dialogue about the ways in which the professional counseling field will promote a social justice paradigm through the development and dissemination of social justice research and practice (Ratts & Wood, 2011). Techniques for increasing social justice pedagogy are valuable for training competent practitioners; however, the adoption of such strategies is far from consistent in counselor education. Further, conversations about difference in counselor education

curricula often exclude sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, gender expression, and oppression.

Brubaker, Puig, Reese, and Young (2010) presented a noteworthy contribution to intentional, social justice pedagogy in the counseling field by developing a framework for restructuring counseling theories courses through a social justice lens. Through this model, the authors suggested counseling theories may be discovered by guiding counselors in training through a series of lessons based on Prilleltensky's (1997) social justice paradigm, emancipatory communitarianism (Brubaker, Puig, Reese, & Young, 2010). Based on Prilleltensky's presentation of psychological paradigms, Brubaker et al. suggested counselor educator's utilize social justice pedagogy and engage students in a critical analysis of counseling theory. The utilization of social justice pedagogy fosters a more egalitarian approach to learning in which professors and students engage in critical discussions about dominant paradigms and reflective, transformative learning experiences (Brubaker et al., 2010). It is probable that critical dialogues in counselor education may provide increased opportunities to discuss the ways in which dominant paradigms are developed and maintained such as binary constructions of sexual and gender identity (e.g., heterosexual versus homosexual/male versus female).

According to Prilleltensky (1997), the field of psychology, and associated mental health practitioners (i.e., psychotherapists), privilege moral systems with little recognition of the implications of favoring such beliefs. Prilleltensky asserted the field of psychology may be structured in four primary psychological approaches; traditional, empowering, postmodern, and emancipatory communitarian approaches. These four approaches encompass a set of values, assumptions, practices, and potential benefits and risks for

practitioners and clients (Prilleltensky, 1997). For example, traditional approaches to psychotherapy conceptualize clients' problems from an individualistic perspective, frequently explained by identifying one's deficits (Prilleltensky, 1997). Such approaches often utilize reactive interventions that focus on changing the individual to become more successful at adapting to cultural ideals that promote individuality (Prilleltensky, 1997). Although each approach has value within the context they were developed (i.e., geographical region, time period, population demographics, etcetera), Prilleltensky posited that mental health practitioners heighten their awareness regarding the morals and beliefs they may be perpetuating, as well as the inherent power differentials between practitioners and clients. Further, Prilleltensky suggested society may benefit from increased investment in mutuality, social consciousness, community, and emancipation for all members.

Critical analysis of traditional counseling approaches is integral for adopting a social justice paradigm, and invaluable for opening space for alternative dialogues regarding sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression. In order for the counseling field to be truly inclusive, practitioners and counselor educators must broaden their vantage point to acknowledge the influence of oppressive social systems that inhibit the lived experiences of many individuals who experience difference. As described by Prilleltensky, this often requires a great deal of self reflection and critical analysis of the practices currently employed by counselors. Active facilitation of social justice pedagogy is essential for providing school counselors in training with the necessary tools to become social justice advocates, bridging the gap between training and practice.

Such efforts to intentionally integrate social justice have become salient in the field of school counseling with progress to incorporate advocacy, social justice, and systemic change within educational environments (e.g., ASCA, 2010, 2012; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Education Trust, 2009; Howard & Solberg, 2006; Parikh, Post, & Flowers, 2011; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Singh, Urbano, Haston, & McMahon, 2010; Wilczenski, Cook, & Hayden, 2011). According to the ASCA's *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (2010), school counselors must be leaders in the creation of educational environments that support equality and justice for all students. Similarly, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) promotes the role of transformed school counselors to include active, social justice advocacy efforts directed at systemic changes that will result in equal access to high quality education for all students (Education Trust, 2009). Furthermore, Steen and Rudd (2009) asserted integration of a social justice paradigm is integral for the preparation and development of 21st century school counselors. Thus, assimilation of a social justice paradigm for the field of school counseling is integral for a common professional identity and progression of the field, requiring commitment to social justice in both training and practice.

Although professional organizations specializing in school counseling (e.g., ASCA, 2010; CACREP, 2009, 2016; Education Trust, 2009) endorse a social justice paradigm, little research or professional literature has been disseminated to clearly describe the progression of the field. At the training level, NCTSC outlined ten suggestions for transforming school counselor preparation programs, including unique mission statements, technological competency, recruitment and selection, curricular content and sequencing, intentional pedagogy, professional induction, community

partnerships, faculty professional development, university-school district partnerships, and university-state department of education partnerships (Education Trust, n.d.). The suggestions provided by NCTSC integrate the Transforming School Counseling Initiative, which heavily emphasizes social justice at the aforementioned levels of program design. For example, school counseling training programs should have clearly articulated mission statements alerting prospective candidates that the vision of the school counseling program endorses a commitment to social justice (Education Trust, n.d.). Although helpful for initiating programmatic reform, the suggestions provided by NCTSC are undoubtedly concise and are more apt for igniting awareness regarding the programmatic reform needed to truly initiate a social justice paradigm.

Building upon the suggestions offered by NCTSC (Education Trust, n.d.), Dixon, Tucker, and Clark (2010) expanded the discussion of programmatic reform to include aspects of the ASCA National Model (2012) and CACREP standards (2009, 2016). Dixon et al. also provided more specific suggestions as to how school counselor educators may improve inclusion of social justice principles into school counseling training programs. According to Dixon et al., a social justice paradigm should guide school counselor training programs from the beginning of the coursework sequence so students adopt a systemic lens as they learn about comprehensive school counseling program implementation and practices. This model of social justice, school counseling pedagogy was designed to foster systemic thinking through active engagement in experiential learning activities that include explicit inclusion of the canons of NCTSC and ASCA, field based experiences, data informed practices, and exposure to quantitative, qualitative, and action research methods (Dixon, Tucker, & Clark, 2010). Dixon et al.

also suggested school counselor educators encourage a school counseling specific cohort model in order to bolster individual learning experiences of school counseling students by encouraging cooperation and collaboration, which are necessary skills for becoming an effective school counselor.

Wilczenski, Cook, and Hayden (2011) offered analogous recommendations for restructuring school counselor education programs to include social justice throughout master's level school counseling curriculum. Wilczenski et al. presented an example of a school counseling program designed from a social justice paradigm to meet the unique needs of school counselors employed within an urban school setting. However, it is worth noting that although intended to focus on the needs of urban school counselors, it is probable a program design structured to integrate social justice advocacy is congruent with the future of the school counseling profession as a whole (ASCA, 2012; CACREP, 2009, 2016; Education Trust, 2009). The proposed school counseling program included integration of social justice tenets at the following levels: program mission/goals, recruitment/admission, curriculum, community engagement, student reflection/feedback, and program evaluation (Wilczenski et al., 2011). Bemak and Chung (2005) proposed similar programmatic reform to include increased efforts to train school counselors to utilize advocacy efforts through pre-service training (i.e., graduate programs), in-service training (i.e., workshops for practicing school counselors), and continued supervision.

Hayes and Paisley (2002) articulated a need for school counselor preparation training programs to adapt to a systemic approach to meet the demands of a quickly changing role of school counselors as leaders and advocates within educational environments. Concordant suppositions of intentional course sequencing, school

counseling cohorts, and well-defined evaluation processes were suggested for enhancing a social justice paradigm for the school counseling profession (Hayes & Paisley, 2002). Further, Ockerman and Mason (2012) described the benefits of exposing school counselors in training to service learning opportunities, and intentional course sequencing involving the development of a common professional identity incorporating the tenets of the ASCA National Model (2012) and the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Education Trust, 2009) to include “ (a) Leadership; (b) Advocacy; (c) Teaming and Collaboration; (d) Counseling and Coordination; and (e) Assessing and Using Data” (p. 9). Ockerman and Mason (2012) also described a series of course assignments that emphasized social justice and meet the aforementioned tenets of a social justice focused school counselor identity. These examples provide insight into the progression of the field, and conceptually support programmatic reform to embrace a social justice paradigm. At the training level, literature supports the adoption of a social justice paradigm in master’s level school counseling curriculum, thus, such inclusion should also begin to evince in school counselor practice.

Social Justice Paradigm in School Counselor Practice

At the level of practice, several authors have proposed conceptual support for the integration of a social justice paradigm for school counselors (e.g., Bemak & Chung, 2005; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Howard & Solberg, 2006; Ratts et al., 2007). Bemak and Chung (2005) asserted traditional approaches to school counseling may have inadvertently perpetuated the status quo within educational environments by focusing too heavily on individualistic approaches and reactive interventions. According to Bemak and Chung, movement towards social justice advocacy is imperative for practicing school

counselors to begin challenging inequities found within educational environments. In order for such efforts to transfer into practice, school counselors must redefine their roles within a school to include systemic, school-wide interventions (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Suggestions were provided for active integration of systemic advocacy efforts such as transitioning from individual counseling interventions to group counseling and consultation with students, parents, and teachers, and participation in school-wide reform at both administrative and community levels (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Several of the suggestions provided also entail educating students and parents to advocate for their educational rights by increasing awareness of educational policies, resources, and community partnerships (Bemak & Chung, 2005).

Ratts, DeKruyf, and Chen-Hayes (2007) also focused professional school counseling discourse on the increased need for social justice advocacy efforts to promote equal access to education to challenge the status quo. In response to the professional desire to restructure school counselors' roles to include advocacy, Ratts et al. asserted the ACA Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2003) are advantageous for organizing, articulating, and implementing advocacy efforts within a school. For example, structuring school counselor interventions based on "(a) client/student advocacy, (b) school/community advocacy, and (c) the public arena level of advocacy" may help guide school counselor efforts (Ratts et al., 2007, pp. 91–92). Further, school counselors may design interventions to act with or on behalf (Lewis et al., 2003) of their target level of intervention (i.e., student, school/community, public) (Ratts et al., 2007). Howard and Solberg (2006) provided additional guidance for school counselors to implement social justice advocacy efforts by providing the Ecological Developmental Cognitive

Framework and the Achieving Success Identity Pathways curriculum to illustrate examples of successful implementation of social justice models for school counselors. Such efforts may support practicing school counselors' efforts to redefine their role to include intentional social justice advocacy.

Emergence of a Social Justice Paradigm

A Delphi study of current leaders in the counseling field supported the notion that social justice is among the most salient ethical concerns in current, future, and counselor education issues (Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011). In concordance, literature supports progression of a social justice paradigm (e.g., ASCA, 2010, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Education Trust, 2009; Howard & Solberg, 2006; Parikh et al., 2011; Ratts et al., 2007; Singh et al., 2010; Wilczenski et al., 2011). However, movement beyond traditional approaches to school counseling requires school counselors and school counselor educators to redefine the roles of school counselors in both training and practice (ASCA, 2010, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Education Trust, 2009; Howard & Solberg, 2006; Parikh et al., 2011; Ratts et al., 2007; Singh et al., 2010; Wilczenski et al., 2011). Such restructuring of the school counseling profession may be challenging in a time of increased demands on school counselors to meet the diverse needs of school communities. Further, Bemak and Chung (2008) coined the "Nice Counselor Syndrome" to describe the possible resistance to shifting one's role as a school counselor. Based on this premise, school counselors may be concerned about the ways they are perceived within a school, inadvertently perpetuating inequality in their attempt to meet the needs and expectations of educational stakeholders and school policies (Bemak & Chung, 2008).

Although professional dialogue supports the adoption of a social justice paradigm, empirical research on the integration of social justice values, beliefs, and practices is lacking in professional school counseling literature. According to Chapman and Schwartz (2012), this deficit in research may be a result of the inherent changes that must take place to effectively conduct research pertaining to social justice. It is to be suggested that the values held in traditional research paradigms may be incongruent with the participatory, reciprocal, action research that aligns with the suppositions of a social justice paradigm (Chapman & Schwartz, 2012). Therefore, evolution to a social justice paradigm in the school counseling profession will require intentional efforts to promote empirical support to demonstrate how students and school communities are different as a result of social justice advocacy efforts.

At the programmatic level, Zalaquett, Foley, Tillotson, Dinsmore, and Hof (2008) explored the effects of organized professional development activities focused on multiculturalism and social justice on student perceptions within colleges of education and counselor education programs. The results of this mixed method design indicated intentional efforts to educate students may have contributed to increased competence and commitment to social justice (Zalaquett, Foley, Tillotson, Dinsmore, & Hof, 2008). Similarly, results of Odegard and Vereen's (2010) grounded theory study suggested integration of social justice into counselor education pedagogy may have contributed to a paradigm shift and increased awareness of social justice among participants. Pertaining specifically to school counseling, Byrd and Hays (2013) conducted a noteworthy randomized pretest-posttest control group design evaluating the affects of Safe Space training on perceived competency levels on the SOCCS (Bidell, 2005) of practicing

school counselors and school counseling students ($n = 77$). The results of this study provided evidence that exposure to the Safe Space training program significantly improved participants' perceived competencies in knowledge, awareness, and skills, indicating increased competency for providing social justice advocacy efforts on behalf of LGBTQIA students (Byrd & Hays, 2013). However, a correlational design conducted by Parikh, Post, and Flowers (2011) suggested personal beliefs regarding religion, politics, and belief in a just world accounted for a significant amount of variance among school counselors' perceptions regarding social justice advocacy. The results of this study indicated variability in commitment to social justice advocacy efforts (Parikh et al., 2011), elucidating a need for investment in a social justice paradigm as a profession, rather than leaving this transformation up to the discretion of individual school counselors.

At a practice level, Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahon (2010), utilized grounded theory to illuminate the efforts taken by school counselors actively engaging in practices focused on social justice and improving equity and access to public education. The participating school counselors ($n = 16$) identified common beliefs regarding social justice advocacy efforts they believed to be viable practices such as having political knowledge to address power structures, willingness to have difficult dialogues, teaching advocacy skills, use of data, and community education about the roles of school counselors (Singh et al., 2010). According to Singh et al., the themes identified by the participants are efficacious examples of how a social justice paradigm can be applied in practice. Although aforementioned studies are integral for the advancement of social justice in the counseling field, few empirical studies of this nature are found within the

professional counseling literature. Fewer still have examined how intentional application of a social justice paradigm looks in practice, consequently limiting understanding of how school communities are different as a result of school counselors' social justice advocacy practices.

Adoption of a social justice paradigm will undoubtedly take time and integration in theory, training, and practice (Ratts & Wood, 2011). As delineated in the literature above, it is evident the field of school counseling is transforming from a traditional approach of individualized intervention, to preventive, systemic change (ASCA, 2012; Prilleltensky, 1997). However, critical dialogues about realistic ways to transform the field of school counseling through intentional integration of a social justice paradigm remain limited. Further, assimilation of critical analyses of social structures and oppression such as those presented by Prilleltensky (1997) and Brubaker et al. (2010) are only beginning to emerge in school counseling literature (e.g., Carroll & Gilroy, 2001; Frank & Cannon, 2010; Smith, 2013). It stands to reason that in order for the field of school counseling to reconstruct comprehensive school counseling programs, inclusion of critical theory may be advantageous for changing the ways school counselors approach their practice. Furthermore, in order for school counselors to facilitate more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals, such transformation is a necessity.

Queer Theory

In concordance with a social justice paradigm, it is probable an understanding of queer theory may be helpful for developing strategies for school counselors to employ to foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. For many, the word *queer* provokes a plethora of muddled definitions referring to pejorative

references of LGBTQIQA individuals, strangeness, obliqueness, uncertainty, or perversion (Huffer, 2010). To define the word queer through a constructionist lens is to acknowledge that each individual using the word queer engages in an active process of constructing meaning by selecting the intended part of speech, context, and intention. This abstraction, and the resulting power of a single word, is incredibly evocative to the essence of queer theory (Jagose, 1996). Many authors refrain from providing a static definition of queer theory, as doing so would be in direct opposition to fundamental tenets of the theory itself (Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). Although difficult to deny the elasticity of the term queer and the conceptualization of queer theory (Jagose, 1996), such a dialogue would certainly be incomplete without paying tribute to the many prominent thinkers who have contributed to the construction of this knowledge base, while actively creating the meaning commonly ascribed to these constructs (Watson, 2005).

The origin of queer theory is frequently credited to the luminous works of social theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and Michael Warner (Huffer, 2010; Jagose, 1996; Sullivan, 2003; Watson, 2005). In the construction of queer theory, Derrida (1974) is often referenced for his contributions to the disruption of binary concepts such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, dark/light, good/evil, success/failure, etcetera. Through a queer lens, Foucault (1984) is renowned for his descriptions of social constructions of power, knowledge, sexuality, and madness. Foucault described the ways in which social constructions simultaneously position humans as both the object and subject of social systems (Foucault, 1984; Huffer, 2010). As posited by Foucault, language and discourse are practices constructed by individuals within a context, resulting in systems that

assimilate meaning, power, and place subscribed by the object, or in other words, the individuals creating these systems. Over time, meaning, rules, and power differentials attributed to language systems outlast the original creators (Foucault, 1984). Often referred to as discursive practices, these systems of language and discourse begin to have control over people as individuals assign power and identity based on social constructions (Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990).

According to Foucault (1984), through discursive practices individuals who were once the object constructing the subject (e.g., language, discourse, social systems), internalize social constructions (e.g., language, rules, social practices, behavior patterns, power hierarchies), ultimately transforming the object into the subject. For example, when an individual's behavior patterns, thoughts, or emotions are described through psychological discourse (i.e., diagnosis), the individual may begin to internalize concepts of psychological pathology, reciprocally affecting the behaviors, thoughts, and emotions being described (Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990). Many authors have integrated these concepts of language and discursive practices to explain how meaning ascribed to sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression creates oppressive power differentials and socially constructed group membership (i.e., minority group status) (Butler, 1990; Huffer, 2010).

Often credited for the emergence of the term queer in the context of queer theory, Teresa de Lauretis (1991) examined the ways discrete categories of identity maintain gender hierarchies and power differentials in social systems (Watson, 2005). De Lauretis challenged the binary language of gay and lesbian, suggesting language describing sexual identity required more variance, resulting in the construct of queer. Most often referenced

for her contributions to feminist theory, Butler (1990) further described gender as performative, meaning one's expression of gender is a performance of their identity. According to Butler, one's gender performance is highly influenced by socialization, and is constrained by existing power differentials and expectations of normalcy (Meyer, 2007).

Butler (1990) is also known for the concept of the heterosexual matrix, which can be defined as “an assemblage of norms that serves the particular end of producing subjects whose gender/sex/desire all cohere in certain ways” (Chambers, 2007). For example, one “performs” their identity through external representations such as hairstyles and clothing (Meyer, 2007). These “performances” take place within parameters of the heterosexual matrix, which includes socially constructed expectations of masculinity, femininity, sexual desire, and partnerships (Butler, 1990; Chambers, 2007; Meyer, 2007). Individuals that do not conform to the narrow categories defined by the heterosexual matrix challenge the normalizing systems of gender, sex, and desire (Butler, 1990; Chambers, 2007; Meyer, 2007). According to Chambers (2007), Butler's account of gender and the heterosexual matrix expanded theories of gender, sex, and desire to include regulatory practices such as heteronormativity.

Although heteronormativity will be explained in greater detail in the next section, it is worth noting that Butler's concept of the heterosexual matrix inspired theorists to move beyond traditional discourses about homophobia to heteronormativity (Chambers, 2007). In brief, homophobia refers to “an aversion, fear, hatred or intolerance” of LGBTQIQA individuals, while heteronormativity is used in reference to the regulatory practices of privileging heterosexuality as normal and socially acceptable (ALGBTIC

LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013, p. 41; Chambers, 2007). The shift from addressing homophobia to heteronormativity also gave rise to a critical lens of inquiry in which theorists began focusing on the power of normalizing paradigms and the need for alternative discourses to challenge the status quo (Chambers, 2007; Watson, 2005). In addition, Sedgwick (1990) is recognized for her integral reconceptualization of sexual and gender identities as compilations of complex experiences unique to each individual, resulting in the use of the word queer to refer to this endless realm of possibility (Watson, 2005). Finally, Warner (1993), who is frequently referred to as one of the most influential queer theorists, facilitated the transition from identity development to large-scale discussions of social, political, and ethical arenas.

One may conceptualize the term queer as anything in opposition to what is perceived to be normal, dominant, or legitimate when used within the context of queer theory (Sullivan, 2003). As posited by Watson (2005), queer theory is not the study of LGBTQIQA individuals, but rather, a critical examination and deconstruction of the categories used to define sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression. Queer theory is the study of the normalizing power of language and discursive practices, and the ways social construction shape individuals, cultures, and paradigms (Meyer, 2007). To define queer theory is to acknowledge a conglomerate of theories, perspectives, and beliefs in an attempt to view the world through a critical lens in which individuals question social constructions of dominant discourses positioned to become the normalizing truths of society (Foucault, 1984; Mayo, 2007; Warner, 1993; Watson, 2005).

Although the critical examination of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression is a long and ongoing discourse, queer theory is only beginning to emerge in the field of school counseling. Extant literature reflects an influx of educational research integrating the tenets of queer theory, many of which are applicable to the field of school counseling. When applied to educational research, the term queer is most often used “as a verb signifying the action of making predominant, everyday norms seem strange” (Bower & Klecka, 2009, p. 358). Various authors have outlined a queer approach to education in an attempt to promote more inclusive educational research, pedagogy, and environments for LGBTQIQA individuals (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; Bower & Klecka, 2009; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009a; Letts & Sears, 1999; Mayo, 2007; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007; Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010).

As posited by Mayo (2007), educational research on LGBTQIQA individuals is inherently challenging and must be examined with a critical lens. One aspect often overlooked in educational research about LGBTQIQA individuals is an understanding of how research participants are selected (Mayo, 2007). More specifically, LGBTQIQA individuals selected to participate in educational research have qualitative differences that must be acknowledged in order to understand the limitations of such studies (Mayo, 2007). According to Mayo, LGBTQIQA individuals who agree to educational research are “out,” meaning they identify as LGBTQIQA. DePalma and Atkinson (2009b) echoed this idea in their account of educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals, stating that one’s identity as LGBTQIQA positions them “to either disappear or appear larger than life, to keep silent, or scream” (p. 876). To this end, it is probable educational

research may be improved by applying a critical lens of inquiry, rather than one focused on individual difference (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009b; Mayo, 2007).

One example of successful application of queer theory to educational research is the *No Outsiders Project* (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009a). This study will be explored in detail in the subsequent section; however, DePalma and Atkinson (2009a) provided a noteworthy rationale for utilizing queer theory in educational research. According to DePalma and Atkinson, the application of queer theory in educational research provides “emancipatory promise of strategic identity-based critical pedagogy” (p. x). To queer educational research is a commitment to focus attention on the social structures and privileged narratives that exist within that system. A queer approach to educational research examines social systems that perpetuate the status quo, while taking steps to increase critical consciousness of educational communities and disrupt the regulatory practices often overlooked in educational environments (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009a; Chambers, 2007).

The interruption of regulatory practices in educational environments is fundamental for establishing queer pedagogy, however, this approach has notable challenges in application (Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010). Zacko-Smith and Smith (2010) asserted that educators are faced with the challenge to restructure their classrooms through intentional inclusion of disenfranchised narratives, such as those of LGBTQIQA individuals. Classroom environments must be transformed by intentionally monitoring the language people use in discussions and curricula to convey messages of normality and power (Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010). These techniques can be observed in Bryson and De Castell’s (1993) account of their experiences queering pedagogy for a college

level, “Lesbian Subjects Matter” course. Bryson and De Castell recounted their intentional efforts to create transformative learning experiences about sexual identity by actively creating a “lesbian-identified space” in which students participated in a variety of interactive activities (e.g., art, reflective projects, guest speakers, games, videos, etcetera) designed to illustrate that lesbian identity is actually a socially constructed concept maintained through language, power, and privilege (Bryson & De Castell, 1993). Interestingly, of the 15 students in the class, the students comfortable enough to fully participate had also experienced some form of oppression as a result of their identities and group membership, as if these experiences privileged their narratives within that educational space (Bryson & De Castell, 1993). Bryson and De Castell recounted that several of the students who did not identify as a member of a disenfranchised group were silenced by the transformation of their educational environment and their privileged identities had rendered them speechless. This experience, mirrors Warner’s (1993) assertion that queer theory is about challenging privileged identities and normalizing structures, and when positioned as normal, queer spaces are equally likely to exclude the “other.”

Although Bryson and De Castell (1993) were confident enough to implement such an extreme example of queer pedagogy, the resistance and discomfort they encountered from their students can also be a barrier to integrating queer theory into traditional educational environments. For example, Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) explored the beliefs of pre-service teacher educators regarding the integration of anti-homophobic and heterosexist education into teacher education curricula, elucidating substantial variance in the understanding and willingness to utilize inclusive pedagogy.

The results of this study indicated participants believed inclusive curricula was important, however, participants frequently privileged integration of racial and ethnic identities over sexual and gender identity, also articulating beliefs that integration of sexual and gender identity was only appropriate at certain stages of development (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008). Further, substantive variance existed among participants who had a personal investment in including sexual and gender identity development in teacher education curricula, such as one's own experiences with homophobia or heterosexism (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008). Bower and Klecka (2009) found analogous resistance in their qualitative analysis of 10 teachers who were also enrolled in graduate level teacher education courses. According to Bower and Klecka, participants recounted social norms of parent-teacher interactions and classroom environments grounded in heteronormative belief systems. The results of this study indicated resistance to integrating discussions of sexual and gender identity into educational environments (Bower & Klecka, 2009).

Although resistance to the integration of queer theory into educational environments is evident (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Bryson & De Castell, 1993; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008), several authors have provided noteworthy suggestions as to how this integration may be possible in practice. In addition to the aforementioned study presented by DePalma and Atkinson (2009a), Rodriguez and Pinar (2007) offered a comprehensive explanation of the ways in which teachers and educational environments may integrate queer theory in order to facilitate inclusivity for LGBTQIQA individuals. *Queering Straight Teachers* provided a queer theoretical foundation for teachers through detailed description of the nuances of critical educational reform, definitions of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, gender expression, and the effects of regulatory practices and

normalizing social structures (Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Rodriguez and Pinar (2007) also drew attention to the ways queer theory may help educators make intentional changes in educational environments through increased awareness, language, and critical consciousness. Letts and Sears (1999) provided comparable recommendations in, *Queering Elementary Education*.

Although the emergence of queer theory in educational discourse is promising, in the aforementioned accounts of queering educational research, pedagogy, and practice, the voices of school counselors remain dim. In fact, little is known about the unique roles of school counselors in queering education. However, extant literature is beginning to address school counselors' roles in providing systemic interventions to foster LGBTQIQA inclusive environments (e.g., Bauman & Sachs-Kapp, 1998; Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Ratts et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009). In fact, many suggestions provided in the school counseling literature mirror those of queer educational theorists, albeit difficult to see a clear integration of queer theory in professional counseling literature. With that said, Frank and Cannon (2010) argued the integration of queer theory, and subsequently queer pedagogy, are essential for improving the multicultural competence of counselors in training. Carroll and Gilroy (2001) outlined a similar proposition to queer counselor education by challenging counselor educators and counseling students to challenge binary assumptions and heteronormative value systems. Pertaining specifically to school counseling, Smith (2013) asserted queer reform is needed within school counseling. Further, according to Smith, some elements of the current school counseling models may perpetuate a heteronormative status quo.

As posited by Frank and Cannon (2010), counselor education may benefit from integration of queer theory through increased understanding of constructs such as discourse, positioning, and deconstruction. The integration of such constructs and awareness of critical inquiry may improve counseling students' understanding of identity development, power, and oppression, ultimately resulting in increased multicultural competence (Frank & Cannon, 2010). Carroll and Gilroy (2001) offered analogous suggestions through recommendations for counselor education programs to employ to disrupt traditional training approaches that neglect critical discourse. For example, counselor education curricula may focus more on constructivist and narrative approaches to counseling while explicitly discussing aspects of these approaches that challenge dominant discourses (Carroll & Gilroy, 2001). Similarly, Smith (2013) presented a compelling analysis of language used in the current ASCA National Model (2012), purporting that without heightened critical consciousness associated with queer theory, school counselors may inadvertently maintain a heteronormative status quo. For example, Smith identified examples of reductive egalitarian language, a lack of clarity regarding systemic barriers, and conditional language (e.g., if/may) throughout the model. According to Smith, the use of such language leaves space for misinterpretation and inadvertent bias. In both cases, the integration of queer theory into the professional counseling literature is important for igniting increased critical consciousness in the field. Furthermore, social justice advocacy is dependent upon the critical consciousness of school counselors to question dominant beliefs that permeate educational environments such as binary constructions of sexual and gender identity. It is likely school counselors will have limited influence on the educational reform necessary for LGBTQIA

inclusive educational environments until they are exposed to a new way of thinking about sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression.

Educational Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a socially constructed regulatory practice which privileges heterosexuality as normal and natural, and anything else as deviant (Chambers, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the construct of heteronormativity is examined within the context of educational environments in order to address the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. Therefore, within this context, educational heteronormativity is defined simply as “the organizational structures in schools that support heterosexuality as normal and anything else as deviant” (Donelson & Rogers, 2004, p. 128). Educational heteronormativity is frequently evinced within schools through language, curricula, classroom instruction, activities, social events, resources, etcetera (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). Because of the previous description of the effects of heteronormativity as a regulatory practice (Chambers, 2007), the following review will focus on the ways in which educational literature and research have used awareness of educational heteronormativity to better understand the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. Although educational literature is demonstrating progress to more critical approaches to educational reform by addressing educational heteronormativity, the voices of school counselors remain unheard in this critical dialogue. Therefore, it is probable improved understanding of the ways educational stakeholders are successfully intervening to challenge educational heteronormativity is fundamental for improving school counselor training and practice.

The risks for youth who identify as LGBTQIQA are well documented and evidenced by higher incidents of alienation (Grossman et al., 2009; Poteat et al., 2011), increased absences, and lower educational achievement (Kosciw et al., 2014). Further, LGBTQIQA students reported higher levels of harassment and victimization while at school, often leading to mental health concerns, suicidal ideation, self harm, (Almeida et al., 2009; Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2011), and posttraumatic stress symptoms (Dragowski et al., 2011). The risks for LGBTQIQA individuals are notable and national school climate data indicate accounts of homophobic bullying and heterosexism remain pervasive (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2014). This may lead one to question the current climate of educational environments, and the steps being taken by educational stakeholders to protect LGBTQIQA individuals' legal right to accessible, appropriate public education.

Many interventions currently in place to support LGBTQIQA individuals are reactive in nature, such as punishing students for pejorative comments or creating support groups for LGBTQIQA individuals struggling to assimilate to the school community (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). According to DePalma and Atkinson (2010), reactive interventions perpetuate the belief that LGBTQIQA individuals are at-risk, thus, creating a "blame-the-victim" mentality. Further, interventions put in place to support LGBTQIQA individuals such as small group counseling and GSAs, require LGBTQIQA individuals to be out enough to access services (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). To this end, a more viable approach for fostering inclusive educational environments may require a transition from reactive interventions to a critical analysis of educational heteronormativity (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts &

Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Examination of educational heteronormativity and institutional structures that perpetuate power and oppression is the first step in providing emancipatory environments in which all students may thrive (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Moreover, proactive, systemic interventions intended to create institutional changes remove the spotlight from individuals, refocusing attention on the systems that historically allow discriminatory beliefs, values, and practices to sustain, rendering many students incapable of accessing public education.

As evidenced by educational literature, evolution toward a more critical approach to inclusivity may be promising for meeting the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals, while simultaneously fostering more inclusive educational environments for all students (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). In, *Queering Straight Teachers*, Rodriguez and Pinar (2007) offered an alternative approach to education in which educational stakeholders may facilitate educational reform by questioning the personal beliefs, policies, and practices that perpetuate educational heteronormativity. Rodriguez and Pinar (2007) provided insight into the ways language, narratives, and performativity maintain power differentials within educational environments. For example, students quickly become targets of school victimization if their gender expression is incongruent with traditional constructions of masculinity or femininity (Greytak et al., 2009). As posited by Rodriguez and Pinar, transition from anti-homophobic and anti-heterosexist approaches to education will nurture more inclusive environments that value and promote difference and variance in identity.

In, *Queering Elementary Education*, Letts and Sears (1999) offered a similar account of educational heteronormativity, paying particular attention to the importance of deconstructing normalizing practices in early childhood education. As posited by Letts and Sears, queering early childhood education is not about explicitly teaching sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression, it is about teaching children about difference. Performances of gender and sexuality differences can be observed in children at a very young age, thus, learning about difference has already begun independently of explicit educational curriculum (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). In addition, early childhood education integrates lessons on other types of identity differences such as race, yet, frequently excludes sexual and gender identity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). According to critical examinations of school environments, it seems exclusion is a primary agent for perpetuating heteronormativity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Therefore, intentional inclusion of marginalized identities through language, curricula, classroom instruction, and school resources is imperative for LGBTQIQA individuals to be welcomed into the educational arena (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). In practice, Letts and Sears suggested educators begin by addressing questions about difference openly and honestly, engaging students of all ages in critical dialogues that explore how beliefs about differences are socially constructed. Letts and Sears provided additional recommendations about intentionally representing sexual and gender variance in identities and families through books, videos, and educational resources. The suggestions provided are less about explicit messages, and more about establishing assumptions of equality from a young age.

One of the most notable works in queering education and deconstructing educational heteronormativity is the *No Outsiders Project* (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). The *No Outsiders Project* is an action research project that took place in the United Kingdom over the course of a 2 ½ year period of time (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). The teacher-researcher team was comprised of 26 primary school teachers who developed and implemented action projects designed to challenge educational heteronormativity within their respective schools (see Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010 for a detailed description of the *No Outsiders Project* design). The teacher-researchers independently established ways to challenge heteronormative practices and policies within their schools through books, videos, and activities that represented diverse identities and family structures (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). Some participants actively collaborated with other educational stakeholders to reword policies and documents to include sexuality and gender equality, facilitated celebrations of diversity, and developed inclusive after school programs (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010).

While implementing the action projects, the teacher-researchers also participated in a web-based discussion to process their own learning, transformation, successes, and struggles (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). The results of this study are displayed through descriptive accounts of the teacher-researchers, which provided evidence to suggest, “children were able to develop understandings of sexual orientation and gender variance” (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010, p. 1673). The results also indicated books and art projects were effective tools for introducing information about

sexual orientation and gender variance, and trainings with other educational stakeholders were integral for increased success of the projects (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). A noteworthy aspect of this study is the ecological approach taken to challenging educational heteronormativity. In congruence with the findings presented by Kosciw et al. (2009) indicating school location had a significant effect on the level of hostility reported by LGBT youth, the *No Outsiders Project* was developed to account for the uniqueness of each school site (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). The *No Outsider Project* was developed as a way of generating many strategies and resources for challenging educational heteronormativity with the understanding that application of such strategies may look different in each school environment (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). Meyer (2007) acknowledged a similar ecological approach to educational reform, suggesting that lists of “strategies that work” are misleading because of the uniqueness of each educational environment. Instead, successful implementation of strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity may be dependent on thoughtful application that is tailored to meet the needs of each educational community.

Although the *No Outsiders Project* is a promising intervention, many educational analyses exemplify the pervasiveness of educational heteronormativity, reifying the importance of the aforementioned attempts to ameliorate educational heteronormativity. Gunn (2011) explored the prevalence of heteronormativity in early childhood education, discovering disheartening accounts of normalizing language, practices, and beliefs in early childhood education. Employing very intentional sampling strategies, the participants were intended to represent three distinct categories: queer allies ($n = 4$),

queer teachers ($n = 5$), and teacher educators ($n = 5$) (Gunn, 2011). The results of this study recounted participants' frequent experiences with heteronormative policies, practices, and beliefs (e.g., examples of parent, teacher, and administrative interactions) within early childhood education, and their feelings of being silenced in response to this epidemic (Gunn, 2011). Pennington and Knight (2011) reported similar heteronormative belief systems about same sex parenting in interviews with nine heterosexual adults. According to Pennington and Knight, "the majority of participants expressed a concern for the potential impact on the wellbeing of children raised in same-sex families" (p. 69), based solely on their personal beliefs regarding same sex parenting. Similarly, Bower and Klecka (2009) found teachers' perceptions of having sexual minority parents to be neutral or negative, excluding any potential for positive attributes ($n = 10$). In addition, Duncan and Owens (2011) used a Q methodology to explore high school girls' ($n = 28$) beliefs about popularity and social power. According to Duncan and Owens, heteronormative beliefs were most frequently associated with social power, with attractiveness to boys being identified as the most valuable attribute of popularity (Duncan & Owens, 2011). When taken in concert, the results of the aforementioned studies regarding the presence of heteronormative beliefs in educational environments reinforce the call to educational stakeholders to engage in educational discourse that will begin to deconstruct such exclusive social systems. It is probable that educational heteronormativity must be challenged in order for educational environments to become inclusive for all students.

The Delphi Method

Originating from Greek mythology, the Delphi method was named to reflect the site of the ancient oracle, representing wisdom and prophetic declarations (Donohoe &

Needham, 2009; Mead & Moseley, 2001; Ziglio, 1996). As such, the Delphi method is a research methodology originally developed as a tool to improve forecasting procedures by generating consensus among a group of experts; hence, the prophetic wisdom of the “oracle” at Delphi (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Mead & Moseley, 2001; Ziglio, 1996). Commonly traced back to the 1950’s and 1960’s, the first accounts of the Delphi method are credited to Dalkey and Helmer, who developed the method as a tool to improve forecasting procedures (Davidson, 2013; Ziglio, 1996).

Dalkey and Helmer developed the Delphi method during a research project sponsored by the RAND Corporation, which is a nonprofit organization that promotes research and development in military planning and technology (Davidson, 2013; RAND Corporation, n.d.; Ziglio, 1996). In response to military demands after World War II, “Project RAND” was established, becoming a nonprofit organization “dedicated to furthering and promoting scientific, educational, and charitable purposes for the public welfare and security of the United States” (RAND Corporation, n.d., p. 1). From this organization, Dalkey and Helmer initiated “Project Delphi” to develop a procedure for systematically questioning experts about the future weapon and security requirements of the United States (Davidson, 2013; Donohoe & Needham, 2009; RAND Corporation, n.d.; Ziglio, 1996).

Since its conception, the Delphi method has been refined and expanded to become a research methodology utilized in various fields, including social and educational research (Grisham, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). The Delphi method lends itself well to social research as it is efficacious for generating knowledge about multifaceted questions and phenomena that lack a well defined knowledge base (Donohoe & Needham, 2009;

Grisham, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). According to Linstone and Turoff (1975), this method is used to structure group communication processes in order to gain improved understanding through consensus of an expert panel. Although frequently referred to simply as the Delphi method, this method has been adapted for various purposes and types of studies (Davidson, 2013). As posited by Davidson (2013), several variations of this approach have been developed, including the modified Delphi (e.g., use of focus groups or face-to-face interviews), policy Delphi (e.g., intended to analyze policy), decision Delphi (e.g., panel of identified decision makers), real time Delphi (e.g., real time platform such as interactive website or conference), e-Delphi (e.g., exclusively online platform), technological Delphi (e.g., use of technology to allow for immediate response to researcher such as a handheld clicker), and disaggregated Delphi (e.g., use of cluster analysis). Further, a study intended to utilize the classical Delphi method may very well morph into another form depending on results and researcher influence (Davidson, 2013).

In addition to generating consensus among a panel of experts (Linstone & Turoff, 1975), the original Delphi method is characterized by “anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and the statistical aggregation of group responses” (Rowe & Wright, 1999, p. 354). Traditionally, communication among participants is facilitated by a researcher through questionnaires, which allows participants to remain relatively anonymous (Rowe & Wright, 1999; Ziglio, 1996). The aspect of anonymity is thought to be advantageous for reducing the potential for social pressure among participants, encouraging participants to respond to questions based on personal judgment rather than pressure to conform (Rowe & Wright, 1999). The questioning procedures used in the traditional Delphi

method are iterative, or in other words, characterized by multiple rounds of intentional questioning which occur over a series of stages. According to Linstone and Turoff (1975) there are four phases of questioning. The process begins with an exploration phase during which time participants are asked to respond to broad prompts about the topic under investigation. The second and third phases are used to explore participants' perceptions about the topic and examine agreement and disagreement that may exist among participants (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The fourth, and final phase, presents the aggregate results back to the participants for a final review (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Similarly, Ziglio (1996) conceptually disaggregated the traditional Delphi method into two phases, including the exploration phase and the evaluation phase. According to Ziglio, the exploration phase typically involves one to two rounds of questioning. In this description of the process, the first round of questioning uses broad questions designed to solicit responses and generate information from participants (Ziglio, 1996). The information gleaned from round one is summarized by a researcher to construct a second questionnaire, which is used to provide an opportunity for participants to review the results, revise their previous responses, and rate levels of agreement or disagreement (Ziglio, 1996). This phase of questioning is repeated as necessary to ensure "issues can be clarified, areas of agreement and disagreement can be identified, and an understanding of the priorities can be developed" (Ziglio, 1996, p. 9). The evaluation phase, often containing rounds two and three of questioning, is characterized by gathering and refining participants' responses until consensus is achieved (Ziglio, 1996).

In the traditional Delphi method, each round of questioning is followed by controlled feedback to provide participants with an opportunity to review the results, as

well as instructions as to how to proceed (Rowe & Wright, 1999; Ziglio, 1996).

Controlled feedback often entails a written description of aggregated results, descriptive statistics used to determine which information to retain (i.e., mean or median values, threshold values, measurements of variance), and a report of any notable areas of disagreement that warrant further input to better understand the discrepancies (Rowe & Wright, 1999). The final defining characteristic of the traditional Delphi method is statistical aggregation of group responses (Rowe & Wright, 1999). Several authors have provided guidance as to how to manage the results gathered throughout the Delphi process (e.g., Grisham, 2009; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007). Typically, in the traditional Delphi method 5 or 7 point Likert-type scales are used to elicit participants' perspectives about individual items (Jenkins & Smith, 1994).

Therefore, group responses are typically aggregated by calculating measures of central tendency (e.g., mean or median) and variance (e.g., standard deviation or interquartile range) (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Rowe & Wright, 1999; Ziglio, 1996). In some cases data may be displayed graphically in order to illustrate stability of responses (Greatorrex & Dexter, 2000). Stability of responses is commonly obtained when a previously determined threshold is reached (Jenkins & Smith, 1994). After consensus is achieved, responses are often returned to participants for further clarification and confirmation that the information collected is representative of participants' perspectives (Ziglio, 1996).

Within the context of this dissertation study, attributes of the classical Delphi method such as participant selection, anonymity, and the ability to distill multifaceted phenomena are congruent with the research question under investigation. Regarding participant selection, a degree of expertise is necessary to understand the complexity of

educational heteronormativity and the unique roles of school counselors. Thus, the classical Delphi method is an effective tool for identifying and soliciting information from individuals with expertise in school counseling and the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. In addition, discussions regarding sexual and gender variance in educational environments can be intimidating, therefore, the anonymity allotted in the classical Delphi method may provide space for participants to communicate freely. In congruence with the goal of this dissertation study, the classical Delphi method is effective for generating knowledge and condensing complex phenomena into manageable components (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Grisham, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). To this end, the Delphi method is efficacious for identifying practical and accessible strategies for school counselors to deconstruct educational heteronormativity, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Grisham, 2009; Ziglio, 1996).

The Delphi Method in the Counseling Field

The Delphi method has been widely used in the counseling field to forecast future directions of the profession (e.g., Daniel & Weikel, 1983; Heath, Neimeyer, & Pedersen, 1988; Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011; Mellin & Pertuit, 2009; Shaw, Leahy, Chan, & Catalano, 2006), determine counselor training methods (e.g., Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007; Klutchkowski & Troth, 1995; Vacc & Charkow, 1999; White & Russell, 1995; Whittinghill, 2006), identify practices for counseling specific populations (Crutzen et al., 2008; Israel, Ketz, Detrie, Burke, & Shulman, 2003; Jeffery & Hache, 1995; Khanna, McDowell, Perumbilly, & Titus, 2009), refine couples and family therapy (e.g., Blow & Sprenkle, 2001; Davey, Duncan, Kissil, Davey, & Fish, 2011; Jenkins, 1996; Wallis, Burns, & Capdevila, 2009; White, Edwards, & Russell, 1997), and examine school

counseling (e.g., Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon, & Henningson, 2005; Geltner, Cunningham, & Caldwell, 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Solmonson, Roaten, & Sawyer, 2011). Based on a review of Delphi studies in counseling literature, it is likely this methodology is useful for examining the complex phenomena inherent to the field of professional counseling. Therefore, it is probable the classical Delphi method is an appropriate approach to generate knowledge about school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity.

Future directions of the counseling profession. The Delphi method is frequently utilized to forecast future directions of the field of professional counseling. For example, Daniel and Weikel (1983) recruited 86 doctoral level faculty members to provide their opinions regarding the future of the counseling profession. Similarly, Heath, Neimeyer, and Pedersen (1988) generated consensus among a group of 53 experts in the field of cross-cultural counseling, predicting there would be increased integration of cross-cultural counseling tenets in counselor training, theory, research, and practice. Focusing specifically on ethical issues, Herlihy and Dufrene (2011) selected a panel of 18 experts to explore the most pressing ethical considerations of professional counseling. Also forecasting the future of the counseling profession, Mellin and Pertuit (2009) utilized the Delphi method to examine beliefs about future research in youth counseling, while, Shaw, Leahy, Chan, and Catalano (2006) explored experts' beliefs about impending concerns for rehabilitation counseling.

The aforementioned examples of Delphi studies provided support for the utility of this approach for forecasting future directions of the field. Because of the limited research regarding the ways school counselors can proactively engage in social justice advocacy

and critical analyses of educational environments, it stands to reason the classical Delphi method may be the first step in generating increased knowledge for future training and practice. As previously mentioned, professional school counseling literature supports the adoption of a social justice paradigm (e.g., ASCA, 2012; Education Trust, 2009), and yet, very few comprehensive guidelines have been provided for how this approach is actualized in practice. Therefore, a classical Delphi method may offer a foundation for the future roles of school counselors as social justice advocates, and the ways in which they can contribute to more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals.

Counselor training methods. In addition to forecasting the future of the field, several authors have employed the Delphi method to examine elements of effective counselor education and supervision (e.g., Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007; Klutchkowski & Troth, 1995; Vacc & Charkow, 1999; White & Russell, 1995; Whittinghill, 2006). One such example conducted by White and Russell (1995) indicated marriage and family therapist supervisors ($n = 61$) shared common beliefs about the essential supervisory components in marriage and family therapy (e.g., executive skills, maturity of supervisor, supervisory perceptual/conceptual skills, professionalism, foundation knowledge of supervisor, relationship skills, training/experience, supervisor beliefs, and acceptance of the role of supervisor). A similar Delphi study conducted by Dressel, Consoli, Kim, and Atkinson (2007) suggested that counseling supervisors ($n = 21$) were in agreement regarding the behaviors they believed contributed to successful and unsuccessful multicultural supervisory behaviors. When viewed in conjunction, it is probable the commonalities among expert counseling supervisors may be helpful for

developing consistent supervisory practices and improving counselor education and supervision.

In an attempt to better understand common aspects of master's level addiction counselor preparation, Whittinghill (2006) used a Delphi method to solicit the opinions of 28 addiction counseling experts to determine if the essential elements of practice were congruent with master's level training (Whittinghill, 2006). As posited by Whittinghill, the results of this study may improve the level of preparation and practical application of addiction counseling techniques. In this context, Whittinghill offered a model for utilizing the Delphi method to improve training based on participants' expert knowledge of clinical practice. This bridge between training and practice is essential for fostering counselor competence, and congruent with the use of the Delphi method in this dissertation study. In addition to utilizing the knowledge of experts to inform intentional practice, the intended results of this dissertation study may also benefit school counselor educators by providing concrete recommendations for how school counselors can initiate educational reform.

Although it is beneficial when research can elucidate a common voice within the counseling field, it is also valuable when consensus cannot be achieved. Vacc and Charkow (1999) employed a Delphi method to investigate the ongoing concern of counselor accountability. Using the CARECEP standards as an overarching organizational tool, Vacc and Charkow concluded there was little agreement between professional literature, participant responses, and the CACREP standards for preparation regarding counselor accountability and counselor training programs. However, this lack of consensus initiated professional dialogue regarding the need for increased

intentionality in these essential realms of the counseling profession. Kluttschkowski and Troth (1995) elucidated similar discordance in a Delphi study examining the substance abuse counselor education training standards, indicating a need for future clarification and curricular refinement. Thus, the Delphi method appears to be an effective way for increasing intentionality in counselor education curriculum, ideally leading to improved counselor preparation. Such intentionality in training is essential for providing a foundation for school counselors to become advocates and leaders within educational environments, which is necessary for fostering LGBTQIQA inclusivity.

Counseling specific populations. Because of the specificity of this dissertation study, participants will be selected based on expertise of both school counseling and the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. Therefore, the prevalence of the Delphi method for identifying best practices for counseling specific populations (e.g., Crutzen et al., 2008; Israel et al., 2003; Jeffery & Hache, 1995; Khanna et al., 2009) is promising for the design of this dissertation study. For example, Jeffery and Hache (1995) used a modified Delphi method, including 11 focus groups in three rural communities to improve understanding about the career related counseling needs of rural youth ($n = 60$). Further, Jeffery and Hache reported subsequent steps to utilize the results gleaned from their study to develop a video-based, career support kit for youth in rural areas. In addition, the authors provided a noteworthy discussion about the ways in which the results from Delphi studies may be used to create interventions that can be studied further for effectiveness (Jeffery & Hache, 1995). Although conducted quite some time ago, Jeffery and Hache's use of the Delphi method demonstrated the efficacy of this

methodology for improving understanding about complex phenomena, leading to the information required to conduct more rigorous outcome research.

Similarly, Israel, Ketz, Detrie, Burke, and Shulman (2003) conducted a modified Delphi study in order to determine counselor competencies for counseling LGB clients. Israel et al. selected a panel of participants with expertise in counseling LGB clients ($n = 14$), as well as LGB individuals who had experiences in counseling ($n = 8$). Participants' responses were distilled to construct a list of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for LGB counseling practices (Israel et al., 2003). As posited by Israel et al., competencies such as knowledge of LGB identity development, discrimination, and oppression are helpful for providing comprehensive counseling services for LGB clients. Furthermore, in addition to improving counseling services for LGBTQIQA individuals, this study promoted integration of critical analyses of social systems that contribute to the oppression of marginalized populations.

Based on the consensus of experts generated throughout the Delphi process, Khanna, McDowell, Perumbilly, and Titus (2009) employed a similar approach to refining counseling interventions for working with Asian Indian and Asian Indian Americans. Although similar in design and intent, one unique aspect of this study was the homogeneity of the panel of experts. Khanna et al. limited the sample to include only counseling professionals with Asian Indian origins, resulting in a very small sample of six participants. As posited by Khanna et al., utilizing a selective, homogenous sample provided insight into the lived experiences of this specific population and may be effective for developing culturally sensitive counseling practices. However, as noted by

Khanna et al., and echoed by the author, this approach must be observed with caution to prevent over specification or generalization of a cultural group.

Numerous examples of Delphi studies intended to address the counseling needs of specific populations demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach for generating knowledge to improve counselor training and practice. Applied to this dissertation study, the rationale for employing a Delphi method to understand the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals is twofold. First, intentional selection of an expert panel is essential for locating participants with adequate expertise to determine school counseling strategies to facilitate more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. Second, the decision to focus on deconstructing educational heteronormativity, rather than on the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals, is intended to shift the school counseling paradigm from responsive services to preventive, social justice advocacy. Therefore, this dissertation is intended to build upon the precedence that the Delphi method is effective for identifying best practices for specific populations, to the development of strategies to initiate the systemic reform necessary to foster LGBTQIQA inclusive educational environments.

Marriage and family therapy. Although frequently considered under the umbrella of the professional counseling field, marriage and family therapy (MFT) is often viewed as a distinct sub-section of the profession, such as school counseling, addiction counseling, and rehabilitation counseling. This delineation can be seen throughout MFT literature, and more specifically, in several Delphi studies conducted to further define the unique characteristics of MFT (Blow & Sprenkle, 2001; Wallis et al., 2009; White et al., 1997). Further, the Delphi method has been applied in order to expound specific concepts

and theories commonly associated with MFT (Davey et al., 2011; Jenkins, 1996; Wallis et al., 2009).

Although master's level counselors may be conceptualized as a conglomerate of the professional counseling field, several examples of Delphi studies evince the value of utilizing expert knowledge to elucidate the uniqueness of counseling specialties. For example, White, Edwards, and Russell (1997) conducted a modified Delphi study to determine the unique characteristics that define necessary variables for successful therapeutic outcomes in MFT (White et al., 1997). White et al. asserted that the results of this study may be used for future investigation of the common factors of MFT, resulting in a more unified professional identity. In congruence with White et al.'s assertion about MFT common factors, Blow and Sprenkle (2001) conducted a similar modified Delphi study examining the common factors among MFT theories and approaches. In this study, a sample of 40 participants representing both practitioners and researchers generated consensus about the commonalities found in client/extratherapeutic factors, relationship factors, model/technique factors, and placebo factors (Blow & Sprenkle, 2001). The high level of agreement among participants led Blow and Sprenkle to conclude movement towards a common factors paradigm of MFT may solidify professional identity.

The Delphi method has also been used as a means to further examine specific models of change frequently found within MFT practices and theory. For example, Jenkins (1996) used a Delphi method to explore the reflecting team approach in MFT, elucidating major assumptions and applications of this technique. Davey, Duncan, Kissil, Davey, and Fish (2011) employed a modified Delphi method in an attempt to operationally define the concept of second-order change, which is regularly referenced as

a central tenet of the change process of MFT. Similarly, Wallis, Burns, and Capdevila (2009) combined Q methodology (i.e., card sorting process) with the Delphi method to define the primary tenets of narrative therapy. These aforementioned studies illustrated how the Delphi method can be applied to clarify complex concepts frequently found in the counseling field. Such clarification may lead to improved definitions of constructs, making future empirical outcome research possible. In addition, the aforementioned examples provided knowledge about the specialization of MFT practitioners, potentially strengthening the unique professional identity of MFT, while simultaneously contributing to improved services within the professional counseling field.

School counseling. Although a sub-section of the professional counseling field, school counseling literature and research often finds a distinct place in professional counseling discourse. Within this literature, several noteworthy studies in school counseling have effectively used the Delphi method as a catalyst for more intentional professional identity (Solmonson et al., 2011), training (Geltner et al., 2011), research (Dimmitt et al., 2005), and practice (Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). One such study conducted by Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon, and Henningson (2005), used the Delphi method to survey 21 practicing school counselors and school counselor educators to identify the most salient research questions necessary for the progression of the school counseling profession. This notable study resulted in the construction of research questions that experts in school counseling believe will contribute to the future success and development of school counseling (Dimmitt et al., 2005). Since that time, the results of this study have been used as guidance for substantive outcome research in the school counseling profession (see Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and

Evaluation), demonstrating how the Delphi method can be used to initiate future empirical research by refining complex phenomena within the field (Dimmitt et al., 2005).

The Delphi method has also been applied in school counseling research to determine improved hiring procedures (Solmonson et al., 2011), training (Geltner et al., 2011), and school-based interventions for specific populations (Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Solmonson, Roaten, and Sawyer (2011) utilized the Delphi method to raise awareness about hiring practices of professional school counselors, elucidating a need for improved training, assessment, and oversight of hiring processes through school district-university partnerships. Similarly, Geltner, Cunningham, and Caldwell (2011) conducted a Delphi study to generate consensus among a panel of 35 school counselors and school counselor educators to develop classroom management strategies for school counselors to employ (e.g., nonverbal communication, summarizing, linking, etcetera). In addition, the Delphi method has been used to define the role of school counselors in post-secondary planning for students with autism spectrum disorders (Krell & Pérusse, 2012) and learning disabilities (Milsom & Dietz, 2009). When examined as a whole, these studies utilized the knowledge of experts to better understand the unique roles of school counselors, while providing suggestions for informed school counselor preparation and practice.

In concordance with this dissertation study, it is evident the Delphi method has been assimilated into school counseling research to support future development of the field, while refining current training and practice. In this dissertation study, use of an expert panel will provide insight into the roles of school counselors within educational environments, while considering the reform necessary to develop LGBTQIQA inclusive

educational policies and practices. Because of the complexity of such educational reform, it is likely the Delphi method is advantageous for distilling an inherently complex social phenomenon into manageable interventions that may translate from research to practice. Further, as demonstrated by the aforementioned Delphi studies in school counseling (e.g., Dimmitt et al., 2005; Solmonson et al., 2011), it is possible the information gleaned from this study may be useful for future outcome research to determine the effects of school counseling interventions on LGBTQIQA inclusivity and school climate. To this end, it is probable the Delphi method may provide increased understanding of the future roles of school counselors in fostering more inclusive educational environments through intentional practices to deconstruct educational heteronormativity.

Conclusion

As posited by Harper and Singh (2013), “*inclusive* refers to how spaces consider the needs and narrative of the entire population, including those who have not yet joined” (p. 406). In congruence with this definition of inclusivity, it is imperative for school counselors to proactively increase visibility of LGBTQIQA individuals, without elucidating LGBTQIQA youth themselves. DePalma and Atkinson (2009b) described the challenges of balancing increased visibility and personal safety for marginalized youth as a conflict between silence and screaming. These youth are often faced with the decision to either become a spokesperson for LGBTQIQA youth, or blend in with their peers and the dominant narratives of heterosexuality, and binary gender identity and expression, rendering them invisible. So often, LGBTQIQA youth are excluded from dominant educational discourses and interventions designed to support them require youth to be out to access services (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009b).

The professional literature supports the integration of queer theory as a means to heighten the critical consciousness necessary to foster emancipatory educational environments in which LGBTQIQA youth no longer feel silenced. Educational researchers are tirelessly striving to generate strategies for educators to begin deconstructing educational heteronormativity. Investment in social reform through social justice advocacy is undoubtedly essential to the future of professional school counseling, and yet, professional school counselors may still be lacking accessible knowledge and skills necessary to fully engage in this critical discourse. The utility of the Delphi method for generating knowledge about complex social phenomena is advantageous for identifying practical school counseling strategies to deconstruct educational heteronormativity, providing tools to illuminate the roles of school counselors in this imperative discourse.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The following chapter outlines the design of this dissertation study, which included seven main elements. An overview of the epistemological assumptions and theoretical foundation are provided in order to elucidate the position of the researcher within the context of this study (Creswell, 2007). In addition, the overarching research question is revisited to illustrate the rationale for selecting a classical Delphi method, followed by a description of methods, which is further disaggregated to include participants, sampling procedures, response rate, sample demographic information, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Further, a discussion regarding the trustworthiness of this study is presented.

Epistemology

Constructionism

Epistemology refers to belief systems about the essence or philosophy of knowledge (Crotty, 2010). Objectivism is a common epistemology that implies the presence of absolute truth and inherent meaning of reality regardless of the presence of human perception (Crotty, 2010). According to this perspective, inherent truth of the world is fairly static and available for discovery (Crotty, 2010). In opposition to objectivism, subjectivism is an epistemological assumption that subjects (i.e., humans) create truth when they ascribe meaning to inherently meaningless objects (Crotty, 2010).

Somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, is the epistemology of constructionism, which is a belief that knowledge is neither inherent, nor is it constructed from nothing (Crotty, 2010). Cunliffe (2008) described the essence of constructionism as a belief that “society exists as both an objective and a subjective reality” (p. 125) that is actively understood through social interactions. Similarly, Crotty (2010) asserted that a constructionist lens values objective and subjective perspectives in the construction of knowledge and the meaning ascribed to objects or phenomena. Although constructionism may be construed as both an epistemology and a theoretical perspective, for the purpose of this study, a constructionist epistemology will provide a foundation for understanding the construction of knowledge within the context of this study.

Because of the lack of knowledge regarding school counselors’ roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity, a constructionist foundation is advantageous for elucidating the positioning of school counselors within the context of critical educational reform. Educational research illuminates the need for educational stakeholders, such as school counselors, to acknowledge the presence of heteronormative policies and practices within K–12 public education environments (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; Bower & Klecka, 2009; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Further, many authors have provided suggestions as to how stakeholders may challenge and deconstruct such heteronormative policies and practices (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). However, the specific roles of school counselors in this educational reform remain elusive. Educational literature and research are lacking regarding school counselors’ perceptions of heteronormativity and the ways in which a

social justice paradigm may be applied to contribute to more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. Thus, additional knowledge is needed to inform understanding of the roles of school counselors in this critical discourse and educational reform. To this end, the results of this dissertation study are intended to provide accessible school counseling strategies that may contribute to intentional practice within the context of a social justice school counseling paradigm.

A constructionist lens created the foundation for this classical Delphi study, as this study was intended to reflect the collective knowledge of the participants. A classical Delphi method utilizes intentional interactions among participants to generate consensus and co-construct a knowledge base that attends to complex questions (Scheele, 1975). The classical Delphi method aligns with a constructionist paradigm in which knowledge can be actively generated through participant interaction to develop strategies that address the complex nature of educational reform. Social change occurs slowly and within the context of each environment; thus, school counselors' efforts to deconstruct educational heteronormativity will be unique to each school counselor and their respective schools. This ecological perspective of social reform, in which one must acknowledge the complex interplay between individual school counselors, schools, and larger communities, is essential for reform. As posited by Scheele (1975), a classical Delphi method utilizes intentional interactions among participants to construct "a reality that will prompt the appropriate kinds of active interventions" (p. 35). Therefore, a constructionist paradigm reflects the intentional process utilized to generate strategies for school counselors to begin deconstructing educational heteronormativity, as well as the

recognition that the implementation of such strategies will be affected by the context of each educational community.

Theoretical Foundation

Queer Theory

While epistemology refers to assumptions about knowledge, the theoretical foundation for this study is intended to provide a lens to focus attention on particular aspects of such knowledge and systems of meaning (Hanna, Giordano, & Bemak, 1996). Although the following study is rooted in the assumptions of constructionism and the construction of knowledge, the research question being examined is best viewed through the theoretical lens of queer theory. The tenets of constructionism are congruent with queer theory, as this theory is a complex construct that may be understood differently depending on context and individual perspectives (Watson, 2005). Many foundational canons of queer theory are intended to elicit questions about the construction of knowledge, and the influence of knowledge on social systems and peoples' lives. Thus, understanding knowledge construction from a constructionist epistemology informs the major assumptions of the theoretical foundation of queer theory.

The examination of educational environments and the ways in which sexuality and gender variance are included or excluded through language, curricula, images, artifacts (e.g., documents, books, videos, etcetera), and social systems (e.g., clubs, athletics, dances, etcetera) reveals complex interactions that are important for understanding the educational system as a whole. Educational systems are comprised of normative social systems, which result in regulatory practices such as educational heteronormativity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Chambers, 2007). The presence of such

regulatory practices has led theorists and researchers to develop substantive knowledge and suggestions as to how educational stakeholders may foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; Bower & Klecka, 2009; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). However, the unique role of school counselors in reducing structural barriers that impede inclusivity such as educational heteronormativity is only starting to be included in educational discourse (Smith, 2013). Thus, the questions posed in this study were constructed through a critical lens in order to further understanding about the ways school counselors can critically question dominant paradigms that perpetuate hostile school climates for LGBTQIQA individuals. Further, this study was intended to identify the ways in which school counselors can proactively contribute to systemic change by deconstructing educational heteronormativity to contribute to more inclusive educational environments.

As posited by Watson (2005), to define queer theory is to acknowledge that the construct of the theory is an evolving body of knowledge that encompasses numerous perspectives that are often viewed as a conglomerate. Therefore, a working explanation of queer theory will be provided to describe the author's understanding of this complex theory and the way queer theory was applied within the context of this study. Queer theory may be thought of as a critical examination of dominant narratives that perpetuate institutional norms regarding sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression (Bower & Klecka, 2009). Other theories examine the human experience of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression; however, queer theory uses the word queer as a verb to represent a critical analysis of societal norms that often

go unquestioned such as heterosexuality (Bower & Klecka, 2009). Such critical analysis challenges binary constructions of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression, creating space for alternative narratives without assumptions of normalcy or deviance (Watson, 2005). According to Bower and Klecka (2009), “queer theory is applied to school contexts to interrogate dominant social norms by exposing social constructions of acceptability, normalcy, and identity for the purpose of destabilizing and troubling binaries of normal and deviant” (p. 358).

It is the application of queer theory that frames the research question and design of this study. Although a variety of questions are relevant to further understanding of school counselors’ roles in improving school climate for LGBTQIQA individuals, to focus on educational heteronormativity is one aspect of this complex system. To ask this question is to assume that educational heteronormativity currently maintains power differentials in public educational environments. While examining educational environments through a critical lens of queer theory, it stands to reason that actively deconstructing the structural policies and practices that perpetuate heteronormativity may provide a foundation for more inclusive educational climates for LGBTQIQA individuals.

Researcher Stance

The concept of reflexivity represents a transparent and reflective practice in which researchers and authors acknowledge their position on the subject under investigation and their stance within the research process (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), “all writing is positioned and within a stance” (p. 179), meaning an author’s lived experiences will influence the questions asked and the aspects one decides to attend to while conducting research. Throughout the research process, personal narratives that are

positioned within a particular cultural, temporal, and geographical context influence the researcher's perceptions and interpretations. Thus, it is imperative to recognize one's own bias and the limitations of one's actions and contributions to the field. Awareness of one's subjectivity and positioning forms the foundation of my stance as a researcher, as I too believe reflexivity is essential and representative of my way in this world.

As described by Crotty (2010), all research begins from a starting point that is unique to each researcher. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge my position in the world and the vantage point from which this study was conceived. The foundation of my stance as a researcher is that of a grown child of nurturing and unique parental dynamics. At the age of nine, after the recent divorce of my biological mother and father, my mother came out as a lesbian. At the time of her disclosure my insight did not extend beyond my understanding of what it was to have two loving parents, who happen to live in separate homes. Based on my recollection of this time period, my experience was anticlimactic, as I could not foresee how this would impact my life. Many years later, eighteen of which have been blessed with the presence of my second, and equally influential mother, I cannot imagine my life without my two moms and father. They bring unique, enriching, and nurturing guidance to my life, each one offering parental support only they can provide. However, from this vantage point, there is gratitude and appreciation that having two moms and a father was not always so comfortable.

At the time of my mother's disclosure, her sexual orientation was of little concern to me. However, three years later when I entered middle school in a conservative community in the throws of a statewide political debate regarding the civil rights of homosexuals, my perceptions were greatly altered. Upon entering the walls of that middle

school, I suddenly had to navigate with whom I would disclose my true self. I found myself questioning whether or not I could tell people about my unique family structure, or if I could stand with pride when my family came to school. As I recall, plotting the course of middle school was challenging enough, and then I made the decision to trust a friend and invite her to my house after school. From that day forward, it was no longer my choice whether or not to disclose my family constellation. In retrospect, I imagine many people never knew about my family dynamics, but through the eyes of that middle school girl, it seemed everyone knew and disapproved. In my mind, I had been dragged out of the closet to face one of the most intimidating social groups... middle school students.

It was at that time I became different from my peers. I was subjected to harassment and victimization as a result of my family dynamics. Over time, I stopped questioning how I would engage in that environment, and turned my questioning to how our difference was beyond the parameters of acceptance. Instead of looking out, I turned my gaze inward experiencing blame, fear, anger, and rejection. After years of traversing a system of exclusion, I finally found myself in a school environment that not only tolerated difference, but also encouraged difference to thrive. This new environment made space for difference in a way I had yet to experience, and for the first time, I was able to accept my difference and focus my attention on school.

Another salient aspect contributing to the conception of my research agenda is the recognition that my educational experiences are similar to those of many children and adolescents with diverse family constellations. In fact, substantive research suggests that the sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression of one's parents

tends to become challenging as a result of external social pressures regarding perceptions of normalcy and deviance (e.g., Bower & Klecka, 2009; Garner, 2005; Howey & Samuels, 2000; Snow, 2004). As stated by Avery (2013):

As “children of”, our greatest challenges do not come from being a part of an LGBTQ family as many argue, our greatest challenges come from inequality, misperceptions, homophobia, and discriminatory laws that further disenfranchise our families. It can be this struggle that helps us define our paths, our choices, our families, and our values. (p. 1)

Having lived experience as a middle school student with a lesbian mother, I understand what it is like to be identified as the “other.” The experience of feeling inherently excluded within the public education system was integrated into my personal narrative and undoubtedly influenced my professional path. In combination with numerous other factors, it is likely the struggle of educational experiences of inequity and exclusion has contributed to the construction of my path as a practitioner, researcher, and author. It is this path that has led to the desire to reduce barriers that inhibit equal access to high quality education for all students. In addition, recognition of the power educational environments had over my beliefs about my family and myself contributed to a critical consciousness and desire to examine social systems and regulatory practices that perpetuate inequality. To this end, my personal experiences have influenced the questions I ask; however, the knowledge necessary to initiate such educational reform rests in the hands of all educational stakeholders with a passion for social justice and equal access to high quality public education.

Research Question

- Q1 How can school counselors deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K–12 public education environments to facilitate institutional reform?

Methods

The Delphi Method

The Delphi method is thought to have originated in the 1950's when "an Air Force-sponsored Rand Corporation study" (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, p. 10) utilized a technique of iterative questioning to generate consensus among a group of experts regarding technological forecasting and future protocol for national defense strategies (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). Since its conception, the Delphi method has been widely applied to various areas of social and educational research because of its utility in generating knowledge regarding complex questions and phenomena (Grisham, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). The Delphi method is characterized by an iterative process of questioning in which information is solicited from a group of carefully selected participants that possess expertise in a particular content area (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Although there are multiple types of Delphi studies (e.g., modified Delphi, policy Delphi, decision Delphi, real time Delphi, e-Delphi, technological Delphi, disaggregated Delphi, and group Delphi) (Davidson, 2013; Linstone & Turoff, 1975), the classical Delphi method was employed in this study, as this method is congruent with the research question under investigation. According to Rowe and Wright (1999), the classical Delphi method is an efficacious way for forecasting the future and is characterized by "anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and the statistical aggregation of group response" (p. 354). Further, the classical Delphi method is effective for investigating complex problems that require knowledge building in order to determine future practice (Grisham, 2009; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Ziglio, 1996).

The features of this classical Delphi study are addressed in more detail below, however, Ziglio (1996) described the general design of a classical Delphi study as two distinct phases: the exploration phase and the evaluation phase. The exploration phase, also referred to as the generative round of questioning, utilizes broad questions to gather information from participants to further understanding of the topic under investigation (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). The information gleaned from round one is then distilled to construct a questionnaire, which is used for subsequent rounds of questioning (Ziglio, 1996). Following the initial exploration phase, the evaluation phase utilizes a series of systematic questionnaires to determine participants' levels of agreement, disagreement, understanding, and opinions regarding importance, desirability, and feasibility of the previously constructed responses (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). This iterative, systematic questioning continues with controlled feedback and refinement of responses until a previously determined level of consensus is achieved (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996).

Because of the complex nature of educational heteronormativity, and the lack of knowledge regarding school counselors' roles in systemically challenging such structural barriers, the exploratory nature of the classical Delphi method may further understanding of the ways in which school counselors engage in this discourse. The classical Delphi method is an effective way to develop strategies and interventions that are informed by the knowledge of highly qualified individuals with diverse experiences (Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Scheele, 1975). Thus, the iterative questioning process of the classical Delphi method was efficacious for distilling the information gleaned regarding school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity into active interventions (Scheele,

1975). Although the overarching research question in this study addressed broad topics (e.g., educational heteronormativity and institutional reform), the purpose of this study was to generate strategies that may improve school counselors' and school counselor educators' understanding of educational heteronormativity through intentional practice and practical strategies that may be implemented across educational environments.

Participants

The recommended sample size for Delphi studies varies significantly, which is evident in the substantive range of sample sizes found in Delphi studies in various fields (Skulmoski et al., 2007; Ziglio, 1996). Therefore, consideration for the intended sample size for this study was based on the median sample size for Delphi studies in counseling literature, recommendations for homogenous samples (Ziglio, 1996), and careful consideration of expert selection criteria. A review of 23 studies published between 1983 and 2012 in the fields of school counseling, clinical counseling, couples and family counseling, addictions counseling, and rehabilitation counseling, elucidated an average sample size of 31.39 with a standard deviation of 18.64 (Blow & Sprenkle, 2001; Crutzen et al., 2008; Daniel & Weikel, 1983; Davey et al., 2011; Dimmitt et al., 2005; Dressel et al., 2007; Geltner et al., 2011; Heath et al., 1988; Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011; Israel et al., 2003; Jeffery & Hache, 1995; Jenkins, 1996; Khanna et al., 2009; Klutchkowski & Troth, 1995; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Mellin & Pertuit, 2009; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Shaw et al., 2006; Solmonson et al., 2011; Vacc & Charkow, 1999; Wallis et al., 2009; White et al., 1997; Whittinghill, 2006). However, the range of these 23 studies was extensive (range: $86 - 6 = 80$), making the median a more appropriate measure of central tendency.

The median sample size for these studies is 28, which is similar to the median sample size of Delphi studies specific to school counseling research ($n = 26$) (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Solmonson et al., 2011). Although a review of the literature suggested an approximate sample size of 26–28 participants, a preliminary analysis of possible participants for this study indicated this was difficult to achieve because of the specificity of this study, and lack of school counseling research regarding the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. However, according to Ziglio (1996), smaller sample sizes of approximately 10–15 experts are sufficient for homogenous samples such as the participants identified for this study (school counselor educators, school counselors, and school counselor researchers). Thus, the sample size for this study was considered in light of the recommendations provided for homogenous samples (Ziglio, 1996), median sample size for Delphi studies in counseling literature, and intentional selection criteria prioritizing the expertise of participants, resulting in an intended range of 10–28 participants.

Selection criteria. The selection criteria utilized in the Delphi method is essential for defining expertise of a representative panel of participants. As posited by Ziglio (1996), knowledge gleaned from informed judgment of participants is the foundation of the theoretical tenets of the Delphi method. For the purpose of this study, the author utilized the selection criteria outlined by Baker, Lovell, and Harris (2006) to identify experts, as these criteria are congruent with Delphi studies found in extant counseling literature (e.g., Dimmitt et al., 2005; Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Mellin & Pertuit, 2009; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Solmonson et al., 2011). According to Baker et al., experts should be representative of the professional group

under investigation; therefore, the panel for this study was comprised of school counselor educators, school counselor researchers, and school counselor practitioners.

Although education literature espouses progress toward educational reform involving strategies for addressing educational heteronormativity, and the perspectives of educational researchers are invaluable, selection criteria for this study was intended to represent a collective professional identity specific to the field of school counseling. Therefore, because of the nature of this study, only individuals that maintained a professional identity affiliated with the field of school counseling were considered for the participant panel. In concordance with Delphi studies in school counseling research, participation was requested from school counselor educators, school counselor researchers, and school counselor practitioners from diverse contexts in order to obtain information that was representative of both research and practitioner perspectives (e.g., Dimmitt et al., 2005; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Solmonson et al., 2011).

In addition to identifying participants who share a common professional identity, Baker et al. (2006) suggested that one consider knowledge, experience, and ability to influence policy as additional criteria for participant selection. According to Ziglio (1996), “the definition of ‘experts’ varies according to the context and field of interest in which the Delphi method is going to be applied” (p.14). Therefore, in addition to the selection criteria suggested by Baker et al. (i.e., representative of professional group, knowledge, experience, and ability to influence policy), specific attributes associated with expertise were based on a review of Delphi studies conducted in the field of school counseling (e.g., Dimmitt et al., 2005; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

While determining sufficient expertise regarding school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity, the author considered participants' professional qualifications (education/licensure), authorship, professional presentations, and associated titles or roles (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

Preferred professional qualifications included school counselor educators and school counselor researchers with a minimum of an earned doctoral degree and current or recent employment in a college or university with a school counselor education program (Geltner et al., 2011). School counselor practitioners' preferred professional qualifications included a minimum of an earned Master's degree in school counseling and licensure in their respective state of practice (Geltner et al., 2011). Participants were also considered for inclusion if their professional qualifications aligned with the professional identity of the school counseling field, as evidenced by contributions to the field through related research, practice, and/or affiliation with applicable professional organizations (e.g., ASCA).

Because of the specificity of this study and the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals, the aforementioned professional qualifications were considered in conjunction with the additional criteria of authorship, professional presentations, demonstration of substantive experience, and the ability to influence policy (Baker, Lovell, & Harris, 2006). Inclusion for this study was based on authorship of a minimum of two publications or professional presentations pertaining specifically to the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals within the past five years (Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Expertise based on experience and one's ability

to influence policy was determined by visible leadership, participation, or affiliation with professional organizations associated with meeting the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). For example, a participant was considered for participation if they possessed appropriate professional qualifications (education/licensure) and served as an editor of a journal or book focused on the educational or mental health needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. Additional examples included an individual with sufficient professional qualifications that had been formally recognized because of their work with LGBTQIQA individuals (e.g., named educator of the year by Gay-Straight Alliance for Safe Schools or GLSEN) or had demonstrated leadership through membership or participation on a task force, related initiative, board of directors, etcetera.

In summary, some variability inevitably existed among participants; however, intentional decisions for inclusion were made based on a thorough examination of the following criteria. Preferred professional qualifications for school counselor educators and school counselor researchers included an earned doctoral degree, and current or recent employment as a school counselor educator or professional researcher. School counselor educators and school counselor researchers with an earned doctoral degree in related fields were also considered for participation if their professional qualifications and contributions to the field (e.g., master's degree, research, publications, presentations, professional organization membership, faculty assignment) aligned with the professional identity of school counseling. Similarly, preferred professional qualifications for school counselor practitioners included a minimum of an earned Master's degree in school counseling, licensure in their respective state of practice, and current or recent

employment as a school counselor. Exceptions were made for school counselor practitioners with alternative professional qualifications if their professional qualifications, experience, and/or contributions to the field were undeniably congruent with the professional identity of school counseling. In addition to such professional qualifications, participants met a minimum of one of the following criteria as they pertain specifically to the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals: authorship of a minimum of two publications or professional presentations within the past five years, visible leadership, participation or affiliation with professional organizations, or formal recognition because of their work with LGBTQIQA individuals.

Sampling strategy. In order to establish an expert panel of participants, purposive sampling was utilized to identify participants based on the aforementioned selection criteria (Baker et al., 2006; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Skulmoski et al., 2007; Ziglio, 1996). Following Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix H), a list of possible participants was constructed detailing each participant's attributes contributing to their expertise and specialized knowledge base. The list of participants was generated based upon a thorough review of professional literature, conference presentations, professional websites, known experts in the school counseling field, and consultation with the author's research advisors. Specifically, professional literature was examined through a systematic review of various research databases such as EBSCOhost and ProQuest. ASCA, ALGBTIC, GLSEN, and state Safe Schools Coalition websites were used as initial starting points for identifying professional presentations and visible leadership. Further, 20 state school counseling organization websites were explored, and when conference information was not available

electronically, the presidents and conference chairs were emailed to request access to extant conference programs for review. This process of reaching out to state organizations was discontinued after 20 states, as it did not result in the identification of any participants.

A list of 36 potential participants was developed by the author and subsequently reviewed by the author's research advisors. Based on feedback provided by the author's research advisors, one of the 36 individuals identified for possible participation was not included in the final list because of uncertainty as to their professional identity as a school counselor. Following Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix H), the author made initial contact via email for the remaining 35 possible participants (see Appendix B). At that time, the author formally requested a brief phone conversation to describe the study, selection criteria, and expectations for participation (i.e., multiple rounds of questioning, time commitment, etcetera) (Grisham, 2009). If participants did not respond to the initial request, the author sent a follow-up request for participation via email one week after the original email contact.

After the initial panel selection process, snowball sampling was used with the goal of expanding the sample (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Skulmoski et al., 2007). According to Merriam (1998), participants selected through purposive sampling are an information-rich group, thus, it is probable they are affiliated with others that share common knowledge and expertise. Therefore, the author provided previously selected participants with an outline of the selection criteria, accompanied by a request to forward the author's contact information and snowball sampling email (see Appendix G) to anyone they believed may meet the aforementioned selection criteria. The snowball

sampling request did not result in any additional individuals for the final list of possible participants.

Response Rate

Based on the selection criteria for this study, 35 individuals were contacted via email to solicit participation. Of these 35 individuals, 19 individuals initially agreed to speak with the author to discuss participation in the first round of data collection, resulting in 16 phone conversations. Two individuals agreed to participate but requested to do so without an introduction over the phone as their schedules did not permit such a time commitment. Of the 19 individuals that agreed to participate, 16 completed the informed consent process, however, only 14 began round one. Both individuals that withdrew from the study did so after receiving the instructions for round one and prior to beginning the data collection process. Both stated they did not have time to commit to the duration of the study. The final response rate for the first round of data collection was 40% (14 out of 35). Rounds two and three had 100% response rates, as all 14 participants completed both rounds.

Demographic Information

All 14 participants completed the brief demographic questionnaire constructed by the author (see Appendix F). The sample consisted of nine females (~64%), four males (~28%), and one participant who identified as 'other' (~7%), indicating they identified as male and gender-variant. The sample was 100% Caucasian. The mean participant age was 37.54 with a range of 22 (30–52). However, three participants did not report their age. For highest obtained degree, 10 participants held a Doctoral Degree in counselor

education and supervision, and four held Master's Degrees in counseling (one Master's of Science; one Master's of Arts; two Master's of Education).

For professional experience, 11 participants reported experience as a school counselor, 10 reported experience as a counselor educator, and six identified as a researcher. Five participants indicated they also had 'other' professional experience such as a Licensed Professional Counselor/Clinical Counselor and one school counseling program consultant. Participants could select more than one category of professional experience, hence, the higher number of experiences than participants. At the time of the study, nine participants were employed as counselor educators, with three of these participants serving simultaneously as program coordinators. Three participants were currently doctoral students, and one of these students reported they were working as a counseling intern in a university-based clinic, as well as a research assistant and school counseling internship field supervisor. Two participants were practicing school counselors, and one of which was also a part-time, adjunct counselor educator.

Data Collection Procedures

Following Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix H), the researcher made initial contact with participants by email to solicit participation (see Appendix B), and request a brief phone conversation in which the researcher contacted each participant to personally invite them to participate in the study. Initial contact was made by phone in an attempt to engage participants in the research process to enhance the ongoing involvement necessary in a classical Delphi study. During this phone conversation, the researcher provided a verbal overview of the study, including a description of the prompts that were utilized in the generative round of questioning (see Appendix C).

Following initial phone contact and verbal agreement of participation, the researcher emailed an electronic informed consent document to each participant (see Appendix D). The author provided electronic copies of the informed consent document, as well as the mailing address of the author for participants that preferred to return a physical copy of the informed consent document via the United States Postal Service. Once the author received the signed informed consent documents, an email prompting the participants to begin the generative round of the study was sent, including instructions for round one (see Appendix E) and a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F). For the purpose of this study, the formalized data collection procedures were modeled after the recommendations provided by Ziglio (1996) and a review of extant Delphi studies in school counseling research (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

Generative round. The first phase of this study consisted of a broad prompt designed to elicit exploration of school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity through intentional practice. As posited by Ziglio (1996), the generative round of the Delphi method is crucial for orienting participants to the Delphi process. Therefore, the generative round of this study began with a rationale for the study and instructions for completing round one (see Appendix E). In addition to the rationale and instructions, each participant was provided with a definition of educational heteronormativity and deconstruction to ensure all participants were conceptualizing the prompt in a similar manner. As previously mentioned, for the purpose of this study, educational heteronormativity was defined as "the organizational structures in schools that support heterosexuality as normal and anything else as deviant" (Donelson & Rogers,

2004, p. 128). Deconstruction was defined as the critical examination of dominant narratives that perpetuate institutional norms in order to allow alternative narratives to emerge free from the normalizing power of a preferred way of being (Chambers, 2007; Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990). Following these definitions, participants were asked to respond to the subsequent prompt: Please generate a list of strategies that may be employed by school counselors to deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K–12 public educational environments. Please consider strategies at the various levels of intervention: student level, teacher level, administrative level, building level (e.g., images, artifacts, curriculum), community level, policy level (e.g., nondiscrimination policies, inclusive language, instruction, hiring practices, etcetera). The information provided by the panel was then coded and organized by themes (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). The generative round of questioning concluded when saturation was achieved, meaning no additional information could be gleaned from the coding process (Saldaña, 2013). After initial data analysis, which is described in greater detail below, participants were asked to begin the evaluation phase of the process.

Round two. The themes identified in the generative round were used to construct a list of strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity. This list was uploaded into the online survey platform, Qualtrics, in order to facilitate the iterative questioning process, while maintaining participants' anonymity (Wester & Borders, 2014). In round two, participants were given the list of strategies to review in its entirety prior to entering the survey portion of the round. Once participants began the electronic survey they were asked to rate each strategy by level of relevance based on a 7-point

Likert-type scale (Geltner et al., 2011; Grisham, 2009; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & P russe, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Level of relevance ranged from 1 (not relevant) to 7 (critically relevant) (Geltner et al., 2011; Krell & P russe, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Participants were instructed to consider relevance pertaining specifically to how school counselors can deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K–12 public education environments. The round two instructions also requested that participants consider variance across ratings, as it is likely all strategies were not equally relevant. The instructions further specified that although future exploration of the strategies may be valuable for determining priority and chronological relevance, this study was intended to determine the initial relevance of the strategies generated in round one. After rating each strategy, participants were asked to briefly explain the conditions they used to rate the strategies, and to add additional comments regarding school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity or the strategy list generated from the previous round (Davidson, 2013; Dimmitt et al., 2005; Krell & P russe, 2012; Solmonson et al., 2011).

In congruence with data analysis techniques commonly used in the Delphi method, the data generated in round two were analyzed in Microsoft Excel to determine the median and interquartile ranges for each strategy (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & P russe, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). The purpose of these analyses was to identify strategies that participants consistently endorsed as relevant. Strategies with medians of 6 or 7 and interquartile ranges of less than or equal to 1.5 were retained for subsequent rounds of questioning (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & P russe, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Ziglio, 1996).

Round three. The third round of questioning was intended to further refine the strategies retained in round two in order to achieve stability of responses. In round three participants were provided with a link to a Qualtrics survey containing a list of retained strategies accompanied by each strategy's respective median and interquartile range (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). Participants were asked to review the revised list of strategies and re-rate each strategy while considering the group ratings provided.

This questionnaire also had an open-ended prompt eliciting any further comments, questions, or concerns regarding the retained strategies and iterative questioning process (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Based on the threshold criteria outlined below, the study concluded when consensus was achieved, and a final list of strategies for school counselors to use in order to deconstruct educational heteronormativity was constructed. The resulting list of strategies was disseminated to the expert panel for final review.

Round four. The fourth and final round of this study was designed to ensure participants agreed consensus had been achieved and their perspectives were represented accurately in the results. During the final review process (i.e., round four), participants were provided with the final list of strategies, as well as a link to an anonymous comment box as an opportunity to write a brief narrative to the author to anonymously disclose any additional information they believed was relevant for consideration in the study.

Although there was no expectation to comment further, participants were asked to provide any additional information they believed had been missed throughout the study and additional feedback about the process. The author and author's research advisors

intended to review the information provided to determine if additional questioning was necessary, however, no additional data were gleaned from this round.

Data Analysis

After panel selection and informed consent processes were completed, descriptive statistics were used to organize the demographic information of the final participant panel (Krell & Pérusse, 2012). Based on guidelines provided by Saldaña (2013), initial coding strategies were employed in the first round of data analysis to break down data obtained from the generative round of questioning “into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences” (p. 100). In order to reduce the influence of researcher bias, the author and one additional reviewer with advanced knowledge of qualitative data analysis independently analyzed the data obtained in the generative round of questioning through a constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Merriam, 1998). As posited by Creswell (2007), the constant comparative method may be defined as the systematic examination of qualitative data to look for salient information until saturation has been achieved. Saturation occurs when no additional information can be located within the data to contribute further to the category or theme under investigation (Creswell, 2007).

Through the constant comparative method the author and external reviewer independently examined the responses of each participant to construct categories based on the similarities within each unit of data, such as similar words, techniques, or levels of intervention (Merriam, 1998). Using the constant comparative method, the reviewers then systematically examined participants’ responses between cases (i.e., comparing the responses of each participant to the other participant responses) to construct similar

groups of information, which in the context of this study, were the identification of suggested school counseling strategies (Merriam, 1998). In order to reduce researcher bias, the author and reviewer did not have knowledge of the other reviewer's process, with the exception of the agreed upon method of data analysis (i.e., constant comparative method). After each reviewer constructed an initial list of strategies based on their review of the data, they compared their results and themes that emerged from the data.

Because of the author's familiarity with the prompts used throughout this study, the author initially organized the strategies into themes based on level of intervention (i.e., student, teacher, administrative, building, community, policy). However, the resulting organization of participant strategies revealed substantial redundancy across levels, as many of the generated strategies had practical application at various levels of intervention. Conversely, the external reviewer had little previous knowledge of the specific language used throughout this study, and subsequently coded the strategies based on overarching themes that encompassed the nuances of the strategy groups. At this time, the author and external reviewer compared results and agreed to recode the data based on overarching themes, as this organization structure substantially reduced redundancy when the data were organized by level of intervention. The following overarching themes were agreed upon for the final organization structure: advocacy; protection and enforcement (sub-theme of advocacy); allies and collaboration; curriculum reform; inclusive language; policy change to promote inclusion; professional development for change; rituals and ethos that promote inclusion; and signs of acceptance and inclusive facilities (see Appendix A for overarching theme structure). The decision to recode the data based on

these themes was based on a simplified presentation of the strategies that reduced the redundancy found when organizing the data by level.

After the new organization structure was established, the author and external reviewer utilized the same constant comparative method to construct parsimonious lists of strategies as they aligned with the overarching themes. The final lists were generated by systematically comparing, condensing, and editing the identified strategies to reduce redundancy (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Merriam, 1998; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). When a strategy could not be condensed or combined with similar strategies across participants without risk of changing the meaning, they were retained as distinct strategies (Krell & Pérusse, 2012). After the initial author-reviewer consultation, two additional rounds of coding and consultation took place. Areas of disagreement were examined to determine if the strategies could be collapsed or retained as distinct segments while maintaining the intended meaning. Although a predetermined plan to seek consultation from the author's research advisors existed for addressing intercoder disagreements, consensus was achieved without formal consultation. However, all de-identified data were shared with the author's research advisors as well as documentation for each step of the coding process. The coding process concluded when saturation had been reached and no new strategies could be obtained from the data (Saldaña, 2013). At this stage of analysis, a final list of strategies was constructed for subsequent rounds of questioning.

Following the qualitative component of data analysis, participants rated each strategy by level of relevance utilizing a 7-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = not relevant... 7 = critically relevant) (Geltner et al., 2011; Grisham, 2009; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell

& Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Throughout each round of questioning medians and interquartile ranges were calculated in Microsoft Excel for each strategy (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). Strategies were retained for subsequent rounds of questioning based on the following thresholds: medians ≥ 6 ; interquartile ranges ≤ 1.50 (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Analysis of the medians and interquartile ranges continued until all remaining strategies met the threshold for retention and a final list of strategies was constructed.

Trustworthiness

The construct of trustworthiness refers to the procedural steps taken by the researcher to ensure methodological rigor (Merriam, 1998). Trustworthiness can be conceptualized through various constructs such as credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Sexton, 2012; Shenton, 2004). From conception to conclusion, the researcher considered these elements of trustworthiness and employed a variety of intentional strategies to augment the trustworthiness of this study.

In qualitative research designs, credibility refers to whether or not data collection and results of a study are representative of the research questions under investigation and the participants' perspectives (Krefting, 1991; Sexton, 2012; Shenton, 2004). Thus, several precautions were taken to ensure credibility in the design of this classical Delphi study. For example, the iterative process of the classical Delphi method includes techniques for increasing credibility such as member checking, participatory involvement of panel members, and prolonged engagement with participants (i.e., multiple rounds of

questioning) (Krefting, 1991; Merriam, 1998). The credibility of the study is further supported by detailed procedural guidelines that were continuously reviewed by both the author and two research advisors (Krefting, 1991). The inclusion of an additional reviewer also enhanced credibility by reducing the influence of researcher bias throughout the data analysis procedures and subsequent results. In addition to data collection procedures, the author engaged in a reflexive process in which researcher bias was acknowledged through intentional bracketing strategies and an ongoing research journal (Merriam, 1998).

According to Shenton (2004), “confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern to objectivity” (p. 72). Confirmability represents the accuracy of the results within the context of the study (Sexton, 2012). Several strategies were used in the design of this study to support confirmability, such as the inclusion of an additional reviewer and research advisors to reduce the subjectivity and bias of the author. In addition, the role of triangulation is integral for augmenting confirmability. According to Merriam (1998), the trustworthiness of a study may be enhanced through triangulation at various levels throughout the research process (e.g., triangulation of data, investigators, confirmation of findings). Although there was one primary author/researcher and one primary method of data collection, the involvement of an outside reviewer, two research advisors, and the continuous participant review process constitute triangulation of investigators and findings, collectively bolstering the confirmability and trustworthiness of the study.

The construct of dependability is used to conceptualize whether or not the results of a study would remain stable if the research design was repeated within the same

parameters of the original study (Shenton, 2004). In order to improve the dependability of this study, the author incorporated an exhaustive review of literature examining similar applications of the Delphi method within counseling research. This review resulted in a detailed description of the author's conduct and the methods being employed within this study to ensure best practices were utilized. Further, the dependability of this study is greatly enhanced by the ongoing involvement and oversight of the author's research advisors.

Similarly to the construct of external validity, the concept of transferability refers to how well the findings of a study can be applied in different contexts (Shenton, 2004). However, the nature of this research design is not conducive for making generalizations beyond the sample of participants selected for this study. Because of the limited sample size and sampling procedures, generalization of results must be considered with caution. Although not inherently generalizable, the results of this study are intended to generate a list of strategies that may be employed by school counselors within various school communities. As previously mentioned, the application of such strategies is not directly transferable, and will be unique to each school counselor, school, and community in which these strategies are applied. Moreover, further research would be necessary to test the strategies developed in this research design in order to make inferences about effectiveness beyond the parameters of this study.

Conclusion

The procedures detailed above formed the structure for the research design adhered to in this study. This study was conducted in accordance with the parameters of the Institutional Review Board of the University of Northern Colorado. The author

followed the methodological guidelines above in order to ensure this study was conducted within the ethical guidelines of research with human participants, as well as to enhance the rigor of this investigation. The following chapters provide an in depth analysis of the results of this study and the implications for the field of school counseling.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter provides a brief summary of the participants' inspiration for becoming advocates for the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals, thus positioning them as experts in the field of school counseling. The results of the study are outlined, including descriptions of results at each of the three rounds of data collection, and the fourth, and final review round. The results are intended to address the overarching research question: how can school counselors deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K–12 public education environments to facilitate institutional reform?

The Position of an Expert

The total number of participants for this study consisted of 14 individuals identified by their expertise in school counseling and their knowledge of the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. The final sample consisted of nine counselor educators, three doctoral students in counselor education, and two practicing school counselors. Of the 14 participants, 11 reported previous employment experiences as a school counselor.

In order to better understand participants' position as an expert in LGBTQIQA inclusive school counseling, the author asked participants to describe the inspiration that motivated them to contribute to the improvement of the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals. Many participants spoke of their desire to contribute to equal

rights for marginalized populations. More specifically, 12 out of 14 participants (86%) reported some type of direct experience with the marginalization of LGBTQIQA individuals. Five participants (36%) recounted experiences as school counselors operating in LGBTQIQA exclusive environments in which they personally observed the struggle of LGBTQIQA individuals. One participant stated, “I have witnessed and experienced resistance to my efforts to infuse LGBTQIQA programs and services into a developmental school counseling program.” Another participant articulated, “as a former K–12 educator and school counselor, I became intimately aware of the marginalized experiences of LGBTQIQA youth and continue to seek appropriate ways to advocate for their needs and intervene when they are denied equal treatment in heteronormative hallways.” Numerous participants also reflected on a lack of school counseling interventions to serve LGBTQIQA individuals and their own experiences with “missed opportunities to intervene effectively in the past.”

Participants also spoke of their personal experiences in schools as a member of the LGBTQIQA community (36%). One participant stated, “I had a horrible time as a gay youth who was closeted with no one and nowhere to turn to.” Other participants recounted similar stories of finding themselves in hostile educational environments lacking support and acceptance because of their sexual identity. Conversely, one participant shared a powerful moment of transformation as an individual who held overt heterosexist beliefs throughout their life largely because of the environment in which they were raised. This participant stated, “as I developed critical consciousness regarding heteronormativity in my early 30's, I began the long, painful process of interrupting my deeply internalized heterosexism and working through my straight guilt. Developing out

of this ugly past, I am now deeply motivated to interrupt heteronormativity, primarily to secure a more equitable society for members of the LGBT community.” Experiences such as these illustrate how over time participants’ experiences and beliefs fostered their motivation to contribute to equality for LGBTQIA individuals. Although the question about motivation to participate in this study was optional, all participants provided a reflection about the importance of fostering equality and inclusivity for LGBTQIA individuals, and their individual motivation to position themselves as social justice advocates in the field of school counseling.

Generative Round Results

The generative round of data collection was designed to provoke a broad investigation of school counseling strategies to deconstruct educational heteronormativity. The data from this round were condensed and organized into themes to create a framework for future rounds of data collection. The generative round yielded 266 distinct strategies across various levels of intervention (i.e., student level, teacher level, administrative level, building level, community level, policy level). Initial coding strategies were employed to organize the data obtained from the generative round and reduce redundancy. The themes that emerged from the data are as follows: advocacy; protection and enforcement (sub-theme of advocacy); allies and collaboration; curriculum reform; inclusive language; policy change to promote inclusion; professional development for change; rituals and ethos that promote change; signs of acceptance and inclusive facilities (see Appendix A for overarching theme structure). After organizing the 266 strategies into these overarching themes, the reviewers grouped similar strategies together in order to synthesize and collapse the responses, resulting in 111 strategies. The

following tables (Table 1 and Table 2) provide examples of how strategies from the generative round were condensed into one succinct strategy list.

Table 1

Example One of Generative Round Coding

Participant Responses:

- Sharing of resources
- Sharing articles and other resources
- Identifying resources - It is important also to not recreate the wheel at every step. By identifying resources (both people and material), you can see what has been done before, reach out before starting something new, gather information and evaluate how you want to proceed based on what you find out of what has been done before.
- Provide an array of LGBTQ-related books, films, and literature appropriate for students, teachers, admins, parents, etc. (or lists thereof)
- Include LGBTQIQA specific resources in one's own school counseling resource bank (i.e., GLSEN and the It Gets Better project); send these resources out to other district school counselors and the school counseling district coordinator
- Provide resources for parents (PFLAG, info sessions, literature, etc.)

Condensed Strategy:

Identify and share LGBTQIQA specific resources (both people and materials) with students, teachers, administrators, parents, school counselors, school counseling district coordinators, etc.

- Evaluate resources that have been used before to inform future practice
-

Table 2

Example Two of Generative Round Coding

Participant Responses:

- Gay-straight alliances and supportive groups for LGBTQIQA youth
- In the literature, the creation of a gay-straight alliance at K–12 schools has been shown to improve educational and developmental outcomes not only for LGBTQ+ students for all students, especially in terms of fostering a safe and welcoming school climate. I stress area of the literature and link to anti-bullying considerations
- Gay-Straight Alliances
- Advocate for GSA's/QSA's in middle and high schools
- Available GSA
- Student support- for Day of silence, GSA, clubs etc.
- Have a GSA that meets regularly and provides support/programs
- Ensure GSA and other LBGT activities are affirmed, supported, and given appropriate space/time to meet
- Chair or support Gay-Straight Student Alliances
- Formation of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar organization
- Help create and/or serve as the advisor for a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)
- Ensure that the GSA is also inclusive of students who are transgender
- Support clubs and organizations for students (i.e., Gay-Straight Alliance; Social Justice and Advocacy based clubs and orgs, etc.)
- Lead a GSA or other student-led school climate task force

Table 2, continued

Example Two of Generative Round Coding

-
- Advocate for the formation of GSA/QSA subcommittee within elementary PTO's

Condensed Strategy:

Establish and/or serve as the advisor for a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)

- Advocate for the formation of GSA/QSA subcommittees within elementary PTO's
-

Throughout the coding process, care was taken to maintain the language provided by participants whenever possible to retain the intended meaning of the responses. When disagreement occurred between the author and the external reviewer regarding the meaning of a strategy, responses were retained as a distinct strategy to preserve the language used by participants. Each strategy was reworded as an action verb in congruence with the overarching research question guiding the study (i.e., how can school counselors deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K–12 public education environments to facilitate institutional reform?). The author's research advisors reviewed the final strategy list for clarity and final approval prior to dissemination for round two. The final strategy list resulted in 111 condensed strategies. Table 3 depicts the total number of strategies generated in round one and the corresponding distribution of strategies by theme.

Table 3

Distribution of Generative Round Strategies by Theme

Theme	Total # of Strategies
Advocacy	17
Protection and Enforcement (sub-theme of advocacy)	6
Allies and Collaboration	20
Curriculum Reform	14
Inclusive Language	8
Policy Change to Promote Inclusion	11
Professional Development for Change	8
Rituals and Ethos that Promote Inclusion	19
Signs of Acceptance and Inclusive Facilities	8

Round Two Results

The second round of data collection was intended to determine the level of participant agreement pertaining to the relevance of the strategies generated in the previous round (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). The 111 strategies from the generative round were uploaded to the online survey platform, Qualtrics. Participants were asked to rate each strategy by level of relevance. Level of relevance ranged from 1 (not relevant) to 7 (critically relevant) (Geltner et al., 2011; Grisham, 2009).

In congruence with the Delphi method literature, strategies with medians of 6 or 7 and interquartile ranges of less than or equal to 1.5 were retained for subsequent rounds of questioning (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & P russe, 2012). Sixty-two strategies were

retained and strategy distribution by theme is displayed in table 4. Of the strategies that did not meet the threshold for retention, 32 were discarded for IQR variance > 1.5 , six had medians of less than six, and 11 strategies did not meet either criteria for retention.

Table 4

Distribution of Strategies Retained After Round Two by Theme

Theme	# of Strategies Presented	# of Strategies Retained
Advocacy	17	11
Protection and Enforcement (sub-theme of advocacy)	6	5
Allies and Collaboration	20	7
Curriculum Reform	14	9
Inclusive Language	8	6
Policy Change to Promote Inclusion	11	7
Professional Development for Change	8	5
Rituals and Ethos that Promote Inclusion	19	8
Signs of Acceptance and Inclusive Facilities	8	4

Round Three Results

In the third round of questioning participants re-rated each strategy in consideration of group ratings from the previous round to further refine the data for consensus (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). The 62 strategies retained in round two were formatted in a Qualtrics survey designed for participant rating in round three. Participants were asked to re-rate each strategy by level of relevance based on the same 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not relevant... 7 = critically relevant), while considering

the group ratings provided from the previous round. The same retention thresholds were used in round three.

In round three, participants reached consensus on 51 strategies creating the final strategy list. In this rating round, seven strategies had an IQR greater than 1.5, and four strategies had medians of less than six, resulting in the 51 retained strategies. This list was presented to participants in a fourth and final round, to ensure participants believed the final strategy list was representative of their voices as experts. Table 5 is a display of the final strategy list and participant ratings. The strategies are organized by theme and listed in descending order by median and ascending order by IQR. The letters preceding the numbered strategies are an abbreviation of the overarching theme and are used as a mechanism to orient the reader. The corresponding themes and abbreviations are as follows: A–Advocacy; PE–Protection and Enforcement Sub-theme; AC–Allies and Collaboration; CR–Curriculum Reform; IL–Inclusive Language; PC–Policy Change to Promote Inclusion; PD–Professional Development for Change; RE–Rituals and Ethos that Promote Inclusion; SA–Signs of Acceptance and Inclusive Facilities.

Table 5

Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Strategy	Median	Interquartile Range
A1. Advocate for school, district, and community level professional development/psycho-education on LGBTQIQA student needs	7	1
A2. Advocate to promote social justice, advocacy, and equality principles in student organizations, school curriculum, and school-wide activities	7	1

Table 5, continued

Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Strategy	Median	Interquartile Range
A3. Identify and share LGBTQIQA specific resources (both people and materials) with students, teachers, administrators, parents, school counselors, school counseling district coordinators, etc. – Evaluate resources that have been used before to inform future practice	7	1
A4. Advocate for policies requiring teachers and administrators to respect a student’s “out” status; they must have permission from the students prior to disclosing LGBTQIQA status	7	1
A5. Advocate for LGBTQIQA visibility	7	1
A6. Advocate for policies requiring school employees to honor gender pronouns that students use (e.g., students are allowed to identify their gender pronouns, such as she/her, he/him, ze/hir, they/them)	7	1
A7. Challenge gender, sexual orientation, and family binaries by talking about different ways of being and different types of family with staff and students	7	1.25
A8. Provide students with information/training on self-advocacy	6	1
A9. Think systemically and advocate for LGBTQIQA inclusive programming. Include levels of implementation across the service domains of the ASCA model, and within the scope of needs identified as salient to the successful development of LGBTQIQA individuals	6	1.25
PE1. Intervene when you hear microaggression, slurs, name calling, and discrimination, and model appropriate, immediate responses	7	0

Table 5, continued

Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Strategy	Median	Interquartile Range
PE2. Ensure faculty and staff are empowered to challenge LGBTQIQA bullying/victimization and that they do so consistently	7	1.25
PE3. Conduct classroom lessons on bullying with an emphasis on zero tolerance for LGBTQIQA victimization	6	0.5
PE4. Become aware of state and federal legislation and case law that provide protection for LGBTQIQA students and employees	6	1
PE5. Help identify an officer at each district responsible for ensuring compliance with state laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment in schools	6	1.25
AC1. Understand one's own identity as an ally for LGBTQIQA individuals while maintaining professional relationships with other stakeholders in the system	6	1
AC2. Demonstrate knowledge of community resources for LGBTQIQA individuals and provide appropriate referrals when necessary (e.g., mental health, housing, clothing)	6	1
AC3. Create a LGBTQIQA peer leadership/peer counseling group of older students to support/mentor younger students	6	1
AC4. Provide small group counseling services for LGBTQIQA individuals	6	1.25
CR1. Ensure teachers include LGBTQIQA themes throughout curricula, and honor family diversity and gender diversity in their classroom lessons and discussions	7	1
CR2. Ensure access to books and other media resources that represent sexual and gender diversity and diverse family systems	7	1

Table 5, continued

Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Strategy	Median	Interquartile Range
CR3. Use current literature (e.g., National School Climate Surveys) on LGBTQIQA students to increase awareness, knowledge, and skills for teachers to infuse affirming resources into their classrooms	6.5	1
CR4. Conduct classroom lessons introducing heteronormativity, its impact, and strategies to challenge it	6.5	1
CR5. Advocate for teachers to include LGBTQIQA role-models, mainstream images, and representations of gender and sexual variance into curricula	6	1
CR6. Advocate for LGBTQIQA inclusive social studies curricula	6	1
CR7. Conduct affirmative classroom lessons that attend to LGBTQIQA diversity and inclusivity	6	1
CR8. Construct career counseling interventions that attend to sexual and gender diversity	6	1.25
IL1. Use LGBTQIQA affirming language to model best practice	7	0.25
IL2. Provide faculty and staff with strategies to handle anti-LGBTQIQA language and address the importance of responding to slurs (e.g., “that’s so gay...”)	7	1
IL3. Acknowledge and address sexism	7	1
IL4. Avoid heteronormative assumptions by listening, supporting, and using open-ended questions	7	1.25
PC1. Review and revise school documents for pronoun usage and discussions about persons (e.g., mission statements, assessments, permission slips)	7	1
PC2. Identify systemic barriers or challenges that prevent inclusivity for LGBTQIQA individuals	7	1

Table 5, continued

Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Strategy	Median	Interquartile Range
PC3. Ensure LGBTQIQA inclusivity at the policy level is maintained and consistently enforced	7	1.25
PC4. Conduct needs assessments exploring institutionalization of heteronormativity at various levels (e.g., building, district, state, national)	6.5	1
PC5. Use strengths-oriented advocacy when communicating with school officials	6	1
PD1. Support ongoing professional development on LGBTQIQA topics	7	1
PD2. Provide supervision and support for teachers' and other school professionals' efforts to disrupt heteronormativity	7	1.25
PD3. Engage in ongoing professional development to maintain current knowledge of interventions, best practices, and language	6.5	1
PD4. Educate school employees about the potential legal liabilities (even personal liability) for failing to respond quickly and sufficiently to harassment of LGBTQIQA students in schools based on federal law and Title IX	6	1
PD5. Provide site-wide LGBTQIQA inclusive anti-bullying training	6	1.25
RE1. Encourage school-wide initiatives and recognition days to promote awareness, acceptance, and systemic change	7	1
RE2. Apply a social justice and equality framework within school counseling tasks (e.g., individual and group counseling, student lessons, consultation, data collection and analysis)	7	1
RE3. Focus on school-wide prevention and positive school climate for all students	7	1.25

Table 5, continued

Final List of School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Strategy	Median	Interquartile Range
RE4. Show empathy for LGBTQIQA individuals, be trustworthy, use humor (when appropriate and rapport is there), and provide validation, acceptance, empowerment, and affirmation	7	1.25
RE5. Advocate for LGBTQIQA inclusive proms/dances	6.5	1.25
RE6. Build on strengths to fight institutionalized oppression, foster resilience, and promote positive visibility (e.g., identify strengths, celebrate successes, history, and culture)	6	1
RE7. Use a “broaching” intake that invites students to share their identities – Day-Vines et al. (2007) defined “broaching as the counselor’s ability to consider how sociopolitical factors such as race influence the client’s counseling concerns” (p. 401)	6	1.25
RE8. Conduct annual focus groups with LGBTQIQA students and parents to learn what the school is doing well and what needs to be improved	6	1.25
SA1. Ensure access to appropriate locker rooms, restrooms, gender-based activities, etc. that match gender identity	7	1
SA2. Distribute Safe Space icons/plaques and LGBTQIQA affirming posters throughout schools (e.g., pink triangles, rainbows, Safe Space stickers, ally stickers)	7	1.25
SA3. Display helpline information for students in crisis	6.5	1.25

Note. The letters preceding the strategy demarcate the overarching theme. A–Advocacy; PE–Protection and Enforcement Sub-theme; AC–Allies and Collaboration; CR–Curriculum Reform; IL–Inclusive Language; PC–Policy Change to Promote Inclusion; PD–Professional Development for Change; RE–Rituals and Ethos that Promote Inclusion; SA–Signs of Acceptance and Inclusive Facilities

Final Review Round

The final round of this study was created to ensure participants believed their voices are represented and that the iterative Delphi process captured the relevant information to answer the overarching research question. During the fourth and final review round, participants were provided with the final list of strategies, as well as a link to an anonymous comment box in which they were encouraged to provide any additional information to be considered by the author prior to concluding data collection. Participants had two weeks to enter their feedback. No additional data were provided.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a summary of the final sample and the inspiration that propelled participants to position themselves as advocates for the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals. The results of the study were presented as they emerged from the iterative questioning process of the classical Delphi method (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). The overarching research question guiding this study was:

- Q1 How can school counselors deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K-12 public education environments to facilitate institutional reform?

The final list of strategies generated by the expert panel selected for this study is one way of answering the overarching research question. Recommendations of how school counselors can integrate critically conscious interventions to deconstruct educational heteronormativity are described in further detail in the discussion. The next chapter also provides an overview of the results and discussion of the application to the field of school counseling, as well as the implications, limitations, and future directions for the study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The following chapter provides a discussion of the results of the study, including a more detailed examination of the themes that created the overarching structure. Additional information gleaned from participants such as examples of specific strategies and supplementary comments throughout the process are included. Implications for school counselor practitioners and school counselor educators are provided, as well as a discussion of the limitations and future directions of the study.

Positioning the Process

Although educational literature provides a great deal of information defining and addressing educational heteronormativity in K–12 educational environments (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007), little is known about the unique voice of school counselors in this critical dialogue. The purpose of this dissertation study was to elicit information from a panel of experts in the field of school counseling to speak to their knowledge of the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals and the roles of school counselors to develop school counseling strategies that deconstruct educational heteronormativity. The resulting strategies provide tools for school counselors to foster institutional reform in increasingly complex educational environments.

The generative round of the study resulted in 266 distinct school counseling strategies to deconstruct educational heteronormativity. The author employed a constant comparative method to analyze the qualitative component of the study to better understand the wealth of information gleaned from the generative round (Creswell, 2007; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Although each participant's list of strategies was unique to the individual, the data as a whole achieved saturation after one round of generative questioning, as school counselors, school counselor educators, and school counselor researchers emerged with a common voice regarding the roles of school counselors in deconstructing educational heteronormativity.

Several themes emerged from the data that subsequently guided the structure of the study. The following themes may be conceptualized as the essence of each group of strategies, as well as the subsequent framework of the results: advocacy; advocacy - protection and enforcement (sub-theme); allies and collaboration; curriculum reform; inclusive language; policy change to promote inclusion; professional development for change; rituals and ethos that promote inclusion; signs of acceptance and inclusive facilities (see Appendix A for overarching theme structure). The results of this study are congruent with the critical application of a social justice paradigm through intentional practice.

School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

After condensing the data collected in the generative round (i.e., 266 strategies), participants engaged in two additional rounds of iterative questioning. In each round, participants were asked to use a 7-point Likert-type scale to rate each strategy by level of relevance with one representing not relevant, to seven representing critically relevant

(Geltner et al., 2011; Grisham, 2009; Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Throughout the study, participants were also given an opportunity to add comments about the conditions they used to gauge relevance, as well as supplementary information about the strategy lists generated from the previous rounds (Davidson, 2013; Dimmitt et al., 2005; Krell & Pérusse, 2012; Solmonson et al., 2011).

The generative round of questioning resulted in a large number of strategies that aligned with literature addressing educational heteronormativity (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007), as well as school counseling literature focused on LGBTQIQA inclusivity (e.g., Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Hohnke & O'Brien, 2008; Ratts et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009). This expansive list was congruent with the methodological guidance of Delphi studies as the broad prompts provided in the generative round are designed to stimulate a breadth of responses from participants (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996).

The second round of data collection provided a framework for distilling the results into more intentional strategies (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Ziglio, 1996). The opportunity to provide additional information at the end of the second round of data collection also proved to be efficacious for understanding how the unique voice of school counselors in educational dialogues was used to further refine the strategy list. For example, several participants reflected on the feasibility of strategies and the ways school counselors can practically affect change with limited resources such as classroom curriculum and small group interventions. Other participants wrote specifically about

how relevance was based on their understanding of the roles of 21st century school counselors, the ASCA National Model (2012), and applicable ethical codes (e.g., ACA, 2012; ASCA, 2010).

The additional participant comments also provided insight into how the 111 strategies presented to participants in round two were further refined, ultimately resulting in the final 51 strategies. As previously mentioned, the initial list included several elements and interventions from school counseling literature focused on LGBTQIQA individuals, such as GSAs and individualized student interventions. Although GSAs have been shown to be an effective mechanism for affecting school climate (Kosciw et al., 2014), the theoretical lens guiding this study promotes a critical inquiry which shifts from focusing on individuals, to acknowledging the regulatory practices of social systems that perpetuate power differentials (Chambers, 2007; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). Throughout this study the evolution from a micro-level approach to school counseling, to a more macro-level analysis of the environment was evident as the three rounds of questioning progressed.

Initially, the results from round one were less congruent with the lens of queer theory and the overarching research question guiding the study. As the participants rated and refined the strategies through the iterative questioning process, the strategies began to align more with the intended goal of the study. For example, in round two several participants spoke to the value added of focusing less on LGBTQIQA individuals, and more on systemic interventions to impact institutional reform, thus, aligning more specifically with queer theory and the overarching research question for this study. One participant stated, “interventions that were more systemic, that sought to interrogate and

interrupt heteronormativity, that sought to challenge heterosexual or cisgender privilege, those interventions that went beyond merely affirming LGBT students and families, were rated higher.” Another participant commented, “in order to rate the strategies, I took into consideration the feasibility of each strategy and also considered the strategy's role in deconstructing a norm, as opposed to pathologizing or highlighting any one group.” To this end, the resulting strategies are intended to be a reflection of the continuous evolution and critical consciousness necessary in order for school counselors to apply a social justice paradigm through intentional practice.

Positioning the Results Through Context and Practice

In addition to the school counseling strategies identified to deconstruct educational heteronormativity, participants provided a wealth of practical examples on how each strategy can be applied. For example, strategy CR2 included suggestions for school counselors to *ensure access to books and other media resources that represent sexual and gender diversity and diverse family systems*. This strategy was accompanied by recommendations such as school counselors can establish a visible LGBTQIQA book section in the library with books such as: *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005); *Goblinheart* (Axel, 2012); *Heather has Two Mommies* (Newman, 2000); *Boy Meets Boy* (Levithan, 2003); *Luna* (Peters, 2004); and *Annie on My Mind* (Garden, 1992). Strategy IL4 indicated school counselors should *avoid heteronormative assumptions by listening, supporting, and using open-ended questions*. Examples of how this can be implemented included, but are not limited to: “*who do you live with?*” versus “*do you live with mom and dad?*”; “*tell me about your partner?*” versus “*do you have a girl/boyfriend?*”; *police officer (not police man)*; *Dr. is referred to as a woman, as*

opposed to a man; fathers/other guardians and their active role in the child's life is noticed instead of always referring to 'mom' (did your mom sign that? I will call mom).

Additional examples that assist in the application of the results are incorporated into the following discussion of the overarching themes.

Advocacy

The role of school counselors as advocates emerged as the most robust cluster of school counseling strategies and was congruent with extant school counseling literature (e.g., ASCA, 2012, 2013; Education Trust 2009). This theme contained nine primary strategies and a sub-theme with elements pertaining specifically to the role of advocacy through protection and enforcement (five additional strategies). Strategies A1 and A9 illuminated the importance of advocating at various levels (school, district, and community level), as well as across the service domains of the ASCA National Model (2012) (i.e., school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, referrals, consultation, and collaboration). Advocacy strategies included advocating for *professional development and psycho-education on LGBTQIQA student needs* (A1), systemic approaches for enhancing LGBTQIQA *inclusive programming* (A2), increased *visibility* of LGBTQIQA individuals (A5), and access to LGBTQIQA *resources (both people and materials)* (A3). These strategies echoed many of the proactive interventions described in school counseling literature designed to increase accurate information and positive representation of variance in sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression (e.g., Bidell, 2011; DePaul et al., 2009; Frank & Cannon, 2009; Harper & Singh, 2013).

As posited by Rodriguez and Pinar (2007), queering educational environments requires intentional efforts to increase awareness about normalizing categories, language, and critical consciousness. These elements are reflected in the results of this study such as in strategy A7, *challenge gender, sexual orientation, and family binaries by talking about different ways of being and different types of family with staff and students*. Similarly, strategy A6 included suggestions for school counselors to *advocate for policies requiring school employees to honor gender pronouns that students use (e.g., students are allowed to identify their gender pronouns, such as she/her, he/him, ze/hir, they/them)*. In addition, the theme of advocacy clearly represents school counselors' roles to address the needs of individual students (e.g., A8. *provide students with information/training on self-advocacy*), while simultaneously striving to become critically conscious, social justice advocates that promote systemic change (e.g., A2. *advocate to promote social justice, advocacy, and equality principles in student organizations, school curriculum, and school-wide activities*).

Advocacy: protection and enforcement. The sub-theme of advocacy, protection and enforcement, reflects school counseling literature regarding school counselors' roles as LGBTQIQA advocates. For example, according to Goodrich et al. (2013), it is best practice for school counselors to remain aware of applicable legal and ethical considerations influencing the lives of LGBTQIQA individuals. A similar message was conveyed through strategy PE4, *become aware of state and federal legislation and case law that provide protection for LGBTQIQA students and employees*. Transforming such awareness into practical application in educational environments, strategy PE5 included suggestions for school counselors to *help identify an officer at each district responsible*

for ensuring compliance with state laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment in schools. Other strategies addressed the power of language such as PE1, *intervene when you hear microaggression, slurs, name calling, and discrimination, and model appropriate, immediate responses*, as well as empowering other educational stakeholders to effectively challenge LGBTQIA bullying and victimization (PE2).

Strategy PE3, *conduct classroom lessons on bullying with an emphasis on zero tolerance for LGBTQIA victimization*, requires noteworthy attention because of the specific language included in this strategy. Although the strategy was retained throughout all three rounds of questioning with a median of 6 and interquartile range of 0.5, additional comments provided by participants suggested controversy surrounding the inclusion of zero tolerance language. Four distinct participant comments made in rounds two and three cautioned against zero tolerance language, as evidence suggests zero tolerance discipline policies in schools may actually do more harm than good (e.g., Black, 2015; Teske, 2011). Participants' comments are consistent with recent research correlating such policies with increased suspension, expulsion, and recidivism rates (Black, 2015; Teske, 2011). Within the context of this study, whenever possible the language used by participants was preserved in order to maintain the intended meaning (Jenkins & Smith, 1994). Although participants' language was preserved to avoid altering the intended meaning, the language in this strategy is questionable as far as participant consensus and educational best practice (Black, 2015; Teske, 2011). Thus, discretion is advised in the interpretation of this strategy, which perhaps could be reworded as the inclusion of classroom lessons on bullying that explicitly include LGBTQIA victimization.

Allies and Collaboration

The four strategies that were retained under the allies and collaboration theme reflect best practice as described by the ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies (2013) and professional school counseling literature (Craig, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Muller & Hartman, 1998). For example, strategy AC2 included school counselors' responsibility to provide referrals for appropriate and accessible community resources, which is found almost verbatim in the ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies. In strategy AC1 participants described the importance of understanding *one's own identity as an ally for LGBTQIQA individuals while maintaining professional relationships with other stakeholders in the system*. Participants also expanded this strategy by recommending school counselors become cognizant of other allies within their environment, while framing the position of an ally *as a component of affirming human rights of all marginalized groups*. Further, this strategy included recommendations that school counselors avoid personalizing disagreements within resistant environments. Climate change occurs slowly, and as posited by Willoughby (2012), when one encounters bias within educational environments there is opportunity for learning and growth. To become defensive or respond punitively reinforces opposition and deviance in discussing difference (Willoughby, 2012).

The remaining two strategies focus on school counselors' use of group counseling techniques (AC4) and peer leadership mentoring groups (AC3). Although these strategies emphasize micro-level interventions rather than deconstructing regulatory practices, it is possible the commitment to this level of intervention is a reflection of the unique roles of school counselors and their specialized training to conduct group level interventions.

Several authors in the school counseling literature (e.g., Craig, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Muller & Hartman, 1998) have asserted that small group level interventions are efficacious for meeting the educational needs of LGBTQIA individuals. Furthermore, an emerging body of outcome research indicates peer leadership programs can contribute to positive climate change and inclusive school culture, contributing to more systemic change over time (Boomerang Project, 2011, 2015). Nevertheless, strategies such as group counseling and peer leadership programs may rely on individual's willingness to access such services.

Curriculum Reform

The theme of curriculum reform was pronounced throughout the study, resulting in eight final strategies. This theme may be the most congruent with literature on queering education and deconstructing educational heteronormativity (e.g., Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Letts & Sears, 1999; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Similar to educational models designed to deconstruct educational heteronormativity (e.g., *No Outsiders Project*, Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; *Queering Elementary Education*, Letts & Sear, 1999; *Queering Straight Teachers*, Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007), this theme contained strategies that included intentional integration of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression throughout many aspects of educational environments. For example, strategies CR7, CR4, and CR8 integrated recommendations for school counselors to adapt classroom counseling curriculum to include education about heteronormativity, and LGBTQIA affirmative, inclusivity programs such as those provided by GLSEN (*Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit*; McGarry, Friedman, Bouley, &

Griffin, 2012), The Human Rights Campaign Foundation (*Welcoming Schools*), and the Southern Poverty Law Center (*Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes*; Willoughby, 2012).

The curriculum reform strategies included recommendations that school counselors encourage and assist teachers to intentionally integrate sexual and gender variance in identities and families into classroom curriculum by including LGBTQIQA role models such as celebrities, athletes, musicians, and historians (CR5). Similarly, strategy CR1 included examples of inclusive curriculum such as *positive representations of LGBTQIQA people, history, and events; discussions about the range of sexual orientations and gender expressions in a psychology class; word problems in math could say, “Dave and Jon take their daughter...”* More specifically, strategy CR6 included suggestions for more inclusive social studies curriculum by integrating *topics such as historical discrimination of LGBTQIQA individuals; Gay Rights Movements and leaders; “two spirited” identities in Native American culture; heterosexual and cisgender privilege*. This theme also encompassed *the use of current literature (e.g., National School Climate Surveys) on LGBTQIQA students to increase awareness, knowledge, and skills for teachers to infuse affirming resources into their classrooms* (CR3), as well as *ensuring access to books and other media resources that represent sexual and gender diversity and diverse family systems* (CR2).

Inclusive Language

The impact of language is undeniably a powerful way of affecting climate and the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals (Kosciw et al., 2014). As posited by ASCA (2013), “as part of a comprehensive school counseling program, professional

school counselors: model language that is inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression” (p. 32). This charge was echoed in the results of this study, as participants spoke to the value of inclusive language as a tool for school counselors to actively promote intentional inclusivity. Perhaps the most salient example of this can be found in strategy IL1, *use LGBTQIQA affirming language to model best practice*. The examples provided by participants included recommendations such as *partner; spouse; guardian; share preferred pronoun when introducing oneself; include preferred pronoun in email signature line*. Similarly, participants made recommendations about avoiding heteronormative assumptions in language (IL3) and acknowledging and addressing sexism (IL4). Furthermore, strategy IL2 extended school counselors’ knowledge and use of language to include providing strategies for faculty and teachers to respond to biased language such as, ‘that’s so gay’. Although not explicitly recommended by the participants in this study, the steps provided in, *Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes* (Willoughby, 2012), may be advantageous for providing an accessible framework for school communities. The *Speak Up at School* curriculum offers a concise model for educational stakeholders to address bias and derogatory language in order to foster more inclusive educational environments (Willoughby, 2012). This model can be employed by school counselors to inform educational stakeholders about the importance of inclusive language.

Policy Change to Promote Inclusion

Educational reform is heavily influenced by the policies that guide daily practice. In this study participants generated strategies for influencing policy change to promote inclusion, providing guidance for how the voice of school counselors can affect reform.

In congruence with school counseling literature highlighting systemic approaches for improving LGBTQIQA inclusivity (Chen-Hayes, 2001; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009), the strategies in this theme align with the ASCA National Model (2012) and recursive school counseling programs that assess the needs of the environment, and design and evaluate interventions accordingly. In order to begin deconstructing educational heteronormativity through policy reform, the participants indicated school counselors should assess educational environments for *systemic barriers or challenges that prevent inclusivity for LGBTQIQA individuals* (PC2), and the *institutionalization of heteronormativity at various levels (e.g., building, district, state, national)* (PC4). Strategy PC3 also included suggestions for school counselors to *ensure LGBTQIQA inclusivity at the policy level is maintained and consistently enforced*. One way school counselors can actively influence such policy reform is to audit school documents to verify *pronoun usage and discussions about persons (e.g., mission statements, assessments, permission slips)* are inclusive such as adding transgender and ‘other’ to gender identity check boxes (PC1). The following list of examples generated by participants are additional recommendations of policy reform that school counselors may use as a starting point for addressing policy reform: *nondiscrimination policies; inclusive language; instruction; hiring practices; bathrooms; PE classes; locker rooms; co-curricular activities; campus climate and equal opportunity statements; anti-harassment policies; mission statements; involvement of LGBTQIQA students in policy-making; ensure students are not “punished” solely due to LGBTQIQA status*.

Another noteworthy element of policy reform that reflects the role of school counselors is the utilization of *strengths-oriented advocacy when communicating with*

school officials (PC5). Although the placement of this strategy under policy change rather than advocacy may seem counterintuitive, this decision is supported by the literature regarding school counselors' roles in fostering a more systemic lens for change (Harper & Singh, 2013). Harper and Singh (2013) provided an overview of the six overarching themes included in the safe schools special issue of the *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, asserting that "although strengths-based approaches are not inherently systemic, it is because of systems of oppression that strengths-based approaches are necessary" (p. 409). Thus, it is the author's belief that if school counselors intentionally approach policy reform from a strengths-based perspective, a great deal can be learned about deconstructing regulatory practices. Based on the definition of deconstruction used in this study, deconstructing dominant narratives provides opportunities for alternative narratives to emerge (Chambers, 2007; Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990). School counselors can use strengths-oriented advocacy to communicate with school officials, leading to small adaptations (e.g., document revisions) that allow space for variance beyond traditional binary systems of heterosexual or cisgender privilege. Applying this approach to policy reform in practice, positions schools counselors to guide school officials to create policy changes that reflect resilience and inclusion, rather than policies focused on protecting disenfranchised groups (e.g., zero tolerance bullying policies).

Professional Development for Change

Regardless of specialization (e.g., school counseling, clinical counseling, couples and family counseling, counselor education and supervision) professional development is irrefutably a trademark of the field of professional counseling (ACA, 2014; ALGBTIC

LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce, 2013; ASCA, 2010; CACREP, 2009, 2016). The strategies retained that encompass this theme provide guidance for how school counselors can effectively use professional development to foster more inclusive environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. Although strategy PD3, *engage in ongoing professional development to maintain current knowledge of interventions, best practices, and language*, did not have the highest level of consensus (M=6.5; IQR=1), it is likely the foundation of this theme. Without one's own ongoing professional development and current knowledge of the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals, it is beyond one's scope of competence to provide professional development for other educational stakeholders. Regardless, it is undoubtedly the role and responsibility of school counselors to position themselves as resources for providing such ongoing learning opportunities (ASCA, 2010, 2012).

Each strategy retained in this theme promoted school counselors' engagement in ongoing efforts to not only understand current LGBTQIQA research and best practice, but also to provide professional development (PD1), supervision, and support (PD2) for other educational stakeholders. More specifically, strategy PD4 included recommendations for school counselors to *educate school employees about the potential legal liabilities (even personal liability) for failing to respond quickly and sufficiently to harassment of LGBTQIQA students in schools based on federal law and Title IX*. Similarly, participants suggested school counselors should *provide site-wide LGBTQIQA inclusive anti-bullying training* (PD5). However, this final strategy is a reminder of the importance of ongoing professional development, as even within the information rich sample of this study, there was a lack of consensus regarding the language used while

addressing bullying (e.g., zero tolerance). This is not to suggest school counselors should avoid such leadership opportunities, nor is it intended to instill professional paralysis regarding ‘the right way’ to approach such topics, however, the author would like to suggest it is more about an ongoing commitment to remain abreast of current literature and research, and a willingness to acknowledge one’s boundaries of competence.

Rituals and Ethos that Promote Inclusion

Many elements of school counseling literature promoting safe schools for LGBTQIQA individuals (e.g., Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Craig, 2013; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Ratts et al., 2013; Smith, 2013) are echoed and condensed in the strategies retained in the theme; rituals and ethos that promote inclusion. For example, Smith (2013) asserted the application of critical theory to the ASCA National Model (2012) provides school counselors with tools for transforming common school counseling activities into critically conscious interventions. These adaptations reconstruct the rituals and ethos of school counselors to promote more inclusive educational climates. One concrete example provided by Smith and the ASCA National Model is echoed in strategy RE1. *Encourage school-wide initiatives and recognition days to promote awareness, acceptance, and systemic change.* Several opportunities exist for school counselors to intentionally integrate LGBTQIQA inclusive rituals into daily practice (e.g., *National No-Name Calling Week; Ally Week; Day of Silence; Harvey Milk Day; Stonewall Day; Think B4 You Speak, LGBTQIQA affirming school spirit day; National Coming Out Day; Transgender Day of Remembrance; Pride Month*). Furthermore, Harper and Singh (2013) spoke to the ways in which school counselors can apply a strengths-based approach to combat oppression and promote a social justice approach to

school counseling. This tenet is described similarly in strategy RE6, *build on strengths to fight institutionalized oppression, foster resilience, and promote positive visibility (e.g., identify strengths, celebrate successes, history, and culture)*.

In congruence with the ASCA National Model (2012), this theme is a conglomerate of strategies that position school counselors as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and agents of systemic change. The strategies range from micro-level approaches for deconstructing educational heteronormativity, to macro-level applications of social justice advocacy. For example, strategy RE7 provided guidance for school counselors to create space for alternative narratives to emerge through the use of broaching intakes (Day-Vines et al., 2007). More broadly, strategy RE2 encompassed the intended goal of this study to begin operating within a social justice paradigm of school counseling as it applies to various levels of intervention.

Signs of Acceptance and Inclusive Facilities

The final theme, signs of acceptance and inclusive facilities, resulted in three retained strategies. The first strategy involved recommendations that school counselors *ensure access to appropriate locker rooms, restrooms, gender-based activities, etc. that match gender identity* (SA1). This strategy is essential, as the most recent National climate data indicated “30.3% of LGBT students avoided gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (bathrooms: 35.4%, locker rooms: 35.3%) (Kosciw et al., 2014, p. xvi). The second strategy, *distribute Safe Space icons/plaques and LGBTQIA affirming posters throughout schools (e.g., pink triangles, rainbows, Safe Space stickers, ally stickers)* (SA2), is also essential for inclusive educational environments. According to Kosciw et al. (2014), the presence of Safe Space

imagery throughout educational environments is associated with students' increased awareness of supportive adults and positive associations with faculty and staff.

Although Safe Space/Safe Zone icons are targeting LGBTQIQA individuals, which may not be viewed as congruent with the theoretical lens of this study, these icons are intended to be an explicit representation of providing space for alternative narratives. However, several participant comments cautioned against haphazardly displaying Safe Space/Safe Zone icons. One participant commented, strategies "stating 'distribute Safe Zone stickers, pink triangles, rainbow stickers throughout' seemed less relevant because if a school is not affirming- having these stickers is sending a message that the school is safe- when in fact it may not be- which will not protect youth at all." Similarly, another participant commented, "I also am concerned about the idea of distributing Safe Zone stickers throughout the school without having a training to accompany it. That is dangerous because that symbol means that someone has been trained. So having symbols present in general is good...but Safe Zone triangles, specifically, should not just be handed out." With that being said, it is possible displaying images that promote acceptance and inclusion of all difference may be an advantageous alternative. Several resources are readily available to school counselors such as the *One World* poster series provided by the *Southern Poverty Law Center*, *Teaching Tolerance* program, or the various free posters available on the *Safe Schools Coalition* website.

Significance of the Study for the Practice of School Counseling

When reviewed individually, the strategies provided in this study are not new to education or counseling literature (e.g., Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Curry & Hayes, 2009; DePaul et al., 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013; Harper & Singh, 2013; Hohnke & O'Brien,

2008; Ratts et al., 2013; Singh & Burnes, 2009). The language may vary, however, each strategy can be found throughout a plethora of articles in both fields. The inherent difference, and perhaps the most salient implication for practitioners, is the method in which these strategies were assembled. In addition to generating consensus among experts (Linstone & Turoff, 1975), the Delphi method relies on “anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and the statistical aggregation of group responses” (Rowe & Wright, 1999, p. 354) to distill the most relevant information. As such, this study is the first attempt to use an empirical method to systematically compile a list of best practice for deconstructing educational heteronormativity based on the knowledge of those with unique expertise in both school counseling and the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals.

This sample shared both personal and professional motivations to seek out increased knowledge and understanding of best practice as it pertains to LGBTQIQA individuals in educational environments. Although such understanding is encouraged of all school counselors, practicing school counselors may not have the resources (e.g., time, access to databases, etcetera) or the desire to specifically seek out this information. The goal of this study is to provide accessible school counseling strategies that enhance critical consciousness, rather than the more traditional approach of assuming a list of best practice can encompass the complexity of diversity or the experience of difference. The results of this study provide a tool for school counselors to apply in order to begin the difficult dialogue of deconstructing educational heteronormativity, improving school climate, and applying a social justice paradigm to practice.

The *No Outsiders Project* is perhaps the most noteworthy research study conducted on the impact of intentional efforts to deconstruct educational heteronormativity (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). One integral aspect that contributed to the success of this action research was the understanding that the application of strategies provided by participating educators may look different in each school environment (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). Meyer (2007) posited a similar ecological approach to educational reform, suggesting lists of “strategies that work” are deceiving because of the substantial differences of educational environments. Thus, effective implementation of the strategies identified in this study for deconstructing educational heteronormativity requires thoughtful application and adaptation to meet the unique needs of each educational community. Therefore, the results of this study are intended to be employed with the discretion of those implementing them and in congruence with professional competencies of a systematic, data-driven, comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2012).

Implications for School Counselor Educators

It is evident school counselor education is progressing to include more intentional efforts to enhance understanding and inclusion of sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression in counselor education training programs (e.g., Goodrich & Luke, 2010; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2013; Luke & Goodrich, 2012; Luke et al., 2011; Matthews, 2005; Rutter et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2008). As the foundation and training standard for school counselors, counselor educators must have the tools to provide a solid foundation for fostering competency and confidence for meeting the unique educational needs of LGBTQIA individuals. Moreover, if the field of school counseling is

committed to embracing a social justice paradigm as the literature suggests (e.g., ASCA, 2010, 2012; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Education Trust, 2009; Howard & Solberg, 2006; Parikh et al., 2011; Ratts et al., 2007; Singh et al., 2010; Wilczenski et al., 2011), it is probable more intentionality is necessary in the ways school counselor educators approach both the theory and application of working with diverse populations within educational environments. To this end, the results of this study are one way school counselor educators can provide a bridge between the theoretical tenets of a social justice school counseling paradigm and the daily practice of practitioners. For example, the strategies from this study can be integrated into school counselor education curriculum to illustrate how practical changes in practice can address systemic barriers prohibiting equal access to education for LGBTQIQA individuals. School counselor educators can use these strategies to initiate conversations about school counselors' roles as leaders and advocates that critically question educational environments in order to foster systemic change.

In addition to a social justice school counseling paradigm, this study contributes to the important body of queer theory literature emerging in school counselor education (Carroll & Gilroy, 2001; Frank & Cannon, 2010; Smith, 2013). School counselor educators may benefit from this example of the intentional integration of critical theory as a means to develop practical school counseling strategies that challenge regulatory practices. This study is intended to illuminate a distinctive perspective of difference, and the ways in which school counselor educators can encourage the critical examination of regulatory practices that maintain oppression and power differentials in various mental health and educational environments. Positioning school counselors in training to

critically question dominant discourses may enhance their ability to adapt to various environments and actively develop interventions that embody a social justice paradigm.

Perhaps one of the most salient implications for school counselor educators is the opportunity to model best practice for school counselors in training by implementing the findings from this study in school counselor education classrooms and supervisory practices. For example, school counselor educators may demonstrate the importance of inclusive language by including their preferred pronoun in their classroom introductions and email signature line. School counselor educators may also demonstrate the value of acknowledging and addressing heteronormative and cisgender assumptions through classroom discussions and role plays. The intentional integration of these strategies may provide opportunities to discuss the possible risks and rewards of utilizing such strategies, as school counselors in training may find themselves questioning which strategies to employ within the context of unique educational environments. By adapting educational and supervisory experiences through the application of these strategies, school counselor educators and supervisors are positioned to foster more reflexive educational environments in which all stakeholders engage in critical dialogues about common assumptions, biases, beliefs, and regulatory practices. It is possible such experiences may extend beyond enhancing inclusivity for LGBTQIQA individuals, to providing opportunities to question other regulatory practices that perpetuate inequality by privileging dominant narratives.

Limitations

As posited by Gelso (1979) all research is inherently flawed and limited by the scope and context of each study. It is impossible to eradicate such flaws, making it

essential to acknowledge the inherent limitations of every design (Gelso 1979). Some aspects of the Delphi method that make this research design effective are also some of the weaknesses (Jenkins & Smith, 1994). Utilizing an expert panel to generate consensus is integral to the Delphi method; however, research utilizing purposive sampling procedures is restricted by the lack of generalizability of results generated from nonprobability sampling (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Because of the limitations of purposive sampling, one must be cautious to adhere to strict methodological guidelines to avoid influence of researcher bias and the misinterpretation of results (Jenkins & Smith, 1994). However, such formalized procedures remain ill defined because of the positioning of the Delphi method on the cusp of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Jenkins & Smith, 1994). Therefore, guided by Delphi literature, the author subscribed to a systematic investigation that was closely monitored by the author's two research advisors.

The decision to limit the participant panel to school counseling professionals is considered a limitation, however, the results of this study are not intended to generalize beyond the context of this study. The decision to limit the sample to school counseling professionals was meant to provide access to the unique voice of school counselors in a realm of critical educational reform that has yet to be heard in the school counseling field. However, because of the dearth of literature and research in the school counseling field regarding critical educational reform, it is possible utilizing only those within the school counseling discipline may have resulted in underdeveloped results because of a lack of exposure and knowledge pertaining to this type of educational discourse. Further, limiting the sample to participants within the school counseling field may have restricted the scope of knowledge being explored by excluding the substantive wisdom of other

professionals. Conversely, the exclusion of other professionals may also be a substantive strength of this study, as this limitation provided the opportunity for the unique voice of school counselors to be heard within this critical educational discourse.

This study had several limitations because of characteristics of the final sample such as sample size and homogeneity. Although 10–15 experts are sufficient for homogenous samples (Ziglio, 1996) such as the participants in this study (school counselors, school counselor educators, and school counselor researchers), the total sample for this study ($n = 14$) is considered relatively small. The final sample was 100% Caucasian, which may have limited the variance in perspectives gleaned from this study. Further, Mayo (2007) suggested samples in LGBTQIQA educational research often consist of LGBTQIQA individuals, resulting in qualitative differences that must be recognized to understand the limitations of such studies. Although the sexual identity, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression of each participant was not known in this study, 12 out of 14 participants reported some type of connection to LGBTQIQA inclusivity, thus, creating the possibility for additional limitations. Another substantial limitation of this sample was the predominant number of counselor educators in comparison to practicing school counselors (nine counselor educators, three doctoral students in counselor education, and two practicing school counselors). The author made every attempt to have equal representation of practitioners, however, practicing school counselors were more challenging to distinguish, and interestingly, several practitioners contacted by the author seemed concerned about how they had been identified. All the individuals who inquired about the way they had been selected for participation declined involvement. This response led the author to question if this hesitance was an indication

of the remaining risk of being a visible LGBTQIQA advocate in public education environments.

Another limitation of this study is the use of a Likert-type scale of measurement, which are questionable because of subjectivity of a numeric point scale and the possibility for participants to rate things based on social desirability or intentional deviation (Moseley & Mead, 2001). Although this limitation could not be fully remediated, the author used anchors throughout both rounds two and three to minimize the subjectivity of interpretation and remind participants of the values associated with their responses. The length of the surveys used in rounds two and three may have also been a limitation, as it is probable participants may have become fatigued, altering their responses. In order to address this limitation, the author provided participants with a PDF of the strategies presented in round two (the longest survey) so participants could review the document at their leisure prior to beginning the rating process.

Another limitation worthy of consideration is how consensus is achieved in Delphi studies. It has been suggested that the Delphi process may force consensus among participants because of social desirability to align with the majority ratings from previous rounds (Geist, 2008; Mittnacht & Bulik, 2015). Methodological guidance for Delphi studies frequently recommends that researchers require or encourage participants to provide an explanation of responses that fall beyond group ratings (Geist, 2008; Krell & P russe, 2012; Mittnacht & Bulik, 2015; Wester & Borders, 2014). However, evidence suggests that participants may be more likely to conform to group ratings if they are required to comment on their disagreement prior to moving forward, thus, rushing consensus (Geist, 2008). Therefore, in order to account for this inherent limitation of the

Delphi method, the author did not require participants to provide a rationale for rating strategies outside of group ratings. However, there was an optional opportunity in each round to add additional information such as the reasoning for rating items beyond the median and IQR range reported from the previous round. Nevertheless, a definitive definition of consensus and whether or not true consensus is ever achieved remain limitations of this methodology (Rowe & Wright, 1999).

Although consensus from experts is helpful for guiding future practice, consensus can also lead to dogmatic adherence to a set of policies or practices without critical consideration (Jenkins & Smith, 1994). While addressing topics such heteronormativity and the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals, it is imperative that practitioners continue to learn about the unique needs of their school communities. Successful implementation of such recommendations is best applied through an ecological lens in which school counselors and school counselor educators continue to address the changing systems in which they are a part. As posited by Jenkins and Smith (1994), results of Delphi studies are the beginning of a constantly evolving system that must be reviewed and refined over time. Ultimately, the results of this study may be utilized as recommendations provided within the context of this particular study, and future research is essential to further validate the results (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Directions for Future Research

Although this study was a first step in providing an empirical framework for school counselors and school counselor educators to deconstruct educational heteronormativity, results of Delphi studies are limited by the subjectivity of opinions. The results of this study are suggestions that must be considered within the context of this

study and additional research is needed to support the effectiveness of the results (Jenkins & Smith, 1994; Skulmoski et al., 2007). Because of the complexity of educational heteronormativity and the extensive amount of information gleaned from the generative round of this study, asking participants to rate items based on more than one attribute was beyond the scope of this study. However, in order to provide further insight into the application of the results it may be beneficial to survey educational stakeholders to distinguish between importance and chronological relevance. For example, if school counselors working in resistant environments had guidance as to which strategies to implement first, the results may become more accessible to practitioners.

A logical next step for the results of this study is to utilize the successful structure implemented in the *No Outsiders Project* (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010) in order to design an action research study to determine whether or not the application of these strategies affects climate. Furthermore, outcome research is essential for policy reform and an expectation of accountable, data-driven school counseling programs. Therefore, systematic application of these strategies is an integral aspect of future directions to determine whether or not this framework is a mechanism for change. In addition, the results of this study may be integrated into school counselor education curriculum to determine whether or not the inclusion of expert recommendations for deconstructing heteronormative policies and practices cause higher levels of competence for school counselors in training.

Conclusion

This dissertation study was designed to identify practical school counseling strategies to deconstruct educational heteronormativity to foster inclusive institutional

reform. In order for the field of school counseling to truly embrace a social justice paradigm, school counselors and school counselor educators must begin a critical and informed discourse to disrupt “inequitable social, political, and economic conditions that impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals, families, and communities” (Ratts, 2009, p. 160). To view educational environments through a lens of critical inquiry is one way school counselors can identify and address barriers that inhibit equal access to high quality public education. This study was intended to illuminate the unique voices of school counselors as educational leaders and social justice advocates that actively contribute to more inclusive educational environments. The results of this study were intended to transform critical theory into critically conscious school counseling practices that allow for difference to be embraced and celebrated in safe, affirming educational environments. Through the integration of a social justice paradigm and intentional practice, school counselors are positioned to foster more inclusive educational environments that have the potential to bring institutional oppression to an end.

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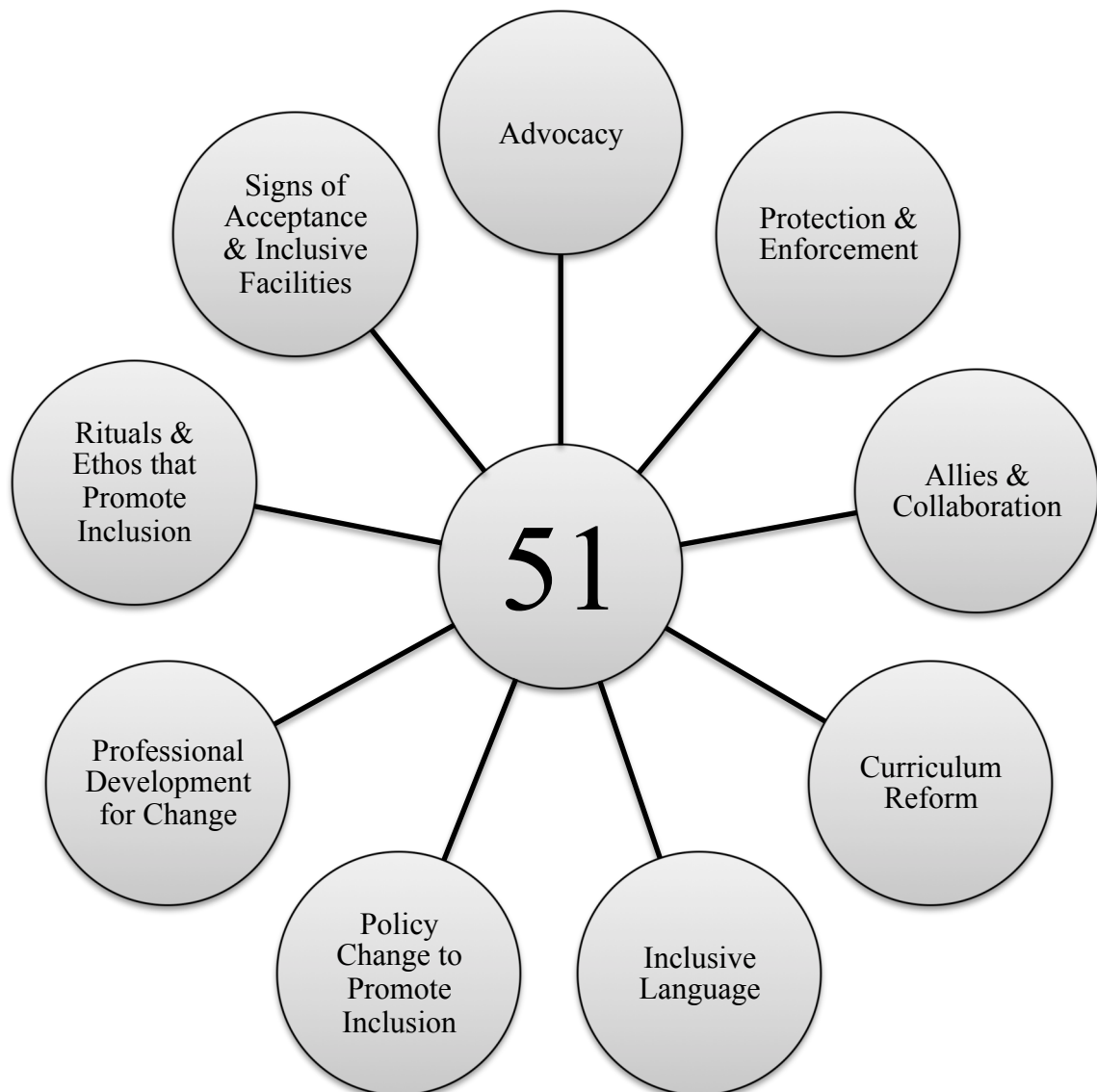
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APPENDIX A
OVERARCHING THEME STRUCTURE

Overarching Theme Structure



APPENDIX B
EMAIL FOR INITIAL PARTICIPANT CONTACT

Email for Initial Participant Contact

Dear _____.

My name is Molly Strear and I am a doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Northern Colorado. I am contacting you today regarding my dissertation research, *Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity*. Based on your marked involvement and efforts in addressing the educational needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally individuals, I was wondering if you would be willing to consider participation in my dissertation study? At your convenience, I would greatly appreciate a few moments of your time to explain the purpose and process of this study, as well as the reasons you have been identified as a possible participant.

If you are available to speak with me, please provide your phone number and a few days and times that would be convenient for me to contact you by phone.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!

Best,

Molly Strear, MA, LPC
Doctoral Candidate, University of Northern Colorado

APPENDIX C

SCRIPT GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL
PARTICIPANT PHONE CONTACT

Script Guidelines for Initial Participant Phone Contact

Hello _____.

This is Molly Strear calling from the University of Northern Colorado. As you know, I contacted you via email to request a moment of your time, and was wondering if this is still a convenient time for you to speak with me?

As I mentioned, I am contacting you today to discuss my dissertation research study, which is intended to identify strategies for school counselors to employ to begin deconstructing educational heteronormativity in K-12 public educational environments. As you know, national climate data remains a concern regarding the current school climate and educational experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally (LGBTQIQA) youth, and I believe it is imperative that school counselors begin actively addressing these concerns. My study is utilizing a Delphi method in which I have identified a panel of experts to address this imperative issue.

You have been selected as an expert based on your experiences and involvement with... (specific participant selection criteria).

Based on these criteria, I believe your voice is invaluable for providing suggestions for school counselors to improve the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA youth. The overarching research question guiding this study is: How can school counselors deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K-12 public education environments in order to facilitate institutional reform?

With that being said, I will be asking you to respond to specific prompts designed to elicit practical strategies that school counselors can use to begin deconstructing educational heteronormativity. If you agree to participate, I will be asking you to generate a list of strategies that may be employed by school counselors to deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K-12 public educational environments. I would like you to consider strategies at various levels of intervention such as the student level, teacher level, administrative level, building level (e.g., images, artifacts, curriculum), community level, and policy level (e.g., nondiscrimination policies, inclusive language, instruction, hiring practices, etcetera).

The themes identified in the first round of questioning will be used to construct a list of strategies, which will be returned to the participants for review. You will then be asked to rate each strategy by level of relevance on a 7-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = not relevant... 7 = critically relevant), followed by a brief explanation of the conditions you used to rate the strategies, and any additional comments you may have at that time. It is difficult to predict the exact number of rounds necessary in a Delphi study, however, stability of responses typically occurs within three rounds.

I understand that you are likely very busy and this study will require ongoing participation and investment. I am incredibly grateful for your time and efforts, not only for this study, but also for your continued investment in improving the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA youth. I believe your work is inspirational and it would be an honor to work with you on this important project for the next few months.

If you agree to participate, I will email you a formal informed document and I ask that you return it as soon as possible. After I receive your informed consent, I will email you a brief demographic questionnaire and instructions to begin the first round of the study. After the first round is complete, I will follow-up via email to remind you of the next steps of the process.

In addition to your participation, I would also like to request that you consider if you know any colleagues that may also meet the sampling criteria for this study. Due to the level of expertise required for this study, the number of individuals I have been able to identify for participation remains fairly small. Therefore, if you believe you know individuals that may also be appropriate for participation, I would greatly appreciate if you would consider forwarding an email from me that contains the sampling criteria and invitation to contact me regarding possible participation.

Thank you again for your time!

Molly Strear

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Participant Informed Consent Document



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

Lead Investigator: Molly Strear, MA, LPC
Department of Applied Psychology & Counselor Education
Phone Number: (720) 220-7825
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Research Advisor: Elysia Clemens, Ph.D.
Department of Applied Psychology & Counselor Education
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Research Advisor: Heather Helm, Ph.D.
Department of Applied Psychology & Counselor Education
Phone Number: (970) 351-1630
Email: heather.helm@unco.edu

Dear Participant:

Purpose and Description: This study is designed to reveal how school counselors can reduce the educational barriers that persist for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally (LGBTQIQA) individuals through intentional practice. School counselors and school counselor educators will benefit from increased knowledge and understanding of the ways in which heteronormative structures are maintained within K-12 public education environments. Improved understanding of heteronormative policies and practices will further school counselors' ability to facilitate the systemic change necessary to foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. This study will use a classical Delphi method to identify the ways in which school counselors can deconstruct educational heteronormativity through intentional strategies to facilitate LGBTQIQA inclusive educational environments.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to multiple rounds of questioning over the course of the next few months. First, you will be asked to respond to a broad prompt designed to explore school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity through intentional practice. The themes identified in the first round will be used to develop a list of strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity, which will be returned to you for review. You will then be asked to rate each strategy by level of relevance, followed by a brief explanation of the conditions you used to rate the strategies, and any additional comments regarding school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity or the strategy list generated from the previous round. It is difficult to predict the exact number of rounds necessary in a Delphi study, thus, questioning will continue until consensus has been achieved through a controlled process of clarification and consideration of group ratings. Although variable, consensus typically occurs within three rounds of systematic questioning.

Risks to you are minimal, however, you may experience mild discomfort being asked to disclose your beliefs about educational heteronormativity. There are no direct benefits for participation, however, you may benefit indirectly, as the intent of this study is to assist educational stakeholders to identify ways to improve the educational experiences of LGBTQIA individuals.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

 Subject's Signature

 Date

 Researcher's Signature

 Date

APPENDIX E
PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS FOR ROUND ONE

Participant Instructions for Round One

Welcome to the first round of the study, *Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity*. Thank you again for your time and willingness to contribute to the future of more inclusive public education!

Rationale: This study is designed to elucidate how school counselors can reduce the educational barriers that persist for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally (LGBTQIQA) individuals through intentional practice. Improved understanding of heteronormative policies and practices will further school counselors' ability to actively facilitate the systemic change necessary to foster more inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIQA individuals. This study is a classical Delphi method designed to identify the ways in which school counselors can deconstruct educational heteronormativity through intentional strategies to facilitate LGBTQIQA inclusive educational environments.

Instructions: This round of questioning is designed to generate school counseling strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity. The themes identified in this round will be used to construct a list of strategies for deconstructing educational heteronormativity, which will be returned to you for review. You will then be asked to rate each strategy by level of relevance on a 7-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = not relevant... 7 = critically relevant), followed by a brief explanation of the conditions you used to rate the strategies, and any additional comments regarding school counselors' roles in deconstructing educational heteronormativity or the strategy list generated from the previous round.

It is difficult to predict the exact number of rounds necessary in a Delphi study, thus, questioning will continue until consensus has been achieved through the process of clarification and consideration of group ratings. Although variable, stability of responses typically occurs within three rounds of systematic questioning.

STEP 1: Please take a moment to review the following definitions in order to ensure we are utilizing the same language within the context of this study.

Educational Heteronormativity: "the organizational structures in schools that support heterosexuality as normal and anything else as deviant" (Donelson & Rogers, 2004, p. 128).

Deconstruction: the critical examination of dominant narratives that perpetuate institutional norms in order to allow alternative narratives to emerge free from the normalizing power of a preferred way of being (Chambers, 2007; Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1984; White & Epston, 1990).

STEP 2: Please generate a list of strategies that may be employed by school counselors to deconstruct educational heteronormativity in K-12 public educational environments. Please consider strategies at the various levels of intervention: student level, teacher level, administrative level, building level (e.g., images, artifacts, curriculum), community level, policy level (e.g., nondiscrimination policies, inclusive language, instruction, hiring practices, etcetera).

STEP 3: Please email your demographic questionnaire and list of school counseling strategies in a Microsoft Word document to: mstrear@gmail.com by Insert Date.

APPENDIX F
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Please indicate the sex that most closely aligns with your identity:

- ☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Other

Age:

Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
☐ Asian
☐ African American or Black
☐ Hispanic or Latino/a
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Other

Educational Experiences (please mark all that apply and include a brief description, i.e., specialty, major, minor, etcetera):

- ☐ PhD Please Describe:
☐ MA Please Describe:
☐ BA Please Describe:
☐ Other Please Describe:

Professional Experiences (please mark all that apply):

- ☐ School Counselor
☐ Counselor Educator
☐ Researcher
☐ Other Please Describe:

Please provide a brief description of your current professional role:

If you are comfortable sharing, please describe the inspiration that motivated you to contribute to the improvement of the educational experiences of LGBTQIQA individuals?

APPENDIX G
EMAIL FOR SNOWBALL SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Email for Snowball Sampling Procedures

Dear _____.

My name is Molly Strear and I am a doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Northern Colorado. I am contacting you today regarding my dissertation research, *Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity*. This email was forwarded to you because you have been identified as someone who may meet the selection criteria for this study. These criteria were designed to identify individuals who have demonstrated marked involvement and efforts in addressing the educational needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Questioning, and Ally individuals. I have provided a brief list of the selection criteria below for your review. If you believe you may meet these criteria and would be willing to consider participation in this study, I would greatly appreciate if you would email me at mstrear@gmail.com with permission to contact you by phone to explain the purpose and process of this study.

If you are available to speak with me, please provide your phone number and a few days and times that would be convenient for me to contact you by phone.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!

Best,

Molly Strear, MA, LPC
 Doctoral Candidate, University of Northern Colorado

Selection Criteria:

- Professional Qualifications: school counselor educators, school counselor researchers, and school counselor practitioners (education/licensure)

AND a combination of the following criteria as they pertain to meeting the educational needs of LGBTQIQA individuals:

- Authorship
- Professional Presentations
- Titles or Roles
- Visible Leadership
- Professional Participation or Affiliation with applicable Professional Organizations

APPENDIX H
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO

*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: July 22, 2014

TO: Molly Strear, MA

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [628491-2] Forecasting an Inclusive Future: Accessible School Counseling Strategies to Deconstruct Educational Heteronormativity

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: July 22, 2014

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Thank you for these modifications. I appreciate your efforts and feel you have attended to all of my questions. I am giving approval and wish you the best on this important research.

Sincerely,

Nancy White, PhD, IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.